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Progress in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator Reporting

Executive summary

In its capacity as the custodian agency for 22 SDG indicators and contributing to an additional five, FAO recognizes the importance of enhancing the capacity of Member countries for effectively measuring and reporting on SDG indicators. Central to this endeavor is the monitoring of progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which stands as a paramount priority within the purview of FAO's mission.

This paper delves into the progression of Latin American and Caribbean countries' reporting capabilities and data availability on 21 SDG indicators under FAO's custodianship, by assessing how the average reporting rate¹ in the region compares to the world average over time. A separate LACCAS paper has been submitted to discuss the addition of the Minimum Dietary Diversity Indicator as a new SDG indicator, including plans for data reporting from 2025 on.

Suggested actions by LACCAS

The Commission is invited to provide guidance on recommended actions and priorities for technical support on:

- LACCAS members' capacity to produce, disseminate and use the 22 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship and to monitor the implementation of SDGs more generally, and capacity development needs;
- possible solutions to significantly increase reporting rates in the Latin American region for under-reported SDG indicators and for indicators where the world reporting averages are significantly higher (e.g. SDG indicators 2.3.1/2.3.2 and 5.a.1), as well as for most SDG indicators under FAO custodianship under-reported in the Caribbean region (i.e. SDG indicators 2.1.1, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.c.1, 5.a.1/5.a.2, 14.4.1 and 15.4.2).

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¹ The reporting rate is calculated based on the criterion that a country is considered to have reported on a specific indicator if it has provided data for at least one year within the five years prior to the reference year.

I. Introduction

1. The FAO Statistics Division, as the responsible unit for coordinating the Organization's work to monitor the SDG indicators under FAO custodianship, coordinates the development of methods and standards for those indicators, and provides technical assistance and capacity development support to member countries. In order to implement its tasks effectively and efficiently by providing comprehensive guidance to member countries and FAO technical units in charge of the compilation of SDG indicators, the Statistics Division assesses countries' statistical capacity on SDG indicators related to food and agriculture by tracking the number of indicators that countries are able to report on (referred to as "reporting rate").

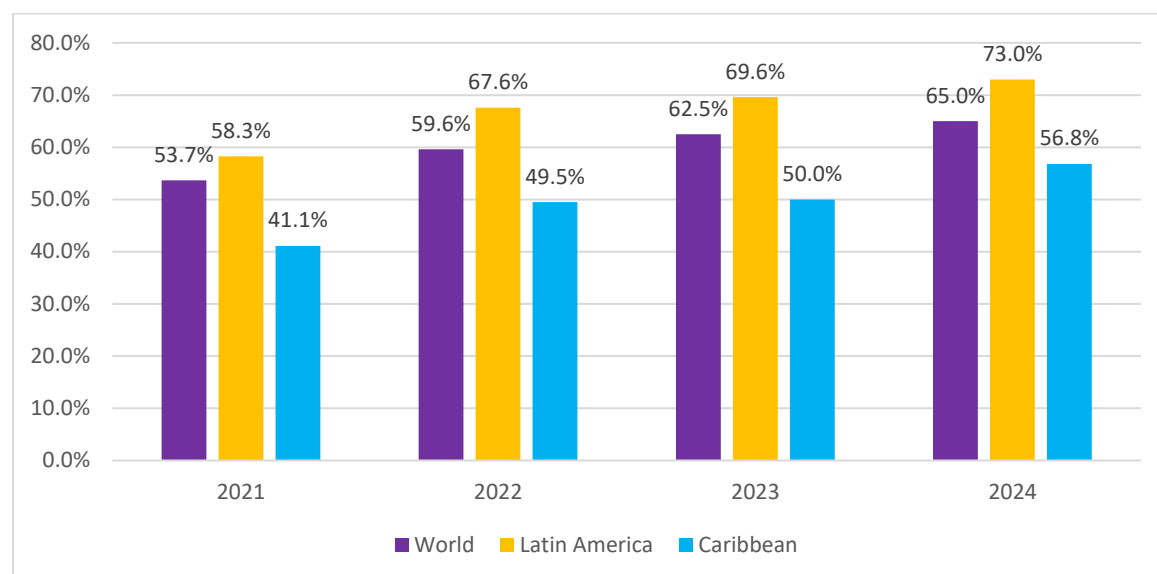
2. It should be noted at the outset that average reporting rates at regional level in this document have been calculated on the basis of FAO's former custodianship of 21 indicators, whereas today, FAO is the custodian agency of 22 SDG indicators. FAO's new custodianship of an additional SDG indicator – the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) – is the result of extensive deliberations and consultation in the framework of the 2025 Comprehensive Review of the SDG indicator framework starting in January 2024, and culminating in the final approval of the new indicator by the UN Statistical Commission at its 56th session on 4-7 March 2025. A separate LACCAS paper number LACCAS/32/3.3 provides further details on this process, on the methodological aspects of the MDD-W and plans for data reporting. In the current document, individual reporting rates on the MDD-W (listed as SDG Indicator 2.2.4.b) are reported, but not taken into account in global and regional reporting rates, which are only calculated once a year in July.

