

Institutional requirements

and

data challenges

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In the year 2015, we are living in the information age in a knowledge-based society. Hence, the need for reliable and timely statistics is more than ever. Statistics are needed to comprehend social structure and changes in the economy and environment. Statistics are needed to understand the past, to analyse today's world and to develop policies to shape the future. In order to be able to make accurate analyses and to develop appropriate policies it is required to produce reliable, consistent, impartial and timely official statistics. And this may be the prime challenge.

In addition to the characteristics of data, the comprehension and management of data production process is of utmost importance. Statistics production is an integrated process. It includes not only statistics offices but also various parties ranging from data providing individuals to organisations keeping records for their own needs. Therefore, a holistic approach is essential. It is essential to avoid repetitions thus, preventing inefficient allocation of resources and reducing the burden on the respondents. It is essential to ensure the timeliness and consistency of data. It is essential to obtain comparable data both in national and international platforms as well as within a time series. Therefore, in order to produce statistics, coordination between parties taking part in the data production process must be ensured. It is easier said than done, though.

However, there is no need to be desperate. There are some tools that may be employed. One of them is a Statistics law determining the basic principles and standards concerning the production and organisation of official statistics within a country. While determining a coordinator authority for official statistics production process (i.e. Statistics office as in Turkey), it also regulates the duties and authorities of many parties involved. Such a law provides a distribution of tasks in terms of compiling and assessing data as well as production, publishing and dissemination of statistics. Via the enforcement of a law, statistical confidentiality can be ensured. Statistical confidentiality is a key measure, which enables respondents to provide most genuine data. Moreover, a law can impose fines on those who fail to submit the requested information. This is a measure leading to higher response rates and therefore more accurate and reliable data.

A second tool that may be employed is an Official Statistics Programme. Such a programme enables coordination among institutions and organizations that are involved in the statistics processes. It defines which organization is responsible for which data, frequencies of data collection and dissemination, data collecting methodology, classifications to be used, etc. By doing this, it establishes a framework for official statistics and prevents repetitions. It ensures timeliness of data by defining frequencies of data collection and dissemination. Moreover, it provides comparability and consistency via the use of standard classifications.

A Data Release Calendar can be another instrument for maintaining a healthy statistics system. A calendar determines time of release for each statistic beforehand and official statistics must be released accordingly. It is announced to public so, users know which data they can reach and when. This way, a data release calendar provides timeliness and punctuality.

To achieve an integrated and sustainable statistics system, Turkey is also undertaking a Statistical Infrastructure Development Programme within the framework of 10th Development Plan. The main aim of the programme is to increase the consciousness in collection, production, use and sharing of statistical data in public institutions and organizations. In addition to that, it also aims to improve the administrative record systems, to produce data according to standard classifications and codes, to maintain timeliness and punctuality. While achieving these it also aims to establish metadata systems in statistics production in order to ensure transparency and reliability. All these measures are serving for an underlying purpose: capacity building. For this purpose it foresees the establishment of statistical analyses units in institutions, the formation of institutional databases and data sharing protocols. And finally it intends to enhance cooperation with international institutions and organisations.

Another critical issue is the data compilation techniques. The significance of administrative records are obvious in this aspect. If the administrative records are well-kept there is no need to organize censuses or conduct surveys. Therefore, the burden on the respondents will decrease and budgets can be used for other projects. By well-kept records, it is meant that records are kept according to standard classifications and codes. In addition, records must be free of missing cells as much as possible. Moreover, how the data are compiled in surveys and censuses is also important. Benefitting from recent technological developments is necessary. Designing online surveys or web forms and employing online data analysis software are time saving techniques improving the punctuality of the data. Using mobile devices during data compilation can also be beneficial.

Although we have been discussing Natural Capital accounts -water and forest accounts in particular - for 3 days, I think the above mentioned requirements and challenges are common for all statistics. Tools and instruments that may be employed to tackle with these issues are common as well.

Last but not least, it is always important to raise awareness. Producers of statistics (i.e. statistical offices) are well aware of the significance of the job they are doing. However, coordination and cooperation with national and international organisations is necessary for keeping up with recent developments and sharing experiences. Users of the data must be aware of the importance of reliable and quality statistics and they must demand this from the authorities. Their critics and comments are important to provide necessary pressure on statistics producers to improve themselves. Data providers should also be aware of the requirements for producing reliable and quality statistics so they could supply these kind of data. To increase the consciousness of data providers it is important to inform them about the results and uses of the statistics they contribute to produce. Finally, decision makers must be aware of the importance of having quality statistics as a tool for developing relevant and effective policies and must take necessary measures to maintain this. Trainings, workshops, meetings as well as all kind of media are always useful instruments for raising awareness.

Thank you for your attention.

Your questions are most welcome.