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# COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

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### PROGRESS REPORT ON THE AGRICULTURAL MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEM (AMIS)

*This report summarizes progress in the implementation of the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) and presents undertaken activities between February 2013 and February 2014. It is based on a longer report that was prepared for the third meeting of the AMIS Rapid Response Forum in March 2014. More recent updates on AMIS activities can be found online on the meeting pages of the Global Food Market Information Group (<http://www.amis-outlook.org/amis-events>), for which the Secretariat prepares six-monthly progress reports. A new report will be released in October 2014.*

#### Executive Summary

Over the reporting period, the AMIS Secretariat continued its efforts to finalize the compilation of historical crop balances and support countries in the submission of forecast information. This included harmonizing methodologies, integrating national statistics into the AMIS database, and setting up improved online services for the submission and validation of crop balances. Using these statistics and other resources, the “AMIS Market Monitor” has evolved into a rich source of market information, which now also features analysis from the GEOGLAM group. In the area of indicators, the Secretariat consolidated the database of market drivers, for example, by expanding the set of variables and automating their update. As for policy indicators, a historical database has been constructed and is currently being modified for integration into a web application. Important progress has also been achieved on research and capacity building projects operated by AMIS. For example: country case studies have investigated methodologies for improved feed estimation and analyzed price transmission from global benchmarks to farm gate; follow-up research on food-energy linkages explored possible biofuel indicators; and a global scoping report compiled current knowledge on stocks estimation. In addition, activities in the five target countries receiving capacity development – Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, the Philippines and Thailand – are gradually commencing. In order to promote dialogue and policy coordination among participating countries, the AMIS Secretariat continued the regular cycle of technical and policy meetings with the Global Food Market Information Group and the Rapid Response Forum, respectively. Finally, the AMIS Secretariat consolidated its funding situation, with some resource partners now also providing support through a newly implemented financing mechanism: the AMIS Multi Donor Trust Fund.

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page;  
a FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications.  
Other documents can be consulted at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)*



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## Background

1. Established in 2011 at the request of the G20, the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) is an inter-Agency Platform to enhance food market transparency and promote the coordination of policy and action in response to market uncertainty. The initiative compiles relevant market and policy information to effectively inform AMIS participating countries<sup>1</sup> and other stakeholders of the market situation and outlook. To the same end, AMIS is engaged in research activities to better understand market developments and identify meaningful indicators to monitor market and policy conditions. Finally, AMIS attempts to detect knowledge gaps and technical needs in participating countries to gradually address them through targeted interventions. AMIS disseminates its information and analysis through multiple channels, including web and print media, and promotes dialogue and policy coordination through regular meetings with participating countries.

### I. Statistics, data and indicators

2. Good progress has been achieved throughout the reporting period as regards the collection of historical supply and demand balances for the covered crops – wheat, maize, rice and soybeans. Starting in July 2013, countries have also been requested to regularly provide forecasts for the next marketing season (e.g. 2013/14), along with information about the methodologies they use to build these forecasts. Progress has been relatively slow, with 16 countries having sent their forecasts and only six having shared information on underlying methodologies.

3. All national crop balances, that have been reviewed by the AMIS Secretariat, are made accessible online and can be compared with data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Grains Council (IGC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Such comparison illustrates that differences between the various data sources are small if the information originates from official sources, such as production and trade numbers. Conversely, differences are much larger in cases where no official data are available, namely data on domestic utilization and stocks.

4. The AMIS website also provides selected market indicators relevant for AMIS crops. Users can choose from a variety of variables, including stocks-to-use ratios, energy prices and ocean freights, which can be visualized and downloaded for further analysis. In addition, the Secretariat started developing a policy indicators database, which contains historical information on six types of policy measures: biofuel policies; export restrictions; export subsidies; import tariffs; tariff quotas; and in-quota tariffs.

### II. Research

5. The AMIS Secretariat has been engaged in a range of research activities, including:

- a review of existing methodologies for the estimation of **feed utilization**;
- country-case studies to better understand **price transmission** from global benchmarks to farm-gate;
- follow-up research on **energy-food linkages**;
- research on **stocks estimation**.

