

# DEVELOPMENT OF ASEAN FOOD SECURITY INFORMATION SYSTEM

## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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# **DEVELOPMENT OF ASEAN FOOD SECURITY INFORMATION SYSTEM**

## **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

### **A. GENERAL BACKGROUND**

#### **A.1 Current Status on Food Security Information in ASEAN Countries**

Food security is a growing concern in national and international communities. In the developing countries of Asian region, especially in the rural areas, there are more than five hundred million undernourished people, which is equivalent to 70% of the world total. It has become the urgent issue to strengthen the food security in order to achieve social stabilization and economic development

In Asian countries, rice is the main staple and a large number of people are engaged in rice production. Rice is therefore a most important and very sensitive food commodity, affecting the food security of the people in the region. East Asia (ASEAN+3) is the world's major producer and consumer of rice. Countries in the region account for about 80% of total world rice production, 75% of world consumption, 57% of world rice trade and they hold 55% of total world rice stocks.

The Asian region has suffered from frequent large-scale natural disasters, which have led to repeated imports of rice and food aid. Rice prices have fluctuated markedly whenever production reductions took place, because of limited amount of imports/exports and storage capacity. Therefore, establishment of food security reserves has been one of important policy agendas for these countries.

Availability of accurate and timely information concerning supplies of rice and other food commodities plays a vital role in ensuring food security in the region. Accurate and reliable production, consumption and trade data in these countries are indispensable in formulating effective and efficient policies and strategies for stable food supplies to the population. Timely short-term forecasts of production enable these countries to organize appropriate storage, transportation and distribution programs to prevent food shortages, both in countries as a whole and in specific "hot spots" within a country. Reliable data concerning private- and government- sector food storage will facilitate more cost-efficient management of reserves.

Food and agricultural statistics and information in ASEAN countries have undergone drastic changes over the last 20 years. Many countries in the region have undertaken regular agricultural production surveys, censuses and food consumption or household income/expenditure surveys. National statistical publications are also issued on a regular basis. These improvements in food and agriculture statistics and information have benefited national agricultural development and food security.

Despite the significant progress made in collecting food and agriculture data, many countries in ASEAN region still face difficulties in obtaining reliable and timely data. Methodologies used in data collection need to be improved in a number of countries,

and new and modern techniques of data collection, analysis and dissemination of food security information have to be adopted.

Dissemination of data is an important area to which countries attach high priority in response to the ever-increasing needs of data users. Traditional hard copy publications are produced, but often this method results in delays in releasing the information. While countries are now trying to capitalize on the progress in computer and telecommunication technology to improve their information dissemination systems, shortages of funds and expertise limit adoption of the new technology.

Furthermore, owing to accelerating globalization encompassing most countries in the world, demand for accurate and timely information, comparable between countries, is ever increasing. Every country is intensifying her efforts for cooperation with other countries in many fields, and food security information is no exception to this trend. With the recent growth of agricultural products trade, every country wants to obtain accurate statistical data on other countries' production and prices in the international market. It is also necessary for international organizations to share agricultural statistics and information as a guide to achieving such goals as the stabilization of food supplies and the balancing of supply and demand.

## **A.2 Project Origin and Preparation**

Following the mandate given to Thailand by the Special Senior Officials Meeting of Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry of ASEAN Member Countries, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (**SOM-AMAF+3**) in April 2001 in Cambodia, an **ASEAN Workshop on Food Security Cooperation and a Rice Reserve Management System in East Asia** was held on 19-20 July 2001 in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. The workshop discussed the Terms of Reference for a Feasibility Study on Creation of a Rice Reserve Management System in East Asia.

Also at the workshop, a **general framework of the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS)** was discussed. It was agreed by the workshop to present the result to the SOM-AMAF+3 and the Ministerial Meeting (AMAF+3) in Indonesia on 3-5 October 2001.

The October meeting of AMAF+3 endorsed ASEAN's proposal for the establishment of the AFSIS project, and Thailand agreed to coordinate the implementation of the project. The Meeting noted that, at the SOM-AMAF+3 Meeting, Japan also considered the AFSIS to be an important and useful project, and would consider studying the necessary support for development of the system.

Subsequently, intensive consultations continued between the Office of Agricultural Economics (OAE), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), Thailand, as the implementation organization, and the Statistics and Information Department (SID), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Japan, as the donor.

Then, the Government of Japan took budget measures for implementation of the **Project on Development of ASEAN Food Security Information System** (hereafter

called “AFSIS Project” or “the Project”). The OAE of MOAC, Thailand, will take the initiative on overall management of the AFSIS Project.

### **A.3 Relevant On-going Assistance**

In the Asia and Pacific region, national food security, agricultural development and eradication of hunger and poverty are important agendas.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Government of Japan, is well aware of this situation, and considers the role of information and statistics as fundamental and of prime importance. It recognizes the necessity of supporting activities addressing these issues. The Government of Japan has been spearheading efforts for the improvement of information and statistics in support of agricultural sector development in general, and poverty alleviation and food security in particular, using bilateral and multilateral schemes.

The AFSIS Project funded by the Government of Japan will involve, as far as is feasible, maximum cooperation with Japanese funded on-going and planned projects in the field of agricultural statistics and food security information to achieve optimal utilization of resources and synergy in project activities.

Specifically, the Project is expected to work closely with other related Japan-funded project such as the FAO regional project "Strengthening Regional Data Exchange System on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries" and a JICA project "Agricultural Statistics and Economic Analysis Development" planned for implementation in Thailand. These projects are required to harmonize their implementation in terms of organizing training courses and meetings, sharing know-how and data, and other related matters.

