Rationale for the minor refinement of the SDG indicator 2.5.2 metadata proposed by FAO

To the attention of the IAEG-SDG

Proposed change: 2.5.2 Proportion of local breeds classified as being at risk~~, not at risk or at unknown level of risk~~ of extinction

In March 2019, FAO submitted a new dataset for this indicator, accompanied by a revised metadata document in tracked changes. In FAO's view, the changes introduced to the metadata, although appearing extensive, merely constitute a "minor refinement" tantamount to a change of unit. This note explains the rationale for these changes and will show that they do not constitute a drastic revision of the methodology.

The previous method of calculating the indicator, with reference to the metadata before 2019, was highly unconventional, and had therefore already been under thorough internal review in FAO during for much of 2018. Essentially, the previous methodology foresaw that the *percentage of breeds at risk of extinction* was not calculated based on the sample of breed of *known risk*, but also of *unknown*.

As a result, the breeds "at risk" were systematically underestimated (the attached technical note provides more details). Evidently, this was not the most sound approach and therefore the decision was taken internally to discontinue it. Instead therefore, the percentage of breeds at risk, which is the essence of SDG indicator 2.5.2, is now calculated based *only on the breeds of known risk status*.

Certainly, the percentage of breeds of "unknown" status remains and important piece of information, that in FAO's view should continue to be computed; however, rather than include it in the denominator, the variable should instead be published as a quality indicator, analogous to the margin of error. In the dataset submitted to UNSD in March, FAO therefore included this information in the footnote accompanying each value. Specifically, the footnote provides the absolute numbers of breeds in different risk categories, from which one is able to derive the unknown value and thus the uncertainty level.

A critical consequence of this change regards the ability to report regional and global aggregates for this indicator. Based on the previous approach, the inclusion of the "unknown" breeds in the denominator resulted in all regions appearing to have sufficient data for the computation of aggregates. By contrast, the new approach where the indicator is computed solely based on the breeds of "known" risk status, effectively means that only very few regions have sufficient data to compute regional aggregates.

Finally, the question also arose as to whether the breeds of "unknown" risk status should be at least factored into the weighting system for calculating regional aggregates. The attached technical note explains the advantages and disadvantages for either approach and why including the unknown breeds was retained in the weighting system.

FAO is fully aware that this entails the downgrading of the indicator from the Tier I and Tier II category, but in the spirit of consistency and integrity, FAO is willing to accept this change, and redouble its capacity development support to countries, allowing more countries to report this indicator. FAO would also like to inform the IAEG-SDG that the proposed minor refinements to the methodology of SDG indicator 2.5.2 have already been communicated to the FAO intergovernmental Commission on Genetic Resources, which oversees the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DADIS).