



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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FAO REGIONAL INITIATIVES FOR COUNTRY LEVEL IMPACT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

FAO has been implementing Regional Initiatives as a mechanism to help deliver its work at country and regional levels since 2013. The Regional Initiatives emphasize impact through well-focused activities that address the most important challenges in food and nutrition security at country and regional levels. Together with its country, regional and international partners, FAO is implementing four Regional Initiatives in Asia and the Pacific: Asia and the Pacific's Zero Hunger Challenge (ZHC); Regional Rice Initiative; Sustainable intensification of aquaculture for blue growth in Asia and the Pacific (Blue Growth); and Value Chains for food security and nutrition in the Pacific Islands (Value Chains). These Regional Initiatives were endorsed by the 32nd session of the Asia Pacific Regional Conference (APRC).



ZERO HUNGER CHALLENGE

As a whole, the Asia and the Pacific region has achieved the Millennium Development Goal of “halving, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.” However, 62 percent of the world’s hungry and 58 percent of the world’s stunted children are in this region. The ZHC aims to support members to achieve zero hunger by: (i) formulating or operationalizing national food security and nutrition policies and investment plans; (ii) improving the capacity to measure and calculate undernourishment; and (iii) improving child nutrition and reducing stunting in five countries: Bangladesh, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Nepal and Timor-Leste.

During 2014-2015, FAO supported the broader UN-wide ZHC in the Asia-Pacific region. Following the launch of the ZHC in April 2013 and the development of a “Regional Guiding Framework for Achieving Zero Hunger in Asia and the Pacific” in December 2013, several countries in the region launched their National ZHC and officially declared their commitment to the eradication of chronic hunger and malnutrition by 2025, including Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Nepal and Viet Nam. As part of the initiative, FAO conducted various field projects, including a training-of-trainers for facilitators and Farmer Field Schools (FFS) in Lao PDR in order to combine agricultural and educational interventions (including messages on nutrition).

Bangladesh has made significant progress in reducing poverty – from 40 percent in 1990 to 22.4 percent in 2015. FAO provided capacity development support through the “National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme.” Results included formulation of the new Food and Nutrition Policy and support to the implementation and monitoring of the new Country Investment Plan. FAO has obtained additional resources to expand this support during the next biennium through the “Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge Programme,” in line with the RI ZHC.

At the country level, based on the priorities listed in Country Programming Frameworks, FAO plans to strengthen: (i) inter-ministerial coordination and monitoring and evaluation for food security and nutrition; (ii) analytical capacity for better monitoring and decision-making, including improved methodologies to measure food insecurity, food loss and waste, and make vulnerability assessments; and (iii) nutrition-sensitive interventions and enabling environments.

At the regional/sub-regional level, member countries have a strong political commitment to address malnutrition in all its forms, from hunger to obesity. FAO will continue to reinforce its partnership with regional organizations, such as ASEAN, building on the Integrated Food Security Framework and Strategic Action Plan 2015-2020.

REGIONAL RICE INITIATIVE

Rice is the staple crop in many countries across the region, which produces about 90 percent of the world’s rice. The Regional Rice Initiative focuses on improving food security by identifying and promoting sustainable rice production practices that will enhance crop resilience and increase efficiency in production.

In 2016 and 2017, FAO will continue focusing on areas recommended in the Regional Rice Strategy to increase rice productivity and farmers’ income. An array of options is available

to meet the objectives of the Rice Initiative, including: the overarching S&G paradigm and SIRP; Trees Outside Forests; Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS); post-harvest and small-scale rice producers’ access to markets; and community based climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures. Working more closely with other organizations, including non-governmental organizations, the Rice RI will also seek to strengthen the exchange of knowledge and experience on such topics as mechanization, farming system technologies, and value chains.

BLUE GROWTH

Fish is among the most important animal foods in Asia and the Pacific, and aquaculture in the region has surpassed fisheries as the most important supply of food fish. Asian aquaculture will need to increase its production by 50-60 percent in the next 15 years in order to meet the increasing demand for fish. The Blue Growth initiative has been designed to address the priority issues in achieving the necessary sustainable growth of aquaculture and responsible fisheries.

The Blue Growth initiative focuses on: (i) more efficient use of sustainable aquaculture and fisheries resources; (ii) improved production efficiency with reduced impacts on the environment; (iii) increased resilience of farmers/fishers and the sector; and (iv) strengthened equality and social acceptability along the value chain and in access to natural resources. Since the launch of the Blue Growth initiative in 2014, FAO and member countries and regional partners have developed a regional strategy and action plan for sustainable intensification of aquaculture in the region and documented 12 successful practices. Further, several member countries have been supported through demonstration of innovative aquaculture production and management practices as exemplified in the box below. In a number of countries, the RI helped build the technical capacity of small farmers so that they had better access to production inputs and markets.



