

**EIGHTH MEETING
OF THE FAO SOUTH WEST PACIFIC MINISTERS FOR AGRICULTURE**
Alofi, Niue, 20 to 22 May 2009

COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The Eighth Meeting of the FAO South West Pacific Ministers for Agriculture was convened in Alofi, Niue from 20 to 22 May 2009. The opening ceremony took place at the Matavai Resort on 20 May in the afternoon, while the Meeting proper was held at the Millennium Hall on 21 and 22 May 2009. In attendance were Ministers from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tonga and Tuvalu. Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu sent delegations to represent the countries. The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the FAO Subregional Representative for the Pacific Islands also attended. Representatives from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Pacific Islands Trade and Investment Commission (PITIC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the University of the South Pacific (USP) attended as observers. On the invitation of FAO, a representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) gave a presentation on the A/H1N1 influenza.

2. The FAO Director-General, Dr Jacques Diouf, delivered the keynote address. The Meeting was opened by the Acting Premier of Niue, Hon. O'love Jacobsen.

3. The outgoing chair, Hon. Mattlan Zackhras from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, made a short statement following which the Hon. Pokotoa Sipeli, Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Niue, was unanimously elected as Chairperson of the Eighth Meeting of the FAO South West Pacific Ministers for Agriculture.

THE THEME

4. The Meeting adopted *Earning a living from agriculture* as the theme for their Eighth Meeting. The theme reflects on the importance of agriculture for income generation, employment and food security.

FAO ACTIVITIES IN THE PACIFIC, 2007- 4/2009: AN OVERVIEW

5. The Meeting welcomed information provided on activities and acknowledged the value and relevance of the main highlights of FAO assistance and support to the region. The performance of the multi-disciplinary team in the Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP) was positively recognized. In this regard the Meeting noted that FAO is developing partnerships with international and regional organizations.

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MEMBER STATES AND FAO

Multi-Country National Medium-Term Priority Framework (NMTPF)

6. Reviewing the multi-country National Medium-Term Priority Framework, the Meeting supported in general the enhanced strategic approach adopted by FAO as an

important tool to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the assistance in the region. It recognized that programme outcomes and results should guide programme formulation and implementation. The Meeting agreed to endorse the NMTPF document as framework for FAO assistance to the region for the period 2009 – 2012.

7. The Meeting noted the proposal for the Pacific region to be the pilot region for the implementation of the outcomes of the FAO High Level Conference held in Rome in June 2008, in particular the twin issues of climate change and food security.

Implementation of the NMTPF

Strengthening Agricultural Policy Development in the Pacific Region

8. The Meeting recognized that in order to earn a living from agriculture, it is imperative to strengthen the policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks. The Meeting requested FAO and other relevant partners to assist with strengthening national capacity for informed policy formulation.

Agriculture for Growth –Learning from Experience in the Pacific

9. The Meeting endorsed the proposed *Agriculture for Growth* study as a valuable means to gain a better understanding of the conditions necessary for successful commercial agriculture. The Meeting advised that partnership in the study, particularly from government ministry staff in the study teams, would enhance ownership and improve the likelihood of the adaptation of lessons learned.

Improving Sustainable Agriculture Productivity and Enhancing Competitiveness

10. The Meeting requested FAO and regional partners to assist the Pacific Island Countries in strengthening productivity of farming systems and, in particular, promote efforts for the conservation and protection of agricultural land. The Meeting urged the countries to further improve extension and research services, technology transfer for livestock and plants, and capacity building in biosecurity.

11. The Meeting requested continued FAO support for further development of organic agriculture in Pacific Island Countries and stressed that the commercialization of farming should be pursued.

Enhancing Competitiveness through Agribusiness and Marketing

12. The Meeting requested FAO and other development partners to provide assistance to enhance countries' capacity in food processing and value adding for agricultural and fisheries products, including the development of technical and business skills along the value chain. In this connection, the Meeting stressed the importance of improving marketing systems and market access for livestock, traditional food crops and high value specialty commodities.

13. The Meeting called for assistance to improve the quality of existing export commodities from Pacific Island Countries, to strengthen and diversify the coconut industry, and to improve market and post-harvest facilities.

Safe and Nutritious Food for a Wealthy and Healthy Pacific

14. The Meeting requested FAO to continue assistance to strengthen the essential components of national food control systems, including Codex based legislation and standards, as well as the capacity to monitor and enforce through effective inspection and certification supported by access to appropriate analytical services.

15. Given the rapid change in diets and increased reliance on imported, highly processed foods which in part are of poor nutritional value, the Meeting requested FAO to assist the agricultural sector to develop sustainable agro-food based solutions to nutritional problems and promote the consumption of local food as part of a healthy diet.

Small-scale Fisheries and Aquaculture for Food Security and Sustainable Development

16. The Meeting stressed the importance of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in food security in the Pacific Island Countries. The Meeting noted that more attention needs to be paid to small-scale fisheries and further strengthening of fisheries management.

17. The Meeting urged countries to further improve fisheries information systems, particularly in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, as well as strengthen national capacities in the sustainable development and sound management of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, responding in particular to climate change and biosecurity issues.

