

A Country Proposal for a Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Georgia

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AA	Association Agreement
CAPI	Computer Aided Personal Interviewing
EA	Enumeration Area
ENPARD	European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development
ESS	European Statistical System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEOSTAT	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GIS	Geographic Information System
GSS	Georgian Statistical System
IdCA	In-depth Country Assessment
IHSN	International Household Survey Network
MENRP	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
NADA	National Data Archive
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
PARIS21	Partnership for Statistics for Development in the 21 st Century
RM	Road Map
SC	Steering Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPARS	Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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1. Introduction

This country proposal sets out a number of discrete activities to support the development and initial implementation of a Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS) for Georgia covering the period from 2016 to 2020. Georgia has been invited to be a pilot country as part of the implementation programme for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the Asia and Pacific Region. The Global Strategy is an international initiative, agreed by the UN Statistical Commission, to improve the quality of agricultural information used in decision-making in all countries of the world. It supports countries in meeting current and emerging data requirements by producing timely and cost-effective national and international statistics. The Strategy has three main pillars: (i) establishing a minimum set of core data required to meet current and emerging needs; (ii) integrating agriculture more effectively into national statistics systems; and (iii) building the capacity to ensure sustainable agricultural statistics systems.

This document accompanies and should be read in conjunction with:

- The In-Depth Country Assessment (IdCA) of the System of Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Georgia; and
- A Road Map (RM) for Preparing a Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics for Georgia.

2. Justification

The case for a comprehensive strategic plan for agricultural statistics in Georgia at this time is very strong. First is the provision of the indicators and statistics series needed to support the implementation of the Government's Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015-2020 as well as to monitor progress and evaluate its impact. The Government places great emphasis on the need for investment in increasing output and productivity in agriculture as well as addressing concerns about rural poverty.

A second important reason is the need to take advantage of the data that were collected in the censuses of population and agriculture that were conducted jointly in 2014. Once all the data have been processed and published in April 2016, they will provide an important baseline as well as a sampling frame for future surveys of households and holdings. In particular, the fact that the two censuses were carried out simultaneously provides the basis for developing integrated sampling frames, making use of the complete geo-referencing of all households and holdings.

The third factor is the signing of the Association Agreement (AA) between the member states of the European Union and Georgia in August 2014. Among many other things, this agreement aims to strengthen the capacity of the national statistical system and progressively align it with the European Statistical System (ESS). This requirement presents substantial challenges to the national statistical system of Georgia, and a strategic approach will be essential.

In support of the AA, a European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) has been put in place. This provides for a five-year programme that runs to March 2018 that aims to reinvigorate the agricultural sector in Georgia with a total budget of €52 million. The programme provides both budget support as well as technical assistance and improving statistics is a core part. Negotiations for the second phase of ENPARD are in progress and are expected to include some conditions specific to agricultural statistics. Coordinating the preparation of SPARS with the ENPARD discussions will help to ensure that the specific conditions focusing on statistics are included in the SPARS.

The fifth supporting factor is that GEOSTAT is already preparing a new strategy for national statistics that will cover the period from 2015 to 2018. With assistance from Statistics Lithuania, GEOSTAT is now embarked on a process to prepare a new strategic plan with a particular focus on aligning processes and outputs with the requirements of the ESS. Preparing the strategy for agricultural statistics at the same time has a number of obvious advantages and will help to ensure that both documents are coordinated and consistent with each other.

Finally, preparing a strategy now will help to ensure that the Georgian system of agricultural and rural statistics is aligned with the reporting requirements that are expected to emerge from the launch of post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015.

3. Activities

The proposal includes support for the preparation of the SPARS over the period from August to December 2015 and a limited number of priority actions that will need to be completed in the calendar year 2016. Beyond this initial time period it is expected that a more detailed action plan and a budget will be set out in the SPARS and included within the implementation plan for the new NSDS.

The initial priorities, therefore, are identified as follows – more detailed information is provided in Section 4.

