Reference Manual

An insight into CountrySTAT
Food and Agriculture Data Network
Reference Manual
An insight into CountrySTAT- Food and Agriculture Data Network

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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# List of acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>API</td>
<td>Application Programming Interface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSV</td>
<td>Comma-Separated Values format</td>
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<tr>
<td>DBMS</td>
<td>Database Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDI</td>
<td>Data Documentation Initiative</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>Food Balance Sheets</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCL</td>
<td>FAOSTAT Commodity List</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information System</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>International Organization for Standardization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDMX</td>
<td>Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>TWG</td>
<td>Technical Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>WDS</td>
<td>Web Data Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMS</td>
<td>Web Map Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XML</td>
<td>Extensible Markup Language</td>
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Foreword

Access to timely, reliable and accurate data on food and agriculture is particularly important to monitor national trends and allow the formulation of decisions on national agricultural and food security policies. For this reason, nationally owned and reliable information systems with indicators on social, economic and natural resources are an indispensable basis for making decisions and to monitor food and agriculture policies.

As a response to the declining state of agricultural statistics in many countries, the CountrySTAT system was implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2007. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation finances the project which supports collection, analysis, and dissemination of data, using adequate tools and international standards.

CountrySTAT is a web-based system for food and agriculture statistics at national and sub-national levels. It supports multiple-sourced data integration and harmonization according to international standards and contributes to improve data quality and reliability. The analysis of data for Supply Utilization Accounts and Food Balance Sheets is facilitated in order to obtain derived indicators relevant to nutrition, food and agriculture.

Through national and regional CountrySTAT projects, FAO forms partnerships with statistical offices and the Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry among others to introduce the system and build the national capacity to use it. In each country, the National Focal Points collaborate with FAO to ensure the correct deployment of the application, deliver training to national staff and guarantee proper system maintenance.

CountrySTAT is in line with the emerging Open Data approach, which provides the conceptual framework for broader collaboration on systems and data integration at the global level. Open Data is expected to establish a more efficient flow of agricultural-related data.
Foreword

FAO’s overall objectives in this area include:

a) Increasing accessibility to quality and timely information

b) Strengthening capacity to develop and carry out multi-sector data analysis

c) Improving data exchange at national, sub-national and regional levels

d) Playing an active role in the establishment and consolidation of a global information network and community

CountrySTAT contributes to the improvement of statistical data collection, exchange and effective utilization of information in order to meet the needs and expectations of FAO internal users, member states and partner organizations. Data are provided in the form of tables, charts and maps and are available free-of-charge.
Voices

«By providing reliable country data CountrySTAT facilitates the decision-making process policy planning and constitutes a powerful tool for decision-makers, development partners and other users in the fight against poverty and hunger.»
*H. E. Ms. Odette Kayitesi, Minister of Agriculture, Burundi*

...«Before I could not imagine that I would be able to have access to such a variety of data in a single access point.»
*François Ouedraogo, Consultant, STRATEGIC, Burkina Faso*

...«The Government of Gambia is committed to food security with good policies, projects and programmes that are geared towards ensuring food security for the citizens. CountrySTAT is one of such projects that could contribute in ensuring realistic monitoring of food security status of countries as the platform that would not only promote partnership between different statistical agencies, but will contribute in improving data quality and comparability based on international standards.»
*Mr Musa Humma, Director, Ministry of Agriculture in Gambia*

...«There is a lack of information in the agriculture sector, which will be addressed by working in collaboration with CountrySTAT. The project has links to other information systems including FAOSTAT, Regional STAT and the global information and early warning system work station which will help Zambia significantly.»
*Mr Dingiswayo Banda, Senior Economist, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Zambia*

...«Government’s quest to increase agriculture productivity and output in order to reduce poverty requires the ability to measure accurately what is produced and the provision of information on how things are produced.»
*Ms Grace Bediako, Statistician, Ghana*
Why CountrySTAT?

1. Why CountrySTAT?

Production and reporting on food availability and agricultural data is challenging in many countries due to budget constraints and limited staff resources. Very often the data do not have a quality indicators and metadata is missing. Usually several national institutions are involved in the collection and dissemination of official statistical data on the agriculture and rural sector, using different concepts, definitions and standards with no single platform for access. As a consequence, available data is scattered, fragmented and originates from different sources which often leads to divergences and contradictions. This leads to its limited use within countries and by the international community and can affect funding and investments in agriculture.

