

PROJECT GCP/GLO/ 208/BMG

« CountrySTAT FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA »



PANORAMA REPORT II

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Prepared

By

Benjamin BISA BANDA

National Consultant in Information System and Agricultural Statistics

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ACRONYMS

APES	Agriculture Production Estimates Survey
MoAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
NSO	National Statistical Office
NACAL	National Census of Agriculture and Livestock
NSSA	National Sample Survey of Agriculture
NSS	National Statistical System
FEWSNET	Famine and Early Warning Systems Network
PHC	Population and Housing Census
HS	Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System
MRA	Malawi Revenue Authority
ESCOM	Electricity Supply Commission of Malawi
STAM	Seed Traders Association of Malawi
OPC	Office of President and Cabinet
TCC	Tobacco Control Commission

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This report draws its background from the First Panorama Report which looked at the reference situation for the food and agricultural statistics in Malawi, overview of user needs for food and agriculture statistics and explained the expectations from CountrySTAT. Furthermore, the report discussed the outputs, data sources, metadata of the food and agriculture statistics. In conclusion it also highlighted important factors for the success of the CountrySTAT. It draws a lot of insights from the key stakeholders involved in food and agriculture statistics, and from a number of agricultural statistical and strategic plans reports coming from different sources such as the National Statistical Office, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services. Hence this second panorama report is a continuation of the first report.

This report will be used to provide data and metadata which would be used for uploading more data and metadata on the CountrySTAT platform. The report will focus on institutional framework, discuss outputs and metadata, provide an overview of the regional integration, and finally it will also explain the data access and use in terms of accessibility and relevance to private and public decision makers.

1.2 Key elements of the first panorama report

The food and agricultural statistics are generated by a number of institutions such as the National Statistical Office, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Department of Forestry, Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services. However, a lot of data and metadata is not published on the institutions' website. Hence CountrySTAT platform will ease data and metadata access to the public.

It was highlighted in the first panorama report that CountrySTAT will give an opportunity to users for a one-stop shop on food and agricultural statistics. While for the producers it will facilitate the standardization of data collection methodologies.

Furthermore, the respective data producers will also have an opportunity to increase their visibility through their links to the site. However, report also brings out a crucial element about human resources where it would be important to a person dedicated to the project full time so that it receives all attention it deserves than is the current situation.

II. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Analysis of CountrySTAT sustainability, evaluating the current situation of Legal Framework and Food and Agriculture Statistical Advisory Bodies

The National Statistical Office was established by the Statistics Act, Chap 27.01 of 1967 of the Malawian constitution and its mandate is to collect, compile, analyze and disseminate official statistics in the country. This act empowers NSO to demand information from people, institutions and organisations through the conduct of Surveys and Census at stipulated periodic intervals. Although the act chronologically dates back to the sixties, its contents ensures that information and statistics required for development policy and programs is collected, produced and disseminated to users in a timely manner.

CountrySTAT project is coordinated through the NSO's Agriculture and Environmental statistics division. From a legal point of view, sustainability of CountrySTAT is dependent on the NSO's statistical act, which will enable the coordinating office to have more clout in collecting its information from its data providers, in sectors or parastatal organisations. The act has undergone revision and is yet to be tabled for parliamentary approval. The reviewed act intends to enhance networking among data producers and users, in a more coordinated approach to ensure timely production and release of data, responsive to users demands and needs. This strategic goal is envisaged to be achieved within the context of the National Statistical System (NSS) whose goal is to ensure harmonised approaches for collecting, analysing and disseminating data and enhanced informed use of data, through a working synergy of data producers and users.

In Malawi, there is no food and agriculture statistics system per se, but that apart from NSO, sector Ministries and departments produce their own statistics for programs and projects formulation, monitoring and evaluation. Amongst such are Ministries of Agriculture & Food Security (MoAFS), Department of Fisheries and Tobacco Control Commission (TCC). As a result of the above scenario, it is hard to even talk about an existing food and agriculture statistics advisory body. In essence, there are no food and agriculture advisory committees which provide input to the food and agriculture statistical system. In this respect therefore, it is risky to figure any sustainability regarding the CountrySTAT project.

