HARVESTING OPEN DATA FOR NUTRITION SECURITY

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A world-wide movement is under way to make data available for public use, with the expectation that open data will generate new insights, drive better decision-making, enable governments and civil society and the private sector to better target interventions and programs, improve service delivery, spur innovation, strengthen accountability, and create whole new kinds of value and growth. FAO estimates that one in nine people suffer from malnutrition today and that malnutrition is a major barrier to sustainable development. As world population approaches 10 billion people over the next 30 years, global demand for food, feed and fiber is predicted to nearly double. Increased availability and more effective use of research and programmatic data have the potential to be powerful drivers toward achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals. Countries, including the U.S., have adopted open data policies and are creating the infrastructure to make available at no cost the scholarly publications and underlying data that are the result of public investment in research along with many administrative data sets. Companies are also recognizing benefits to participating in the open data movement. More than 160 governments, companies and non-governmental organizations have joined a partnership called Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) that supports making data relevant to agriculture and nutrition available and accessible for unrestricted use worldwide. GODAN encourages collaboration and cooperation among existing agriculture and nutrition open data activities without duplication, and seeks to bring together stakeholders to tackle long-standing global problems. A rich data infrastructure is emerging with data from: advanced technologies from field sensors to satellites; genetic sequencing of crops, livestock and their disease and pest species; through supply chain and market data. Sophisticated analytical tools and algorithms are also being made publicly available. Focused public-private collaborations to address the world's nutrition security problems will be needed to unlock the potential of open data for nutrition security.