



# The Bahamas and FAO

## *Building resilience and sustainable food and nutrition security*

The Bahamas became an FAO member state in 1975. Cooperation has focused on strategic development and increased competitiveness of the country's agriculture and fisheries sector, with FAO interventions comprising policy and legislative support, technical development projects and rehabilitation and emergency assistance. As a flat and small island developing state (SIDS), the Bahamas is very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which makes resilience building an important element of cooperation today.

### **Towards a Caribbean blue revolution: developing aquaponics systems**

The promotion of healthier diets and a rise in the cost of imported fish have increased the demand for domestic sources of fish. This has resulted in the need to expand production of the local fisheries sector.

The Government of the Bahamas, along with three other Caribbean states, has requested FAO's technical support to develop the aquaculture sector. In the Bahamas, large-scale commercial aquaponics demonstration systems are to be developed on the island of Andros, along with a smaller demonstration system on the island of Grand Bahama. In addition, plans are being set in place for students from the Bahamas Agriculture and Marine Science Institute (BAMSI) to construct a mobile unit under the guidance of local farmers and the Ministry of Works. The project will be implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources. It is expected to promote ecologically viable and sustainable aquaculture and aquaponics farms, which will increase the volume of locally produced fish and fish products to serve the growing domestic demand for nutritious food.

### **Matching FAO's expertise to the Bahamas' development priorities**

FAO assistance in the Bahamas is shaped by the 2016-2019 FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF), which is centred on three priority areas:

- **Food and nutrition security and safety**, including improved data management capacity to improve productivity and production practices; and the formulation of a fisheries and aquaculture management framework; and a gender-focused approach
- **Climate change and sustainable resource management**, focusing on international trade agreements as well as the development of value chains and more effective marketing systems for local produce
- **Poverty elimination**, including the strengthening of community-based forestry management programmes; and improving capacity for effective forestry stock management and more sustainable lumber harvesting practices in the northern islands of the country

Jointly developed with the Government, other national stakeholders and other development partners, the CPF reflects relevant priorities in key national policies and complements the 2013 sector document **Rebuilding Bahamian Agriculture: A 20-Year Plan**.

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## Increasing agricultural productivity to combat food insecurity

To address food insecurity in the face of rising food import bills and increasing incidences of chronic non-communicable diseases associated with changing dietary patterns, the Government requested technical support from FAO to develop a Food and Nutrition Security Policy and Action Plan.

In December 2017, the Food and Nutrition Security Policy (FNSP) 2017-2020 was launched to guide efforts to increase the productivity and self-sufficiency of the country's agricultural production systems. The FNSP will address a number of complex and inter-related issues that affect the country's food and nutrition security. As such it is a step towards the modernization of relevant legislative frameworks and procedures.

Support to the Bahamas' national policy was delivered under the umbrella of the Regional FNSP and Action Plan for member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The regional policy incorporates a number of "right to food" provisions. A multi-sectoral Food and Nutrition Security Coordinating Commission (FNSC) is under development to support the implementation of several related activities across the nation.

## Improving data to support sustainable fisheries management

Fisheries provide an important source of rural employment as well as supporting tourist fishing activities and contribute to the country's exports. Good governance and management is therefore essential to ensure the sustainable and productive use of the resource, which risks significant impacts from climate change. FAO has supported the Government by strengthening the governance and capacity of the fisheries sector through the development of a Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Strategic Planning Framework, the establishment of the Fisheries Management Information Systems (FISMIS) and capacity building of stakeholders in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Additionally, assessments of the potential for aquaculture development, the establishment of aquaculture businesses, and the socio-economic impacts of recreational fisheries were conducted. Through FAO's support the Bahamas now has a modernized Fisheries Act and increased capacity for the implementation of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.

## Improving the Bahamas' school feeding programme

The Bahamas' national school feeding programme serves the majority of school students in the New Providence and Family Islands through the provision of free and subsidized lunches. However, there is concern about the provision of unhealthy lunches, the lack of a standardized menu, the lack of a framework and the limited use of locally produced foods. On top of this, there is limited accountability in relation to compliance with standards.

*"For small island developing states (SIDS), including the Bahamas, adaptation to climate change is a question of survival."*

**José Graziano da Silva**  
FAO Director-General

Through FAO's support, a comprehensive assessment of the national school feeding programme is being carried out and overall technical support to the strengthening of the programme is being provided. The Bahamas National School Feeding Committee, with intersectoral representation from the Ministries of Health, Education, Agriculture, and Social Services, has also been mandated by Cabinet and will support the improvement of the school feeding programme. Laws and policies will come into effect to facilitate the programme, which aims to be transformative and promote lifelong healthy eating habits among the nation's children.