- Access to timely, reliable and accurate data on food and agriculture is particularly important to monitor national trends and allow the formulation of decisions on national agricultural and food security policies.
- How much food is available in the different regions of a country?
- What influences the rise of food prices in a certain period?
- What type of livestock is practiced in the country?
- Do women have access to land and other resources?

CountrySTAT- a single access framework for improved statistics on food and agriculture.

CountrySTAT is a web-based system for food and agriculture statistics at the regional, national and sub national levels. It provides decision-makers with a one-stop centre for easy access to statistics across thematic areas such as production, prices, trade and consumption.
In practice, CountrySTAT centralizes and integrates data coming from various sources and allows its harmonization according to international standards, while promoting data quality and reliability.

CountrySTAT has been developed using the open-source technology FENIX. This platform offers users a scalable system that provides multiple functionalities and other web-applications. The system is capable of handling large volumes of data and produces results in real time. Customized tools allow easy data analysis and to create outputs such as maps, tables and charts.

Goals and objectives

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the CountrySTAT system the capacity of regional and national experts and trainers is developed.

CountrySTAT aims to:

• Provide quality statistics on food and agriculture, and promote evidence-based decision making;
• Facilitate informed policy making and contribute to the reduction in hunger and malnutrition;
• Assist countries in integrating and organizing national data to be comparable at the international level and
• Promote partnerships between various statistical institutions within countries, including national statistical offices and other statistical authorities – establishing a one-stop centre for accessing existing food and agriculture statistics in the country.
Why CountrySTAT?

Value-added of CountrySTAT:

- Country-owned, sustainable and reliable
- Easy access to existing data through a single on-line access point
- Powerful instrument for strengthening decision-making based on facts
- Facilitates the exchange of data and metadata
- Based on international standards
- Enhances capacity-building and institutional strengthening
- Monitors national and regional food security programmes

How it works

Each CountrySTAT system is nationally owned and managed, and contains national and sub-national data using international norms, concepts and standards. Data from various sources is checked for consistency and reconciled with other related series. National Coordinators work towards ensuring the data on the National CountrySTAT site is made available in a timely manner considering the official release of this data.

The CountrySTAT Database has the following levels of data:

National Core – The domains under the National Core contain data that has been aggregated to the national level using international concepts, definitions and classification in order to allow for international comparability. The data is presented in a standard data structure and corresponds to the standards of FAOSTAT. The data structure is organized according to the main activities under the agricultural domains, such as production, trade, population, food availability, labour, land use and irrigation, machinery, pesticides,
fertilizers, prices, forestry, fisheries, and water.

Sub-National – This area includes the same data domains and indicators as the National Core, but the data is disaggregated at the sub-national level according to the national classification. The data is consistent with data in the National Core (aggregation of sub-national data corresponds to national core data). A correspondence table is developed by the country under the guidance of the FAO CountrySTAT Team in order to ensure linkages between the national classification found in the Sub-National and the international classification found in the National Core.

Thematic Modules – This area includes relevant national modules that are not included in the core, but are very important at the national level (such as Supply Utilization Account, Food Security data, cost of production surveys, etc.). This area can be further developed by the country in accordance with data needs.

There are also other data areas such as the Global Strategy Minimum Set of Core Data, Agricultural Censuses and Surveys, Statistical Yearbooks, Food Balance Sheets, as well as National Institutions and Partners, which can be expanded upon by the country.
Main areas of work

2. Main areas of work

The CountrySTAT team based at FAO Headquarters works with the participating countries and provides support with methodology, training and tools related to the four “pillars” of CountrySTAT: Information Technology (IT), Statistical Methodology, Communication, and Country Coordination.

The IT team provides technological support to the countries and assists them in setting up and maintaining their national CountrySTAT systems. The Statistics team provides assistance with the harmonization of national statistical data applying the standards used by FAO, with the objective to improve data quality and comparability. The Communications team helps to raise awareness of CountrySTAT, fosters the collaboration among its users and promotes partnerships. Finally, the Country Coordination team provides assistance with capacity-development activities and helps to enhance institutional collaboration at national and sub-national levels.