## **B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

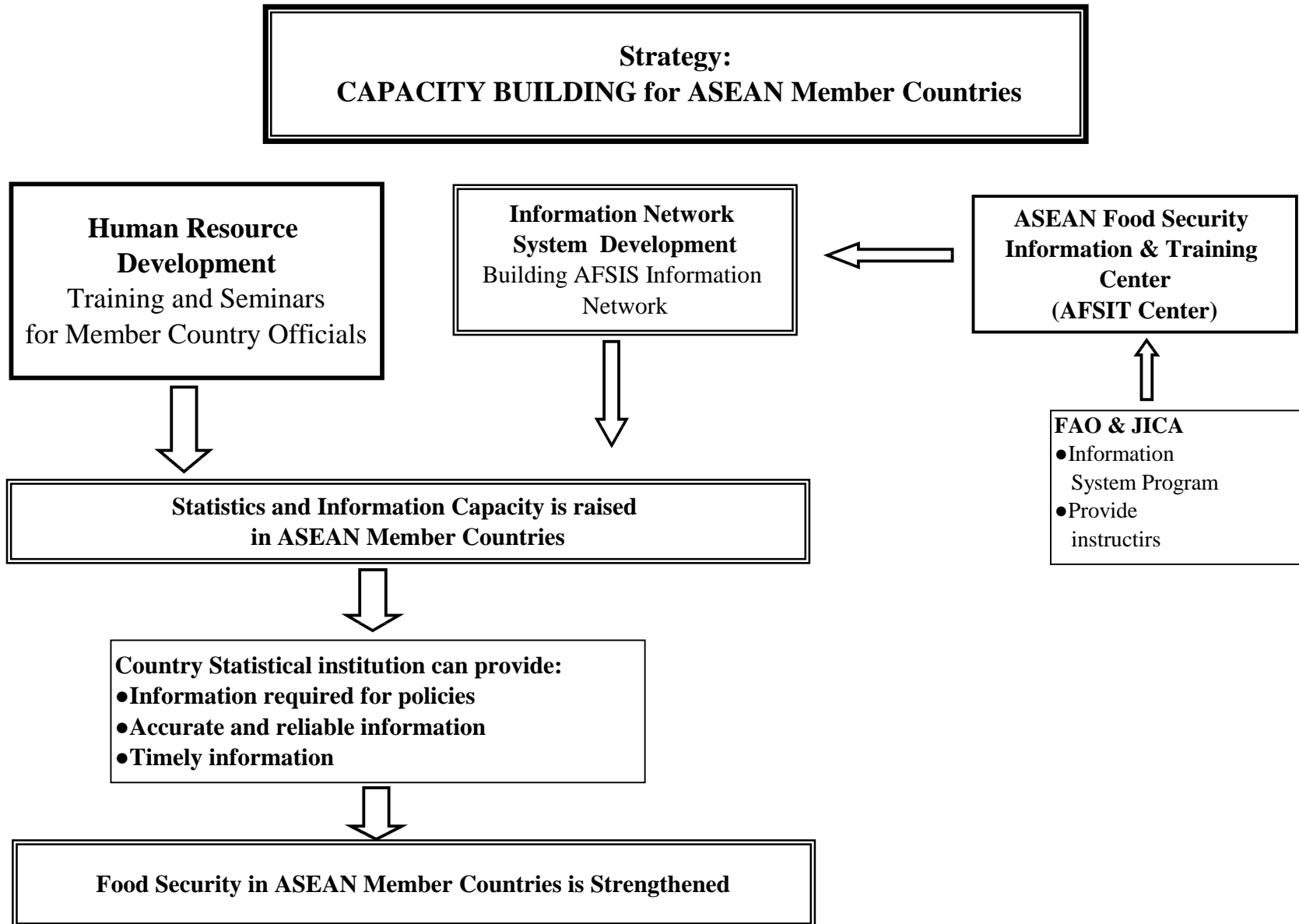
### **B.1 Project Concept, Strategy and Approaches**

The Project intends to build up a system called **AFSIS**. The AFSIS will be a combined human resource development and information network system, which together will support the food security policies and programs in ASEAN countries in terms of statistics and information. (See **Chart 1** for the overall concept and strategy of the AFSIS Project.)

The strategy of the AFSIS Project is to contribute to the **improvement of institutional capacities of national agencies for agricultural statistics and information**. Rather than immediately seeking food security information from the start, the Project will first endeavor to upgrade the capacity of the statistical agencies. To the extent that the Project is successful in this endeavor, the improved statistical agencies will be capable of supplying the statistics and information required for the planning and implementing

Chart 1

**OVERALL CONCEPT of  
AFSIS Project**



agencies of governments and the private sector that are engaged in food marketing and distribution.

Institutional capacity of statistical agencies consists of two major components. One is human resource capacity, i.e. technology, experience and morale of statistical personnel both in the agency headquarters and in regional and/or local offices. The other is infrastructural capacity, i.e. facilities and equipment for data collection, processing and dissemination. The most important of these at present is the information network system for data processing, reporting and communication. The Project will work with both these components

Therefore, the Project has two main activities, which are (1) **human resource development** and (2) **information network system development**.

### **(1) Human Resource Development**

The Project aims to develop human resources, i.e. to raise the capacity of statistical personnel in member countries in the food and agricultural sector. The objectives of human resource development are to improve routine data collection skills in respect of agricultural statistics and information, to enhance utilization of information network systems, and to strengthen data analyzing skills. (See **Chart 2** for objectives and approaches of human resource development.)

The Project will use a combination of many modalities such as regional seminars and training, and national seminars.

In order to facilitate the implementation of these training and seminar programs, necessary hardware, software and other support system will be provided. The Project will make use of more statistically advanced expertise from other relevant projects of international organizations, recruitment of national and international consultants, etc.

The regional level training is divided into two levels, **basic technology** and **additional technology**. (See **Chart 3** for examples of the training curriculum.)

As the national component of human resource development under the Project, member countries will organize National Seminars in order to discuss important problems and issues related to agricultural statistics and information. This component will consider ways and means of further developing national statistical systems to be more functional in providing data to policy planning and implementing agencies.

### **(2) Information Network System Development**

The Project will develop an AFSIS Information Network System (AFSIS Net). Through AFSIS Net, statistical organizations for the agricultural sectors of member countries will be able to acquire domestic and international data, as required by governments' food and agricultural policy planning / implementing agencies. (See **Chart 4** for information network system.)

