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Country team of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is an Island of the Indian Ocean situated off the southern coast of India. It has an area of 65,610 square Km and the length is 435 Km & the greatest width is 225 Km. Administratively country has divided into 09 Provinces, 25 Districts, 332 Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DS Divisions) and 14,022 Sub Divisions under the Divisional Secretariats calling GN Divisions.

The Island has tropical climate with year-round warm weather, moderated by ocean winds. There are two seasons generated by two monsoonwinds. The north-east monsoon (September to March) provides widespread rain around the country. The south-west monsoon (May to August) brings heavy rain, especially to the south-west of the country. Sri Lanka's crop cultivation decides on these two seasons called Yala & Maha.

Sri Lanka midyear population is 20.9mn in 2015 while18.3% out of them are living in urban areas and rest in rural areas. The GDP of Sri Lanka for the year 2015(Jan-Dec.) has reached up to Rs.mn 8,622,825 (82.3 Billion US$). The four major components of the economy of Sri Lanka is Agriculture, Industry, Services, and Taxes less subsidies on products has contributed share to the GDP at constant price (2010 base) by 7.9%, 26.2%, 56.6%, and 9.3% respectively in the year 2015. It shows Agriculture has significant higher growth rate in 2015 by 5.5%. Per capita income is nearly 3,836 US$.

Total Labor force was 8.4mn while unemployment rate held around 4.3% in 2014. Around 28% of the employed population engaged in Agricultural activities in 2014. Agriculture plays a key role in Sri Lanka's employment sector. The Government of Sri Lanka has given high priority to the agricultural sector in its socio-economic development plans.

National statistical system of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a centralized statistical system with the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) responsible for collection, process, analyze and dissemination of statistical

information and computation of statistical indicators related to the socio-economic condition of the country. DCS does not collect all national statistics. Some statistics are collected by line agencies with support from their in-house DCS branches or from DCS itself. In agricultural statistics, DCS collects production data for livestock and most crops. Statistics for plantation crops, export agriculture crops, fisheries and forestry are collected by the respective line ministries. Ministries and departments often do their own statistical work to supplement data collected by DCS; for example, DCS collects data on paddy area and production by season, while the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) collects monthly data on the progress of the crop.

Department of Census and Statistics

The Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) plays the role of National Statistical Organization which functions under the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs. The DCS provides data required for national planning and policy formulation of the government as well as that needed for monitoring the progress in implementing such policies. DCS also provides data to the needs of local and international agencies regularly on a variety of subject areas drawn from different sources, including its own censuses and surveys. The data collected covers subjects mainly on Population, Agriculture, Trade and Services, Industries, Prices and National income etc.

Branch Offices Located In Ministries/Departments

40 branch offices are functioning in important ministries, departments and provincial councils to support their statistical activities.
For example,

- Agriculture statistics unit (Ministry of Agriculture)
- Medical statistics unit (Ministry of Health)
- Education statistics unit (Ministry of Education)
- Custom statistics unit (Department of Custom)
- Vital statistics unit (Department of Registrar General)

District Statistical Units

District statistical Units are functioning in 25 District Secretariats throughout the country which is headed by a Statistician. Much of data is collected by DCS through these units on regular basis. Nearly 400 Statistical officers are attached to these units to carry out statistical activities at Divisional Secretaries Division level.

Main activities of the Department of Census and Statistics

- Conduct censuses on various subjects.
- Conduct large scale sample surveys to collect information on various fields.
- Conduct censuses and Surveys by the statistical branch offices of the DCS located in other Ministries and Departments.
- Collection of data on regular basis relating to various socio-economic conditions and compilation relevant indicators.

Apart from its responsibility for collecting and disseminating statistics, DCS is also required to recruit, train and place professional staff in government institutions requiring statistical services. In addition, it provides statistical consultancy services to government agencies, as required. DCS has about 40 branch offices in all key ministries and departments, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture, Department of Export Agriculture, Department of Animal Production and Health etc. Statistical staff has out posted from DCS to head these branches.

Statistical systems must be designed to provide the geographic disaggregation necessary to meet the needs for policy and planning work. In Sri Lanka, there is a strong need for statistical information at the national and provincial levels, and to a lesser extent at the district level; for this reason, most statistics in Sri Lanka are produced down to the district level. Lower administrative levels are more concerned with day-to-day operational issues and are not seen as major users of statistics.

Assessment of agricultural statistics in Sri Lanka

Within DCS, the Agriculture and Environment Statistics Division is responsible for agricultural statistics. This has a well-established statistical system for crop and annual livestock statistics except for plantation crops and export agricultural crops, which are collected by the respective line ministries. Fisheries statistics are prepared by agencies under the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development. Forestry statistics are prepared by the Forest Department under the Ministry of Environment.