II. Recent developments in SDG reporting in Latin America and the Caribbean region

3. The Statistics Division, alongside other statistical units, the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Sub-regional Office for the Caribbean, has collaborated closely with countries in the region to bolster their capacities in collecting, processing, analyzing, and disseminating data related to food, agriculture, and rural sectors. This collaborative effort encompasses a spectrum of activities, including the collection, processing, analysis, validation, and dissemination of food and agricultural statistics. Over the past five years, several countries in the region participated in one or more training sessions or received technical assistance from FAO. Some 22 countries received capacity development support on measuring sustainable agriculture (SDG Indicator 2.4.1); 6 countries on measuring hunger and food insecurity (SDG Indicators 2.1.1/2.1.2), 11 countries on measuring the productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers (SDG Indicators 2.3.1/2.3.2); 18 countries on measuring public investment in agriculture (SDG Indicator 2.a.1); 10 countries on measuring women's access to land (SDG Indicators 5.a.1/5.a.2); 11 countries in measuring food losses (SDG Indicator 12.3.1.a); 20 countries in measuring water use efficiency and (SDG Indicator 6.4.1/6.4.2); 22 countries on measuring fish stock sustainability (SDG Indicator 14.4.1 - more detailed in the fisheries paper for LACCAS/32/7.2), and 17 countries on measuring forest area and sustainable forest management (SDG Indicators 15.1.1/15.2.1).

4. These efforts are gradually bearing fruit, as illustrated in Figure 1 below, which shows that the average reporting rate for all countries has grown over time in all regions, including Latin America and the Caribbean, and the world as a whole. In Latin America, the average reporting rate outpaces both the global and the Caribbean aggregate. For the Caribbean, while the average reporting rate has grown from 41.1 percent in 2021 to 56.8 percent in 2024, the sub region has consistently lagged behind the global average and the Latin America average. In other words, whereas the average Latin American country is currently able to report on close to three quarters of the SDG indicators under FAO custodianship, the average Caribbean country is able to report on just over half of the indicators. However, the Caribbean is catching up and reducing the gap with the global average, which stands at 8 percent in 2024 compared to 12.6 percent in 2021.

Figure 1: Average country reporting rate on the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship.