Chart 2

### Human Resource Development

#### Objectives and Approach

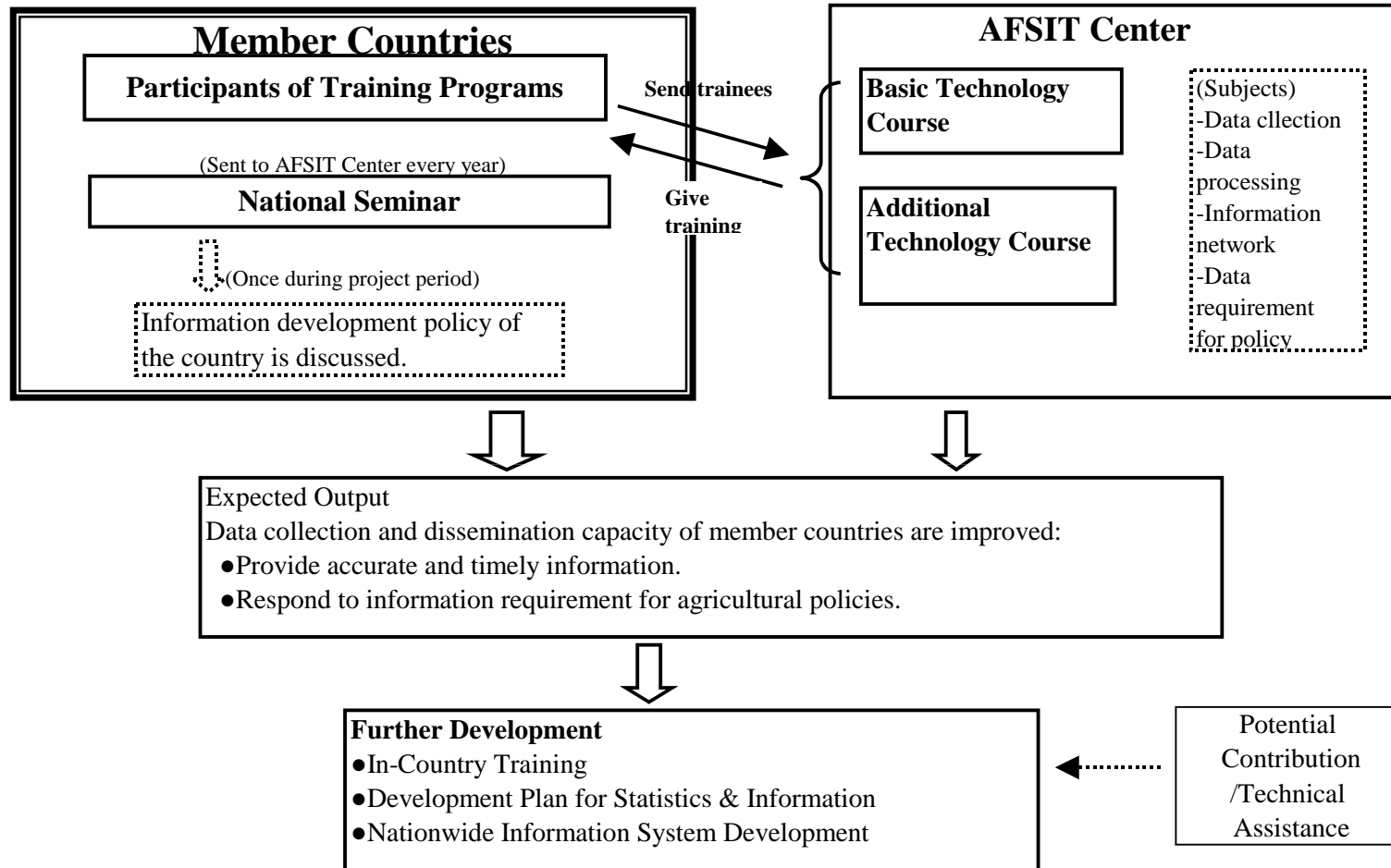
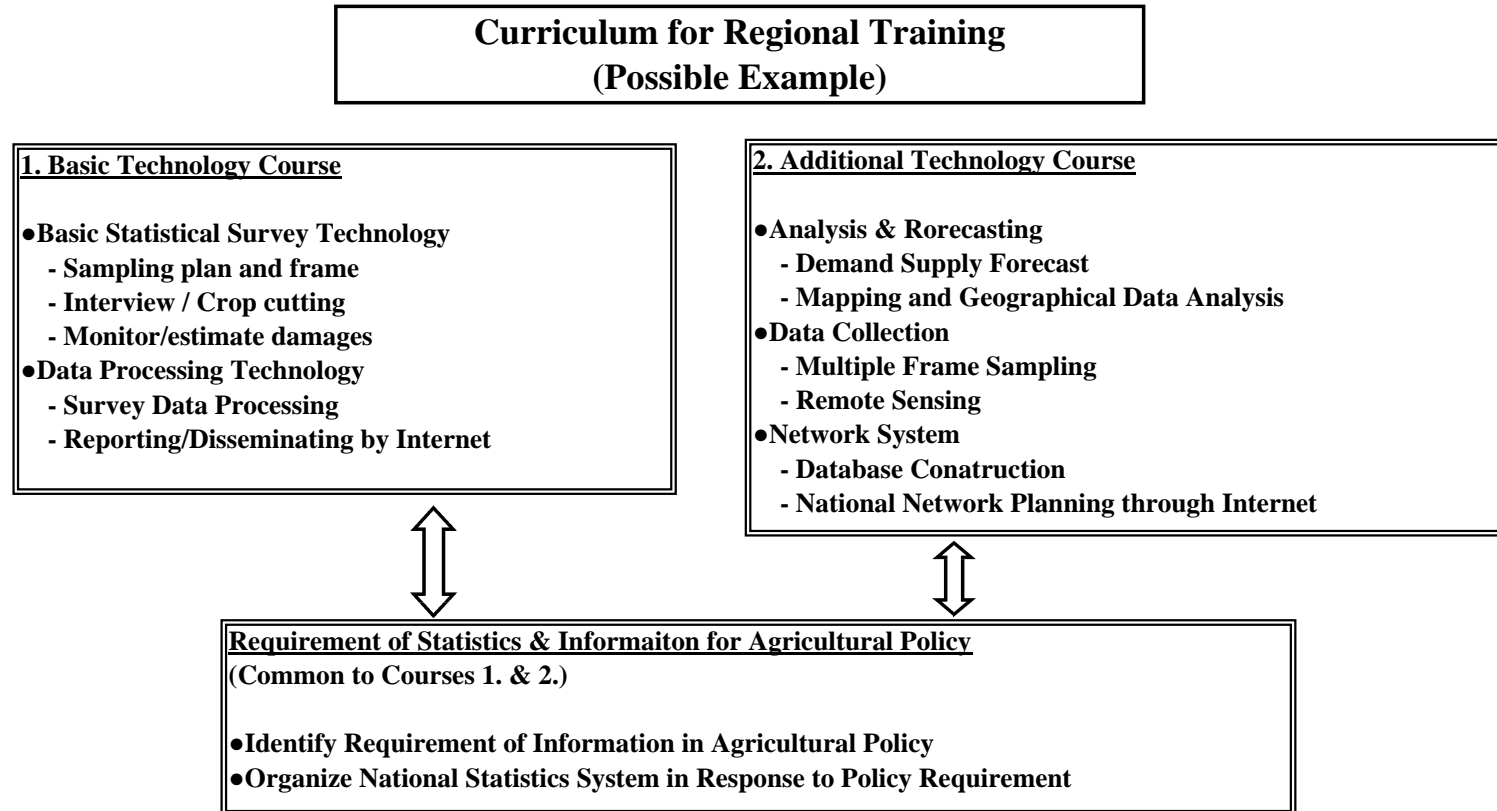