Although the foregoing is the case, there are some organizations and committees which through their mandates and operations, provide advice to government on the situation of food and agriculture statistics in the country. For instance, The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC), a multi-institution committee with membership from government, UN agencies, civil society organisations and the University of Malawi. MVAC also produces food security data especially as it relates to vulnerability of the population to hunger. Although such information is released for the sake of policy and programmatic intentions to avert hunger, it serves to provide a picture to the country as regards how much food is available for the nation, and which areas require attention.

The National Statistical Office is administratively autonomous but reports to the Office of President and Cabinet (OPC) which is the policy body of government, through the Ministry of Development Planning and Cooperation. Through its placement within the authority of the MDPC as a central planning ministry, NSO is functionally able to fulfil its mandate to produce and release official statistics. It is positively envisaged that owing to its location within the National Statistical Office, CountrySTAT activities will be sustainably implemented. CountrySTAT is located in the division of Agriculture and Environmental statistics whose core business is compiling data crop and livestock production. This entails that CountrySTAT adds no extra workload on activities of the division since its focus is compilation of statistics focusing on the same. As such CountrySTAT activities are likely to be treated as core to the functions and focus of the division, as long as it remains in the NSO, hence its sustainability.

Furthermore, due to its permanent placement in the Agriculture and Environmental Statistics division, NSO permanently assigned an officer who's been trained to coordinate CountrySTAT activities in the country at no added cost to the office. The officer coordinates data collection from the sectors, jointly edits and validates the data with the CountrySTAT technical committee and the secretariat, and finally upload the data on the CountrySTAT website for consumption. This again entails that CountrySTAT activities are coordinated and implemented by the NSO without creating any added financial expenditure and human resources strain. Such a scenario will ensure technical and operational sustainability of the project.

As mentioned earlier, the National Statistical Office coordinates the National Statistical System, an initiative that aims at bringing data producers and users together and share concerns about statistics. Structures that provide advisory services to the NSS include, the Statistical Advisory Committee, which is comprised of principal secretaries of key Ministries and they offer policy direction to the NSS.

This is supported by the Steering Committee which is composed of directors of key ministries and departments including the Reserve Bank of Malawi. The Technical Committee comprise technocrats which advise the steering committee on technical issues. It is hoped that as NSO intensifies its efforts to bring '*statistics at the finger tips of users*' as its strategic goal stipulates, it will take broad based initiatives to permanently provide technical and financial resources for the running of the CountrySTAT project, to ensure its sustainability.

2.1.1 Analysis of benefits/impacts of the national Ministries/Institutions' involvement in CountrySTAT activities and the Impact of CountrySTAT activities on National Strategy for Food and Agriculture Statistics –

Most producers of food and agriculture data particularly in the public sector and academic research centres do not have regularly functioning data dissemination approaches and mechanisms. Although some of them use magazines and periodic reports to disseminate their data, few of these channels reach data users. In essence, few organizations have data dissemination policies, let alone effective data dissemination points, except for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS) and the National Statistical Office which do have release calendar of specific reports and data.

The organisations therefore rely on CountrySTAT website to disseminate their data for use by consumers. This entails that data uploaded on CountrySTAT website fairly represent a recent and up to date picture on selected production, prices and markets of agricultural goods. As such, CountrySTAT plays a significant role in ensuring fairly timely and wider dissemination of food and agricultural data produced by institutions which do not have effective data dissemination approaches.

The advent of CountrySTAT project has catalysed improvement of quality food and agriculture data among producers of such data. Owing to the fact that producers are aware how important their data is to other institutions and organisations, and that through CountrySTAT this data is disseminated to a wider local and international community, many food and agriculture data producers have intensified quality checks in their approaches for collecting and analysing data. This entails that whilst data collection and analysis approaches were not subjected to critical scrutiny before release and dissemination, CountrySTAT validation process (which takes place before uploading data on the website) has fostered data producers to carefully review their data to ensure that it reflects realistic picture. As such, CountrySTAT has facilitated data quality improvement among data producers.