*CountrySTAT brings together institutions from various countries*
2.1 Statistical methodology for improved data quality

Work is carried out through a validation data process, which allows data producers and national experts to collaborate on data harmonization. The National Technical Working Group members together with the CountrySTAT Secretariat meet to carry out the different phases of the process described below:

Data Quality requirements

In the past, statistics data quality was evaluated only in terms of accuracy, and this implies the discrepancy between the values provided in the statistical surveys and the “real” values.

Now statistical quality is understood in terms of the capacity of statistical information to meet users’ needs. According to the International Organization for Standardization’s norm 8402-1986, the definition of quality is “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.”

The table below summarizes key questions from the user point of view related to the data quality dimensions:
Statistical Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY QUESTIONS</th>
<th>DIMENSIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the data what the user expects?</td>
<td>Relevance and Completeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the figure “reliable”?</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the data in all necessary respects comparable across Countries?</td>
<td>Compatibility across the countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the data coherent with another data?</td>
<td>Coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the user get the data in time according to pre-established dates?</td>
<td>Timeliness and punctuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the figure easy accessible and understandable?</td>
<td>Accessibility and clarity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Countries are given the methodological means to revise their data with the objective to respond to quality requirements and to influence the process of national data structures.

CountrySTAT statistical module proposes the following approaches relates to data quality dimensions:

a) The relevance dimension refers to the ability of data to meet current and potential user needs, at national, regional and international levels. A basic primary data set - CORE has been defined to support the elaboration of the Food Balance Sheets (FBS) and analytical indicators to get Food Security Statistics. Collaboration with international institutions and partners includes the collection and dissemination of relevant indicators for policy making, as well as monitoring of regional and international indicators related to agriculture and food. In order to have a clear understanding of the situation related to the structure of the national statistical system, a periodical “Panorama” report is compiled by each country to
assess the current national statistical framework. It provides an overview of the institutional, legal, technical and operative aspects of national food and agriculture statistics.

b) Accuracy: Accuracy relates to the closeness of the estimated values to the exact or true values. The analysis of data and metadata accuracy are carried out during the Technical Working Groups Meetings.

c) The comparability dimension deals with the adoption and adaptation of FAO commodities classification, concepts and definitions with the national classifications. They are progressively analyzed and revised to ensure a consistency in data comparison. This work is carried out during the sessions of the Technical Working Group meetings. CountrySTAT provides a framework for the concepts and definitions of each domain and indicator in line with FAO standards that are available in the technical document *Statistical Reference Manual on Data Dissemination.*

In order to harmonize local products with the international standards a correspondence table is provided. It also ensures linkages and coherence between the two classifications (national and international).

The example below shows the analysis and harmonization process:

![Image of roots and tubers](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAOSTAT CODE</th>
<th>COMMODITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0136</td>
<td>TARO (COCOYAM) Dasheen, eddoe, taro,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>old cocoyam (Colocasia esculenta)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You consult the document under the section “Roots and Tubers”, (you know that Macabo belongs to this category because of its agrobiological characteristics). Here you find initial information, and the hyperlink takes you...

...to its definition (e.g. aroids cultivated for their edible starchy corms or underground stems..), its classification by species, its international name and the FAOSTAT code. You also find information about data coverage (e.g. Trade datashould cover both the fresh and dried product).

Statistical Methodology

d) Coherence concerns the review and systematic analysis of data that is carried out by the National Technical Secretariat, the Regional Technical Team and the CountrySTAT FAO Headquarters team.

The analysis takes into account the following issues:
- Coherence between different national sources
- Missing and incompleteness of data
- Anomalies in the historical trends
- Incoherence between the related indicators
- Coherence between Core and Sub-national data
- Consistency between the local and international concepts and definitions
- Correspondence between national and international classifications

e) Timeliness and punctuality dimensions refer to the time lag between data collection and dissemination time and they are requested for each data source (national agricultural surveys, censuses, etc.). Countries are also required to plan a data dissemination calendar in order to inform the user on the expected data availability.

f) Accessibility and clarity dimensions require an organization of data structure to have easy access to the national micro-data, macro-data and metadata.

