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EXPERIENCE OF GABON IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PMRA 2020

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SUMMARY

The overall objective of the General Agricultural Census (GAC) and Integrated Permanent System of Agricultural Statistics of Gabon (GAC-IPSAS-Gabon) is to collect structural agricultural data as well as comprehensive statistics on livestock, food security, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, horticulture (market gardening) and fruit tree growing.

The implementation of this GAC-IPSAS -Gabon will therefore, enhance knowledge and develop potentials and resources of the entire agricultural and rural sectors. Similarly, one of the aims of such an operation is to promote the establishment of a reliable information system, making it possible to observe the trend of the sector's potential and to describe the structural transformations likely to modify its production capacities in the medium and long terms.

In conducting the GAC- IPSAS, Gabon decided to adopt the FAO recommendations contained in the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture (2020 Programme or WCA 2020), which recommends a modular approach, among other implementation modalities. It recommends two major phases: the creation of a clearly identified core module (core modules) and the implementation of complementary modules, thus allowing each country to take into account its specific needs. The information collected as part of the core module will also be used to develop the sampling framework used for the complementary modules.

Gabon is in the first phase of the 2020 World Programme for the Census of Agricultural Census, that of the implementation of the core modules. Five main modules will be implemented during this first phase: the household count module; the traditional farm module; the modern and semi-modern farm module; the community module (rural); the professional farmer organizations module.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Gabon, located in Central Africa, is crossed by the equator and covers an area of 267,670 km². It has approximately 800 km of coastline giving it access to the Atlantic Ocean and shares its northern borders with Cameroon to the northwest with Equatorial Guinea and to the east and south with Congo. Administratively, the country is divided into (09) provinces (Estuaire, Haut-Ogooué, Moyen-Ogooué, Ngounié, Nyanga, Ogooué-Ivindo, Ogooué-Lolo, Ogooué-Maritime and Woleu-Ntem), (48) regions, (158) counties, (26) districts, 26 traditional areas, 3,483 villages and village groupings.

Sectoral context

According to the 2013 General Population and Housing Census of Gabon (GPHC 2013), 211,858 people are engaged in agricultural activities. Farming is mainly practiced by the elderly and women. The main types of crops grown are foodcrops (by 88% of people) and fruit trees (26% of people), while other crops are grown by less than 7% of farmers.

The GPHC-2013 recorded 106,925 agricultural households, including 42,263 rural households (39.5%) and 38,657 female-headed households (36.2%). For instance, one in four Gabonese households is engaged in agriculture. In addition, Gabonese agriculture is underdeveloped and most agricultural production is food crop. In 2007, the agricultural sector accounted for 3.5% of the GDP.

Gabon is in a situation of agricultural dependence, which results in a massive import of agricultural products. This situation puts the country at risk of one-day becoming food insecure. The development of the agricultural sector is therefore becoming a strategic issue for the country.

II. RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GAC

RATIONALE

The last agricultural census was conducted in 1972/1975. Currently, the country is in dire need of reliable, complete and up-to-date statistical information necessary for planning its rural sector and for formulating strategies and policies and monitoring progress. Statistical production in agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry is characterized, as in many other African countries, by:

- Obsolescence of structural data and the lack of a recent sampling framework and reference framework for current surveys and statistics;
- The weakness or non-existence of resources allocated (human, material and financial) for statistical production;
- inadequacy of the data produced to the needs of users;
- The lack of reliability of statistical data;

It is with a view to finding lasting solutions to these problems that the Government of the Gabonese Republic is committed to carrying out the General Agricultural Census, a large-scale statistical survey that it considers a priority not only for the renewal of structural data on the rural world and mainly the country's agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry sectors, in close connection with poverty and food security issues but also for the establishment of a new solid sampling framework enabling effective sample surveys to be conducted.

In addition, the GAC is in line with the main orientations defined in the Emerging Strategic Plan for 2025 (PSGE-Vision 2025) and the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (SNDS). It will contribute to improving the capacities of stakeholders working in the rural sector to enable them take appropriate decisions on reviving agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forestry, food security management, monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Objectives

The overall objective of the GAC is to collect structural data on agriculture in Gabon as well as detailed data on Agriculture, Livestock, Food Security, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Forest and Forestry, Horticulture (Vegetable growing) and Fruit trees.

In more specific terms, the GAC will contribute to:

- Improve the production and dissemination of Agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries statistics;
- Have an integrated system for collecting and monitoring the agricultural season, capable of providing reliable, rich and diverse information on the agro pastoral sector;
- Have a reference framework for subsequent surveys;
- Assess the impact of agricultural development policies and programs;
- Assess the added value of the agricultural sector in the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP);
- Assess the Sustainable Development Goals (SDOs), food security, poverty and gender;
- Have a modern data archiving and dissemination system.