Most of the organisations which produce food and agriculture data hail CountrySTAT for facilitating validation of data before it is dissemination. The arrangement is that before CountrySTAT data is uploaded on its website, producers of the data meet to re-look at the statistics from each sector through the CountrySTAT technical committee. This exercise includes reviewing how data was collected and analysed, by who and for what purpose. It also covers review of meta-data about whatever is reported by the organizations.

This approach brings about more clarity as it provides more details about the nature of the data and how it should be interpreted. In essence, this exercise helps not only to facilitate good quality data, but also provide more clarification about the nature of the data or metadata. The committee is treasured among CountrySTAT data producers because it ensures harmonisation of data, such that there is no room for queries from among CountrySTAT data producers regarding quality. This harmonised approach towards the production and dissemination of statistics and data on food and agriculture is also pivotal to and enhances the sustainability of CountrySTAT.

Although most of the organizations involved in collecting food and agriculture data have time schedules for producing and disseminating the information, few of them really stick to the set schedules for various reasons, be it operational hiccups or general complacency. However, since the introduction of CountrySTAT, organisations involved in providing data to the website have enhanced production and release of data to match up to the demands of CountrySTAT, so that data is regularly updated. In effect, data producers have ensured timeliness in collecting and analysing their data so that it moves along with the periodic data uploading and updating on CountrySTAT website. Such a change has seen organizations produce up to date food and agriculture data for use by various consumers, locally and internationally through the CountrySTAT website.

2.1.2 CountrySTAT organization, functioning and implementation and its sustainability in the country

CountrySTAT Malawi has three main bodies, the secretariat which includes the CountrySTAT coordinator, the technical working group, and the National Coordinating board. The secretariat is involved in the day to day activities of CountrySTAT such as uploading data and metadata, participating in telephone conferences, training of members in the technical working group, calling for technical working group meetings, and general coordination of the CountrySTAT activities. Since the secretariat is based at the National Statistical Office, its activities are also reported to the Management of NSO apart from the Technical Working Group.

The Technical Working Group meets every two to three months to validate, harmonize and look at other technical issues affecting the data dissemination from the respective data producers. The Technical Working Group is currently composed of members from the National Statistical Office, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Department of Fisheries, Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services, and the Tobacco Control Commission. As for the National Coordinating Board, it is planned to have this committee housed under the steering committee under the National Statistical System. The Board will mainly give advice and technical expertise to the overall activities of CountrySTAT. The CountrySTAT coordinator will be reporting to this board as well as FAO headquarters on the progress.

2.1.3 Availability of Human and non Human Resources to the project

Since the project is housed in the Agriculture Division of the National Statistical Office, the activities of the project are now part of the overall activities the division is undertaking and it has to report to the Management of the NSO during the Heads of Divisions and Sections Meetings. The IT component is also being handled by the Computer Section of the NSO to provide any IT solutions for the project with support from FAO Rome. There are also statistical units in the institutions involved in the project. However, there is need for more in-country trainings so that the work of uploading data and metadata becomes decentralised.

As regards to the non-human resources for the project, it has become really difficult for the secretariat to upload a lot of data due to slow internet accessibility. Furthermore, laptop computers would speed up doing some CountrySTAT activities when members of the secretariat are out in the field doing other work.

2.1.4 Developments on Data Dissemination Policy for Food and Agriculture Statistics

There has been no developments as regards to data dissemination policy for food and agriculture statistics. It is important to that there has been no deliberate policy on data dissemination from all the stakeholders except the National Statistical Office where:

- Neither the basic data nor any reprocessed version or application thereof may be copied or transmitted to other persons or organizations, directly or indirectly without prior consent from the Commissioner of Statistics
- All publications produced using the database should explicitly acknowledge the National Statistical Office (Malawi) as the original source of the data.
- Specification should be made that the application and /or analysis is the result of the user's independent processing of the data.
- A copy of all publications/research projects should be sent to NSO for information purposes.

