

USER - PRODUCER WORKSHOP ON FOOD SECURITY DATABASE

NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS (NBS)

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PART ONE – A brief story about the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)

i) INTRODUCTION

In order to formulate the meaningful and manageable development plans whether at village, district, regional or national level, a variety of relevant, accurate, reliable and consistent statistical information is required to work out reasonable and achievable targets.

For effective economic policy, decisions and formulation of sound and realistic rural development programmes, the government needs detailed and reliable statistical information concerning the agricultural resources in the country, the present status, their utilization and potentialities for further development.

The National Bureau of Statistics (formally known as Central Bureau of Statistics) is among many statistical information producers.

The National Bureau of Statistics was established as an Executive Agency within the Planning Commission in 1998. This was according to the Executive Agencies Act of 1997. The National Bureau of Statistics is expected to provide efficient services to the government and to the general public. It is a market-oriented institution, and is to remain the authoritative source of statistical information pertaining to socio- economic conditions in the country.

It is composed of four Directorates, namely:

1. Directorate of Finance, Administration and Marketing
2. Directorate of Social Statistics
3. Directorate of Economic Statistics
4. Directorate of Statistical Operation

Within each Directorate, there are several departments. The Department of Agriculture Statistics which is directly linked to the food security is within the Directorate of Economic Statistics.

Tanzania's economy crucially depends on agriculture for development and growth. The sector contributes about 50 percent to the Gross Domestic Product and it accounts for over 55 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Furthermore, about 85 percent of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood (The Economic Survey, 1998 publication).

Agriculture statistics is one of the several products produced by the National Bureau of Statistics. It is very important in the planning, monitoring, evaluation and measuring the level of agricultural projects implemented by the government, non-government organizations, private institutions and individuals.

Other departments with food security implications are Social and Demographic Statistics which provide information used to calculate “Per Capita Consumption”; and Labour and Price Statistics used to calculate Consumer Price Index, which helps to know the level of inflation. Both departments are within the Directorate of Social Statistics.

In the past, the National Bureau of Statistics did not have a well-defined database. However, recently, The National Bureau of Statistics together with their counterparts from different ministries have developed “Tanzania Social and Economic Database (TSED), its main objective being to facilitate easy access of information within ministries.

ii) Data produced as a by-product of routine operations

- estimate of the sector’s contribution to the national economy which is compiled through the collection of food and cash crop production statistics

iii) Data required to effectively carry out our routine operations

For effective management of the agricultural sector, we need timely, consistent and reliable agricultural data specifically for facilitating planning, policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation and decision-making process.

We also need monthly crop production to compile Semi-annual GDP.

iv) Data gaps

The data is not timely and there are a lot of inconsistencies in the data produced by several different data producers.

It has been very difficult to obtain monthly crop production since all records are kept in annual basis.

Production of crops like bananas, fruits and vegetables is not available.

v) Recommended steps to fill the gaps

- To utilize the limited resources efficiently through coordination among data producers so as to avoid /eliminate duplication and inconsistencies.
- The National Bureau of Statistics and the Regional Agricultural and Livestock Development Officers should come to an agreement on better ways of collecting crop production statistics on a monthly basis.

PART TWO - Statistical Coordination for Food Security

BACKGROUND

Adequate data production processes assessment in Tanzania was undertaken in order to contribute to further development of efficient and sustainable Agricultural Information Systems and Services capable of adequately meeting national data needs for agricultural development. The assessment was about data needs, development of cost-effective and sustainable methodology for agricultural data production.

A number of personnel from several data user institutions including government ministries, government institutions, regional and district officials, private sector operators, non-governmental organizations, academicians, donor community, international organizations and the press held discussions about this. The discussions with officials in these institutions aimed at understanding the nature, functions and activities of each institution; establishing their current and perceived future data requirements; availability and non-availability of required data and their sources; level of data disaggregation, ie. whether at national, regional or at district level and how frequent the data are required; adequacy of available data in terms of relevance, accuracy, completeness, consistency and timeliness; and to appreciate how data are used by the institutions for planning, decision-making, analysis and reporting.

In order to standardize the collection of information from the said user institutions, a schedule was used, and the following were the main findings:

i) Main producers of agricultural data

- The national agricultural statistical system is basically decentralized with a number of data producers who are not fully coordinated.
- Data produced are always conflicting and are not collected in a cost-effective manner.
- There is no one-stop centre for agricultural data since data are scattered among different sources.
- It has been difficult to identify data gaps and other major weaknesses of the data production system.

ii) Main users and uses of agricultural data

- There are two main types of data users – intermediate and end-users
- Users differ in intensity of use, sophistication and data they require.
- Agricultural data are used for a variety of purposes including analysis, planning, decision-making, evaluation and reporting
- Data on their own are not very useful to end-users and have to be transformed into information.

iii) Available data

- Data on agricultural indicators which change rapidly mainly from sample surveys, are available in different institutions.
- Programmes of data production is not fully coordinated, in particular, user-producer and technical coordination require further improvement. Also there is need to coordinate the census of agriculture with that of population.
- Constraints to data production were identified as budgetary problems; shortage of skilled personnel especially in the field of survey designing, programming, data processing, analysis and reporting.

iv) Adequacy of available data

- A lot of available data including data on livestock, crops, post-harvest data, food deficit areas, population under food stress were deemed by users to be inaccurate to varying degrees.
- A number of data sets were deemed not to be consistent through time and between sources. The main causes of the inconsistencies were identified as changes in definitions, methodologies, sample size and lack of producer-producer and technical coordination.
- Data gaps which were identified include data on household food security, fish farming, post-harvest food losses, environment, livestock diseases, forestry resources, food consumption, cost of production, role of women and yield for crops like bananas.
- The available data are not always put to optimal use by data users either because they are not made available in a timely manner, are not in the form required, are not disaggregated to sub-national levels, are not accurate or users lack knowledge of how to effectively use them.

