

Strengthening Capacity to Monitor and Evaluate Agricultural and Rural Development Programs – Measuring Results in Less-Than-Ideal Conditions

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Abstract: Building the capacity to measure results and to use that knowledge to learn what works and what doesn't, or how to make things work better is not an easy task, and requires the existence of a strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity backed up by an effective statistical system capable of generating timely and relevant development indicators.

FAO and the World Bank have joined together to support the preparation of a sourcebook for countries needing help with establishing or strengthening monitoring and evaluation capacity. A draft document, Selecting Monitorable Indicators for Agricultural and Rural Development Programs - Measuring Results in less-than-ideal Conditions, was prepared in 2006 and the methodology and the indicators were validated in five countries. A final version of the Sourcebook, incorporating the lessons learned from the country experiences, is due for dissemination by the end of this year.

The sourcebook is intended to assist countries to strengthen their capacity to monitor agricultural and rural development programs and to measure results. It should serve as a Handbook for development practitioners working in Agricultural and Rural Development (ARD) and provide them with certain basic tools to help with the selection and use of core indicators for monitoring and evaluating projects and programs. It focuses on particularly the measurement of results (outcomes and impact). At this level indicators can be quite hard to define since the underlying data are often not available. The Sourcebook suggests ways or simplifying the process for instance by using, where possible, a "service delivery" approach.

The sourcebook also addresses supply-side issues and the need for building up capacity of the national statistical systems. Various statistical instruments are reviewed, and a menu of indicators that can be used for monitoring and evaluating agricultural and rural development programs is also included.