

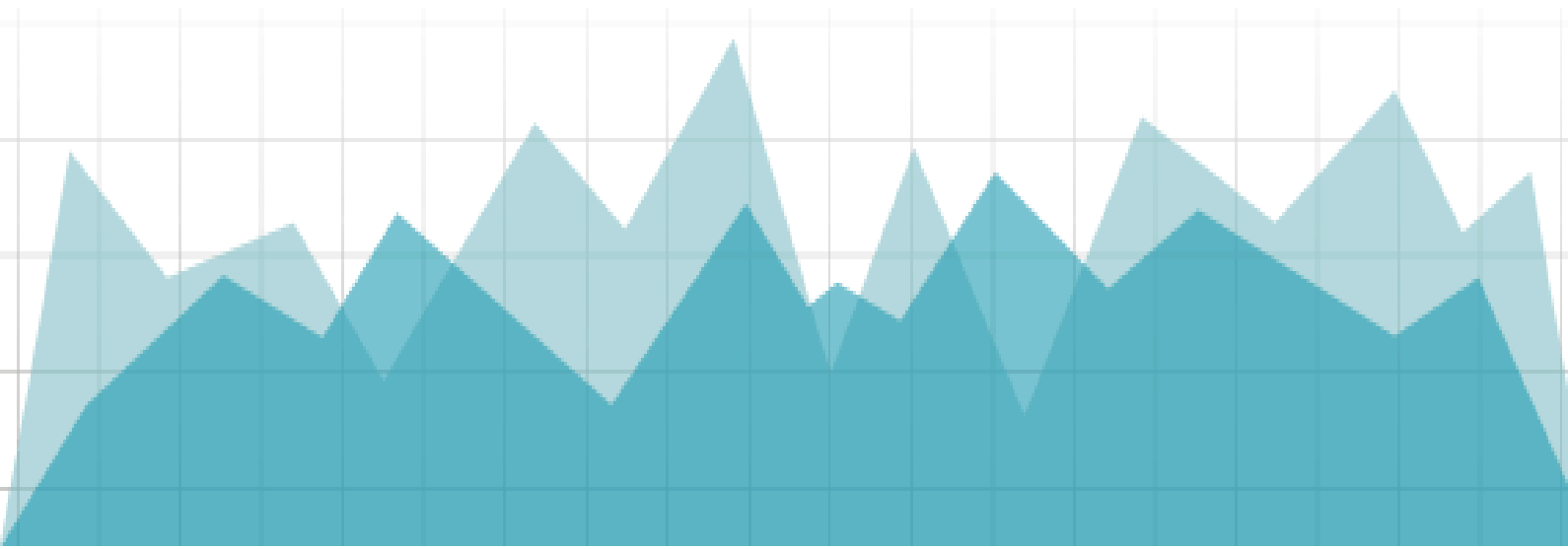


Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

# Statistical Standard Series

Use of external data sources

Endorsed by the Inter-Departmental Working Group  
Technical Task Force on Statistics  
15 November 2019





In line with FAO's commitment to reduce the response burden on data providers, this document recommends technical units to use data already collected by other international organizations instead of gathering the same data from national sources.

The document identifies the statistical domains and corresponding agencies to be used as reference external data sources at FAO corporate level, both as input for indicators and models and as output for final dissemination. The document also describes the internal arrangements for ensuring the consistency of the external data used by the different FAO technical units.

*The document is endorsed as FAO standard by the Inter-Departmental Working Group Technical Task Force on Statistics on 15 November 2019.*

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## 1. General recommendations

FAO is committed to reduce the response burden of data providers (Principle 8 in the FAO Statistics Quality Assurance Framework, SQAF) and to avoid any duplication in the collection of country data, unless absolutely necessary for completely fulfilling the Organization's mandate on food and agriculture statistics.

One way to implement this principle is by relinquishing any activity aimed at gathering national data already collected by other international organizations and falling under their mandate. This standard identifies data sources and their custodian agencies for which this principle must be applied within FAO.

In most cases, the responsibility for collecting and compiling data and indicators in specific statistical domains is well established within the global statistical system. More recently, the process for the selection of the indicators to monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has also entailed the identification for each indicator of a dedicated custodian agency responsible for leading all the international statistical activities aimed at supporting its production, dissemination and reporting on a global scale.

An important associated principle is that the data collected by the designated agency shall be shared in a timely manner and at no cost with the other international organizations. FAO will therefore gather data under the mandate of other international organizations directly from them, possibly by using automatic data transmission standards and tools. In particular, this document identifies the statistical domains and corresponding Agencies that should be used as reference external data sources in compiling FAO statistical outputs. The identified data sources are reported in Annex 1.