III. METHODOLOGY

In conducting the GAC, Gabon decided to adopt the FAO recommendations contained in the World Program for Agricultural Census (2020 Program or WCA 2020), which recommends a modular approach, among other modalities of implementation. This recommends 2 main phases: the creation of a clearly identified core module (core modules) and the implementation of complementary modules, thus allowing each country to take into account its specific needs. The information collected as part of the core module will also be used to develop the sampling frameworks used for the complementary modules.

The first phase of the GAC is devoted to the implementation of the following core modules.

Module 1: *HEADCOUNTING OF STATISTICAL UNITS*

This is an operation to update the exhaustive list of agricultural households, modern farms, socio-economic infrastructure and takeovers in all counting areas (CAs) in the country. CA's are geographical units defined by the 2013 General Population and Housing Census (GPHC). The operations related to this module are scheduled to start on 08 November 2019.

Module 2: *OBSERVATION OF FARMING HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS*

This operation consists of an exhaustive inventory of characteristic data on farming households, their activities, living conditions and assets.

Module 3: *COLLECTION OF COMMUNITY DATA (Rural)*

Comprehensive counting of territorial settlements (villages) through the collection of information on agro-pastoral production sites, access and use of basic social services and economic and agricultural infrastructure, etc.

Module 4: CENSUS OF MODERN FARMS

Comprehensive mapping of modern and semi-modern agricultural holdings (holdings outside the traditional household farms), by collecting data on their status, activities, human and material resources and production.

Module 5: CENSUS OF PROFESSIONAL FARMER ORGANIZATIONS

Exhaustive census of professional agricultural organizations, by collecting data on their status, activities, human and material resources and production.

The second phase is devoted to the realization of the complementary and thematic modules.

The additional module: VEGETABLE AND ANIMAL PRODUCTION SURVEY

Counting, by sampling, of quality and diverse structural data from farming households in order to understand the Gabonese agro-pastoral landscape and progress made, and to provide a reference framework for evaluating the impact of development policies and support programs on the sector.

Thematic surveys (Counting by sampling)

- Module on Fisheries and Aquaculture Survey;
- Modules on the Forest/Forestry and Environment Survey.

Consolidation and development of the CountrySTAT-Gabon System: a one-stop shop for quick and easy web access to disseminate and archive RGA/SPISA data and metadata, various surveys and censuses, statistical yearbooks, annual reports, administrative statistics or all kinds of available official statistical data.

IV. CONDUCT OF THE GAC

A- Preparatory phase

With the technical and financial support of FAO through TCP/GAB/3603, the preparatory phase is aimed at elaborating the following:

- Regulatory instruments (decree and/or order) governing the various organs of the GAC: National Steering Committee, National Directorate, National Coordination, National Office, National Secretariat and CountrySTAT-Gabon's Technical Working Group.
- Development of the GAC methodology and technical documents (questionnaires, instruction manuals, tabulation plan and analysis plan) for the three (3) core modules (Basic Module for Traditional Farms, Community Module and Modern Farming Module).
- Design of the methodology and organization of the computer processing of the GAC (Technical organization, architecture, equipment and materials, human resources)
- Development of the GAC Communication Strategy.

B- Second Phase: Implementation of the core modules

The second phase of the GAC is currently in progress, consisting of the implementation of the core modules (Household Count Module, Basic Module of Traditional Farms, Modern Farms Module, Community Module, and Professional Farmer Organizations Module).

B-1- The major activities carried out during this second phase of the GAC-GABON

ACTIVITY 1: Establishment of the National Coordination and National Office and appointment of members.

Members of the National Coordination and the officers of the GAC National Office were appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Decree establishing the GAC. So therefore:

- ✚ A National Coordinator and a Local Coordinator from the Ministries of Economy and Financial Affairs and National Farmer Organizations: Fisheries and Food processors respectively have been appointed.
- ✚ Officials from the Ministries involved in the GAC have been appointed by their respective departments to compose the GAC National Office.
- ✚ The GAC National office consists of 5 sections: Administration and Finance, IT Application Management, Collection and Mapping, Methodology and Analysis, Communication.

ACTIVITY 2: Review of collection tools (questionnaires, manuals) before GAC Pilot and launch of a fourth core module (household count sheet).

ACTIVITY 3: Design and finalization of the computer programs of the core modules on Cspiro before the pilot phase.

ACTIVITY 4: Assessment mission of the agricultural services per province:

ACTIVITY 5: Awareness-raising in the three provinces selected for the pilot, which took place from September 1 to 7:

ACTIVITY 6: Piloting the GAC in the three provinces:

ACTIVITY 7: Review of collection tools (questionnaires and manuals) for the core modules of the Pilot:

ACTIVITY 8: Signing of the agreement (UTF) between the Gabonese government and the FAO on Thursday 15 November 2018 at the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in charge of the seed program and official launch of the GAC on Monday 10 December 2018:

ACTIVITY 9: Completion and validation of the communication and awareness raising strategy with the Communication Consultant recruited by FAO.