Chart 3

Human Resource Development

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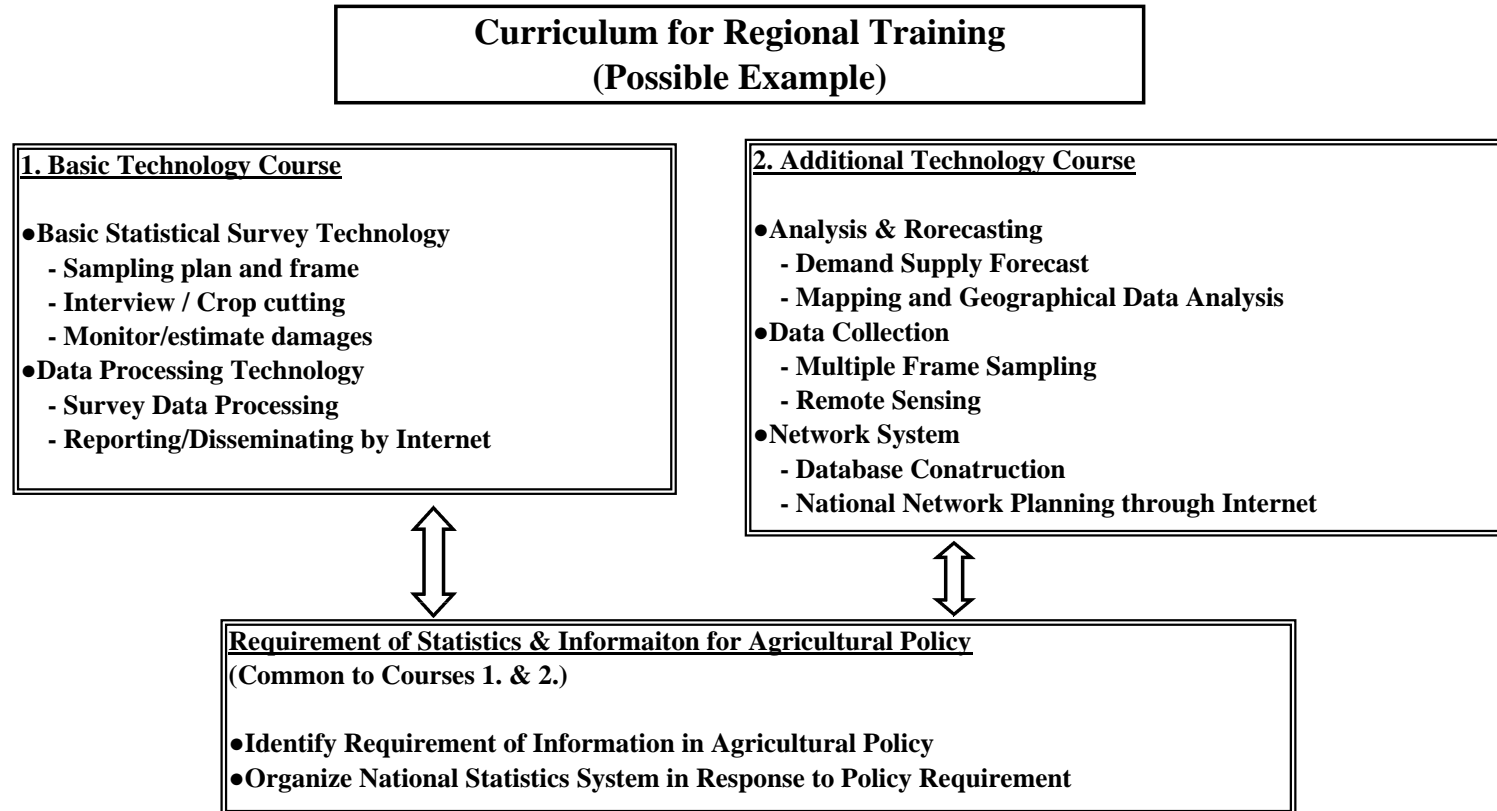


Note: Training Programs will be discussed and finalized by the AFSIS Focal Point Meeting.

