



## Back to Office Report

Date: 30 March 2026

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| 1. Reference       | MRS/2026/03/xxx                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 2. Description     | <p>Through a USD 1.58 million 3-years support action, ESTELLA delivers a regional digital public good that integrates Earth Observation, field surveys, and farmer registries, transforming how agricultural data is produced and used. ESTELLA is a three-year UNECA–FAO initiative to modernize agricultural statistics in Africa using Earth Observation, geospatial surveys, and policy-driven applications. The project target countries are: Kenya, Senegal, and Zimbabwe.</p> <p>The mission comprised the organization and delivery of a regional technical workshop under the ESTELLA initiative, bringing together national, regional, and international stakeholders to strengthen the operational use of Earth Observation (EO) data for agricultural statistics, crop monitoring, and decision-making.</p> <p>The mission included preparatory technical coordination meetings, delivery of structured plenary and hands-on training sessions, facilitation of institutional dialogue, and consolidation of regional collaboration mechanisms.</p> <p>This report summarizes key discussions during the event.</p> |
| 3. Mission members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andre Nonguierma, Chief, Geospatial Information Management Section (Project Manager)</li> <li>• Ayalnesh Asrat (Programme Assistant)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 4. Venue and Dates | <p>Location: Accra (Ghana)</p> <p>Date: 27 March 2026</p> <p>Duration: 3 Days</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 5. Purpose         | The purpose of the mission was to support African countries and regional institutions in operationalizing Earth Observation technologies within agricultural statistics systems, and to advance ESTELLA as a regional digital public good anchored in institutional processes and regional collaboration.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 6. Objectives      | <p>The workshop aimed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen institutional capacity for the operational use of EO in agriculture</li> <li>• Demonstrate practical integration of EO data with agricultural surveys and statistical frameworks</li> <li>• Promote harmonized, validated, and scalable methodologies</li> <li>• Strengthen collaboration among national institutions, regional centres, and technical partners</li> <li>• Lay the foundation for sustainable adoption and scaling of ESTELLA approaches.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |





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| <p><b>7. Collaborating Divisions:</b><br/><i>SRO(s), IDEP and Partner Organisations, Team members</i></p> | <p>The workshop brought together participants from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Statistical Office (Ghana Statistics Services)</li> <li>• National Mapping Agency (Survey Department)</li> <li>• Other national stakeholders including CERGIS, GSSTI, etc..</li> <li>• Ministries of Agriculture and related technical agencies</li> <li>• Regional Centres of Excellence (including AGRHYMET, RCMRD)</li> <li>• Academic and research institutions Technical partners and development organizations including: FAO, University Catholique de Louvain (UCL); Vito ; European Space Agency (ESA)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p><b>8. Background and Context</b></p>                                                                   | <p>ESTELLA, an initiative jointly implemented by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the Food and Agriculture Organization, responds to this challenge with clarity and ambition. It brings together Earth Observation, survey data, and farmer registries into a single operational framework that delivers timely, validated, and actionable crop information.</p> <p>What distinguishes ESTELLA is not the novelty of its tools, but the rigor of its design. Its methods are aligned with official statistics standards, its data are validated against field observations, and its platforms are open, interoperable, and scalable.</p> <p>Pilots in Kenya, Senegal, and Zimbabwe demonstrate what is possible when innovation meets institutional ownership. From improved drought early warning to smarter survey design and registry-linked services, ESTELLA shows how data can serve farmers, planners, and policymakers alike.</p> <p>Equally important, ESTELLA is anchored in Africa's regional institutions. By working through existing Centres of Excellence, it strengthens regional capacity, avoids duplication, and ensures sustainability beyond project cycles.</p> <p>Ultimately, ESTELLA is about trust in data, in institutions, and in collective action. It is about ensuring that no farmer remains invisible, and no policy is built on guesswork.</p> <p>This initiative invites partners to invest not just in technology, but in systems that turn information into foresight and resilience into reality.</p> |
| <p><b>9. Brief Summary</b><br/><i>(Key Results, Proposed Action, Decisions)</i></p>                       | <p><b>4.1 Earth Observation for Agriculture</b><br/>Participants were introduced to EO concepts, satellite missions (Sentinel-1 and Sentinel-2), and their relevance for crop monitoring, phenology analysis, and environmental assessment.</p> <p><b>4.2 Integration with Surveys and Statistics</b><br/>Sessions emphasized that EO data must be anchored in statistically sound survey designs. Discussions focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Georeferencing requirements</li> <li>• Sampling frames and validation</li> <li>• Error measurement and uncertainty</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |





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|                                       | <p>Participants reaffirmed that EO complements and do not replace traditional surveys and official statistics.</p> <p><b>4.3 Operational Workflows and Hands-On Exercises</b></p> <p>Hands-on sessions allowed participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access EO data and platforms</li> <li>• Generate crop type maps and biophysical indicators</li> <li>• Explore validation methods and quality control</li> <li>• Understand cost-efficiency and timeliness gains</li> </ul> <p>These sessions were highlighted as a major strength of the workshop.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 10. Implications for future: ECA Work | <p>The workshop highlighted several areas requiring continued engagement from ECA/ACS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration is essential: Earth Observation strengthens agricultural statistics only when combined with georeferenced surveys and sound statistical frameworks.</li> <li>• Institutions matter: Technology alone does not transform systems; institutional ownership and collaboration do.</li> <li>• Regional anchors are critical: Regional Centres of Excellence are central to sustainability, harmonization, and scaling.</li> <li>• Operational focus: Hands-on, practical capacity building is key to translating innovation into impact.</li> <li>• Efficiency gains: EO integration can improve timeliness, granularity, and cost-efficiency of agricultural statistics.</li> </ul>             |
| 11. Follow-up Actions:                | <p>Based on workshop findings and recommendations, the proposed Next Steps include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Immediate (0–6 months) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize follow-up technical coordination meetings with regional centres.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Medium-term (6–18 months) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support national institutions in adapting survey protocols for EO compatibility.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Long-term (18+ months) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate ESTELLA outputs with existing regional early warning and monitoring platforms</li> <li>• Mobilize additional resources for scaling beyond pilot countries</li> <li>• Document lessons learned and best practices for dissemination across UNECA programmes.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> |
| 12. Attachments:                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Workshop Concept Note</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