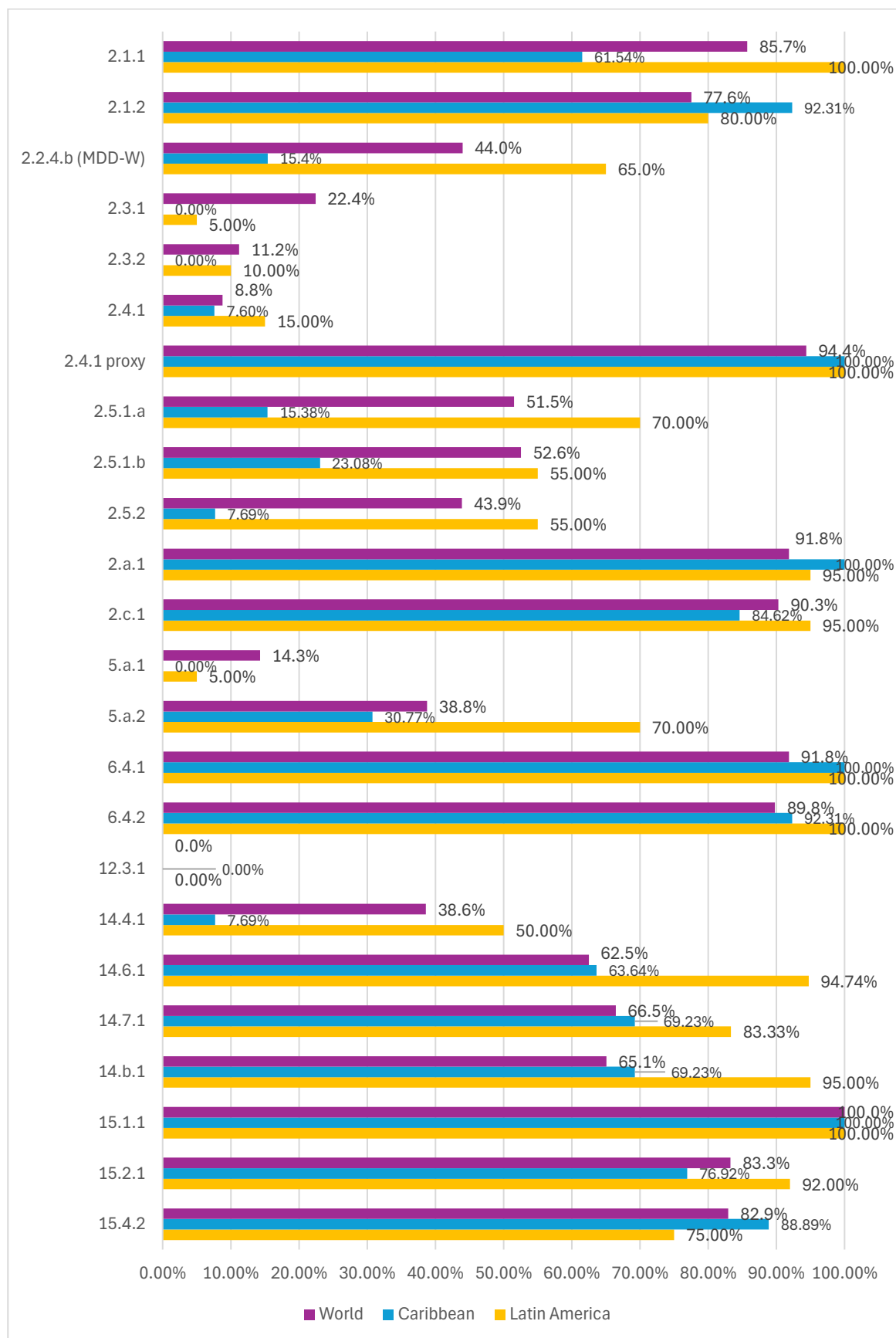


Note: To observe the evolution over time of the reporting rate for the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship, we haven't included the new indicator 2.2.4 (b) to this graph.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

5. The observed disparity in the average reporting rates within the Latin America and Caribbean region, relative to the global average, is contingent upon the individual reporting rates associated with each of the SDG indicators under the custodianship of FAO. Figure 2 below illustrates the average reporting rates for 2024 pertaining to each of the 22 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship in Latin America, the Caribbean and the world, including the new SDG Indicator 2.2.4.b.