Chart 3

Human Resource Development

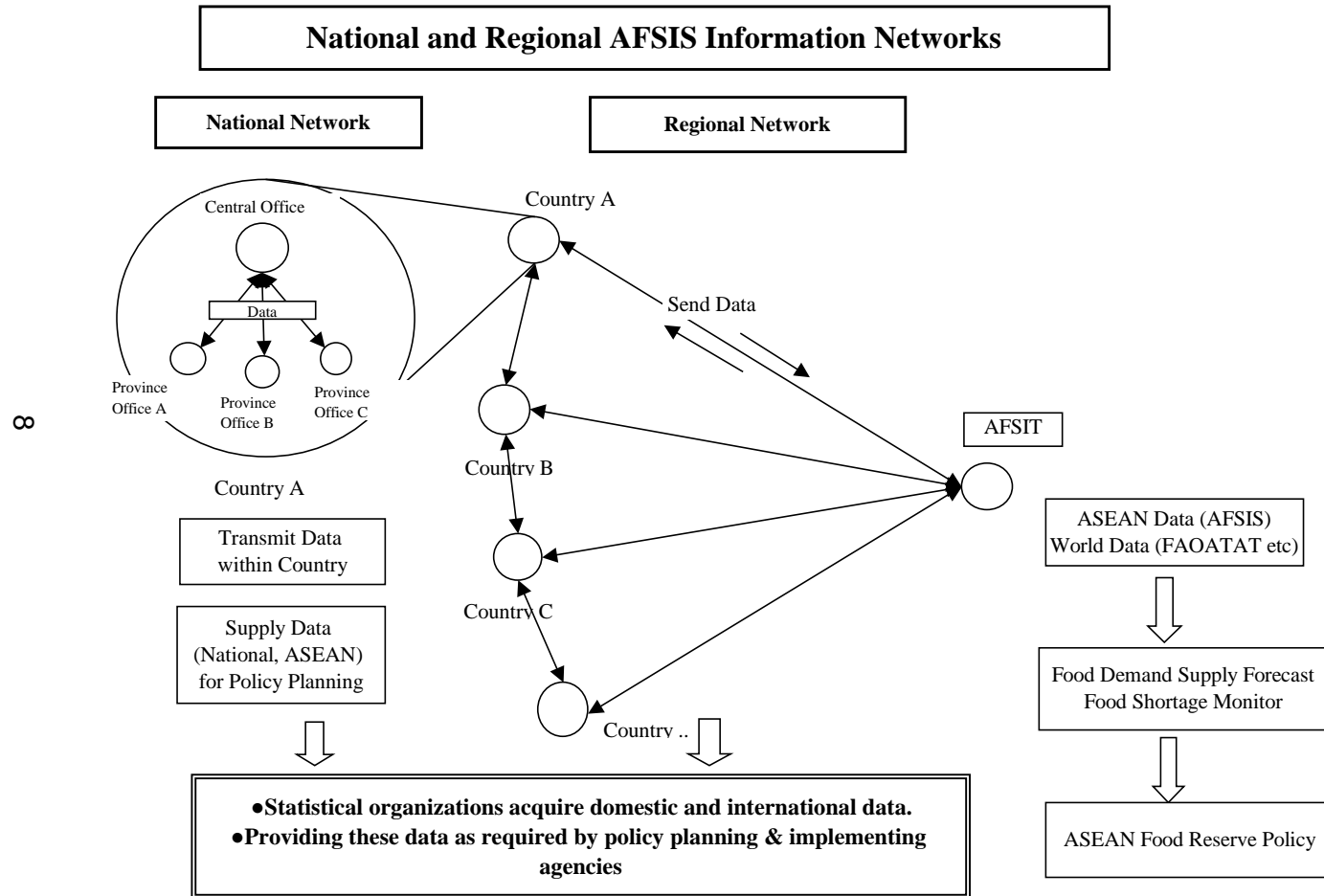
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Note: Training Programs will be discussed and finalized by the AFSIS Focal Point Meeting.

Chart 4

Information Network System Development



The AFSIS Net consists of National Networks and a Regional Network. At the regional level, the Project will establish an information network system on food security covering regional center and member countries, composed of datasets and Internet WebPages. (See **Chart 5** for schematic presentation of Regional Network.)

Building the Regional Network will be conducted in collaboration with participating member countries and an FAO project.<sup>1</sup>

As well as the AFSIS Net at the regional level, each member country will establish its own information network system to manage data/information collecting. Because the input of such information is expected to be large, however, the Project cannot complete the entire national level networks. Instead, the Project will conduct small-scale pilot tests in each member country. The pilot models may differ according to the administrative structure of the statistical institutions, communication situations, etc, in each country. (See **Chart 6** for a schematic presentation of National Network.)

## **B.2 Expected Output of Project**

The AFSIS Project will develop a system of human resources and information networks at both regional and national levels. It will also build capacity in statistics and information in ASEAN member countries.

The Project will help statistical personnel in member countries gain the capacity to plan and implement statistical data collection, analyses and dissemination for their agricultural sectors. Statistical organizations in the member countries will exchange data through the AFSIS Regional Network, connecting member countries with its regional center. Member countries will formulate small preliminary models for their national network and conduct pilot tests.

As a result of member countries' statistical development, their statistical institutions will be able to provide information required for policies, and accurate, reliable and timely information.

## **B.3 Commencement and Duration of the Project**

The AFSIS Project commences in the first quarter of the year 2003, and will be implemented for five years from its commencement.

## **B.4 Institutional Framework of the Project**

Every member country will nominate a **Focal Point** for the Project. Each Focal Point will be responsible for managing and/or assisting in carrying out project activities, ensuring cooperation among national personnel/offices concerned, seeking

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<sup>1</sup> Country Web Pages are planned and developed by the FAO Project "Strengthening Regional Data Exchange System on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries"

