

SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

**CONSULTATION REPORT
JUNE 2012**

**NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC
ACTIONS TO ADDRESS HIGH FOOD PRICES IN VANUATU
16-17 APRIL, 2012
LE LAGON RESORT, PORT VILA, VANUATU**



**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

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From left to right

Back row: Viliami Fakava (FAO), Francois Japiot, Advisor MAQFF, Timothy Sisi, (Trade Department) Sumbue Antas (Director of Trade), Adrien M, (EU representative) David Hopa (Serro Farmers Coop), James Wasi (DARD)

Second row: Donald Pelam, (Industry Officer) Aleki Sisifa (FAO Consultant)

Front row: Timothy Tumukon (PHAMA Project), Shem Temar, (Chairman, Vanuatu Christian Council) Ruben Markward (Director DARD), Marie Melteras (CEO VARTC), Arnold Bani, (First Political Advisor, Ministry of Agriculture), Vili Fuavao (FAO Sub-regional Representative)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MALQFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Quarantine, Forestry and Fisheries
PCU	Price Control Unit
PHAMA	Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Project
VAC	Vanuatu Agricultural College
VARTC	Vanuatu Agricultural Research and Training Centre
VCA	Vanuatu Chamber of Agriculture

OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION

Introduction

The National Consultation on Policy and Programmatic Actions to Address High Food Prices for Vanuatu was held at the Le Lagon Resort, Port Vila on 16-17 April 2012. Vanuatu is one of the four countries selected by FAO to hold further dialogue following the Sub-Regional Consultation on High Food Prices for the Pacific sub-region that was held in Nadi, Fiji in 2011. The other countries included the Cook Islands, Niue and the Solomon Islands. The meeting was convened by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Quarantine, Forestry and Fisheries (MALQFF); and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Participants

The consultation was attended by participants from government agencies, international partners, private sector and civil society organizations (see attachment 2: List of Participants). Documents and presentations on policy and programmatic action to address high food prices were distributed to participants for reference and were made available in electronic form.

OPENNING SESSION

Following dedication of the workshop Mr. Ruben Markward, Director of Agriculture, made his welcoming remarks. He said that the delay of the National consultation from 2011 did allow more time for his staff to make preparations and he expressed hope for successful outcomes. Mr. Markward pointed to the high price of rice during the 2008 high food price crisis and expressed belief that high food prices have generally persisted to the present time.,

The FAO Sub Regional Representative for the Pacific, Mr. Vili Fuavao, in his opening remarks informed that FAO as part of its core function of promoting food security in member states, has in recent years increasingly involved in monitoring high food prices. He said that the national consultation was one of four to be held in the Pacific following the Sub-Regional Consultation on Policy and Programmatic Actions to Address High Food Prices in 2011. One of the main outcomes was the need for national dialogue to better address and raise awareness of the negative impact of high food prices. Mr. Fuavao reminded participants that high food prices although have adverse effects on the buying public, can have the advantage of improved livelihoods for farmers.

The first political advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr Arnold Bani delivered the Minister's speech on his behalf at the official opening. In his opening address, he said the meeting is important in helping to identify and discuss practical options to mitigate the impacts of increasing food prices on the people of Vanuatu. The advisor reminded the participants that

Vanuatu is vulnerable to rising food prices. While the vast majority of the people in this country still farm and grow their own food, the growing population in urban centers and its dependence on imported food posed a food security challenge given the recent food price hike in 2008. These factors together with ongoing erratic weather patterns caused by climate change will continue to impact food prices in the future. The advisor urged the participants, private sector and the donor community to engage meaningfully to see how best to move forward in reducing the country's vulnerability to high food prices.

Background and objectives of the national consultation

Mr. Aleki Sisifa briefly outlined the historical perspective of the global high food prices crises and the key causes. He then explained the approach used in the national consultation. The two day consultation would be conducted in three main parts: 1) statements on high food prices by the national government and the FAO; 2) presentations by FAO on global, regional and national policy and programmatic actions to address high food prices, followed by group discussions; and 3) plenary discussions and the drafting, verification and endorsement of an outcome statement from the consultation.

The objective was to assist government in identifying various policy options and designing immediate actions in response to food price rises. The expected impact, as a result were improved policies on food price volatility that are relevant to national realities and are designed and implemented by both national stakeholders and development partners.

Similarly, the expected outcome was for stakeholders to be sensitized and encouraged to work closely to better address high food prices through relevant policies and programmatic actions that safe guard food security of low-income consumers, while at the same time provide opportunities for producers and exporters.

