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PACIFIC NEWS

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From Eriko Hibi



The first-ever regional meeting on food security in the Pacific was held in Fiji recently. The major theme of this meeting was preparing for and responding to natural disasters as they affect access to food for people in the Pacific Islands. We highlight this important milestone in this newsletter.

Also in this edition, we also cover the progress of a fruit and nut trees replanting project in Niue. We take a look at work FAO is doing in the Marshall Islands and finally we welcome a new Nutrition and Food Systems Officer to the Subregional office.

We hope that this newsletter will keep you informed of the work we do in partnership with others in the region.

Eriko Hibi

FAO Subregional Coordinator for the Pacific Islands

First-ever regional meeting on food security in the Pacific Islands

Preparing for and responding to natural disasters as they affect access to food for millions of people in the Pacific Islands was a major theme at the first-ever meeting of the Regional Pacific Food Security Cluster Forum in Nadi, Fiji that took place from 26 to 28 April.

The joint FAO/WFP meeting of some 50 representatives from governments, non-governmental and UN organizations, was jointly hosted by the FAO and WFP Food Security Cluster co-lead Coordinators.



The three-day event aimed at fostering collaboration and sharing ideas and experiences amongst cluster members. The Cluster supports the work of in-country food security coordination bodies that include Government and Non-Government actors from six regional pacific countries: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

““The South Pacific region is among the most vulnerable to the threat posed by natural disasters,” said Fiji’s Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Jitendra Singh, who also attended the forum as chief guest. “In the past few years there have been two category five cyclones, Pam and Winston, as well as the El Niño drought, which were devastating for our region. Food Security Clusters across the Pacific region have coordinated the efforts of partners across the spectrum and have been instrumental in leading assessments to measure the impacts of these events and to inform action.

“We know there are already coordination gaps at the country level and these gaps become even more pronounced at the regional level. By bringing together Fijians and other Pacific Islanders to discuss the need for better and more productive food security coordination in this event, the Regional Cluster is also opening up opportunities for learning that surpasses country boundaries and that, strategically, provides Pacific Island Nations with a platform and a forum to discuss, network, and raise visibility for their work in the food security sector,” said Singh.

Head of Office WFP’s Pacific Office, Mr. Peter French said: “The Pacific region is unlike any other region on earth – and food security here is a unique, complex and highly diverse issue. On top of the challenges of growing food in small island nations, comes the looming threat of climate change. We all need to work together to find solutions – and the impressive participation of partners from across the food security sector in this week’s meeting in Fiji is a strong sign of this collaboration.”

FAO Nutrition and Food Systems Officer, Mr Joseph Nyemah noted that FAO has been working with governments, communities and households in the region for over 30 years. “Our support to countries under the Food Security Cluster builds on a wide range of ongoing technical cooperation projects and experiences gained from extensive in field and in government assistance to FAO member countries in the sub-region,” he said. “FAO technical cooperation to support emergency preparedness and response is an expansion and enhancement of our work on the ground to ensure that every programme is resilience proofed.”

Fruit and nut trees project flourishes in Niue

One year on, farmers in Niue see progress in an FAO project to replant fruit and nut trees on the Pacific nation.

Launched in March 2016, the two year project entitled – Niue Household Fruit and Nut Trees Integrated Replanting Project – was implemented by FAO and the Government of Niue to increase local fruits production as a means to improve food and nutritional security and increase employment. The project also aims to address the decline in domestic fruit production and productivity, increasing costs for fruit imports, and low income generated from agriculture.



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Fruit tree expert, Brian Paxton returned to Niue on his 3rd mission since the initial implementation a year ago to work with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries (DAFF) and core famers who are active in this project. “Collaborating with farmers, the areas we worked on together included fruit tree selection, orchard layout, wind breaks, site preparation, planting, Irrigation, fertilizing, orchard management, harvesting, marketing and packaging”. Said Mr Paxton.

The development of the fruit tree demonstration area at the Vaipapahi Agricultural Research Farm, under the leadership of newly appointed DAFF Director Poi Okesene, has shown much progress since its establishment over a year ago. It has been the main area for demonstrating the management techniques to farmers and interested growers.

Natasha Toeono-Tohovaka, FAO National Correspondent from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries explains. “The project continues to promote and increase awareness and knowledge among students and village communities on the importance of local fresh fruits and nuts for family nutritional needs and dietary practices. This will contribute to ensuring food security, combating Non Communicable Diseases, reducing imports of fresh fruits and creating an economic livelihood for some farmers”.

Major focus is to increase domestic production of fruits and nuts through a selection of fruit species and varieties and the adoption of improved production techniques and management practices. The project also includes supporting farm demonstrations with selected village farmers and schools to adapt technologies to local conditions.