Figure 2: Comparison of the average reporting rate for SDG indicators under FAO custodianship in Latin America, Caribbean and the world



Source: Authors' own elaboration

6. In Latin America, the reporting rate exceeds the world average for SDG indicators 2.1.1/2.1.2 (undernourishment and food insecurity), 2.5.1.a/2.5.1.b (plant and animal genetic resources conserved in gene banks), 2.5.2 (risk status of livestock breeds), 2.a.1 (public expenditure in agriculture), 2.c.1 (food price volatility), 5.a.2 (protection of women's land rights), 6.4.1/6.4.2 (water use efficiency and water stress), 14.4.1/14.b.1/14.6.1/14.7.1 (fisheries sustainability), 15.1.1/15.2.1 (Forest area and sustainable forest management). Conversely, the average reporting rate for Latin American countries falls short of the world average for SDG 2.3.1/2.3.2 (productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers), 5.a.1 (women's ownership of agricultural land) and 15.4.2 (mountain health and degradation).

7. Among the SDG indicators where the average reporting rate for Latin America is below the global average, SDG 2.3.1 (productivity of small-scale food producers) and SDG 5.a.1 (women's ownership of agricultural land) are the indicators where the gap is the greatest, 17.4 and 9.3 percentage points respectively. These two indicators have one of the lowest reporting rates overall, due to the difficulty of collecting data. The computation of SDG 2.3.1/2.3.2 requires survey microdata collected at the farm level through a single survey or through agricultural surveys - when available - that provide data on agricultural production. Similarly, SDG 5.a.1 can be obtained through agricultural surveys or household surveys. However, in many countries agricultural surveys are seldom conducted on a systematic and complete basis, especially at the level of the holding. To fill the data gap and support the development of a sustainable system of farm surveys for both SDG 2.3.1/2.3.2 and 5.a.1, FAO developed the Agricultural Integrated Surveys (AGRISurvey) project. AGRISurvey proposes a set of integrated farm-level surveys, bridging the 10-year gap that normally exists between Agricultural Censuses. By integrating farm-level surveys, AGRISurvey aims to provide more timely and regular data on agriculture, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of policymaking and monitoring progress toward SDGs.

8. Turning to the Caribbean region, the average reporting rate significantly lags behind both the world and Latin America for SDG indicators 2.1.1 (prevalence of undernourishment), 2.5.1.a/2.5.1.b (plant and animal genetic resources conserved in gene banks), 2.5.2 (risk status of livestock breeds), 2.c.1 (food price volatility), 5.a.2 (protection of women's land rights), 14.4.1 (fish stock sustainability) and 15.2.1 (sustainable forest management). Moreover, there is no country in the Caribbean that has reported on SDG indicators 2.3.1/2.3.2 rendering the measurement of productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers infeasible. Similarly, as of end of 2024, no country in the Caribbean has reported on SDG indicator 5.a.1. As explained above, both 2.3.1/2.3.2 and 5.a.1 can be produced from agricultural surveys, provided that they are appropriately adapted to this purpose and are conducted on a regular basis.

9. Caribbean countries are clearly in need of additional support on SDG 2.5.1.a/2.5.1.b (plant and animal genetic resources conserved in gene banks) and 2.5.2 (risk status of livestock breeds) with gaps close to 37 percentage points compared to the global average. The Caribbean also significantly lags behind the Latin America reporting average (50 percentage points) and the global reporting average (38.6 percentage points) on SDG indicator 14.4.1 with a reporting rate close to 8 percent. Computing SDG indicator 14.4.1 is an arduous process, as it requires a combination of catch and fishing effort data, biological data, and the scientific expertise to perform the fish stock assessments. FAO is continuing to support countries in this regard through a variety of capacity development initiatives, including training and technical assistance, as well as an e-learning course available on the FAO e-learning academy.