Metadata structure

CountrySTAT adheres to the metadata framework developed by international organizations responding to the need to improve the information about the data based on the United Nations’ Guidelines for the Modeling of Statistical Data and Metadata:
2.2 Information technology support

CountrySTAT provides technical support and assistance to participating countries with setting up and managing their national CountrySTAT systems.

CountrySTAT is based on the open-source software platform called FENIX. Its main features include browsing and analysis of data, advanced interactive data download, cross-domain data search by using free-text, and data exchange through web services. The tool enables users to access and manage information and to easily perform data analysis using the web browser.

Data sharing is one of the main objectives of this module. CountrySTAT system is meant to support a network of users and facilitate data exchange among the partners. Technologies such as Application Programming Interface (API)s, based on efficient data transfer protocols and frameworks, are widely used by the system for both internal and external communications. Data exchange technologies are complemented by the use of FAOSTAT standards for coding, transforming and exporting data to widely known formats and contents.
Information Technology

Several software frameworks used by the application are developed and maintained by the open source community and the upgrades of these components are available free-of-charge. The reusability of software components is expected to result in economies of scale in the medium term, and in a cost-effective sharing of resources among the consumers of CountrySTAT/FENIX services.

The FENIX architecture

FENIX is based on a service-oriented architecture where the different software components are built as separate web-applications and use loose coupling techniques to communicate. This makes the application flexible and scalable. New components can be added and old components can be upgraded without requiring changes in any of the other components they need to communicate with. In addition, all components can be reused in various contexts (e.g. user-specific web interfaces) improving efficiency in the development efforts.

CountrySTAT, as part of the FENIX family of applications, consists of several web applications for handling spatial and non-spatial data. These applications provide data to the client applications using standard services in defined formats, without requiring any further elaboration. The Web Data Services (WDS), and the Web Map Services (WMS) applications expose data from different sources and systems to the internet and make functionalities available as services to respond to incoming requests. Web applications responsible for handling metadata, FENIX security and other data management functions interact with the WDS and WMS to ensure consistent handling of metadata information, implement and enforce security rules and provide editing/update tools for spatial and non-spatial data. This approach allows FENIX to use multiple data sources, regardless of the Database Management System (DBMS) used (e.g. PostgreSQL, Oracle, SQL Server, etc.), and enables the FENIX web-applications to be independent from the data storage systems and
formats.

A number of web applications use data through the above-described web services. Data is served in various formats such as CSV, Excel, XML, JSON, etc. and processed to generate results in the forms of maps, tables, charts, etc. using different technologies such as Java, Python, .Net, etc. These applications use APIs that comply with a standard syntax without being dependent from any specific architecture and technology.

The outputs produced by the web applications are used by higher-level web applications that perform analysis, generate reports, automate procedures and implement models.

Metadata

Metadata are selected fields or elements to describe data. The challenge is to define the standard metadata fields and the names of
those fields for the consumer of the data to have sufficient information to understand the data. The more information can be conveyed in a standardized regular format, the more valuable data becomes. Metadata can range from basic to advanced, allowing to discover the mere fact that a certain data asset exists, as well as to provide detailed semantic information that enables software applications to interpret and understand the metadata content and structure. Making the metadata machine-readable greatly increases its openness and utility.

CountrySTAT metadata is meant to be platform-independent and aligned as much as possible with the existing open standards. In line with the overall Open Data concept and approach, the objective is to ease the use of data within and beyond the CountrySTAT system. Open metadata standards allow any application implementing the standard specifications to access and handle data from different systems regardless of the technology used.

Therefore, CountrySTAT metadata plays an important role to describe and catalogue any resource (e.g. datasets, GIS layers, documents, etc.), filter data for analyses, make the resources searchable and exchange data and documents with applications and users.

The CountrySTAT metadata structure consists of three main components:

- The descriptive metadata: includes title, location, category, timeframe, source, contacts, etc.
- The Data Structure Definition (DSD): provides details of the individual fields of the data such name, data type, associated coding system, etc.
- The codelist structure: lists and describe the coding systems (codelists) referenced by the datasets. Codelists can be simple or hierarchical

The revised schema of the CountrySTAT metadata includes all
the necessary elements to ensure compatibility with international metadata standards such as Dublin Core, DDI, SDMX and ISO 19115. Although the schema is specifically designed for CountrySTAT use, services to import and export data from the above mentioned standards are being developed.