1. FOOD SECURITY DATA

Agricultural data is an important tool for management of the agriculture sector. The sector contributes about 50% to the GDP and accounts for over 55% of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Moreover, about 85% of the population depends on agriculture for their living.

Therefore, effective management of the agriculture sector requires comprehensive, reliable, consistent and timely agricultural data. The data are specifically used for facilitating planning, policy analysis, decision making, monitoring and evaluation.

2. Understanding Food Security

- Means to achieve food security
- State of having adequate food and nutrition
- Food availability and accessibility
- Equitable distribution of food at household and community level

Household Food Security can be defined as “the capacity of households to procure a stable and sustainable basket of adequate food”.

This food must be adequate in terms of quantity and quality to compose a diet to meet the nutritional needs of the household members.

Food security depends on enhanced household food production and self-sufficiency at all levels, crop diversification, changes in food habits which may increase or decrease food security, for example, preference for maize rather than drought-resistant crops, safeguards with respect to seasonality so as to have adequate food throughout the year. With this respect, stronger linkages are needed between agricultural data producers and producers of food.

Producers need greater access to agricultural information on food security at all levels, including knowledge about food requirements and mechanisms to monitor year round at household level, with adequate attention to indigenous knowledge and technology.

3. Official data for agricultural development

In each country, there exists official data which constitute a common information basis for public policy, planning, and decision-making.

It is believed that official data are a public good whose production costs should be met by the government. As a public good, official data should be made available and should be used as much as possible by the society to justify their production which is resource-demanding.

In Tanzania, there are a number of different statistical series which are recognized and used as official data by data users. These include population census data, labour force statistics, cost of living indexes, gross domestic product estimates, industrial statistics, trade, transport, tourism and migration statistics, etc.

What these official data have in common is that they are all produced by one institution, that is, The National Bureau of Statistics.

In the agriculture sector, the scenario is quite different because in the sector, there are many different institutions producing/compiling data that are not always consistent. Users usually decide on which data to use depending primarily on availability of data.

4. Constraints in the existing system

The present state of affairs in the agricultural data production in the country is that there are a lot of constraints which include:

- **crisis of expectation** – The demand for agricultural data is ever increasing. Firstly, there are different users who have different needs and preferences for data as well as different capacities both to appreciate data, and secondly, to put these to optimum use in their work.. There has been a number of data users following the system of the new economic dispensation of liberalized marketing of inputs and produce. These include operators in the private sector. Therefore, there has been an increase in demand for data in terms of quality, quantity and type.
- **Crisis of designation of official data for agricultural development** – With the existence of conflicting data on the agricultural economy from a multiplicity of sources, it has been difficult to designate a particular set of data as official data on the sector.
- **Budget trap** – Resources available for agricultural data production to be able to meet the ever increasing demand for data are so limited that in relation to the functions to be performed, they are getting less. The constraint, therefore, is one where the system is expected to meet the ever increasing demand for more and adequate data with disproportionately less resources.

5. The need for coordination in data production

Coordination in data production is very helpful in many aspects. Firstly, it helps to prevent duplication of effort which in many cases leads to inconsistent data. Secondly, it helps to achieve cost-effectiveness in utilization of scarce resources and thirdly, coordination helps to produce quality data.

The forms in which coordination can be distinguished are:

- coordination among data producers
- coordination between data producers and data users
- technical coordination.

Coordination among data producers relates to production of agricultural data by different producers. This type of coordination is very crucial in avoiding duplicating effects and working at cross-purpose.

Coordination between data producers and users is essential for advancing common understanding of policy issues and related data requirements, setting data priorities, clarifying the objectives for data collection and agreeing on the best methods for collecting data.

Data users need to specify their data needs, the form in which data are required, the detail the data should take (level of disaggregation) and the time frame for data presentation (ie. monthly, quarterly, annually).

Likewise, data producers need to indicate what data are available and their quality, how available data can be accessed, what data are expected to be collected, experienced problems in data production, etc.

Technical coordination aims at ensuring that data from different institutions are consistent or that they are comparable. The coordination is normally achieved through adoption of standardized concepts, definitions and classifications, and adoption of comprehensive work programmes and conceptual frameworks relevant to data collected and compiled as those provided by FAO.

6.Recommendations:

- a) Since there are many producers of agricultural data in the country who are not fully coordinated, the result of this is the existence of conflicting data. Therefore, it is high time efforts are made to coordinate agricultural data producers to produce quality data. This would also enable data collection to be in a cost-effective manner.
- b) In order to promote use of data produced by agricultural data producers, coordination between data producers and data users should be encouraged.

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