18. In addition, the Meeting called on countries to further improve post-harvest fisheries practices, value-added fishery products and increase access to markets and trade. The Meeting requested FAO to undertake a regional overview of the development of aquaculture. The lessons learned should be documented and experiences shared.

Sustainable Forest Management and Conservation: Challenge and Opportunities

19. The Meeting recognized the importance of conservation and protection of fragile, high risk and unique forest ecosystems and agreed to:

- (i) identify and develop markets for different forest products and services; and
- (ii) improve and update their data and information and work closely with FAO's FRA 2010 Secretariat to report on the status of their tree and forest resources.

20. Countries noted FAO's new status as an implementing agency for the Global Environment Fund (GEF) and agreed to give appropriate consideration to linking future GEF funded projects with developments in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors.

21. The Meeting noted the changing environment in the forestry sector and requested countries to incorporate the emerging issues into their policies and plans of action.

PARTNERSHIP - INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD)

A Greener Agriculture in a Blue Ocean - a Pacific Partnership for Young Farmers

22. The Meeting expressed appreciation for IFAD's support to the Pacific and noted IFAD's assistance to rural communities especially on the outer islands and ongoing efforts to contribute to rural poverty reduction.

23. The Meeting acknowledged the work of the MORDI programme in the outer island communities in Fiji, Tonga and Kiribati, focusing on vulnerable groups of youth and women. Furthermore it recognized the assistance provided for the establishment of a Regional Atoll Agriculture Centre for Excellence in Kiribati and the ongoing support in the promotion and development of organic agriculture.

PACIFIC FOOD SUMMIT

24. The Meeting noted the multi-sectoral initiative for a food secure Pacific and provided endorsement and support for the proposed Pacific Food Summit to be held in 2010. Furthermore, they requested FAO to discuss with the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat on incorporating the issue of Food Security as an agenda item at other relevant Meetings including the forum trade, economics and finance ministerial Meetings.

25. The Meeting noted and supported a proposal from the FAO Director-General for the convening of a World Summit on Food Security to be held in Rome from 14 to 16 November 2009 in conjunction with the FAO Conference.

26. The Meeting further noted other related international initiatives, and requested FAO to consider in its preparation; issues such as the progress on the 1996 World Food Summit and the MDGs, support the conclusion of the Doha round, and incorporate climate change issues.

SUPPORT TO THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR FOOD SECURITY (RPFS) IN THE PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES: OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

27. The Meeting endorsed with appreciation the outcomes and results in the implementation of the regional project GTFS/RAS/198/ITA *Support to the Regional Programme for Food Security (RPFS) in the Pacific*. They acknowledged with gratitude the generous assistance provided by the Government of Italy and FAO for the coordination and management of the programme, including the South-South Cooperation which provided technicians and experts from the People's Republic of China and the Philippines.

28. The Meeting recognized the important role of government to sustain the activities supported under the project and agreed to encourage relevant ministries and agencies responsible for agriculture, trade, health and nutrition to ensure that the inter-

sectoral and multi-disciplinary nature of food security issues continue to be effectively addressed after the termination of the programme.

FOOD SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME FOR THE PACIFIC (FSSLP)

29. The Meeting noted the progress in the preparation of the Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (FSSLP).

HIGH FOOD PRICES AND THE FOOD CRISIS - EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

30. The Meeting expressed its appreciation for the presentation on high food prices and noted the continuing problems posed by food price variability, which require consistent and coherent policy responses tailored to their country-specific circumstances.

31. In this regard the Meeting welcomed the proposal for country case-studies in the region and the Meeting requested FAO to support this work. They welcomed the efforts being made to compile detailed national databases on local market prices and expressed their willingness to collaborate with FAO on this initiative.

OTHER BUSINESS

32. The Meeting expressed their appreciation to the Director-General of FAO for being able to attend the formal opening of the Meeting and for the valuable information provided on the state of food and agriculture in the world, and future work of FAO.

33. The Meeting and FAO expressed gratitude and appreciation to the Government and the People of Niue for hosting the Eighth Ministerial Meeting and for the hospitality extended to their delegations during their time in Niue.

34. The Meeting also expressed its appreciation to SPC, USP, PITIC, IFAD and WHO for their participation and contributions.

VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

35. Ministers accepted the offer by the Kingdom of Tonga to host the next biennial Meeting in 2011.

Signed in Alofi, Niue, on 22 May 2009

Honourable Robert Wigmore (Cook Islands)

Honourable Jocketani Cokanasiga (Fiji)

Honourable Nakara Tetabo (Kiribati)

Honourable Mattlan Zackhras (Marshall Islands)

Honourable Sprent Dabwido (Nauru)

Honourable Pokotoa Sipeli (Niue)

HRH Prince Tu'ipelehake (Tonga)

Hon. Sir Tomu Malaefono Sione (Tuvalu)

Ms Anna Willock (Australia)

Mr Neil Fraser (New Zealand)

Mr Anton Kauge Benjamin (Papua New Guinea)

Mr Asuao Kirifi Pouono (Samoa)

Mr Jeffery Wilfred (Vanuatu)