TRANSFORMING THE RICE SECTOR IN LAO PDR

To support the Lao PDR government to develop a transformed, dynamic and competitive rice sector, FAO intervened with three programmes: (i) Sustainable Intensification of Rice Production (SIRP) under the Save and Grow (S&G) paradigm, in which rice is produced with better and fewer inputs; (ii) Rice-Fish Systems; and (iii) Trees-Outside-Forests/Trees in Rice Landscapes. In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, the National University of Laos, and the Plant Protection Center, FAO conducted FFS and field experimentation in four rice-producing provinces in 2015. The initiative allocated 1 000 m² of field experiment plots for each of 13 sites, where S&G-SIRP good practices were compared with conventional practices in terms of yields and economic benefits.

Parameter	Conventional	FFS S&G	% of Achievement (FFS S&G)	FFS S&G with Fish	% of Achievement (FFS S&G with Fish)
Seed	344 167	122 222	-64%	86 000	-75%
Chemical Fertilizer	887 500	476 867	-46%	505 000	-43%
Manure	6 870 000	566 667	-92%	1 200 000	-83%
Total Labour	6 540 000	6 315 000	-3%	5 160 000	-21%
Total Cost	8 451 667	7 480 756	-12%	6 951 000	-18%
Revenue	18 806 250	22 133 333	18%	24 675 000	31%
Gross Margin	10 354 583	14 652 578	42%	17 724 000	71%

EXPERIENCE WITH BLUE GROWTH IN INDONESIA

The Government of Indonesia has been implementing a national programme promoting rice-fish for years. To overcome some technical bottlenecks, the Regional Initiative successfully demonstrated a “farm cluster” approach along with innovative practices for maximizing the benefits of rice-fish farming. More than 300 clustered farmers in the two project provinces successfully adopted innovative rice-fish farming practices and realized significant gains. The average rice yield in the FAO-supported fish-fish farming project was 8.8-10.8 tonnes/hectare/planting season, compared with 6.5 tonnes in the farmers’ self-invested production; in addition, the average fish yield increased from 150 kg/1000 m² in the self-invested farming to 180 kg/1000 m² in the FAO-supported project. As a result, the net income gain from the initiative ranged from 39-67 percent. A regional workshop was held to share the successes with experts from 15 member countries. The Government is working to scale up the new practices.

VALUE CHAINS FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

The export competitiveness of farmers and fishers in the Pacific Islands has been declining, at the same time that their dependence on imported food – for food security and to meet the needs of the tourism market – is growing. The Value Chains initiative seeks to support a long-term change that will see more local food in domestic and export markets, and national diets having an improved nutritional composition. It is being implemented through three action areas: (i) building evidence for policy-makers; (ii) strengthening the regional enabling environment; and (iii) taking appropriate actions at the national level (focusing on the Cook Islands, Fiji and Samoa). National-level actions include providing technical assistance to: strengthen capacity for generating evidence-based agriculture policy options; develop agriculture and market linkages; explore policy options to control nutrition-related health problems; and strengthen the capacity of domestic farmers and agro-processors to supply the domestic and tourism markets.