III. OUTPUTS AND METADATA

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents key outputs and metadata availability with respect to standard dataset and with particular attention to Production, Trade and Population domains at national and sub national level. It will also provide information on the availability of commodity p farm gate, retail and wholesale prices for crops, livestock and livestock products. Furthermore, the chapter gives reference metadata on the data that have been published on the national CountrySTAT websites to facilitate the secretariat in metadata collection, and provides the link and documents of official reports of sources on surveys, censuses and administrative sources.

3.2 Outputs and metadata availability with respect to the standard dataset

Production

Data on production (for both crops and livestock) is produced annually by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS) through the Agriculture Production Estimates Survey (APES). The data is available on ministries website <http://www.moafsmw.org/> and is also published through the Annual Agriculture Statistical Bulletin. However, only 2009 figures are available on the website hence recent hence the printed publication remains the consistent source of production data. The data ranges from crop production, livestock production and livestock products.

While the MoAFS produces production data on an annual basis, the National Statistical Office produces production data through the census of agriculture every ten years. The agriculture census is a benchmark for the Agriculture Production Estimates Survey. The latest agriculture census, the National Census of Agriculture and Livestock (NACAL) was done in 2006-07 growing season and the data and the metadata is available on the National Statistical Office website <http://www.nso.malawi.net/>. Furthermore, printed copies are also available in the NSO library. It should be noted that the NACAL is the fourth census of agriculture to be conducted in Malawi, the last being 1992/93 National Sample Surveys of Agriculture (NSSA). The reports for the NSSAs are only in printed format. NSO plans to scan these documents and uploaded them on its website.

As part of the activities of the National Statistical System (NSS), a draft compendium of agricultural concepts and definitions has been produced to aid in the understanding of agricultural statistical reports, *inter alia*, such as the National Census of Agriculture and Livestock (main report), the Annual Statistical bulletin, and the Livestock report of the NACAL. However, the data from the Agricultural Production Estimates Survey as depicted from the Agricultural Statistical Bulletin does not reveal data collection methods and other metadata as is shown in the enumerator's manual for APES.

Population

Population data is produced by the National Statistical Office every ten years through the Population and Housing Census. The NSO conducted its fifth post-independence Population and Housing Census (PHC) in June 2008 and the results have been produced and published together with thematic reports covering areas such as Disability and Elderly Population, Migration, and Population Projections. The reports contain data and metadata and are available in hard copy from the NSO and on the website, www.nso.malawi.net. Furthermore, the 1998 Census is also available on the website but the 1987, 1977 and 1966 censuses' reports are currently only available in printed format.

Trade Data

The NSO also produces trade data and metadata through the Annual Statement of Trade Statistics and the Trade briefs publications. Trade data is also contained in the Annual Statistical Bulletin and a summary of trade transactions between Malawi and the rest of the World is also available on the website <http://www.nso.malawi.net>. The latest 2007 Annual Statement of Trade Statistics publication has commodities grouped to two different classifications. The Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) is a six-digit international combined customs and statistical nomenclature, and the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) is a UN classification for statistical purposes. In the HS, commodities are grouped according to their physical material while in the SITC, the commodities are grouped by level of processing.

