**Note on potential inconsistency in the Population Statistics**

**to be published in FAOSTAT**

**17 September 2019**

This brief note describes a problem of comparability that arose during the update of the Population Statistics to be published in FAOSTAT. Certain FAOSTAT aggregates are not consistent with those reported by the UN Population Department (UNPD).

**Guidance in sought on the best strategy to publish consistent and accurate information on population in FAOSTAT.**

The UNPD calculates regional aggregates by applying the *present* country allocation to regions in every period. Instead, FAOSTAT normally applies the *historical* country allocation and geo-political structure when computing aggregates.

The main example is the USSR prior to year 1992.

In most key FAOSTAT domains, particularly production and trade, data for the countries that were part of the USSR were split between Europe and Asia only after 1992. The UNPD aggregated figures for Europe and Asia prior to that year, instead, contain estimates for the countries of the former USSR consistent with the current assignments to Europe and Asia, respectively. Thus the pre-1992 population of e.g. Ukraine is found in the UNPD aggregate “Europe” for that same period; while the pre-1992 population data for Kazakhstan is found in the UNPD aggregate “Asia” for that same period.

For this reason, the pre 1992 aggregated population figures computed by the UNPD are different from those employed in the SWS and in FAOSTAT to compute per capita indicators.

Two options can be considered to address this issue.

Either: *the UNPD aggregates are published in the FAOSTAT population domain as they are*; in this case the production and trade per capita in FAOSTAT would not be consistent with the Population figures, as FAOSTAT uses the historical country aggregation to define regions and the sum of available national data to produce aggregates; users trying to combine population data with FAOSTAT data may be confused.

Or: *the population aggregates published in the FAOSTAT population domain are re-computed to follow the use in the SWS and key FAOSTAT domains*; in this case the production and trade per capita in FAOSTAT would be consistent with the Population figures; but the pre-1992 population aggregates for Asia and Europe would be different from those published by the UNPD.

**Guidance is sought on the two proposed solutions**, or any other feasible approach that addresses the issues highlighted. A note of caution would in any case be added to the metadata, to make users aware of the issue when using population statistics for re-computing per capita values shown under other FAOSTAT domains.