- **Preparation of the SPARS** – based on the outline set out in the Road Map document, the output will be an agreed and approved strategy document. This will set out the broad goals and objectives for agricultural and rural statistics, a set of strategies that will achieve these, a more detailed action plan for the first one or two years, an overall budget and financing plan and a specific set of proposals to monitor and report on progress.
- **Improving data quality and coverage on the annual agricultural surveys carried out by GEOSTAT** – the focus here is on meeting the needs identified in the IdCA, especially improving the timeliness of the final season estimates of production. This is expected to involve moving from paper-based interviewing to a computer-based system, with on-line data checking and data capture. Another concern is to increase the sample size so as to provide a more detailed geographical analysis of the results. The aim will be to develop an agreed action plan by December 2015, to implement the increased sample size and field test the computer-based system in 2016 and implement the computer-based system in 2017.
- **Developing methodologies for the objective measurement of yields for different crops** – with the assistance of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), MOA is developing methodologies for the objective measurement of the yields of economically important crops. It is anticipated that methods will be developed in 2015 and then used more extensively in 2016. It will be important to integrate this activity with the GEOSTAT annual surveys, to provide better measures of agricultural productivity in different areas of the country.
- **Documenting and archiving data from recent surveys and censuses** – the objective here is to make sure that data from past surveys and censuses, starting with the 2014 population and agricultural censuses, are properly documented and archived and that anonymised data sets can be made available to users outside GEOSTAT for research and further analysis. The aim will be to establish a national data archive, managed by GEOSTAT, in line with international standards and to make sure that the census data are accessible for research and analysis by December 2016. Technical and financial support for this project will be provided by PARIS21 and the International Household Survey Network (IHSN).
- **Identifying data needs and priority indicators for rural development** – the Government is committed to developing a rural development strategy in 2016 and the purpose of this activity is to provide statistical

inputs to this process to help identify data needs and preliminary indicators that can be used to monitor progress and outcomes.

Timetable and Budget

Activity	2015					2016												Budget (US\$)
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Nov	Dec		
Prepare and approve SPARS	■	■	■	■	■												\$52,405	
Improve coverage and quality of agricultural surveys	■	■	■	■	■				■	■	■	■	■				\$45,200	
Developing methodologies for and implementing yield surveys	■	■											■	■	■		USDA	
Documenting and archiving micro-data		■	■												■		PARIS21	
Data needs for rural development											■	■	■	■	■		\$30,200	

4. Concept Notes for the Proposed Projects

4.1. Preparation of the SPARS

Background

Georgia has been invited by FAO to be a pilot country as part of the implementation programme for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the Asia and Pacific Region. This will involve as a first stage the preparation of a strategic plan to improve agricultural and rural statistics in the country over a five-year period from January 2016 to December 2020. It is proposed that the process of preparing the SPARS in Georgia will follow the guidelines prepared by FAO, with some modifications to take into account the special situation of the country and the need to coordinate closely with other related processes.

Rationale

The case for a comprehensive strategic plan for agricultural and rural statistics (SPARS) in Georgia at this time is very strong. In particular the plan will feed into and coordinate with the following.

- Implementation of the Government's Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015- 2020.
- Use of the 2014 census of population and agriculture for improving current agricultural and rural statistics.
- The further development of the national statistical system in line with the 2014 Association Agreement with the European Union and the commitment to ensure that national statistics on Georgia and aligned with the requirements of the ESS.
- The implementation of the ENPARD programme and negotiations for the second phase, which are expected to include some conditions specific to agricultural statistics.
- The development of a new national strategy for the development of statistics in Georgia, which will be launched early in 2016.
- The potential reporting requirements that will be placed on Georgia when the new SDGs are launched in September 2015.

There is strong support for the development of a SPARS in Georgia, from the Government and a commitment from the key agencies, including GEOSTAT and MOA to lead the process.

Framework

The impact of this component will be to improve the use of agricultural and rural statistics in Georgia to design and deliver more effective policies and programmes and to monitor and evaluate their effects.

The outcome will be strengthened capacity on key agencies to collect, compile and disseminate official statistics on different aspects of the agricultural and rural economy in the country and improved availability of better quality statistics.

The output will be an agreed and formally approved strategic plan to guide the development of agricultural and rural statistics over the period from 2016 to 2020. The plan will also guide investment in capacity building, infrastructure and statistical operations.

The output from the project will be sustainable, provided that there is continued commitment from the Government and development partners to implement the plan.