Much of the data collection for DCS on crop and livestock is done by the Agricultural Research and Production Assistants (ARPAs), who are field staff under the Department of Agrarian Development in the Ministry of Agriculture. ARPAs have a large data collection workload and their duties, skills and training needs to be evaluated. The potential role of

other agricultural field staff in the data collection should also be examined. Agricultural Instructors provide an extension service for the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA). There are also specialist field staff for coconut, rubber, tea and export agricultural crops. Livestock Development Instructors and Veterinary Officers provide livestock services in the field. Also, the government has recently appointed Economic Development Officers in each GN Division.

Dissemination and Communication Strategies of Agricultural and Rural statistics

All designated official statistics which include basic and sectoral statistics either solely produced by DCS or in cooperation with other statistics units of the Government, disseminates to the public on a regular basis according to the Data Dissemination Policy of the DCS. In addition to the summary or aggregate statistics derived from the surveys, and Censuses micro-data will also be disseminated. Metadata relating to these micro-data also provided in order to help researches understand what the data are measuring and how they have been created. This will allow users to assess quality of the data and guide them to its correct use.

The DCS collects a large number of socio-economic data and compiles various indicators for the country as well as provincial and district level. These statistics are published in the department web site for multiple users in the country and overseas. Some important statistics especially survey and census reports are published in PDF formats. Census and survey reports, Hand books, Pocket books, bulletins, Newsletters, CDs, Online data bases and Meta data files are the other main forms of data dissemination of DCS.

DCS has established sales counters to sell its publications at few locations in the country. Main sales counter is located at the head office, Colombo and three others are in District statistical units. Data dissemination unit is established at the DCS head office to disseminate especially Meta data files and to provide data on official requests of the government organizations as well as international governments/ organizations.

Most important findings are released through special press conferences. Regular press conferences are held to make aware the media personal on seasonal changes of major indicators such as Economic Growth, Inflation etc. Moreover that, senior government officials make aware through special stakeholder meetings for policy formulation exposing

hidden pictures behind the statistics. Data users and stakeholder meetings are held with the release of major findings of the censuses/surveys.

From this year DCS use social media to disseminate updates on release of statistics. Instant updates on the release of statistics are available on DCS Twitter account @lankaSTAT. All interested parties would be able to receive these updates by following this twitter account.

DCS web site: www.statistics.gov.lk

The home page of the DCS website highlights latest publications of the Department for the easy reference of the user. It also provides details of printed publications, compact disks (CD), Meta data releases such as Lanka SIS and Quick Stat web pages. It also gives the Advance Data Release Calendar (ADRC) which user gets information about the future data releases of the DCS. Links are given to online data bases such as UN data, UNSD and ESCAP web sites.

National data archive in this website provides the time series data for some selected indicators complied by DCS through its regular surveys and censuses. This tool aims to provide easy, user-friendly access to data on the indicators that have been released by the Department.

Statistics Division of MOA publishes crop production plan for Sri Lanka annually for the crop production year (for two seasons) and disseminates among relevant officers island wide and to the relevant institutions including General Treasury and to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. In addition to that, those are published through the MOA website.

Examples of use of data and statistics in agricultural policy making

Official agricultural statistics produced by the government organizations, especially DCS and MOA uses in agricultural policy making by the government of Sri Lanka at national and sub national levels. Two recent national policies are given below.

1. Food Production National programme, 2016-2018

The food production national programme is implemented with the objective of increasing food crop production and increasing crop productivity to minimize imports of food items that can be cultivated in the country itself. Under the this programme, it has been planned to enhance both production and productivity of paddy and supplementary food crops such as green gram, maize, ground nuts, soya bean, big onion, chili, potato, turmeric and ginger, vegetable and fruits.

2. Fertilizer Subsidy Programme in Sri Lanka – 2016

As in many developing countries, fertilizer subsidies represent a major component of agricultural policy in Sri Lanka. With rice being the staple food in Sri Lanka, successive governments have provided significant fertilizer subsidies for paddy with the primary aim of increasing the paddy production. Since 2005, the fertilizer subsidy has accounted for 2-2.5% of total government expenditure. Over the years, the subsidy has significantly contributed to increasing paddy production, stabilizing the milled rice price, and helped the country attain self-sufficiency in rice. However, there were questions on the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme. The excessive use of fertilizer has also raised concerns over soil and water pollution, food safety and the burden on the national budget.