2.3 Increased visibility through communication

Communication is one of the four main pillars of CountrySTAT and is crucial for strengthening institutional collaboration and partnerships at national, regional and international levels.

For CountrySTAT, communication is more than a one-way channel that provides the partner countries with information. Regular Video Conferences ensure effective meetings and updates, problems can be addresses immediately. Daily exchange via Email, phone and meetings allow CountrySTAT for a constructive collaboration between institutions and countries. Interaction with data users and data producers is enhanced through Social Media.

In doing so, CountrySTAT focuses on enhancing the internal and external communications in order to reach out different target audiences at national, regional and international levels.

CountrySTAT Communications Strategy aims to:

- Increase the visibility of CountrySTAT and inform target audiences about recent developments.
- Foster the participation and collaboration among the CountrySTAT community members through the use of social media.
- Raise awareness on the impact achieved through CountrySTAT network on national agriculture and food security policies.
Communication

A number of activities are being implemented to achieve the above-mentioned objectives.

Activities at regional and national levels include:

- Raised advocacy on CountrySTAT in High level meetings and National Sensitization Seminars for policy makers,
- Engagement of data users through national User Seminars,
- Encouraged participation of user community through social media.

Activities at the global level include:

- Fostering of partnerships and collaboration
- Outreach and information-sharing
- Enhanced donor relations

Communication activities have been included in country work plans to ensure that CountrySTAT is being widely promoted in the local and national media in each country. Sensitization seminars are being organized in each county with the aim to inform policy-makers, government officials, development partners and other interested audiences about the advantages of the CountrySTAT system. National CountrySTAT user seminars are organized to provide information and training for data users and producers on how to use CountrySTAT in their daily work.

The Headquarters-based Communications Team coordinates the activities at national and regional levels and works closely with designated national communication focal points in each country ensuring that information about CountrySTAT reaches different audiences. Various communication tools (both print and on-line) are used to raise the visibility about CountrySTAT worldwide. Bi-monthly E-newsletters provide updates on recent activities and events. Social media is used with the aim to facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge among users of the CountrySTAT community.
Future plans include the development of policy briefs and country fact sheets with the aim to reach out decision makers and have a positive impact on the formulation of food security and agriculture policies.

2.4 Strengthening Institutional Collaboration

Various institutions within countries produce official statistics. Oftentimes these institutions work in isolation and are not accustomed to bringing their expertise together when preparing to disseminate official statistics that can inform users of their national situation with regard to agriculture and food. The CountrySTAT Institutional Framework is structured to address the aforementioned issue and ensure that reliable information across national institutions can be consolidated to inform national policy decisions.

The CountrySTAT approach is the result of a collaborative effort carried out by members of a network of national and regional institutions who make official data available to be uploaded to CountrySTAT that adheres to international standards, is harmonized between institutions, is validated and has the reliability supported by metadata which is also uploaded to the CountrySTAT system. The result is a food and agriculture data network formed by the effort of a community.

In the implementation of CountrySTAT the first step is to identify the focal institution with support of the Government. This would be either the National Statistical Office or Ministry of Agriculture. There are two main national bodies that work together in the implementation of the national CountrySTAT system.

1. A coordinating body called the National Secretariat manages the main activities of CountrySTAT. The Secretariat is under the leadership of a National Coordinator that is nominated by Government and comes from the national focal institution.

2. The technical activities are driven by the Technical Working
Institutional Collaboration

Group (TWG) that is led by the National Secretariat and composed of national experts from the main data producing institutions.

The CountrySTAT National Secretariat, under the leadership of a national coordinator, is responsible to oversee, guide and implement all CountrySTAT activities at national and sub-national levels.

The National Secretariat is usually composed of five members from the National Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Agriculture. The composition of the team should have a balance between statisticians and IT specialists.

The National Secretariat works closely with the FAO Headquarters team in order to:

- Coordinate all national activities;
- Organize the collection of information needed to monitor relevant national policy as well as the national food security situation, and update CountrySTAT accordingly;
- Prepare CountrySTAT National Technical Working Group meetings, and ensure their Secretariat;

The National Technical Working Group is the catalyst for institutional collaboration and the driving force behind making official data and metadata available for upload to the CountrySTAT system. The TWG members provide:

- Official data such as Agricultural Censuses/Surveys and Statistical Yearbooks;
- International Standards are applied to ensure global comparability of data;
- Metadata to support the reliability and official status of the data.
Statistical institutions work closely together and exchange their knowledge on data collection and dissemination.