The expected outputs of the consultation included (1) shared understanding of global and national food price situation and future developments, (2) shared overview on policies and programmatic actions to address volatile and high food prices, (3) agreement on strengths and weaknesses of current national policies and programmatic actions, (4) agreement on specific policy and programmatic actions, (5) required cooperation and necessary support, and (6) a workshop report that helps in following up activities.

PLENARY PRESENTATIONS

Global and Regional Trends in Food Prices: Underlying Causes and Implications to Food Security

Mr. Sisifa made this presentation. The policy imbalance that came about through many developing countries reducing investment in agriculture, availability of credits and protection to

agriculture while developed countries were maintaining high levels of support to agriculture and to bio-fuel production, led to increased dependence of developing countries on food imports from developed and emerging countries. This has led to the creation of the global high food price crisis.

The crisis of 2008 caused major threat to political stability of many countries and a major cause of high rates of inflation, coinciding with record high petroleum and fertilizer prices. The potential impacts of climate change on production/productivity stand to make matters worse in future.

The impacts of high food prices have been particularly high on the poor who spend most income on food, forced to reduce consumption of nutritious foods and forced to sell off productive assets.

Guide to Policy Measures and Programmatic Action: Overview, Global Experiences

Mr. Sisifa presented the FAO guide as a “menu” of options which countries need to consider and possibly adapt depending on local contexts. He emphasised the relevance of the “no one size fits all” concept.

He outlined the three main categories of country level actions: Trade and market related measures; measures to facilitate access to affordable food by consumers; and measures to increase food production. He indicated how each measure could mitigate high food prices and suggested some possible implications (both positive and negative and both long and short term).

Mr. Sisifa emphasised some features of good interventions such as: do little harm as possible; be clear on humanitarian versus economic scale (efficiency vs. Equity); and ownership and participation.

Finally he outlined some policy responses and lessons learnt from data collected from an FAO survey involving 81 countries. Most countries applied general consumer support measures e.g. reducing tariffs and custom fees, releasing public stocks and restricting or banning export. The next most popular category of measures is targeted subsidy consumer support, as in cash transfer, food transfer and increasing disposable income.

One of the lessons learnt so far is that country wide consumer support measures did not help much in many countries for the following reasons. Reducing tariffs had minimal impact on prices in countries that had already reduced tariffs; budgetary costs were often very high; general subsidies fail to reach the rural poor; and unplanned interventions affected traders and producers. Safety net programmes work well in situations where: they are effectively designed; foster synergies between social protection for the poor and support provided to food production; and government is centrally involved in planning and implementing long-term programmes of

assistance. Furthermore, producers' response has not been high for the following reasons: high fuel prices raised cost of farm power, transport, fertilizer, pesticides etc.; increased price volatility reduced incentives; lack of or poor markets prevented transmission of high prices to producers in many cases; and well designed productive safety nets (smart subsidies) have worked.

Outcomes of the Sub-regional Consultation on Policy and Programmatic Actions to Address High Food Prices in the Pacific

Mr. Sisifa briefly talked about the Sub-regional Consultation that took place in Nadi, Fiji, 14-15 April 2011. In summarising the outcome statement of the Sub-regional consultation, he asked participants to note that the outcomes were all general in nature befitting regional contexts. In contrast, the outcome statement from the national consultation should be very specific for Vanuatu, and where relevant to specific communities targeted. Furthermore, in identifying and considering policy and programmatic actions at national level, implications, particularly any long term ones should be seriously considered.

Mr. Sisifa emphasised that an important task for the consultation would be to identify the most group(s) within the Vanuatu society that are the most vulnerable if and when high food prices crises occur.

WORKING GROUPS SESSION

Participants broke into three groups to identify and discuss potential policy measures and programmatic actions that the Government may consider developing to address high food prices. The three groups focused on the following: measures: policies and programmatic actions to increase production; policies to enhance food supplies (e.g. pricing, marketing, food stock management and foreign trade and tariff policies); and policies to provide social protection/safety nets).

The three groups reported back to plenary. Participants then in plenary discussed the proposed measures and actions in detail. From these discussions, participants reached agreement on what to include in the Outcome Statement of the consultation. Some of the information gathered from the three groups are summarised below.

Group 1: Measures to increase food production

Government has been working to develop a productive sector policy. A draft productive sector policy is now available for comments and is due to be finalised before the end of the year.