# AFSIS Regional Network

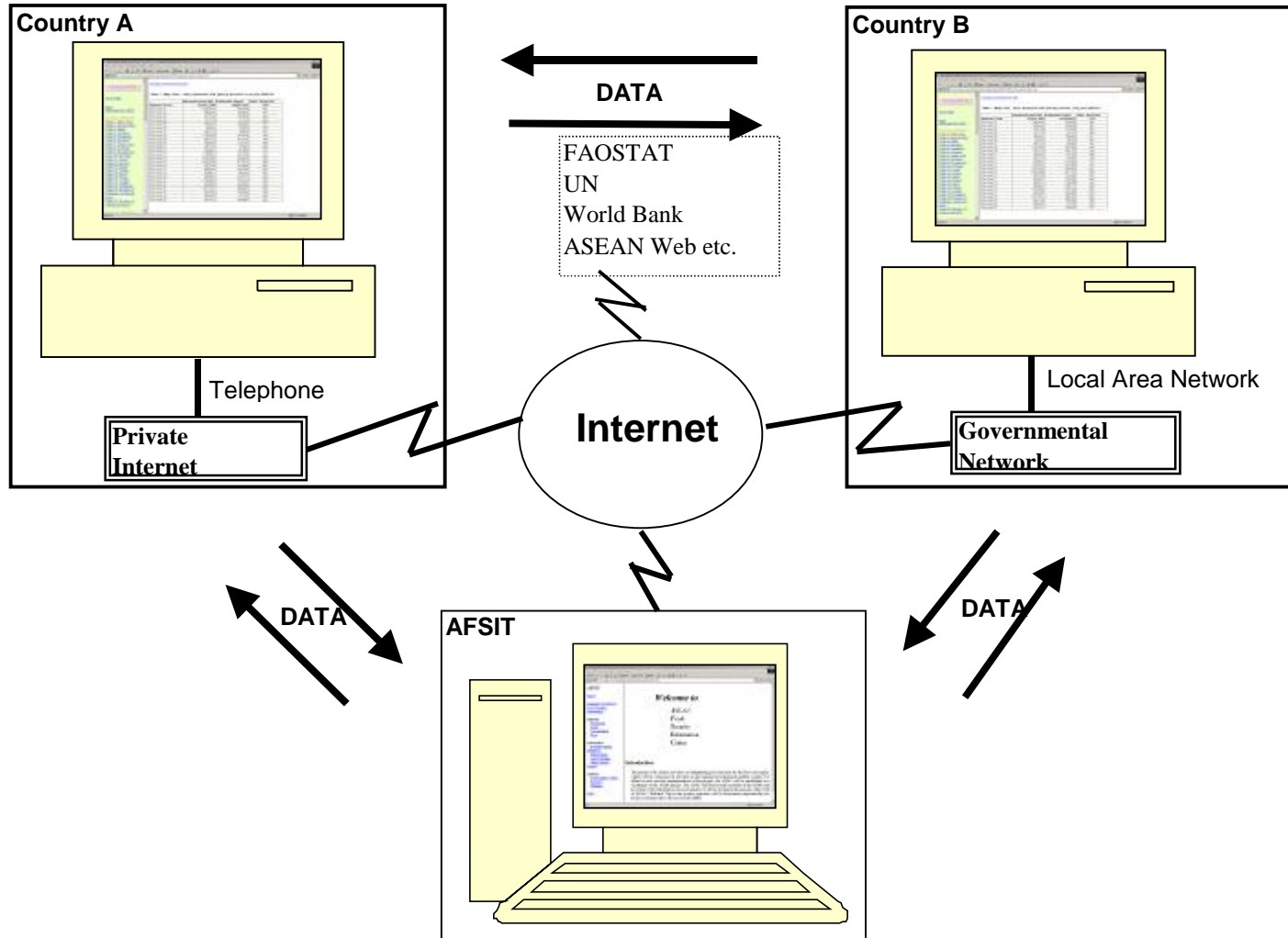
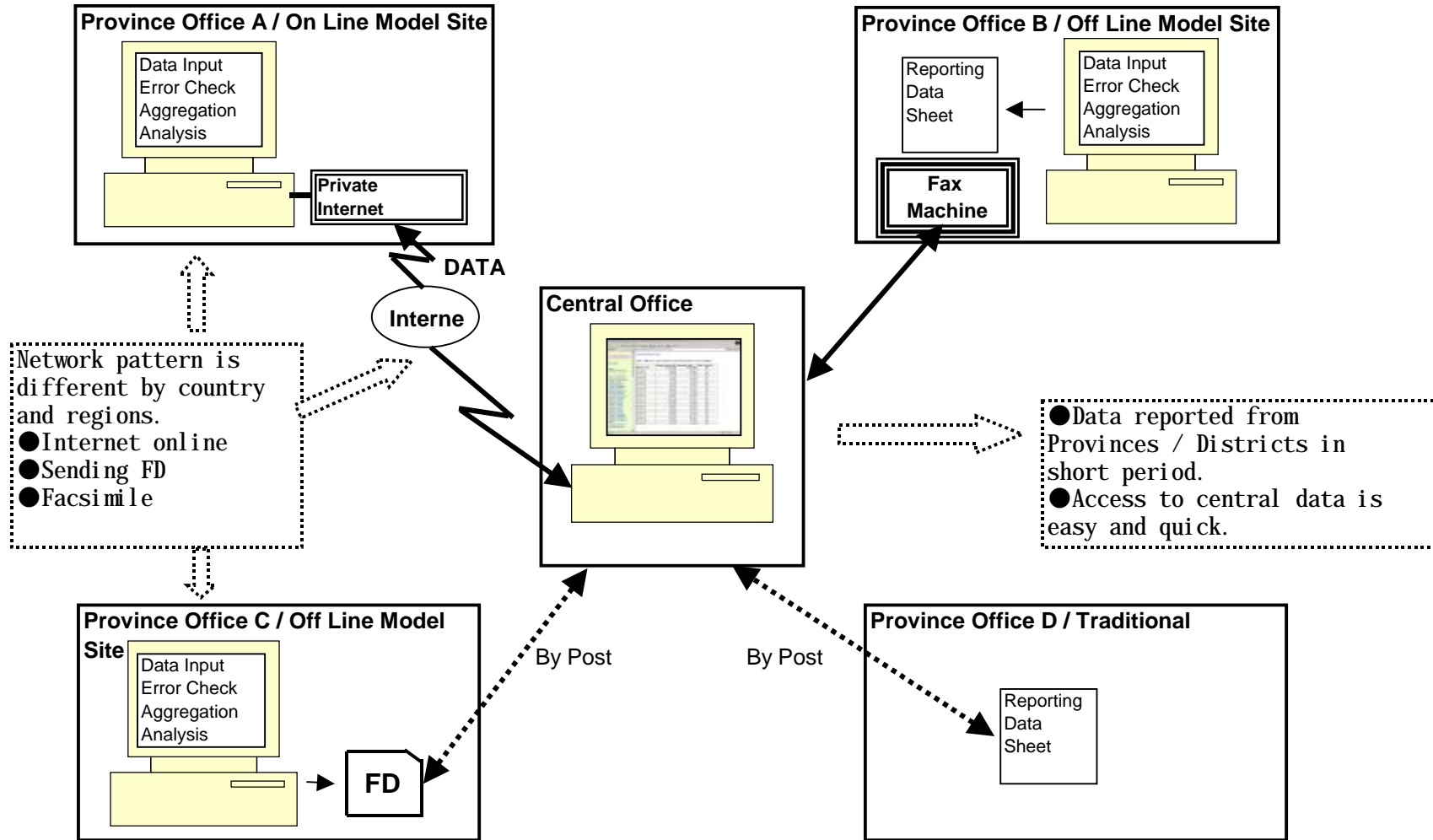


