

African Statistics Day 2022

Press release

African Statistics Day is an annual event, celebrated on 18 November, to promote understanding about the importance of statistics in all dimensions of life, including society, the economy and the environment. The theme for 2022 is “Strengthening data systems by modernizing the production and use of agricultural statistics: informing policies with a view to improving resilience in agriculture, nutrition and food security in Africa”. This year’s theme is aligned with the African Union theme, “2022, the Year of Nutrition: strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security on the African continent”, and is intended to be a call to modernize data systems for the production, dissemination and use of agricultural statistics.

The theme for African Statistics Day 2022 was chosen to raise awareness among decision makers, technical and financial partners, data producers and users, including researchers, and the public about the importance of data and statistics in building resilience and ending hunger in Africa.

Continental and global frameworks and initiatives to eliminate hunger through agriculture-led development

The central role of agriculture in providing the African people with food security and resilience to shocks is even more prominent now than before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Existing frameworks at the subnational, national, subregional, regional and global levels all emphasize the crucial role of agriculture in Africa. These frameworks include the national development plans of Member States, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative. As for Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, its aspiration 1 is focused on achieving a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, with Goal 5 of that aspiration centred on modernizing agriculture for increased productivity and production. In addition, Goal 2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is aimed at ending hunger by achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

In 2021 and 2022, at its seventy-sixth session, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 76/166 on the right to food and 76/264 on the state of global food insecurity. In its resolution 76/222 on agriculture development, food security and nutrition, it noted deep concern about the continuing food insecurity and malnutrition experienced by hundreds of millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

Globally, it is projected that nearly 670 million people, or 8 per cent of the world’s population, will face hunger in 2030, the same number as in 2015, the year in which the 2030 Agenda was launched. Despite expectations that the world would emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, exacerbated inequalities continue to prevail within and across countries, owing to unequal patterns of economic recovery and unrecovered income losses among those most affected by the pandemic.¹

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022: Repurposing Food and Agricultural Policies to Make Healthy Diets More Affordable* (Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2022).



Strengthening data systems by modernizing the production and use of agricultural statistics

A better understanding of the challenges and opportunities involved in achieving all the agriculture-related Sustainable Development Goals and their targets requires high-quality data and statistical analysis to inform decision-making and policy design. Although notable efforts have been made towards improving data availability for indicators related to agriculture, nutrition and food security, much remains to be done in prioritizing processes for strengthening and improving existing agricultural statistical systems in Africa.

African national statistical systems play a central role in modernizing data value chain processes, including data generation, dissemination and administration, with a view to attaining the timely production and use of reliable official agricultural statistics, which are critical for evidence-based policymaking. Furthermore, civil society, academia and the private sector all have complementary and supplementary roles to play as significant alternative data producers.

The pandemic severely affected national statistical systems on the continent in various ways, including financially, operationally and regarding their methodological approaches. Moreover, the pandemic revealed the clear need to modernize national statistical systems, developing and adopting alternative methods for agricultural data collection, such as Earth observation and web scraping, and using mobile data, online data and administrative data. This modernization process needs to be strengthened appropriately and sustainably to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

In response to ever-increasing data demands arising from the implementation of both agendas, and of national and subregional development plans, programmes and frameworks, in 2020, the Statistical Commission for Africa commenced the journey of modernizing official statistics by endorsing the formation of the African group on transformation and modernization of official statistics, which will strategically guide and coordinate the work. The implementation of the road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa, 2023–2030, is expected to bring about significant improvements in the efficiency of all data processes for monitoring and reporting on the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.