Government has not provided any direct support to the people to mitigate high food prices. The FAO assisted project to increase vegetable growing has provided relief to many communities in Vanuatu.

Subsistence agriculture continues to provide a significant part of the family diet in Vanuatu. Farmers sell surplus from their subsistence farming for cash. Impact of high food prices is experienced more in the remote areas particularly prices of imported goods. In these locations, 25 kg of rice can cost up to 10,000 vatu.

Although available resources are limited, the Ministry of Agriculture provided technical assistance to farmers in the production food and cash crops, farming systems support and marketing of their products. The Government support targets mainly key farmers, but is provided to any farmer when requested. The Ministry of Agriculture assistance is mainly available in the main island, Efate, as well as in the islands of Espirito Santo, Tanna, Malekula and to some extent, Ambae.

Lack of statistical data, including those necessary for monitoring food production and prices is a significant issue. Furthermore, the absence of networking in terms of food prices issues as in Fiji and Tonga needs to be addressed.

Group 2: Trade and market related measures

Data from the last 10 years show that contribution of agriculture to GDP has been 20% and stagnating. Volumes and values of imports are high in Vanuatu; food imports constitute 2.5% of total imports. Imported vegetables, mainly for the tourist market, make up 8% of the total import bill. This represent lost opportunity that farmers can benefit from, by mobilising domestic vegetable production.

The formal economy provides 1,500 jobs available annually compared to 4,000 youths discharged from the education system each year. The agriculture should work to absorb these youths. Most graduates from the Vanuatu Agriculture College (VAC) tend to look for jobs in the formal employment sector rather than being self employed in their own farms. That mentality needs to be addressed as what is happening is a repetition that resulted in the closure of the Young Farmers Training Centre that was located at the Department of Agriculture premises.

Farms are mostly located at great distances (5-20 km) from proper roads. Transporting surplus produce from these farms to the market is a significant constraint.

The Chamber of Agriculture (VCA) provides, among other roles, services to help farmers collect and trade their produce in the local markets.

Group 3: Measures relating to Safety Nets

The groups that are most vulnerable to high food prices are children, women and the poor. About 60% of Vanuatu's urban population are unemployed. Eighty percent of babies are under-nourished, and high food prices are a contributing factor.

The Price Control Unit (PCU) apparently existed and operated well before Independence. However, after Independence, this service became ineffective and was eliminated by Government in 1993. This function needs to be re-established and made operationally effective. Compared to rice, locally grown root crops are expensive in the local market. For example, a 8-9 kg basket of sweet potato which costs 600 vatu in the market can at most provide only two meals for the family. A 600 vatu worth of rice would provide many meals for the same family.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The following are the conclusions and next steps to which the participants agreed to. These constitute the Outcome Statement of the Vanuatu national consultation on policy and programmatic actions to address high food prices.

Participants discussed the trends, impacts and key issues of high food prices and agreed that the following would inform their actions:

- a) Recognised the impact of high food prices on food security in Vanuatu, and its effects on people's ability to meet and fulfil other needs such as health, education, and socio-economic opportunities.
- b) Recognised that high food prices will continue into the future and this issue could be addressed by increasing local production and productivity, access to domestic market, value addition and trade.
- c) The most vulnerable group to high food prices include the poor, women and children who spend a large share of their resources on food.
- d) There is a need to increase public awareness on consumption of local nutritious food and reduce dependence on imported food.
- e) Investment to improve capacity in data collection and analysis of food prices of both imported and locally produced foods, for informed policy formulation and programme development.
- f) Strengthen support to public and private sector partnerships, to enhance services to farmers and be more responsive to market opportunities through the following:
 - i. Enhanced information and communication management;