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FAO backs programs in Ebon atoll in the Marshall Islands

By Isaac Marty – The Marshall Island Journal

Have you tasted breadfruit pancakes, taro oatmeal, lime vinegar or even banana jam? These are some of the products Ebon Atoll in the Republic of the Marshall Islands is conjuring to part of its daily food fare.

Ebon has been promoting local food security programs and agriculture marketing development projects since 2012 when Mayor Iona deBrum first took office. But these slowed the last couple of years due to lack of resources.

As of last year, new support came from FAO to help move the projects forward to become fully operational by the end of the year.

FAO Food Safety and Nutrition Consultant Ann Hayman, from the Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands in Samoa admired Ebon's efforts to develop agriculture products led by deBrum. She confirmed that FAO's subregional office oversees 14 Pacific countries, including RMI. Internationally, FAO aims to "eliminate hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition".

In Ebon, FAO has selected 20 households from the main island of Ebon and Taka, the second largest community, and supplied them with gardening materials to pilot a variety of crops. All other households will be provided with the same materials by the local government so that "everyone moves forward together," said deBrum. Harvested crops will be processed through outdoor and indoor means.

The completion of a Kitchen Center, left with a concrete floor since 2012, is being supported by FAO. It is near completion and is expected to start operation in September so residents have an indoor processing center for their products. The new center, with its associated processing equipment, is expected to lower the cost of production of local products, as well as to provide catering for the school lunch program. Two more centers for Taka, and Ene ko lon (northern islands) are expected in the near future.

"The goal is to sustain the people of Ebon Atoll with food, nutrition, and eventually income," said deBrum.

Training, health food education, awareness on non-communicable diseases, and trading places are what deBrum is focused on. "Ebon is a good lesson for the RMI," said Hayman. "The Ministry of Resources and Development also likes Ebon to be a model that can be rolled out to the rest of the country."

Meanwhile, FAO approved national consultant Newton Lajuan will continue working with deBraun and Ebon.



FAO officials Ann Hayman (left) and Newton Lajuan (center) joined with Ebon Mayor Iona deBrum during Hayman's visit to Majuro last week.

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FAO welcomes new officer to Samoa

The FAO Subregional Office of the Pacific Islands is pleased to welcome Mr Joseph Nyemah Nyemah as Nutrition and Food Systems Officer.

A Liberian-Canadian national, Joseph arrives directly from Malawi where he was with the One UN as humanitarian advisor. “In this role, I led inter-cluster coordination for the food security, agriculture, nutrition, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), education, protection and health clusters over a \$395 million humanitarian response. Working for the One UN did not only help me to see humanitarian and development work from a broader and integrated vantage point; it also strengthened my partnership building capacity across different UN and government agencies, NGOs, etc”. Joseph explained.



In his new role as Nutrition and Food Systems Officer for FAO, Joseph hopes to contribute to the work of his colleagues in FAO and across other UN agencies, governments, national and regional NGO and civil society partners to improve resilience in agriculture, nutrition and food security. “I want for us to collaboratively study the contextual applicability of a food systems approach – the analysis of food from the handling of the seeds to the point of disposal – and how the generated knowledge can inform programming”, Joseph says.

Joseph is a former food security cluster coordinator with FAO in Mali, West Africa, where he coordinated two IPC – Integrated Phase Classification analyses for food and nutrition security.

He also worked in HQ in Rome with the World Food Program as an integrated context analyst in VAM (Vulnerability Analysis Mapping), where he led the publication of “[Tracking the Development of Urban Food Security Assessment Tools: 2010 to 2015](#)”

While working for the Paris-based Action Contre La Faim, he managed integrated agriculture and food processing, aquaculture, nutrition and socioeconomic analyses in Liberia, Cote d’Ivoire, Sierra Leone, the Somali Region of Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sri Lanka from 1996 to 2005.

From 2008 to 2014, Joseph worked in the Canadian public service across community, rural and economic development. His last post was director of regional planning, government of Nova Scotia, where he developed Nova Scotia’s first ever social enterprise strategy.

Joseph has published in several peer-reviewed academic journals, for example, the Australian Journal for Studies in Continuing Education, and Canadian Social Studies Journal.

Joseph has a multi-disciplinary academic background that straddles rural sociology/development, development economics, political science and adult education. Joseph’s research interest looks at the politics and interconnectedness of gender, culture, migration, and capacity building. He is a research

fellow with the European-North American “Borders in Globalization (BIG)” project and the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Afrocentric Learning Institute, Halifax.

Joseph is joined in Samoa with his family including his wife, four year old son, two year old daughter, and his sister.

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