

Agricultural Statistics: Who Should be in Charge - the National Institute of Statistics or the Ministry of Agriculture?

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Abstract: Agricultural Statistics are indispensable in designing development policies in the agricultural sector and the national economy in general. They constitute a sub-system within the National System of Statistics (NSS). The NSS operates on the basis of consultation and coordination and mainly seeks to harmonize concepts, definitions, methods, indexes and nomenclatures. In general, the NSS is organized in two distinct forms: centralization, practiced by some developed countries where the National Institutes are responsible for producing all public statistics; and decentralization whereby public statistics are produced by more than one organization.

In France, for instance, the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE) is the main and most renowned statistic institute, although there are departments in ministries in charge of producing statistics at the ministerial level in their respective fields of activities. A sound coordination of activities is carried out by the National Council of Statistical Information (Conseil national de l'information statistique).

In Africa, and more especially in French-speaking African countries, the system applied is decentralization but it is poorly coordinated. The national system of agricultural statistics in Africa as a whole suffers from a sheer lack of identity and appropriation. Whereas National Institutes of Statistics are generally responsible for all official statistics, agricultural statistics are usually under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock which has local services in all administrative constituencies across the country. Moreover, there is little collaboration between services in charge of agricultural statistics and the National Institute of Statistics (NIS).

This paper discusses who should be in charge and makes the case for a clear-cut description of responsibilities in the production of statistics, as well as the promotion of partnership between NIS and agricultural statistics services. If adopted these measures will certainly help break this isolation and improve the production of agricultural statistics.