It should be noted that external trade statistics are based on data collected by the Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) Customs clearance at port or point of entry through the customs declaration form. The NSO receives electronic data, monthly, in Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) format from the busiest ports and hard copies from all other ports. Furthermore, the monthly electricity export tariff to neighbouring countries are collected from Electricity Supply Commission of Malawi (ESCOM)

3.3 Reference metadata on data that have been published on the national CountrySTAT websites to facilitate the Secretariat in Metadata collection, and provide the link and documents of official reports of sources: Surveys, Censuses and administrative sources

Matrix	Table title or indicator	Focal point	Concepts, definitions et classifications	Geographical coverage	Data processing, estimation and data revision	Sources	Dissemination method	Frequency of data collection	Timeline and punctuality
(130CPD 010)	Production quantity of Primary Crops	Banda Benjam in Bisa ----- bisa1b anda@y ahoo.c om	FAO	Country , regions and province	Provide a short description of a series of operations on data by a computer in order to retrieve or transform or classify information. Describe the methodology on how to aggregate data from national local level to requested standards	Surveys (e.g., Rice and corn production survey <u>Census</u> (e.g., census of agriculture) The Administrative Records are information produced by administrative offices that manage the requested data, for example Foreign Trade statistics	Annuaire des statistiques,	Annuelle	5 mois
130CPD0 15)	Area Harvested						CD et rapport du RNA 2001	décennale	30 mois
(130CPD 016)	Area Sown								
(130CPD 035)	Number of Live Animals								

IV. DATA QUALITY

4.1 CountrySTAT publication process

Data published on CountrySTAT website comes from different institutions which have different dissemination methods. CountrySTAT uploads this data on its website which comes in different file formats, publications and websites. The data is uploaded after a technical working group meeting which validates the data. The technical working group is composed of the secretariat and the technical officers involved in data collection and dissemination coming from the key stakeholder institutions.

The validation involves getting to understand the methodology and instruments used to collect the information. Furthermore, CountrySTAT provides the metadata which gives the focal point for contact, concepts, geographical coverage, data processing, estimation and methodology, and whether the data is collected from a census, a sample or from administrative records. Coupled with the web links attached to some of the metadata, there is reliability and transparency of the data on the website. Thus, the data and metadata sources are acknowledged, and web link is put if the data is also available on the data producers website.

Data collection, compilation, harmonization, validation and dissemination processes

The production data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security is mostly published in the Annual Statistical Bulletin. The data is collected through the Annual Agriculture Production Estimates Survey (APES) in which extension works are used as data collectors. A technical committee comprising of Ministry of Agriculture, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Development Planning and Cooperation, Fewsnat and other stakeholders oversees the operations of the survey. The data is officially disseminated at a forum where all the key stakeholders are present before being published. Furthermore, every ten years the National Statistical Office conducts the census of Agriculture and Livestock in which FAO provides technical expertise in terms of the methodology. The APES uses the agriculture census as the sampling frame. The census is also disseminated through the website and an official launch is done with all stakeholders taking part in the launch.

The population data is collected every ten years as part of the United Nations decennial census programs. Furthermore the data is used for population projections where the use of Rural-Urban projections software developed by the U.S. Bureau of the Census is used for these projections. It should be further noted that data population data is a bench mark for all the surveys done at the National Statistical Office. The data is disseminated through the website and also is in print format.

As regards to Trade data, the Malawi Revenue Authority gives the data to NSO in electronic format through the ASYCUDA format. The data undergo various checking on partner country, unit value and quantity. The control on quantity is based on relationship between net weight and supplementary unit, and the partner country quality control checks the country code against selected commodity groups. Finally analysis of unit value (value/quantity) for a commodity is used as a consistence check over time. The data is disaggregated by year, country, region, value and quantity. In addition, the data is published on the website and in print format as well.

The Department of Fisheries publishes its some of its data through its parent ministry, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, website. However, detailed data is not disseminated but is available on request. The data is disaggregated month, fish type and boat. Currently, fisheries data will now be part of the Annual Agriculture Production estimates survey so that a lot of stakeholders have a say over its data collection methods.

4.2 Correspondence Table and FAO commodity codes

The table below shows the crop groups, names and Codes used by CountrySTAT Malawi and the respective FAO code.