No major risks are foreseen.

Management and implementation

The preparation of SPARS will be led and managed by GEOSTAT with inputs from a number of other agencies including MOA and MENRP. It will start in August 2015 and a draft plan will be completed by mid-December 2015. A small and flexible working group will be established, led by the head of the Agricultural and Environment Statistics Division of GEOSTAT. This group will include specialists from MOA, especially the Policy Analysis Department and staff from MENRP.

To provide supervision and overall guidance to the preparation process it is also proposed to establish a small Steering Committee of senior level decision makers that will meet once every two or three weeks as required. This group will include senior managers from GEOSTAT, participation from MOA and MENRP at the level of Deputy Ministers and representatives from some development partners.

Activities will include an extensive period of consultation with stakeholders, through public meetings, workshops, interviews and an on-line consultation process.

The proposed work plan is as follows.

Activity	Responsibility	Target Date for Completion
Roadmap agreed and resources identified	FAO, GEOSTAT	14 August 2015
Technical Group and Steering Committee established	GEOSTAT and local consultant	14 August 2015
Consultation process	Technical Group and consultants	2 October 2015
Goals and targets agreed	Technical Group and consultants	30 October 2015
Action plan drafted	Technical Group and consultants	13 November 2015
Draft SPARS document circulated for comments	Technical Group and consultants	27 November 2015
Final draft presented	GEOSTAT	15 December 2015

The GEOSTAT led team will be supported by some external technical assistance, including both an international and a national expert on strategic planning. Other input to SPARS will include a consultation on priorities for upgrading the annual agricultural survey provided by a national consultant, and a separate consultation on the development of a micro-data archive with no additional costs required.

A draft budget for this project is as follows.

Item	Estimated Cost (USD)
International technical assistance (fees, fares, per diems)	\$28,200
National consultants	\$12,500
Consultation costs (workshops, interpretation etc)	\$9,705
Other costs (publications, translation etc)	\$2,000
Total cost	\$52,405

Oversight, monitoring and reporting

The FAO Asia-Pacific Regional Office will provide technical support. At least one backstopping mission will be undertaken to discuss the project's results and the way forward. The FAO Representative in Georgia will provide operational support for the project. The consultants in consultation with the Regional Office will prepare the necessary project reports.

4.2. Improving the annual agricultural surveys

Background

Quarterly sample surveys of agricultural holdings, carried out by GEOSTAT, are the main source of data for current agricultural statistics in Georgia. Each round of the survey covers one reference year and consists of 5 interviews. The Agriculture and Environment Statistics Division of GEOSTAT (AESD) is responsible for the surveys. The most recent complete set of results, relating to 2014, was published in June, 2015.

The statistics produced from the survey are considered reliable and the data quality is acceptable in general. There are a number of concerns reported by users in the IdCA, however and the most important are as follows.

- The timeliness of statistics is a concern, with preliminary annual data published in April and the final data in June. Many data users complain that these data are not available in time to be of use for the next planting season. Improved timeliness is also a requirement of the ESS.
- Detailed regional and municipal data are not available. GEOSTAT is committed to updating the sampling frame making use of the results from the 2014 agricultural census, but there will also be a need to increase the sample size from the current 5,000 holdings, if more detailed data are to be produced.

Rationale

As the Government's strategy for the agricultural sector is rolled out it will be important to ensure that the main sources of data on current production of both crops and livestock products are fit for purpose. While the reliability of the data produced at present is thought to be reliable, users do have major concerns about both the level of coverage and the timeliness. The purpose of this project, therefore, is to develop reliable methodologies that will meet the needs of users.

Framework

The impact of this project is to support the achievement of the Government's strategic goals for the agriculture sector.

The outcome will be the use of the data on crop and livestock production to increase productivity and help direct investment.

The output will be the survey reports, with regional and municipality level results published after four months of the end of the previous agricultural season.

Sustainability will be ensured through the development of a reliable survey methodology, staff training and continued quality control.

No major risks are envisaged.

Management and implementation

The project will be undertaken by GEOSTAT working in close collaboration with the Policy Analysis Department of MOA.