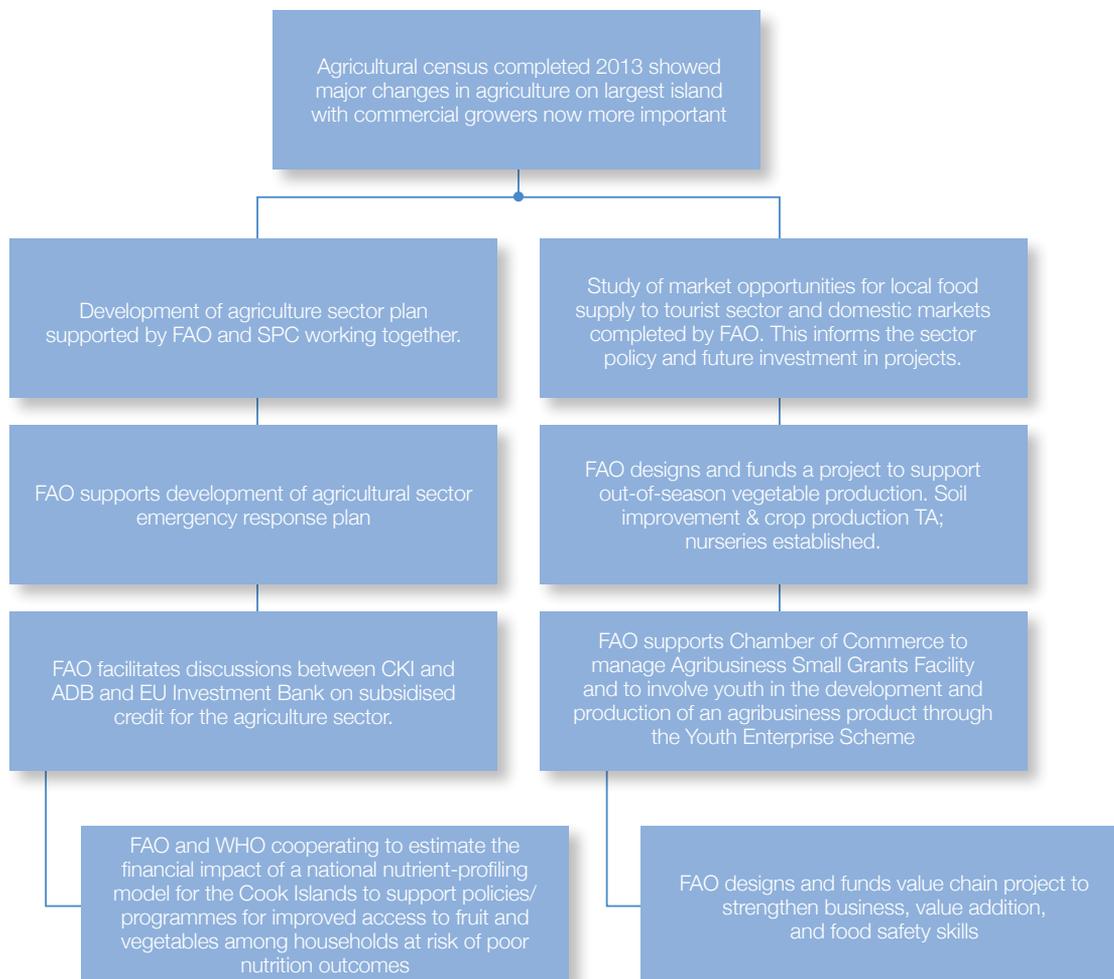
At the regional level, FAO and partners have conducted nutrition and food safety reviews, produced regional guidelines for developing harmonized aquatic animal health strategies, and advanced work on the development of harmonized biosecurity legislation. Support was also provided to establish a Micronesian Association of Sustainable Aquaculture. FAO has presented policy recommendations for improving linkages between agriculture and tourism to the Forum Economic Ministers, and developed related toolkits. Work will continue on a regional food security information system to strengthen capacity to collect, disseminate and analyse sector data.

For 2016-2017, the Value Chains initiative will continue to improve evidence-based policy monitoring and development in Fiji and Samoa, and improve the capacity of farmers and agro-processors to market a consistent supply of safe, quality food in the Cook Islands and Samoa. Greater emphasis will be placed on analysing food security and nutrition and consumption patterns in the Pacific Island Countries. The focus of the initiative will also be expanded to the value chain of fish and fisheries products.

In 2016-17, the Regional Blue Growth Initiative will be strengthened in the following areas: (1) Support development of national and regional strategies to address priority issues related to blue growth; (2) Promote innovative production and management systems and practices for more efficient production and sustainable use of resources (e.g. fisheries, water, land, forests) and restoration of ecosystem services and functions; (3) Increase the resilience of farmers and fishers in adapting to climate change impacts and coping with natural and socioeconomic risks; and (4) support development of inclusive aquaculture and fisheries value chains with special focus on improved access of farmers to quality production inputs, technologies and markets.

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF DOMESTIC FARMERS IN THE COOK ISLANDS

The Value Chains Initiative in the Cook Islands helped develop a strategic action plan to link agriculture to tourism and domestic markets. The capacity of farmers to produce off-season fruits and vegetables in Rarotonga and outer islands was strengthened and, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, selected agribusinesses received business training. More activities are under way to improve the capacity of domestic farmers and agro-processors to supply domestic markets. The diagram exemplifies how FAO works in the Cook Islands with the Value Chains Initiative.



As FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva stated during the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015, “FAO has supported the Post-2015 Development Agenda process. FAO is committed to continue to be part of this effort, by supporting governments and working with non-state actors to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.” Regional Initiatives in Asia and the Pacific will be a crucial part of FAO’s efforts to support countries to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition by 2030.

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CONTACT DETAILS

Xiangjun Yao
Regional Initiatives Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific
39 Phra Athit Rd, Chana Songkhram, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200
Phone:02 697 4000, Email: Xiangjun.Yao@fao.org