Chart 6

# Information System Development **AFSIS National Network**



appropriate assistance when required and promoting liaison and cooperation with other related projects. A list of expected Focal Points are attached as ANNEX 1.

The **Focal Point Meeting (FPM)** will be the decision-making mechanism of the Project. The FPM will be attended by representatives of Focal Points. The ASEAN Food Security Information and Training Center, as explained later in this section, will perform the function of secretariat. FPMs will be held at least once a year.

The FPM will discuss, review and decide on the following matters:

- a) Detailed work plans of the Project;
- b) Project activities at the regional and national levels; and
- c) Other important matters relevant to the implementation of the Project.

For smooth and efficient management of the AFSIS Project, an **ASEAN Food Security Information and Training Center (AFSIT Center)** will be established. It will function as a secretariat of AFSIS FPM, as a center for regional training and as a hub of information on food security for participating member countries. It will provide whatever services necessary for project activities of member countries. The AFSIT Center will be located in the premises of the Office of Agricultural Economics (OAE), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), Thailand.

A **Coordination Body**, which will be composed of managers of projects related to food security information, i.e. the AFSIS Project, FAO regional project on food and agricultural data exchange system, and JICA project on agricultural statistics and economic analysis development in Thailand, will be organized to discuss efficient cooperation and coordination of these projects' activities. The objective of the Coordinating Body is to produce the maximum combined output by avoiding duplication among projects concerned. In discussing mutual coordination, the Coordinating Body will be guided by decisions made by decision-making bodies of the individual projects.

## **C. PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS**

### **C.1 Basic Objectives**

The basic objective of the project is to strengthen food security in ASEAN countries with the aim of raising people's living standards and nutritional status. It aims to do this through the building of institutional and operational capacities for statistical information systems on food and agriculture in member countries, which will be capable of (i) monitoring and providing food security information for planning and policy making, (ii) collecting accurate and timely statistical data on national level, and (iii) sharing food security data within and between countries through an information network system.

## C.2 Project Targets

Statistical personnel in member countries, as a result of participating in training and seminars conducted through the Project, will be able to plan and implement statistical data collection, analyses and dissemination for the agricultural sector.

An AFSIS Regional Network will be established, connecting the member countries with each other and with the AFSIT Center. Statistical organizations in the member countries will exchange data through the Network. The member countries will formulate their own small preliminary models for their National Networks and conduct pilot tests.

## D. ACTIVITIES

### D.1 Human Resource Development (See *Chart 7* for schedule.)

#### **Activity 1.1 Establishment of ASEAN Food Security Information and Training Center**

The ASEAN Food Security Information and Training Center (AFSIT Center) is established in the premises of OAE of MOAC. It functions as a center for implementing regional level training programs.

#### **Activity 1.2 Planning of Training Programs and Seminars**

AFSIT Center prepares a detailed draft plan for regional training and seminars. FPM considers the draft plan and decides on the plan at its first meeting in the first quarter of 2003.

The plan of training and seminars will be reviewed every year by FPM. Necessary modifications are made following the decision of FPM.

#### **Activity 1.3 Regional Training**

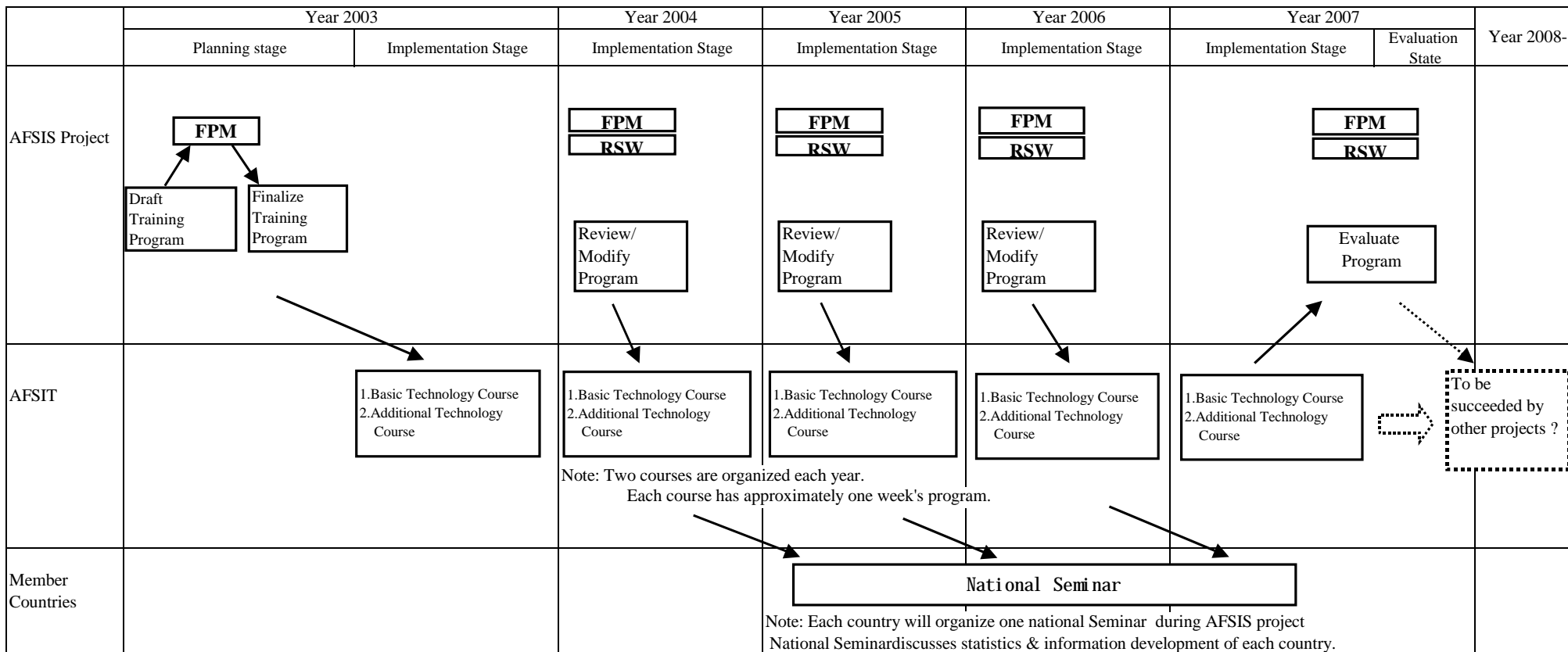
AFSIT Center conducts a regular training program at the regional level. The program consists of **Basic Technology Course** and **Additional Technology Course**. These courses are organized every year. Member countries send their statistical personnel to the training.