Internally, one FAO technical unit will be responsible for gathering the data from the international organization, storing them in an accessible database and regularly updating them. In addition, effective and efficient data sharing arrangements with the other FAO technical units will be established to facilitate easy and timely access to the information contained in the external databases.

## 2. Technical recommendations

- 1) Before using external sources, **metadata and additional documentation should be consulted to avoid incorrect use of the data.**
- 2) When two or more alternative external data sources on the same statistical domain are available, **only the source(s) listed in Annex 1 of this document should be used by FAO technical units.**
- 3) If a data source does not publish data at the required level of disaggregation, before using alternative data sources (not listed in Annex 1), **contacts with data providers should be established to assess whether data with the required disaggregation are available** (even if not published) **and can be obtained.**
- 4) **The use of external data in the compilation of a FAO statistical product should be communicated to data users in the methodological documents and metadata provided with this product.**
- 5) **Any change/correction to the list of external data sources should be documented with a revised annex to this document.**

### 3. Governance procedures

- 1) **The FAO unit designated as responsible for a specific external data source is expected to:**
  - **Develop data acquisition agreements** with data providers;
  - **Act as the focal point for all communications** between FAO and the data provider;
  - **Ensure regular updates of FAO external data** according to an agreed calendar;
  - **Document any treatment carried out on the data received for IT or statistical purposes** (re-coding, conversions of measurement units, etc.) and make the documentation available to users;
  - **Support internal users in accessing and using external data** as well as the documentation, metadata, auxiliary information needed to fully exploit the data.
- 2) **The calendar of the external data updates should be made publicly available within FAO.** The Office of Chief Statistician will coordinate the preparation of this calendar twice a year with the input of the responsible units.
- 3) **Errors discovered in the data received from an external source should be immediately communicated to the FAO unit responsible for this particular external data source** which, in turn, if needed, will contact the providing agency for feedback or clarifications.
- 4) **Technical units or data users should communicate to the Office of Chief Statistician any new opportunities of acquiring and using already existing external data sources.** The Office of Chief Statistician, in collaboration with the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Statistics, will assess the relevance of these data for a particular data domain and will decide on the designation of the most suitable technical units to become responsible for the acquisition of the new external data sources.
- 5) **The Office of Chief Statistician will also monitor stakeholders' compliance to this standard through its quality assurance unit** and provide support in the elaboration and review of data acquisition agreement.

## Annexes

### Annex 1: List of external data sources

Domain	Source	FAO unit responsible	FAO database	Update calendar
<b>Population</b>	United Nations Population Division (UNDP)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/OA">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/OA</a>	Every two years (in July of odd years)
<b>Macro indicators (gross domestic product and national account aggregates)</b>	United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/MK">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/MK</a>	Annually (in March)
<b>Capital stock</b>	United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/CS">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/CS</a>	Annually (in August)
<b>Deflators</b>	United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/PD">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/PD</a>	Annually (in March)
<b>Foreign direct investment</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) International Trade Centre (INTRACEN) Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FDI">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FDI</a>	Annually (in October)
<b>Standard local currency exchange rates</b>	United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) International Monetary Fund (IMF) UN operational exchange rates	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/PE">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/PE</a>	Annually (in April)
<b>Consumer priceindex and Foodconsumer priceindex</b>	International Monetary Fund (IMF) Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/CP">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/CP</a>	Quarterly (in March, June, September and December)



Domain	Source	FAO unit responsible	FAO database	Update calendar
<b>Trade</b>	United Nations Statistical Division (Comtrade)  Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TP">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TP</a>  <a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TA">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TA</a>  <a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TM">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TM</a>  <a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TI">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TI</a>  <a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/RFN">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/RFN</a>  <a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/RFB">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/RFB</a>  <a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/RT">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/RT</a>	Quarterly (in March, June, September and December)
<b>Employment</b>	International Labour Organization (ILO)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/OE">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/OE</a>	Annually (in January)
<b>Education</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/HS">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/HS</a>	
<b>Nutrition</b>	World Health Organization (WHO)  United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS</a>	Annually (in July)
<b>Development flows to agriculture/ Official Development Assistance</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Creditor Reporting System (Oecd-CRS)	Statistics Division (ESS)	<a href="http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/EA">http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/EA</a>	Annually (in April)

## Annex 2: Document history (for internal purposes)

Revision version	Revision date	Author	Description of changes/status
1	14/2/2019	Marcello D’Orazio	Initial draft
2	19/3/2019	Pietro Gennari Marcello D’Orazio Valerie Bizier Yakob Seid	Revised draft incorporating OCS comments
3	11/11/2019	Valerie Bizier	Modification of Annex 1 based on ESS inputs
	15/11/2019		Endorsed by IDWG-TTF