To resolve these problems, under the 2016 Budget, the Government decided to convert the subsidy to a cash allowance of Rs. 25,000 per hectare, a year to encourage farmers to move away from using chemical fertilizers and to ensure that they are given good quality fertilizer, instead of the cheap kind that is often given on the subsidy.

The Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

The Global Strategy provides a framework to enable national and international statistical systems to produce the basic agricultural information needed to guide decision making. A roadmap has prepared to provide a coherent framework for the development of the SPARS in Sri Lanka leading up to the preparation and endorsement of the SPARS document.

The design process for the SPARS has started in December 2015 and will be followed up as per this Roadmap. It is expected that the process would take about seven to eight months and the SPARS document would be ready by around September 2016.

A draft document was prepared according to the roadmap and discussed in the stakeholder workshop held in April, 2016. Findings of the in depth country assessment are the main basis for development of SPARS to be implemented over the next 10 years.
 Main findings were

    i. Inadequate inter agency coordination mechanisms at national and sub-national levels

    ii. Unknown quality of the data from administrative reporting system

    iii. Lack of regular capacity building programmes for human resource development and maintenance

    iv. Need for adoption of better methodologies and technologies for data collection, compilation and dissemination

v. Need for further improving the availability and quality of data to meet national and international requirements

vi. Specific technical assistance needs in certain areas such as Food Balance Sheets, Cost of production statistics, improved national accounts for agriculture sector, improved crops, livestock, and fishery and forestry statistics

Based upon these findings, a broad SPARS outline has been prepared in terms of its vision and mission, strategic goals, and activities to produce the outputs and reach the goals at the end of implementation period.

Some functional weaknesses identified by the in-depth Country Assessment

- There is no National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) or Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS) in Sri Lanka. The development of NSDS/SPARS is an important area for technical assistance.

- DCS conducts all censuses and surveys in the country using paper based methods. The use of hand-held devices, such as tablet computers, personal digital assistants, and global positioning system (GPS) units could greatly improve the data collection efficiency.

- The Head Office of DCS is located in several rented buildings in and around Colombo. Agriculture statistics division is located away from some other divisions, especially National Accounts, Prices and Wages, and Sample Surveys Divisions.

- District statistical staff is housed in the offices of the District Secretariat. Statistical staff at the DS Division level are housed in the office of the Divisional Secretariat. ARPAs are required to spend most of their time working with farmers in the GN Divisions, but are not provided with an office.

- Usually, government officers have access to a motor vehicle of some sort, often a motor cycle. Sometimes, the government provides some support to staff to buy a vehicle. Field staff, such as AIs and ARPAs, usually use their own motor cycle, but some only have a bicycle.

- Lack of assistance from donor agencies is one barrier to the statistical system. In late 2012, an FAO consultant provided some training to DCS in agricultural census taking. In 2013, FAO also assisted in the design of the census questionnaire. Apart from this, there has been no donor assistance for agricultural statistics activities in the last three years.

- Most people in the country now own a mobile phone and the mobile phone service is good, even in rural and remote areas. This opens up possibilities for more timely and efficient data collection methods, but the opportunity is not being utilized.

Highlights of action plans developed for improving agricultural and rural statistics

- The design process for the SPARS has started in December 2015. A draft document was prepared according to the its vision and mission, strategic goals, and activities to produce the outputs and reach the goals at the end of implementation period.

- DCS started a new project to complete data entry of sample surveys during the interview stage itself, using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) System using tablet computers. CAPI enables interviewers use portable computers to enter data directly via a keyboard instead of collecting data on paper questionnaires. This Project is assisted by the National Statistical Office of the Republic of Korea (KOSTAT).

- DCS is now housed in an own building in Battaramulla, close by many other ministries, departments and government agencies. All technical divisions of DCS are now functioning under one roof.

- There are four field officers working in GN divisions namely Grama Niladhari(GN), Agriculture research and Production Assistant (ARPA), Divi Neguma Niladhari (DNN) and Economic Development Officer (EDO). Some of them are using private places as their office. The government has decided to build semi multi service centers (Sewa piyasa) in each GN division to house all of them. Few GN divisions have been provided this facility. This will be applied for all GN divisions in future.

- Government of Sri Lanka has provided Motor cycles under subsidy scheme for all field officers throughout the country to use their day to day duties. This enables quality improvement and timeliness of data collected through primary reporters.

- Agricultural census (2014) data entry has done by scanning questionnaires in the district offices. Scanning machines provided for each district office, and district staff trained for carrying out the scanning operation. All scanning tasks have been completed successfully and data processing activities are ongoing.

- The Statistical training facility of the Department was strengthened by setting up two modern computer laboratories in 2015. Use of Information Communication Technology for the advancement of official statistics is the theme for 2016 component of KOSTAT Project.