6. A main component of the **feed project** has consisted in the preparation of country case studies to assess cereal use for animal feed. Feed utilization is a largely unknown component in crop supply

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<sup>1</sup> AMIS participating countries include G20 members plus Spain as well as seven invited countries: Egypt, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, the Philippines, Thailand, Ukraine, and Viet Nam.

and demand balances, so improved methodologies to estimate these numbers are of great relevance for AMIS. Following an online survey with livestock experts around the world, studies have been conducted in China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, which have already helped improve a global feed model of FAO's Statistics Division.

7. The AMIS Secretariat also commissioned a study to review **price transmission** from global benchmarks such as the Chicago Mercantile Exchange to farm-gate. Focusing on six AMIS countries (Argentina, Brazil, China, South Africa, Ukraine and the United States), the study provides insights into: the extent to which prices of local farmers follow global benchmarks; the components along the supply chain that facilitate or impede the transmission of prices; and the overall relevance of futures market prices to producer price realization.

8. Continuing its analysis of **energy-food linkages**, a set of indicators have been identified together with USDA to monitor the profitability of ethanol production from maize, which may impact on prices and the availability of maize for more traditional uses such as food and feed. Keeping a close watch on the potential drivers of ethanol production is, therefore, of key importance for AMIS, and will continue being a focus of the Secretariat's work in 2014.

9. Finally, the AMIS Secretariat commissioned a scoping report to examine current and best practices in **estimating stocks positions** and to develop from that review a set of guidelines to help countries improve their methodologies. The report emphasizes the desirability of estimating stocks using both commercial and on-farm surveys, conducted separately on an annual or seasonal basis.

### III. Capacity development

10. AMIS is currently implementing two capacity development projects: one, financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to strengthen agricultural market information systems in Bangladesh, India and Nigeria, through improved methods and digital innovations; and a second project, financed by the Government of Japan, to improve rice statistics in the Philippines and Thailand.

11. Activities in the Gates-financed project have focused on finalizing the endorsement of target countries, recruiting the project team and preparing future field work. The main focus of the Japan-financed project has been on analyzing national data systems so that project interventions can be tailored to local needs. In this context, status reports have been prepared for each target country, in collaboration with national counterparts in the Ministry of Agriculture and National Statistics Offices.

### IV. Information dissemination

12. Since its introduction in September 2012, the "AMIS Market Monitor" has provided a regular overview of the current market situation and outlook. Apart from presenting supply and demand information, prices and policy developments related to the AMIS crops, the Monitor now also features a contribution from GEOGLAM – the GEO Global Agricultural Monitoring initiative launched by the G20. GEOGLAM provides regular updates on the growing conditions of AMIS crops in the world's major producing regions, using satellite imagery, ground observations, and meteorological data. This information has proved a valuable supplement to the Monitor's existing analysis, for example by highlighting crop vegetative growth anomalies.

### V. Policy dialogue

13. In order to promote dialogue and policy coordination among participating countries, the AMIS Secretariat continued the regular cycle of technical and policy meetings.

14. Decision-making officials got together at the World Bank in Washington, DC, for the second session of the AMIS Rapid Response Forum on 20 February 2013.

15. As for technical meetings, representatives of the Global Food Market Information Group gathered for the first time outside of FAO in a meeting hosted by the OECD in Paris on 23-24 April 2013. Participants shared experiences in establishing supply and demand balances, discussed selected indicators to be monitored on the AMIS website, and assessed various options for improved crop forecasting. The meeting also marked the beginning of a successful collaboration with GEOGLAM, which was invited to develop with the AMIS Secretariat a monthly contribution to assess the growing conditions of AMIS crops. The outcome of this work – the so-called “crop monitor” – was presented during the subsequent meeting of the Information Group, which was held on 1-2 October 2013, in FAO headquarters. The meeting also featured a presentation of the policy database as well as discussions with regional market information systems for possible collaboration with AMIS.