V. DATA ACCESS AND USE

5.1 Evaluate the accessibility of data and metadata on the CountrySTAT website

In this exercise, it has been difficult to establish who uses CountrySTAT website apart from the general expectation that public and private organisation make use of the data. It has also proved less effective an exercise to single out which organisation in the public and private sector uses the website. However, it has been noted that in many cases, it is mostly the same organisations which provide the data to the CountrySTAT website who reported visiting the website. Although the website has recently been launched in the country (17th March 2011), most of the patrons to the launch were generally public organisations and the media.

In fact, CountrySTAT is a relatively new project in the country and is not widely known by the majority of potential users in the private sector, universities and research institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in food and agriculture activities. Although this is the case, a few of the organisations who use the website mentioned that they encounter difficulties with navigation when they visit the website looking for some data. In this respect, users argued that by design, the webpage does not clearly and easily locate where specific data, nor its related data. In addition, the terms used on the page are technical enough to confuse a user who's searching for information of some kind. In simple terms, the website provides a lot of difficulties to users when they want to access data because they do not know what certain icons on the menu stand for and how they could guide them to get some data. This case surfaces more particularly because the terms used on the website are technical and lack simplicity, as such users do not access the most needed data in time, or they get it with difficulties.

Furthermore, as a web-based data system, CountrySTAT limits users of its data since in Malawi internet is expensive to operate and manage. In essence, by opting to disseminate food and agriculture data through the website, it should be conceived that a certain section of users is denied access to data that would have been more important to planning or monitoring their programs and projects.

Another observation is that by its design, CountrySTAT website is should be linked to a lot more other systems or websites that can supply a user with additional information from other sources, more particularly institutions whose information is uploaded on the CountrySTAT website, such as the TCC and MoAFS. In this instance, users of CountrySTAT website argued that it would have been better to have the website linked to a lot more other food and agriculture data producing organizations for users to refer to, if in need of details about some data and statistics. For instance, if a user having read about tobacco production in the most recent season intends to know the amount that has been sold, websites such that of Tobacco Control Commission (TCC) if linked to CountrySTAT website would become so useful. Such linkages would within a short space of time enlighten the user about details of the products such as; volume produced and sales realised within a specified time period. In a way that would enhance users' trust and reliance on food and agriculture data in the country.

CountrySTAT data users also observed that most of the data which is uploaded on the website appears historical. This should not mean that the data is outdated (for that would render it useless) but that although the data is regularly updated, the website does not provide real time data which is most crucial for planning.

In effect, most of the data is uploaded after a certain period other than having it uploaded as soon as an activity has been done. In essence, users contend that it would have been far much better if data was uploaded as soon as it was available from the supplier. For instance, it was observed that fisheries data could be updated on weekly basis, as soon as a record for the day has been completed. So too Tobacco, whose sales could be reported at the shortest possible time period soon after the conclusion of daily auction floor sales. However, such a move would only be possible if there is was constant and functioning network linking the CountrySTAT secretariat with the data producing organisations, so that as soon as there is data about a particular product from within the linked data producing organisation, it is uploaded on the site. However, if in effect such an attempt is made, caution should however be taken to ensure that in such an arrangement, quality of the data is not compromised.

5.2 Evaluation of data relevance for Public and Private Decision Makers and their expectations

As aforementioned, CountrySTAT data is feared to be historical in nature and does not reflect real-timeliness regarding about the data. This aspect impacts on public sector planning which sometimes requires that decisions be made on recent data. For instance, the 2010/11 Tobacco sales season in Malawi has been compounded with low prices, a situation that required a daily monitored picture on the performance of the product on the market in terms of how much Tobacco is sold and how much money is realised, to aid policy makers and planners in making efficient and effective decisions about tobacco markets. Although such information is reportedly collected by the TCC, it is not released to the general public for reasons to do with organisational policies and other administrative and operational procedures. This a situation entails that such up to date information is only known to data users (both public and private) through local newspapers, unlike professional data disseminating channels like the CountrySTAT website, where users would have benefited more. Such a situation renders the website ineffective and jeopardizes its reliability.

