Maldives and FAO

Partnering for sustainable agricultural development and food security

Maldives has been a member of FAO since 1971 and covered by the FAO Representation in Sri Lanka since 1997. Current FAO assistance in Maldives is geared towards strengthening food security and boosting the sustainability of rural livelihoods, with a focus on climate-smart agriculture and fisheries development. As a small island developing state (SIDS), disaster risk reduction and management are also important areas of cooperation.

Matching FAO’s expertise to Maldives’ development priorities

FAO assistance in Maldives is shaped by the 2018-2020 FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF), which is centered on three priority areas:

- **Food production**, to contribute to shared prosperity and household wellbeing
- **Rural livelihoods**, ensuring that they are more resilient to climate change and the environment and that natural resources are more sustainably managed
- **Increased capacity** of concerned stakeholders to collect, analyse and utilize data and information

The CPF sets out how FAO can support the Government of the Maldives to reduce poverty and improve food security and nutrition. The CPF focuses on increasing, diversifying and adding value to fisheries, aquaculture and agriculture while increasing resilience to climate shocks. The CPF is fully aligned with the development objectives of the Government of the Maldives as well as with FAO’s Strategic Framework and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2016-2020.

Fisheries – contributing to food security

Maldives is an archipelago comprising 26 natural atolls, which consist of 1 190 coral reef islands. It has an abundance of natural resources in the form of multicoloured coral reefs, tropical ocean fish, crustaceans, turtles, seaweed and shells. The fisheries and tourism sectors play a critical part in the country’s economic development, with the fisheries sector making a significant contribution to food security, as fish is the primary source of protein in the local diet. Skipjack tuna, the most important species in the Maldivian fishing industry, contributes about 50 percent of the country’s total fish catch, followed by yellowfin tuna – both caught predominantly by pole and line fishing.

FAO is coordinating closely with the Government to develop programmes in the areas of fisheries legislation and capacity building for vessel monitoring. Ongoing cooperation includes strengthening the capacity of the Government to comply with their commitments to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and international standards related to Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS). FAO is assisting with technical studies on future MCS needs and the feasibility of implementing an electronic observer programme. Work has also begun on the formulation of a National Plan of Action for combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Under the sustainable management of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) project, assistance was provided for turtle conservation, development of the grouper management plan and a national plan of action for shark fisheries. A second phase of this programme is expected to commence in the near future.

CONTACTS

Xuebing Sun
FAO Representative for Sri Lanka and the Maldives
FAO Representation
202, Baudhhaloka Mawatha,
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka
Tel: +94 11 2580798
E-mail: FAO-LK@fao.org
Improving agricultural and rural statistics

A regular and sustainable agricultural statistics system is essential for producing the basic agricultural information needed to guide evidence-based decision-making. Maldives does not have a regular agricultural survey programme in place, other than the daily Malé Market volume and price collection. Financial and human resource constraints further hamper the capacity to deliver the required level of agricultural and rural statistics services.

Following initial assessments, Maldives was therefore selected as a target country in the third round of FAO’s Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The main objective of the Global Strategy rests on three pillars which will also involve preparation of a strategic plan for agricultural and rural statistics (SPARS) in Maldives:

- Pillar 1. Establish a minimum set of core data required to meet current and emerging needs
- Pillar 2. Integrate agriculture into the national statistical systems and use sound data management systems
- Pillar 3. Establish suitable governance processes and build the necessary statistical capacity to ensure sustainability of agricultural statistics systems.

FAO’s Global Strategy initiative will provide guidance and suggestions to Maldives on other economic, social and environmental data and geographic references, which are a prerequisite for informed planning and policy decision-making across the agriculture and rural sector.

Institutions working with FAO include the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Practical capacity building work related to data reporting requirements and other survey methodologies and strategies is ongoing, and FAO is also assisting NBS in the assessment and implementation of agriculture ‘modules’. The aim is to collect core crop and livestock data on existing surveys, such as the Population and Housing Census and Household Income and Expenditure Survey.

Adapting to climate change

Due to its low-lying geography, Maldives is vulnerable to flooding and inundation, and its key economic activities – fishing and tourism – are also sensitive to the effects of climate change. Moreover, the country is highly dependent on imported fossil fuels for its energy supply, and this represents a major source of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Government is actively pursuing a low-emission climate-resilient development (LECReD) agenda, but ongoing decentralization, a fiscal crisis and capacity constraints often result in local planning efforts that do not reflect national commitments. In response to this situation, FAO is currently supporting a One-UN initiative for LECReD with the purpose of building the island communities’ disaster risk management capacities and resilience to climate change. With a budget of US$9 million, the three-year programme is being implemented under Outcome 9 of the UN Development Assistance Framework and builds on the comparative strengths of a group of UN agencies (FAO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNFPA, UN WOMEN and WHO).

The pioneer programme is bringing together the diverse development-oriented expertise provided by each agency, as well as that of the different national and local partners that each UN agency works with, in order to address this multifaceted development challenge. It is assisting Laamu Atoll in its LECReD activities and is seeking to mainstream LECReD issues into local level development planning and service delivery in order to ensure community ownership and sustainability of programme benefits.

In addition, FAO is working with the Government to develop a proposal for the Green Climate Fund related to climate proofing of agriculture and fisheries.

“Food security and adequate nutrition for all is where sustainable development starts.”

FAO Director-General