- ii. Improved research and extension support; and,
 - iii. Institutional strengthening of research.
- g) Improve availability of nutritious and safe foods through improved domestic market access, increased value added products and food preservation, and promote domestic food marketing.
- h) Enhance collaboration and coordination between the Ministry of Lands, other relevant line ministries and other organizations to maximise use of land for food production; recognizing the changing trends in land use.
- i) Encourage engagement of youth in food production through enhancing their earning capacity from farming; improving formal and informal training; and changing public perception of agriculture as a source of livelihood.
- j) Review current tariff structure for selected food items and agricultural inputs with a view to improving access to nutritious foods and enhancing domestic food production.
- k) Establish a Consumers Affairs Board and introduce Food Price Competition Policy.
- l) Improve inter-island trading through making VCA operational; improving networking and encouraging the establishment of collection centres.
- m) Reduce domestic food prices through:
 - i. Improved awareness of cost of production;
 - ii. Assist producers organizations and cooperatives with market facilitation;
 - iii. Encourage traders/farmers to mass produce; and,
 - iv. Support and enhance agro processing.
- n) Increased investment in agriculture through improved access to credit and incentives.
- o) Recognise the importance of the traditional safety net in managing the negative impact of crises. Encourage the cultural and traditional system of sharing and caring for one another – Malvatumauri custom law.
- p) High prices of both domestic and imported food commodities affect the people's ability to meet needs in health, education and socio-economic opportunities. The most vulnerable groups are the poor, women, youth and children who lack access to safe, nutritious foods, economic opportunities and resources. These most vulnerable groups require secure access to land for agricultural development purposes. Women groups and other relevant stakeholders can work together collaboratively in food supplies and stock management and provide social protection, highlighting the urgency to re-establish the Price Control Unit.
- q) Increase focus on specific income generating activities for women and youth groups.

- r) The coordination, implementation and monitoring of these recommended actions will be the responsibility of the MALQFF and DSPPAC.
- s) The Government, private sector, development partners and stakeholders need to commit to implement the policies and programmatic actions recommended in this outcome statement.

In closing, the FAO Sub regional representative, Mr. Vili Fuavao thanked the MALQFF and the Government of Vanuatu for their hospitality in hosting an excellent meeting. He also reaffirmed FAO's commitment to ensuring food security in the region and will work closely with the government to advance the meeting outcomes. Mr. Vili Fuavao also thanked the participants for their valuable contributions to the discussions and the meeting outcomes.

On behalf of the participants, Mr. Ruben B Markward, Director of the Department of Agriculture expressed sincere gratitude to FAO for organising the meeting and for sharing their experiences and knowledge. The meeting outcomes reflected the views of participants and they look forward to the implementation of these outcomes in the future.

Annex 1: Agenda

National Consultation on Policy and Programmatic Actions To Address High Food Prices in Vanuatu

Le Lagon Resort, 16 - 17 April, 2012

A g e n d a

Day 1: 16 April 2012

Purpose: To provide an overview of policy and programmatic actions to address high food prices

Time	Session
9.00-9.30	Opening address by Hon James Nwango, Minister for Agriculture, Livestock & Quarantine, Forestry and Fisheries
Session 1: Global and Regional Food Price Situation, Trends and Implications	
9.30-10.30	1. Background and objectives on national consultations: <i>Aleki Sisifa, FAO Consultant</i> 2. Presentation: Overview of the Global and Regional Trends in Food Prices, Underlying Causes and Implications to Food Security: <i>Aleki Sisifa, FAO Consultant</i> Discussion
10.30-10.45	Tea/Coffee Break
10.45-11.30	3. Presentation: Guide to Policy Measures and Programmatic Action: Overview. Global Experiences ¹ : <i>Aleki Sisifa, FAO Consultant</i> Discussion
Session 2: Sub-Regional Food Consultation	
11.30-12.30	4. Presentation: Outcomes of the Sub-Regional Consultation on Policy and Programmatic Actions to Address High Food Prices in the Pacific: <i>Aleki Sisifa, FAO Consultant</i> Discussion
Session 3: National Consultation	
12.30-1.30	5. Presentation: Price situation and trends of major food commodities in Vanuatu, their implications on food security and the government's policy and programmatic response: Govt official MAQFF
1.30-1.45	6. Introduction to working group session: <i>James Wasi, National Correspondent</i>
1.45-2.00	Lunch Break
2.00-3.00	7. Working group session 1 - What are the policy and programme measures undertaken to address HFP? - What are the results of and problems/constraints in the implementation of the

¹ Reference: *Guide for Policy and Programmatic Actions at Country Level to Address High Food Prices*, FAO, 2011.

	policies/programme actions identified above?
3.00-3.15	Tea/Coffee Break
3.15-4.00	8. Presentation and discussion of results of working groups: <i>Lafaele Enoka, FAO Consultant</i>

Day 2: 17 April 2012

Purpose: What are the gaps in policies and programmatic actions to address high food prices?

