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World food and agriculture

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Foreword

Good statistics are needed to monitor the progress of development. The better the data, the better policies can be designed to protect vulnerable populations. And, without good data, it is impossible to evaluate or determine the impact of policies.

There are 867 million chronically undernourished people in the world today. Seventy percent of the world's food insecure live in rural areas, and 60 percent of the world's population rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. The need for quality data on agriculture and food security is as pressing as ever.

Where do people live? Do they have access to land and water? How much formal schooling or training do they receive? How much do countries invest in agricultural innovation? What products do they export or import? How is agriculture affecting their forests, soils and waterways?

Employing data from global statistical providers, including FAO, this publication presents a visual synthesis of the major trends and factors shaping the global food and agricultural landscape and their interplay with broader environmental, social and economic dimensions. In doing so, it strives to serve as a unique reference point on world food and agriculture for policy-makers, donor agencies, researchers and analysts as well as the general public.

The data cycle revolves around three key activities: building the capacity of countries to improve their collection and use of data; collecting data in a timely and efficient manner; and disseminating this information through meaningful products.

Based on key resources, such as FAO flagship publications and others, the FAO Statistical Yearbook is the result of a global collaborative effort among countries, international organizations and resource partners. In addition to FAO's traditional domains – forestry, fisheries, agricultural production, trade, and resources – this edition of the yearbook features two new datasets: greenhouse gas emissions and investment.

This global yearbook is just one of the instruments used to disseminate information to a wider public. Regional statistical yearbooks, which highlight major trends in a particular area of the world, are also available. All of the data can be accessed electronically through the FAOSTAT data platform.

FAO is deeply committed to helping countries strengthen their statistical systems as, for example, collect gender-disaggregated data. FAO and international partners are implementing a Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, to address weaknesses in basic data and information availability in developing countries, as well as emerging data and information needs. This long-term project builds on three major pillars: producing a minimum set of core data and determining national priorities; integrating agricultural statistics into national statistical systems; and fostering the sustainability of agricultural statistics through governance and statistical capacity development.

We will continue to support these three activities – collection, dissemination and capacity building – to improve agriculture and food security statistics, and to advance the fight against hunger and poverty.

José Graziano da Silva
FAO Director-General

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