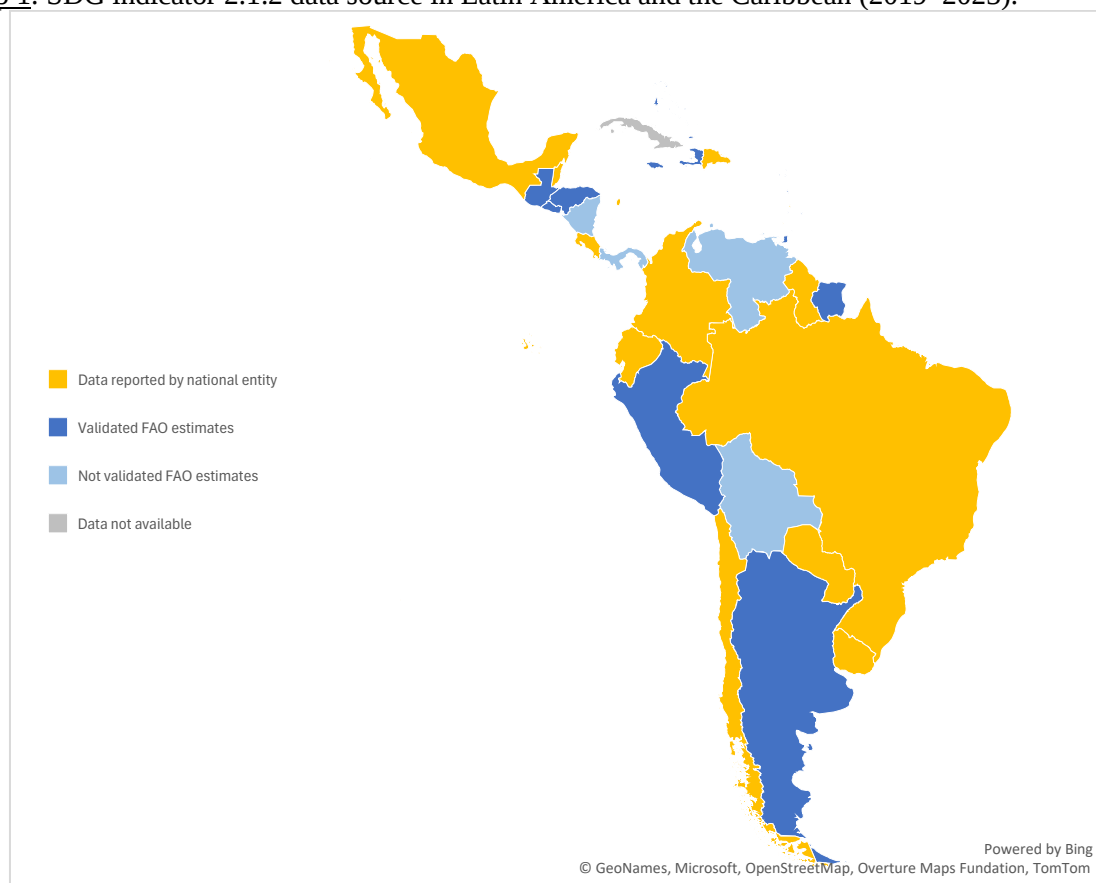
10. Regarding the new SDG Indicator 2.2.4 (MDD-W), which assesses the prevalence of minimum dietary diversity among non-pregnant women aged 15 to 49 years, in Latin America, 65 percent of countries are able to report, a figure above the global average reporting rate which stands at 54.9 percent. However, the Caribbean region is far behind both the Latin American and the global average, with a reporting rate close to 15.5 percent. This highlights the need to step up support Caribbean countries in the reporting of this new indicator.