CountrySTAT regularly organizes trainings and workshops.
3. Partnerships

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation financed the implementation of CountrySTAT in 17 Sub-Saharan African countries in 2007. The success of the project’s first phase attracted additional funding since two regional organizations – the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the East African Community (EAC) have decided to adopt CountrySTAT system and to provide funding for expanding the system to cover the rest of their member countries. The project has since then attracted numerous donors and technical partners:

**Resource Partners**


**Technical Partners**


CountrySTAT forms partnerships with national statistical offices and ministries of agriculture to introduce the system and build national capacity to use it.
At country level, key partners of CountrySTAT are:

- The Statistical Institutions of the participating countries. They benefit from increased technical capacity of national staff to run and maintain cost effective, timely, and reliable methods and technologies for producing and disseminating better quality food agricultural statistics.
- The policy makers, researchers, private sector and other users who will be able to access country data easily.
- The Governments in the participating countries who attract investment through improved access to improved quality data on countries’ food and agriculture sector.
- The private sector, donors, and NGOs that can make evidence based and improved investments decisions.
- The agro-industry sector and smallholder farmers who will be benefit from improved policies and investments in agriculture for productivity growth.
Country experiences

4. Country experiences

For many countries, CountrySTAT provides a valuable tool for accessing and disseminating national food and agriculture data through a single platform. Its multiple functionalities, easy maintenance and user-friendliness continue to attract new countries to join the CountrySTAT community.

Great achievements were made by all countries in harmonizing their official data and making it available through CountrySTAT network thanks to the efforts of the National Secretariats and the collaborating institutions.

In Cameroon for instance, CountrySTAT system was launched in February 2010. With support from the national CountrySTAT secretariat, national food and agriculture data was available to all users through CountrySTAT in a short time. National authorities were very pleased with the results achieved and the system was soon mainstreamed into the activities of the Ministry of Agriculture, which continues to provide the necessary funding. Today CountrySTAT Cameroon contributes to the National Programme on food Security by providing reliable and comparable national data.

Another example of how CountrySTAT data can be used for evidence-based policy-making is Kenya. The system was implemented in 2009 and Kenya became the first English speaking country of Africa to join the community. Since then, significant progress was made in the collection and validation of relevant national data through CountrySTAT. The data available is also used for decision-making processes by senior management of the agribusiness sector.

In Bhutan, the implementation of CountrySTAT started in 2009. National authorities recognized the advantages of the system and decided to provide the necessary funding to implement the system. Today, its data collection and diffusion is entirely self-managed and data are available on-line, providing a window into national food and agriculture statistics.
Since its launch in October 2009 the CountrySTAT system in Burkina Faso has made significant efforts to provide a reliable one-stop centre for access to national and sub-national statistics on food and agriculture. They have also made considerable progress to harmonize the existing national data in line with FAOSTAT standards, making them easily comparable worldwide.

In Haiti, data from the complete General Agriculture Census has been uploaded to the national CountrySTAT platform and over 290 tables are now available on-line. Moreover, a correspondence table was developed which links the national classification to the international standard classification of commodities. This table allows data comparison among all national CountrySTAT systems around the world.

Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Gambia, Tanzania, and Zambia are only few of many other countries who have significantly improved the quality and availability of their national data through CountrySTAT.
5. Future perspectives

CountrySTAT network in the world is growing both in number and capacity. It aims at working with 26 more countries over the next year. CountrySTAT team in Headquarters continues to provide technical support to countries for developing methodologies, concepts, definitions and classifications to ensure comparability and exchange of data between countries and regional institutions, and between FAO and countries.

Furthermore, CountrySTAT plans to expand its scope by including real time and forecast data relevant to agriculture, and will make use of mobile technologies and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for data collection.

The CountrySTAT homepage provides information about the project and links to the country-owned, national systems.
6. References


A system of integrated agricultural censuses and surveys http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0135e/A0135E00.htm