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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

## Thirty-fourth Session

Nadi, Fiji, 9-13 April 2018

**Report on the Outcome of the First Joint FAO and SPC Pacific Ministers  
of Agriculture and Forestry Meeting in Port Vila, Vanuatu,  
on 20 October 2017**

### FIRST JOINT FAO AND SPC PACIFIC MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY MEETING

Port Vila, Vanuatu

20 October 2017

### COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The First FAO and SPC Joint Pacific Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry meeting was held at the Iririki Resort in Port Vila, Vanuatu on 20 October 2017. The meeting combined the previous Agriculture Ministerial meetings organised separately by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Pacific Community (SPC). The Ministerial meeting was the culmination of the inaugural Pacific Week of Agriculture.
2. The meeting was attended by Ministers from Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau and Tuvalu, and Heads of Delegation from Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Tonga and Vanuatu.
3. Representatives from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), Technical Centre for Agricultural & Rural Cooperation (CTA), Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Landcare Research New Zealand Limited, Pacific Horticultural & Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA),

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United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the University of the Sunshine Coast attended as observers.

4. The meeting was chaired by the Director General of Agriculture, Mr Benjamin Shing, on behalf of the Hon. Matai Seremaiah Nawalu, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity for Vanuatu.
5. The outgoing Chair of the most recent FAO Southwest Pacific Agriculture Ministers meeting, represented by Hon. Benny Allan from Papua New Guinea, welcomed the first joint Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Ministers meeting as a unique forum to further strengthen coordination and action.
6. The Deputy Director-General of FAO, Ms Maria Helena Semedo, and the Deputy Director General of SPC, Dr Audrey Aumua, delivered opening statements.
7. FAO DDG highlighted the challenges faced by Small Islands Developing States, and called for bold action. FAO said it is placing great importance on its work in the Pacific and it has increased its staff and technical capacity. FAO called for working together in innovative ways, and that solutions can be found at the local, regional and international levels. FAO's responses included the Multi-Country Programming Framework (CPF) for the Pacific Islands 2018-2022, and the Pacific regionalisation of the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in SIDS. Papua New Guinea has a separate CPF.
8. The SPC DDG said the region faced huge challenges including from the impacts of climate change. Non-communicable diseases were the leading cause of death in the region, with life expectancy declining as a result. Food and nutritional security had to be at the top of the political agenda. In the Pacific, an average of 3% of national budgets went to the agriculture sector. Smallholder farmers produced most of the local food, and innovative partnerships with them will help to promote food security.
9. The Ministers appointed a drafting committee comprising Ministers from Papua New Guinea and Samoa; Heads of Delegation from Australia and the Federated States of Micronesia (observer), and FAO and SPC.
10. The Ministers adopted the agenda.

#### **GAP SIDS - FAO**

11. The meeting welcomed the presentation on the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States (GAP SIDS). The programme provides for improved access to safe, sufficient and nutritious foods, the end of hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, and the sustainable management and utilization of natural resources in Small Islands Developing States.
12. The objectives are to (1) Strengthen the enabling environments for food security and nutrition; (2) Establishing Sustainable, Resilient and Nutrition-Sensitive Food Systems; and (3) Empower people and communities.
13. The Ministers noted that regionalising and operationalising the GAP in the Pacific requires fewer studies and more tangible actions tailored to the specific social, cultural, technological and demographic characteristics of countries in the region. The ministers supported the actions being undertaken by FAO and partners to develop a five year Regional Framework for Accelerating Action on Food Security and Nutrition in Pacific SIDS. FAO affirmed that biodiversity, gender equity and women's economic empowerment would be integral to implementation of the framework in the Pacific.

14. Ministers noted that FAO intends to consult with partners to further develop actions for inclusion in the framework, and to present the Pacific Framework for discussion at the 34th session of the FAO regional conference for Asia and the Pacific to be held in Nadi, Fiji in April 2018.

#### **PACIFIC MULTI-COUNTRY PROGRAMMING FRAMEWORK - FAO**

15. FAO presented a paper on the Pacific Multi-Country Programming Framework (CPF) 2018-2022. The CPF is a planning tool for the development of priorities between FAO and member countries. The aim is to foster a sustainable increase in production, trade and marketing of domestic agriculture products, and the healthy consumption of diverse, safe and nutritious food.

16. Ministers welcomed the presentations on the GAP and CPF, and noted ongoing challenges. There is a rising demand for water from the agriculture and other sectors, and better ideas are needed for the use of scarce water resources, including waste water. Access to land for agriculture is becoming a problem due to pressure from other sectors, including water catchments. These and other problems are being exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

17. Ministers highlighted that Pacific island farmers are often unable to access credit, which impacts on their ability to contribute to food and nutritional security, and FAO and SPC should consider this in their work plans. FAO highlighted its experience with schemes to improve access to credit for farmers. Programmes to improve market access and trade facilitation are a priority, in terms of their technical aspects. Research and other studies in the region should have stronger links to practical action on the ground. The valuable contribution by women in agriculture should be acknowledged, given their contribution to agriculture, and in promoting nutrition and food security.

18. The Ministers noted the increased dependence on unhealthy processed imported food and called for more investment in agriculture that would help to address the serious threat posed by non-communicable diseases, which are having major social, economic and health impacts in the region.

19. Ministers noted that farmers need access to more diverse and resilient seeds and planting materials. Ministers highlighted the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources, and supported the strengthening of FAO and SPC work in this field.

20. Building on the joint approach by FAO and SPC for the meeting, Ministers encouraged closer collaboration between FAO and SPC including the possibility of joint programming, where appropriate.

21. Ministers welcomed the focus on gender and women's economic empowerment across FAO and SPC programming.

22. Ministers highlighted the need for more agriculture data and statistics that would improve policy decision making and action on the ground.

23. The 14 FAO Members and Associate Member endorsed in principle the 2018-2022 CPF, with FAO to provide flexibility that allows Member countries to amend their own country programme.

#### **HOAFS REPORT - SPC**

24. The joint approach by SPC and FAO for this meeting was welcomed, and may be strengthened in areas such as joint programming.

25. Ministers noted LRD was focused on four strategic pillars - genetic resources; sustainable forests and land management; sustainable agriculture for food and nutritional security, and markets for livelihoods value chain.

26. The Ministers noted that SPC was developing a new business plan and undergoing internal reforms within the LRD. The Ministers agreed to establish a working group to support LRD to finalise

its business plan. The working group includes Australia, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

27. The management structure of LRD, and the way it engages with members, will be among the topics for discussion at the next HOAFS.

28. The Ministers noted that SPC will present its final business plan in April 2018 in the margins of the FAO Asia Pacific regional conference, in preparation for endorsement by SPC's governing body (Committee of Regional Governments and Administrations) in July 2018.

29. Ministers wished to bring the outcomes of this meeting to important high-level global and regional events in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

### **VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING**

30. The meeting warmly accepted the offer from Samoa to host the next meeting of the Pacific Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry in 2019, in association with the second Pacific Week of Agriculture.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

31. Ministers expressed their deep gratitude to the Government and people of Vanuatu for the excellent meeting arrangements in hosting the 2017 Pacific Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry meeting and the inaugural Pacific Week of Agriculture, and for the kind hospitality extended to them during their stay in Port Vila.