

Préface

Dr. Menghestab Haile*

Reliable agricultural statistics are essential for food security, resilience, and sustainable agricultural transformation in Africa. While data alone cannot ensure food security, it underpins informed decision-making, early warning systems, and timely responses to climate shocks and market fluctuations. Given that millions of people rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, accurate and timely data are essential for effective planning, resource allocation, and policy implementation.

Agriculture is also a key driver of economic growth and trade, yet fragmented data limit market access, weakens trade policies, and reduces supply chain transparency. Reliable agricultural statistics enhance price forecasting, improve supply chain efficiencies, and facilitate regional trade by providing critical insights to governments and private sector actors. Strengthening agricultural data systems is vital for enhancing agricultural value chains, export opportunities, and rural economic development.

The rapid expansion of digital tools, internet access, and advanced analytics has revolutionized agricultural data collection and analysis. High-resolution satellite imagery, AI-driven analytics, and cloud-based data management enable real-time, high-quality data collection. The integration of household surveys, remote sensing, market intelligence, and environmental monitoring presents a transformative opportunity for agricultural planning and food security strategies.

To fully harness these opportunities, strong political commitment, national ownership, and inter-institutional coordination are essential. Harmonized data governance frameworks and open data-sharing policies must be prioritized to ensure integration into broader policy frameworks. Often, data collection remains fragmented or donor-driven, lacking sustainability and national ownership. Governments must embed statistical systems in national planning, ensuring cross-sectoral data

integration and investing in long-term capacity building. Sustainable financing mechanisms are also critical to reduce dependence on external funding and ensure resilient national statistical systems.

Climate change further heightens the risks to African agriculture, particularly for smallholder farmers reliant on rainfed agriculture. Integrated data systems leveraging geospatial technologies and climate analytics help governments anticipate risks, track environmental changes, and implement adaptive measures to protect food systems. Enhanced data and analytics strengthen early warning systems, supporting proactive policymaking before crises escalate.

This issue of Statéco highlights key efforts to enhance agricultural statistics across Africa. The African Development Bank's technical assistance model supports national capacity building, while Rwanda's Master Sampling Frame improves statistical precision. The expansion of Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) is modernizing data collection, and discussions on Agricultural Cost of Production Statistics (AgCoP) and Food Balance Sheets illustrate how improved methodologies can strengthen agricultural policies and food security outcomes.

The African Union and AUDA-NEPAD, through initiatives like the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), are fostering regional cooperation and harmonizing agricultural statistics. Strengthening collaboration between governments, regional institutions, and international partners is crucial to ensuring that agricultural data informs food security policies, trade facilitation, and climate adaptation strategies. Robust and harmonized data systems are essential for the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), enabling data-driven trade policies, improving market efficiency, and fostering regional economic integration.

* Dr. Menghestab Haile est Senior Advisor, The Digital School (TDS), UAE, Senior Advisor to the CEO, Egyptian Space Agency, Former Regional Director, World Food Programme (WFP) Southern Africa

This publication brings together expertise and practical experiences in agricultural statistics. By fostering collaboration, innovation, and evidence-based

decision-making, agricultural statistics can serve as a powerful tool for food security, climate resilience, sustainability, and market development.