Developing an Agricultural Statistics Strategy for South Africa

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Abstract

South Africa, and indeed many other countries, has in the past years been in the process of developing an agricultural statistics strategy. The agricultural statistics strategy was developed as a guide to all matters related to the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of agricultural statistics. A country's agricultural statistics are aimed at addressing planning, policy, evaluation and developmental issues related to the agricultural sector and the country at large. The first motive for a country to develop an agricultural strategy is, naturally, to address these national issues. South Africa is no exception in this regard. However, there were other factors, which catalysed the development of the strategy. Firstly, to align the country's agricultural statistics processes to the Global Strategy for the improvement of agricultural and rural statistics as specified by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and its partners. This involved the development of a National Agricultural Statistical Subsystem and the integration of agriculture and rural statistics into the country's National Statistical System (NSS). Secondly, in order to reduce duplication and therefore wastage of resources within the public and private sector it was important to conduct an audit of all agricultural statistics producers in the country. Thirdly, traditionally, agricultural statistics in the country largely excluded small scale and subsistence (smallholder) agriculture. The strategy had to address the exclusion. And lastly, a strategy had to be developed to address capacity development and data quality (also quantity) challenges connected to agricultural statistics in the country.

This paper is a review of the strategy development process in South Africa and provides insight into the more fine-tuned process behind the design of the agricultural statistics strategy in a diverse and large country like South Africa. It provides the major steps undertaken from the initial study, formation of the National Agricultural Statistics Subsystem (NASS) through to the incorporation of the NASS into the South African National Statistical System (SANSS). The paper is also a reflection of subsequent developments after first paper on the topic was submitted to the 5th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics held in October 2010 in Kampala, Uganda.

Key words: Agriculture, Statistics, Strategy development**.**

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