An initial approach will be developed, as part of the SPARS process, through a process of consultation with international survey experts. By the end of 2015 the increased sample will be drawn and in 2016 the increased sample size will be implemented. It is anticipated that improving the timeliness of the survey data will involve moving from a paper-based data collection process to the use of hand-held computing devices and a Computer Aided Personal Interviewing (CAPI) approach. During 2016 field testing of the CAPI approach will be carried out. The field tests will include procuring some tablet computers, the development of software, training of staff and then their use in field conditions.

The proposed timetable for implementation is as follows.

Activity	Responsibility	Target Date for Completion
Initial consultation on the best approaches	FAO, GEOSTAT	31 October 2015
Proposals incorporated in SPARS and approved	GEOSTAT and consultants	15 December 2015
Procurement of 20 tablet computers for testing	GEOSTAT and FAO	29 February 2016
Sampling frame developed	GEOSTAT	31 October 2015
CAPI software developed	GEOSTAT and consultants	30 June 2016
Field tests completed	GEOSTAT and consultants	31 October 2016
Field tests evaluated and proposal developed for 2017	GEOSTAT and consultants	15 December 2016

Staff costs will be met by the Government; additional, donor-funded inputs will be needed as follows.

- Procurement of up to 20 tablet computers
- The development of software applications
- International technical assistance

An outline budget is proposed as follows.

Item	Estimated Cost (USD)
International technical assistance (fees, fares, per diems)	\$28,200
Purchase of 20 tablet computers	\$5,000
Preparation of software	\$10,000
Other costs (documents, translation etc)	\$2,000
Total cost	\$45,200

Oversight, monitoring and reporting

The FAO Asia-Pacific Regional Office will provide technical support. At least one backstopping mission will be undertaken to discuss the project's results and the way forward. The FAO Representative in Georgia will provide operational support for the project. The consultant in consultation with the Regional Office will prepare the necessary project reports.

4.3. Developing methodologies for yield surveys

Background

The US Department of Agriculture has been providing support to the development of agricultural statistics in Georgia for a number of years now. More recently they have been working with the recently established Policy and Analysis Department of MOA focusing especially on the use of data, including data from the GEOSTAT annual surveys of agriculture. They have also been helping the Department develop new techniques for measuring crop yields especially for economically important products. In 2015 a number of trials have been conducted to develop robust methods for measuring the yields of apples citrus, maize and wheat. In 2016 it is hoped that these techniques could be used in the field, while objective measurements will be developed for other crops including hazelnuts, nectarines, peaches and potatoes.

Rationale

The need to provide robust and reliable measures of yields is clear. The data are important to monitor trends in production and productivity and will be key indicators for the Government's strategy for the sector. They will also provide important data for farmers and for private sector businesses involved in crop purchasing, processing and distribution.

Framework

The impact of this project will be to support the implementation of the Government's strategy for agriculture and efforts to increase production, farmers' incomes and exports.

The outcome will be greater use of the data by the Ministry of Agriculture and other agencies to understand and monitor improvements in productivity and the need for investment in crop production in different areas of the country.

The output will be a data series documenting average yields for different crops in different regions.

The activities outlined here will be sustained by MOA, working in conjunction with GEOSTAT. It will be important to develop mechanisms for the effective sharing of data between the two agencies, but still maintaining the confidentiality of data about individual holders and holdings.

No major risks are identified.

Management and implementation

The project will be implemented by the MOA with technical support and advice from USDA. MOA will meet the costs of their staff from the budget.

The proposed timetable for activities is as follows.

Activity	Responsibility	Target Date for Completion
Methods for yield measurement of apples, citrus, maize and wheat evaluated and agreed	USDA MOA	31 October 2015
Methods for other crops tested	USDA and MOA	30 September 2016
Yield measurements for apples, citrus, maize and wheat completed	Technical Group and consultants	31 October 2016
Methods for other crops agreed	Technical Group and consultants	31 October 2016

Oversight, monitoring and reporting

The Ministry and USDA will supervise the activities and GEOSTAT will maintain a watching brief over data quality.

4.4. Documenting and archiving micro-data

Background

In 2012, GEOSTAT received some technical advice and training from PARIS21 on ways to document and archive the metadata and data from recent surveys and censuses and then to make this information available to users through a National Data Archive (NADA). For a number of reasons, it was not possible to proceed further with these proposals at the time, but there is now considerable interest in putting these ideas into practice, starting with the data from the 2014 population and agricultural censuses.

