

UN Statistical System Organizations statement on Goal 2
2nd IAEG-SDG Meeting, Bangkok, 26-28 October 2015

Madame co-chair, esteemed colleagues,

On behalf of the Chief Statisticians of the UN System Statistical Organizations, after having carefully reviewed the responses to the Questionnaire on Indicator Proposals, and with the aim of contributing our expertise to the discussion on **indicators for Goal 2**, we would like to respectfully draw your attention to the following points.

Indicator 2.1.1. Prevalence of undernourishment

Some countries have advanced an alternative proposal to estimate the proportion of population below minimum levels of dietary energy consumption, by using in particular “*direct methods to measure the amount of energy intake*”. This proposal is based on the possibility of collecting the necessary data from individual dietary intake surveys. We believe, however, that this approach would impose a prohibitive burden on countries. Collecting, on a regular basis, individual food consumption and energy requirements data to establish the adequacy of dietary energy intake, with the required precision to inform reliable nutritional assessments at national and subnational levels, *is particularly difficult and extremely costly*. Even in European countries large-scale nutrition assessment surveys are conducted on average once every ten years.

We share the concern that several member countries have raised regarding the importance to provide disaggregated information at subnational level. This is one of the main reasons why we proposed to include two additional indicators to monitor food insecurity, with specific reference to the ability to access food. One is indicator 2.1.2., that a large majority of the members of this group has endorsed, and the other one is the Food Consumption Score.

We take this opportunity to reiterate the utility of the FCS, particularly with reference to issues of subnational data disaggregation. As suggested by some countries, we ask that FCS be included in the list of Grey indicators that will be submitted to the Statistical Commission. This is important considering the difficulties in circulating adequate information and the fact that members may not have had the opportunity to adequately consider this indicator.

Indicator 2.1.2. Prevalence of population with moderate or severe food insecurity, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)

We strongly believe that the FIES is the ideal indicator to monitor in a sustainable and cost-effective way, as well as with the necessary level of detail, the target of universal food access.

We notice that nine countries have explicitly stated that they have no concern with the proposed indicator, while two countries have requested more information on the FIES and one country has requested that the data to inform this indicator *should* be produced by the national statistical system.

This provides us the opportunity to clarify immediately that *this is precisely the objective of our proposal*: we believe that the indicator should be produced, whenever possible, using data collected by Official Statistics Organizations, through national representative surveys that allow monitoring the inequalities within countries. This is already the case for several

countries such as the US, Brazil, Canada, Mexico and Guatemala! In all other countries, FAO is ready to support the inclusion of the FIES into large-scale national surveys. Since the scale is based on 8 simple YES/NO question, applying this method is very easy and can be done at a very limited cost.

We wish to clarify that the collection of FIES data in more than 140 countries in 2014, through a private data collection service provider, has been the necessary step to validate the application of the scale in virtually every country in the world and to establish a global baseline for target 2.1. Having collected data from 146 countries has in fact allowed us to develop the analytic procedures that are necessary to ensure that the measures obtained in different languages, culture, and livelihood conditions could be calibrated against a common standard reference metric, so that indicators would be truly comparable across countries.

This is however just an interim solution proposed by FAO for those countries that do not have yet suitable national data. *For all other countries FAO will use data collected by national statistics offices.*

Indicator 2.3.1. Value of production per labour unit (measured in constant USD), by classes of farming/pastoral/forestry enterprise size.

The target explicitly requires monitoring the productivity and income of small-scale producers. The other components of the target, which refer to the access to land, productive resources and key services, are already monitored by other indicators.

The fact that the indicator does not have yet a sufficient coverage and that we still lack of an internationally agreed definition of small-scale food producers, are not good reasons for not adopting the indicator. On the contrary, this should create the incentives for the intensification of the adoption of an integrated agricultural survey programme in many countries and for the global statistical system under the UNSC to reach a consensus on the definition of small holders.

The inclusion of an additional indicator based on total factor productivity, calculated for the national agricultural sector as a whole, would not be relevant, as we have seen, for a target that calls for improving the agricultural productivity *of small scale food producers.*

Indicator 2.4.1. Percentage of agricultural area under sustainable agricultural practices

We believe that this indicator is the most relevant and best suited to monitor progress towards target 2.4. It is directly linked to the target; it is based on existing methodologies; it has been tested in several countries of all continents and climatic zones; and it will be operationalized in 2016 within the internal reporting system of FAO. We hope therefore that the IAEG will consider moving this indicator to the green group

Concerns have been raised on the definition of agricultural sustainability. Sustainability is in fact a difficult concept, which we all are called to define, operationalize and address in the SDG process. Several tools, however, are available as a basis for the definition of agricultural sustainability. The Sustainable Food and Agriculture Framework, recently developed by FAO, is a good starting point for such work. FAO stands ready to work together with all the partners to identify an internationally agreed definition.

Other indicators have been proposed, such as irrigated areas, nutrient balance or the use of eco-friendly fertilizers. All these parameters have their relevance and can be taken into account as additional indicators. However, we believe that each of them reflects only a little part of the complexity of agriculture sustainability. We think that the proposed indicator is a good compromise between the need of capturing all the main components of sustainability and the need to remain measurable and easily understandable.

Indicator 2.5.1. Ex-situ Crop Collection Enrichment Index

We would like to stress that one indicator is not enough to monitor the conservation of both animal and plant genetic resources. Maintaining biodiversity for animal and plants requires different approaches and involve different measurement tools. For this reason we propose to also include the “Number/percentage of local breeds classified as being at-risk, not-at-risk and unknown-levels of risk of extinction”. The two proposed indicators are already well established and countries are already regularly reporting them to FAO.

The proposal on an alternative indicator of “In-situ conservation of genetic material”, even if attractive, is simply unfeasible. The data collection requirements, in fact, would be prohibitive for most countries.

Indicator 2.a.1. The Agriculture Orientation Index (AOI) for government expenditure

The target calls for increased investment in agriculture, *including through enhanced international cooperation*. Monitoring the ODA to agriculture therefore would not be sufficient. The ODA provides only a small component of the total agricultural investment, which, in certain circumstances, might actually crowd-out national sources of funding. In these circumstances total investment in agriculture may not even grow.

Moreover, the spirit of the target is to increase the accountability of both national governments and international partners. For this reason, the Agriculture Orientation Index (AOI) for government expenditure is proposed as priority indicator, while the ODA to agriculture is proposed as additional indicator.

Indicator 2.c.1. Indicator of (food) Price Anomalies (IPA)

Proper functioning of food commodity markets is reflected in limited price volatility, not necessarily in price stability. Some comments and proposals for alternative indicators, instead, seem to reflect confusion between price *variability* and price *volatility*.

The indicator proposed by FAO consists of a rather simple methodology to measure the frequency of phenomenon of excess volatility, and can be applied, with the necessary parameterizations, to any price series. Alternative methodologies for measuring price volatility can be applied and FAO is ready to discuss with member countries the most suitable approach.