It has also been revealed through the exercise that data presented on CountrySTAT website is not disaggregated enough to present a picture of what is happening in terms of production of agriculture commodities at the lowest area or unit, such as the extension planning area. Although different data could be disaggregated differently, it is advisable to have the data disaggregated to the lowest possible planning units. Such presentation will allow analysis at lowest units of production, hence provide a picture of the product from the lowest point (EPA) to the national, and allow for comparisons wherever necessary.

VI. REGIONAL INTERGRATION

Malawi belongs to two regional blocks. These are the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). The aim is to foster regional trades. As such, through the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan recognises that statistics aims at providing relevant, timely, accurate and comparable statistical information for planning, policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SADC integration activities. Furthermore, the plan strategies for achieving the goal focus on development of legal framework for regional co-operation in statistics; harmonisation of statistical information; collecting, processing and dissemination of official statistics; developing indicators for monitoring and evaluating regional integration; and building capacity for national and regional statistical systems.

The development of the SADC statistics is guided by the Strategy Document which stipulates that SADC statistics is critical in the monitoring and evaluation of the SADC Programme of Action. However, the strategy highlights some challenges such as disparity in the statistical capacity among the countries, inadequate resources allocated to statistics in some of the member countries and also lack of dissemination mechanisms (including databases and connectivity) and finally long time lag between collection of data and dissemination of statistics.

It should be noted that the National Statistical Office supplies price and trade data to these regional blocks on a regular basis, and typically the International Comparisons of Prices (ICP) in the SADC region funded by the African Development Bank (ADB) looks at the prices for quite a number of goods in the region.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions and summary of important factors for the success of CountrySTAT

It should be conceived to this far that CountrySTAT website is very important in the provision of food and agriculture data in the country, that enables organisations have information about what is produced and how much is realised in terms of sales, and so facilitate informed decision making when and wherever possible. However, there is need for more improvements in the timeliness of data uploading, to enable timely decision and policy making.

This could be realised if effective mechanisms are in place to ensure more and frequent interaction between data producers and the secretariat which coordinates dissemination of the data. Effective control measures are therefore required to ensure that such timeliness in release of data does not negatively impact on quality of the data.

This exercise has established that despite launching the website at national level, few organizations are aware about the website, let alone how best to benefit from it or utilize its information. In fact, most of the users of the website are basically producers of the data, who visit the web just to see whether their data has been uploaded and draws not much from it. This indicates that as of now, there are few visitors to the site and potentially few users of the information uploaded thereon.

Analysis shows that the national dissemination of the website which took place recently in March did not do much to inform more organizations about the website and how relevant it could be. As such, there is need for more advocacy and communication targeting different categories of organizations in the private and public sector, so that many are aware about the treasure of CountrySTAT website.

Efforts should also be deliberately engaged to improve the website to make it user friendly so that people and organizations draw much from the site in terms of food and agriculture data. This entails reviewing the navigation processes to make data more visible and direct as well as establishing linkages with data suppliers to the website, so that more information about a particular product is accessed by the user through the links. Such an attempt will ensure that there are no gaps in information required by users, since what may not be available on the CountrySTAT website could be provided through its links, hence ensure and enhance complementarities between and among data suppliers, in the provision of data and statistics required by the consumers.

It has been learned through this exercise that some organizations, more particularly university research institutions have huge volumes of data that has not been disseminated, as a result of weak and ineffective dissemination approaches held by the institutions. In essence, there is more data that could form basis for comparison and further analysis in various areas on of food and agriculture, but it is not released.

CountrySTAT secretariat therefore ought to enhance its linkages with producers of food and agriculture data to ensure that their data is widely disseminated and benefits more people and organisations in their day to day planning for agriculture and food security programs and projects in the country. In this attempt, more focus should be placed on ensuring that apart from targeting and maintaining linkages with public organisations (Ministries and parastatals) critical institutions such as research bodies, the academia, food and agriculture NGOs as well as the media and the general public are involved as key players either in production or dissemination of food and agriculture data and statistics.