The program is formulated so that member countries' personnel working on agricultural statistics and information can be trained or gain knowledge in statistical data collection, analyses and dissemination. Technology, skills and knowledge offered by the program should correspond as much as possible with each country's agricultural situation and statistical development.

AFSIT Center will find trainers, instructors and resource persons for the training from AFSIT Center itself, other national agencies / research institutions from member countries, FAO and other international organizations.

Chart 7

Schedule of Human Resource Development



Notes: FPM = Focal Point Meeting    FPM/RSW = Focal Point Meeting and Regional Workshop / Seminar

## **Activity 1.4 National Seminars**

Member countries organize **National Seminars** to discuss important problems and issues related to agricultural statistics and information. The Seminars also consider the statistics/information development of the country.

In organizing the National Seminar, member countries accept necessary assistance provided by AFSIT Center, for example resource persons, advisors, etc.

## **Activity 1.5 Regional Seminars and Workshops**

AFSIT Center organizes **Regional Seminars and Workshops**, whenever it considers necessary, on subjects and issues related to statistics and information concerning food and agriculture.

In organizing Seminars and Workshops, AFSIT Center may collaborate with other projects working for food and agricultural statistics in the region and member countries. The Seminars and Workshops are convened, when appropriate, back-to-back with FPM to allow as many persons as possible to participate in them.

### **D.2 Information Network System Development (See *Chart 8* for schedule.)**

#### **Activity 2.1 Planning of Information Network System**

As the AFSIS Project starts, an overall plan for information network development will be formulated. The plan will outline the scope of information to be collected by AFSIS and shared by member countries through AFSIS Net or other means. It will also set out the structure / configuration of AFSIS Net. The First FPM will discuss and finalize the plan.

Contents of food security information to be included in the AFSIS Net will be reviewed and modified every year by the FPM. If it proves to be necessary, Regional Seminars and Workshops will discuss the detail.

Eventually, AFSIS Net will consist of National Networks and the Regional Network. AFSIS Project will start building the Regional Network first. The National Networks will be pilot-tested on a small scale later during the Project period.

#### **Activity 2.2 Building Regional Network**

##### **(1) Information to be Exchanged**

Information to be exchanged by the Regional Network consists of Center Information and Country Information. The former will be prepared by AFSIT Center and shown on the "AFSIT Web Page". The latter is prepared by the member countries and posted on "Country Web Pages".



## **(1) Install Network: Hardware, Software and Data**

Software for the AFSIS Web Pages for AFSIT Center and Countries is designed and programmed by an FAO project<sup>1</sup>. Customization to fit country situations will be done by the AFSIS Project. Each member country will upload data to its Web Pages<sup>2</sup>.

Personal computers will be installed in each member country and at AFSIT Center. Later on, additional computers will be installed for data use and analysis. Member countries will open Country Web Pages, either using existing Web Sites in appropriate government offices or by contracting with an Internet provider.

### **Activity 2.3 Data Exchange and Utilization through the Network**

Each member country will acquire statistical data from AFSIT Center and other member countries through AFSIS Net. Member countries will analyze the data and provide the results to policy planning / implementing agencies. They will also provide country data to other countries' users by uploading to their Country Web Pages. AFSIT Center will undertake its own data / information collecting activities. Data collected by AFSIT Center will be provided through the AFSIT Web Pages. (See **Chart 9** for possible contents of AFSIS Net information.)

AFSIT Center will assist member countries by providing necessary technical guidance and organizing seminars and workshops on information system management and data utilization<sup>3</sup>.

### **Activity 2.4 Pilot Testing of National Networks**

Each member country will conduct a small-scale pilot testing of its National Network. For this purpose, additional computer hardware will be installed in member countries. Detailed testing plans will be formulated in the later stage of the Project.

## **E. COST AND FINANCING**

### **E.1 The Trust Fund**

The Project will be implemented with financial support from a Trust Fund, which the MAFF Japan has agreed to provide over a period of five Japanese Fiscal Years, starting with FY 2002

Basically, the annual fund should be spent year by year. However, if a balance accrues from the annual fund, it could be carried forward to the next year's budget.

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<sup>1</sup> Project "Strengthening Regional Data Exchange System on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries" GCP RAS JPN

<sup>2</sup> Costs of initial data input will be supported by the AFSIS Project

<sup>3</sup> FAO Project on Regional Data Exchange System assists AFSIT Center and member countries in the network management



