Rationale

Documenting and archiving the data from surveys and censuses as well as information about how the data were collected and processed – the metadata – is important to preserve the information for the future as well as making it available for further research and analysis. The IHSN, implemented by the World Bank and PARIS21, has developed a number of tools and processes to do this in line with international standards. They are also able to provide advice and tools to make sure that where micro-data are made available to analysts and researchers, the confidentiality of individual results – required by law – is protected. Many countries have now used these tools and have established NADAs, which have helped to make more data available and increase the level of use.

Framework

The impact of this project will be the development of more effective policies and programmes, based on research and analysis using data from past surveys and censuses.

The outcome will be the better use of data collected through different censuses and surveys, including the 2014 censuses of population and agriculture.

The output will be the establishment of a national data archive for Georgia together with procedures and policies to provide access to micro-data to researchers and analysts, while ensuring the confidentiality of data about individuals.

GEOSTAT will maintain the NADA and will ensure that it continues to document new surveys and censuses and to add them to the archive as they are completed.

There are no major risks, provided appropriate policies and procedures are in place to protect data confidentiality.

Management and implementation

The project will be implemented by GEOSTAT with technical advice and support from PARIS21. No additional resources or budget will be required.

The proposed timetable for implementation is as follows.

Activity	Responsibility	Target Date for Completion
Initial workshop on establishing a NADA	GEOSTAT and PARIS21	31 October 2015
Documentation of 2014 censuses of population and agriculture	GEOSTAT and PARIS21	30 October 2016
Policies and procedures for data access developed and approved	GEOSTAT and PARIS21	31 October 2016
NADA operational	GEOSTAT	31 December 2016

Oversight, monitoring and reporting

The project will be supervised by the GEOSTAT Board, with technical support as needed from PARIS21 and IHSN.

4.5. Data needs for rural development

Background

The Government is in the process of developing a National Rural Development Strategy and an associated Action Plan and it is anticipated that approval of both of these will be a condition for the release of the first tranche of the second ENPARD budget support programme. As the strategy is developed it will be important for the Georgian Statistical System (GSS) to be involved, in helping to identify suitable indicators for monitoring progress and also in identifying new data sources.

Rationale

The need to address rural poverty and to put in place a comprehensive rural development strategy for Georgia is recognised by the Government. The GSS will need to respond to this and will need to participate in discussions about what indicators are needed, what data sources are already in place and what baseline data are available. This project will support this process.

Framework

The impact of the project will be to improve the well being of rural people and reduce poverty among the rural population by supporting the implementation of the Government's national rural development strategy.

The outcome will be better monitoring of the situation facing the rural population of the country and more effective use of data to analyse policy options for poverty reduction.

The output will be the identification of indicators of rural development and well-being and the specification of new data sources.

Sustainability of the project will be achieved through the implementation process for the rural development strategy.

No major risks are identified.

Management and implementation

The project will be implemented by MoA with some technical assistance from GEOSTAT and FAO. It will be carried out in 2016 as the rural development strategy is developed.

The proposed timetable for implementation is as follows, some changes may be required depending on the strategy preparation process itself.

Activity	Responsibility	Target Date for Completion
Initial input by the consultant	MoA and consultant	31 March 2016
Review of recommendations and proposals	MoA, GEOSTAT and FAO	30 June 2016
Second input and finalization of recommendations	MoA, GEOSTAT and consultant	31 October 2016

GEOSTAT will meet the costs of its staff. There will be a need for some technical assistance, potentially in two separate visits and the proposed budget for implementation is as follows.

Item	Estimated Cost (USD)
International technical assistance (fees, fares, per diems)	\$28,200
Other costs (documents, translation etc)	\$2,000
Total cost	\$30,200

Oversight, monitoring and reporting

The FAO Asia-Pacific Regional Office will provide technical support. At least one backstopping mission will be undertaken to discuss the project's results and the way forward. The FAO Representative in Georgia will provide operational support for the project. The consultant in consultation with the Regional Office will prepare the necessary project reports.