ACTIVITY 10: Review of collection tools (questionnaires, manuals) with FAO international consultants and development of a fifth module: module on Professional Farmer Organizations (PFO).

ACTIVITY 11: Drawing up a list of villages and large-scale businesses per province.

ACTIVITY 12: Adoption of the Survey Solution software and training by the FAO expert of the Managers of the IT Application Management Unit on this new software.

ACTIVITY 13: Development of computer programs for the core modules (Counting sheet, basic module, Community module, Modern Operations module and the Professional Farmers' Organizations module) on Survey Solution.

ACTIVITY 14: Training of trainers

The training of trainers was held from 23 July to 2 August 2019. It brought together 70 managers from the General Agriculture Census National Bureau of (GACNB) and other governmental agencies involved in the operation. This training, both theoretical and practical, focused mainly on the general presentation of the GAC; mapping recognition and the listing of statistical units (structures, households, infrastructures, etc.); presentation of the communication strategy plan; presentation of the different questionnaires (Counting sheet, Basic module, Community module, Modern and semi-modern farm modules, Professional Farmer Organizations module) and manuals (concepts and definitions, enumerator, team leader, supervisor); taking GPS points; presentations and simulations of the computer applications of all the above-mentioned modules

ACTIVITY 15: GAC PILOT 2: IT application testing and collection strategy.

The general objective of the Computer Program and Collection Device Test was to evaluate the methodology and all technical and computer applications of the operation. Specifically, it aimed to:

- Test whether the questionnaires of the core modules (basic module, community module, modern and semi-modern farm) can be easily adapted on the field;
- Detect possible weaknesses or errors related to the various computer applications installed;
- Test the entire control and monitoring system for field activities ;
- Assess the workload of data collection agents.

To carry out this test, eight (8) teams were deployed in the Estuary province..

ACTIVITY 16: Review of collection tools and computer programs

ACTIVITY 17: Decentralized training of data gathering agents (including team leaders)

GACNB and other government officials trained during the training of trainers were deployed throughout the country to train and recruit potential data collection agents for the comprehensive count phase of the GCRB. Thus, 1000 agents attended this training followed by a selection test. 720 agents and 120 team leaders were selected.

V. DATA COLLECTION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

For the implementation of the core modules, the project coordination has developed and implemented an efficient and structured organizational structure to ensure the proper implementation of data collection and management activities.

This organization has four (4) hierarchical and operational levels:

LEVEL I /Coordination at national level: It is led by a multidisciplinary team of experts in charge of the following:

- Coordinate the entire data collection and management process;
- Develop questionnaires and collection tools;
- Develop collection applications and upload them on the Tablets;
- Develop data transfer and collection monitoring applications;
- Test and validate collection devices;
- Training of trainers;
- Monitor and assist collection teams on the field;
- Plan data processing;
- Set up a system to manage the information collected;
- Coordinate data processing and analysis;
- See to the dissemination of results

At this level, the Headquarters and data quality controllers provided for in level 1 are listed in the table on page 6.

LEVEL II / Coordination at the local level. (province): It is composed of technicians from various sub-sectors involved in the census. The objectives of this team are to:

- Coordinate all activities related to data collection, verification and transmission to the central server;
- Ensure the updating of geo-referenced mapping of community socio-economic infrastructure in survey areas;
- Manage the computer equipment (computers, batteries, chargers, tablets) assigned to their districts;
- Contribute to the training and supervision of data collection agents;
- Ensure data collection from modern and commercial farms;
- Provide technical and material support to field teams;
- Monitor the collection and ensure the transfer of data to the national level

These workers include collection supervisors, application supervisors and their assistants (see levels 1 and 2 in the table on page 6)

LEVEL III/ Supervision (province/region/traditional areas/etc.) : Team leaders are responsible for the direct supervision of the collection teams. Their tasks are to:

- Distribute the work among the teams of questionnaire administration agents;
- Ensure the daily control of work done by the teams;
- Ensure the administration of the community data questionnaire;
- Retrieve and validate the information collected or updated;
- coordinate feedback from the field in case of errors;
- Transfer the verified data to the national level.

LEVEL IV/ Data collection teams: Under the direct supervision of the team leaders/supervisors. Their tasks can be summarized as follows:

- Collect data from farming households;
- Ensure the correctness and transfer of raw data to team leaders

At level 9 of the table, national (DN, National Coordinators) and provincial officials are listed. They are not directly involved in collection operations. They have a coordinating and guiding role. As such, they must periodically receive reports (dashboards) enabling them to take appropriate corrective decisions, if needed.