11. Both Latin American and Caribbean countries are all reporting on SDG indicator 6.4.1 (water use efficiency), 15.1.1 (forest area) and the 2.4.1 proxy (progress toward productive and sustainable agriculture). Monitoring progress with the official SDG indicator 2.4.1 has been challenging for countries, due to the large variety of data required and the need to have a robust farm survey system in place to collect this data. Indeed, reporting rates on the official SDG indicator 2.4.1 have been very low – only 12.1 percent for the entire region and with only one country in the Caribbean reporting this indicator. As an interim solution, FAO has developed a 2.4.1 proxy to provide a measure of country, regional and global progress toward sustainable agriculture. Further details on the rationale and methodology of the 2.4.1 proxy indicator are provided in LACCAS/32/3.3.

12. Overall, there is a consistent disparity in reporting rates between the two regions, with the Caribbean consistently falling below the Latin American average across most indicators. This gap is particularly notable for SDG Indicators 2.1.1, 2.5.1.a/2.5.1.b, 2.5.2, 5.a.2, and 14.4.1, where reporting rates in the Caribbean are 38 to nearly 55 percentage points lower than those in Latin America. These findings yield one inescapable conclusion. The Caribbean as a whole faces the risk of being left behind in SDG reporting and missing out on the benefits of enhanced data availability in SDG indicators related to food and agriculture. Such data can serve as a vital catalyst in the transformation of agrifood systems aimed at eradicating hunger and malnutrition. Consequently, there is an urgent need for increased efforts from donors, the international community, and FAO to invest in statistical capacity development initiatives in this region. Even if there have been historical tendencies or practical reasons to allocate more capacity development resources to other subregions, it is imperative to boost and scale up investments in the Caribbean to foster better data collection and reporting capacities.

13. A notable exception to the general pattern outlined above is SDG indicator 2.1.2 (prevalence of food insecurity). While both Latin America and the Caribbean achieve a high reporting rate for this indicator, the Caribbean exceeds Latin America with 92 and 80 percent respectively. This indicator measures the percentage of individuals in the population who have experienced moderate or severe food insecurity, based on responses to a set of eight questions regarding people's access to food. Since 2014, FAO is supporting countries to collect this indicator through national household surveys. In the absence of survey data, FAO may collect data on SDG indicator 2.1.2 through the Gallup World Poll, which it then submits to country authorities for validation. To an important extent, this high reporting rate can be attributed to FAO's particular efforts to develop the capacity to Caribbean countries in collecting SDG indicator 2.1.2 in the region. Furthermore, Map 1 below also shows that among the countries that do not have their own survey data to produce SDG indicator 2.1.2, some have validated FAO estimates based on Gallup World Poll data (dark blue), whereas others have not (light blue). The fact there several countries in Central and South America have not validated FAO estimates is also a contributing factor to the lower reporting rate of Latin America compared to the Caribbean.

Map 1: SDG indicator 2.1.2 data source in Latin America and the Caribbean (2019–2023).



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Source: FAO. 2025. FAO SDG Indicators Data Portal: SDG Indicator 2.1.2. <https://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals-data-portal/data/en>. [Accessed December 2024]. Licence: CC-BY-4.0.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

14. In conclusion, while the Latin American and Caribbean region has made substantial progress in reporting on the SDGs, significant disparities remain within the region, particularly between Latin America on the one side, and the Caribbean on the other. Latin America is performing well overall, with average reporting rates for several SDG indicators surpassing global averages. However, the Caribbean region faces challenges, with reporting rates significantly lagging behind both the global average and Latin America. Notably, Caribbean countries have struggled with collecting reliable data on several of the SDG 2 indicators under FAO custodianship, indicators related to women's land rights, and fish stock assessment.

15. Addressing this situation requires concerted action at both national and regional levels. FAO's commitment to supporting countries in this endeavour is evident through its comprehensive capacity development initiatives. Moreover, FAO's online e-learning Academy offers countries accessible opportunities for enhancing their understanding and reporting of SDG indicators under FAO's purview. By leveraging these resources and collaborative efforts, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean can strive towards fulfilling the global commitment to SDG reporting and advancing sustainable development agendas.