Time	Session
Session 3: Policies and Programmatic Actions to Address High Food Prices	
9.00-9.30	1. Formation of briefing to the working groups for parallel break-out sessions on: <i>Aleki Sisifa/Lafaele Enoka, FAO Consultant</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and programmatic actions to increase production, • Policies to enhance food supplies (e.g. pricing, marketing, food stock management and foreign trade and tariff policies), and • Policies to provide social protection/safety nets
9.30-10.30	2. Parallel working group session 2
10.30-11.00	Tea/Coffee Break
11.00-12.30	3. Presentation of results and discussions ² : <i>Aleki Sisifa/Lafaele Enoka, FAO Consultant</i>
12.30-1.00	Lunch Break
Session 4: Key Messages and Guidelines for Action	
1.00-2.30	4. Preparation of outcome statement: <i>Aleki Sisifa/Lafaele Enoka, FAO Consultant</i>
2.30-3.30	5. Presentation, discussion and adoption of the Outcome Statement: <i>Aleki Sisifa, FAO Consultant</i>
3.30-4.00	Tea/Coffee Break
4.00-4.30	6. Closing remarks and workshop evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant representative: • MAF Government representative: Director General

² Each working will have 15 minutes for presentation followed by 15 minutes for a question-answer session.

Annex 2: List of Participants

National Consultations on Policy and Programmatic Actions to Address High Food Prices in Vanuatu Le Lagoon Resort: 16 to 17 April 2012

	Name	Designation	Organization	Address
1	Mr. David Hopa	Manager	Serro Cooperative	hopadavid@gmail.com
2	Ms. Marie Melteras	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Vanuatu Agriculture Research and Training Centre (VARTC)	VARTC, Santo
3	Mr. Francois Japiot	Technical Advisor	Department of Agriculture (DARD)/Vanuatu Chamber of Agriculture (VCA)	pop@vanuatu.com.vu
4	Ps. Shem Tema	Secretary General	Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC)	shemtema@yahoo.com
5	Mr. Arnold Bani	First Political Advisor	Ministry of Agriculture, Quarantine, Forestry and Fisheries (MAQFF)	MAQFF
6	Mr. Donald Pelam	Marketing and Promotion Officer	Department of Industry	dpelam@vanuatu.gov.vu
7	Mr. Adrian Mourgues	EU representative	EU Delegate	P O Box 422, PORT VILA
8	Mr. Ruben B Markward	Director	Agriculture Department	rbmarkward@vanuatu.gov.vu
9	Mr. Timothy Tumukon	National Coordinator	(Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access) Programme	t.tumukon@phama.com.au
10	Mr. Sumbe Antas	Director	Trade Department	santas@vanuatu.gov.vu
11	Ms. Leias Cullwick	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Vanuatu National Council of Women (VNCW)	vncw@vanuatu.com.vu
12	Ms. Christine Soulier	Resource Mobilization & Planning Manager	World Vision	Christiin_Soulier@wvi.org
13	Mr. Timothy. W. Sisi	Principal Trade Officer	Trade Department	twilliams@vanuatu.gov.vu
14	Ms. Astrid Boulekone	Acting General Manager	Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI)	aboulekone@vcci.com.vu
15	Ms. Emily Tumukon	Senior Food Technologist	Food Technology Development Centre and Analytical Unit (FTDC –AU)	etumukon@vanuatu.gov.vu
16	Mr. Thomas Bangalini		Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM)	tbangalini@vanuatu.gov.vu
17	Ms. Tina Soaki Laau	Laboratory Technician	Food Technology Development Centre and Analytical Unit (FTDC –AU)	tsoaki@vanuatu.gov.vu

18	Mr. Simon Boe	Country Director	World Vision	PO Box 247, PORT VILA
19	Mr. James Wasi	Principal Agriculture Extension Officer	Agriculture Department	jwasi@vanautu.gov.vu
20	Mr. Antoine Ravo	Provincial Agriculture Officer	Agriculture Department	aravo@vanautu.gov.vu
21	Ms. Gwenneth Natu-Tari	Marketing Information Officer	Agriculture Department	gntari@vanuatu.gov.vu
	Dr Vili Fuavao	FAO Sub-regional Representative for the Pacific	FAO	Vili.fuavao@fao.org
	Mr. Lafaele Enoka	FAO Consultant	Consultant	Lafaele.enoka@fao.org
	Mr. Aleki Sisifa	FAO Consultant	Consultant	Alekis6210@gmail.com

Annex 3: Speech of the Hon. Minister of Agriculture

Head of the FAO sub-Regional office in the Pacific, Dr Viii Fuavao and the FAO Team,
Donor partners,
The Director Generals and Directors of various Government institutions,
The Managing Directors of major Retailers in Port Vila,
Business community, VCC Secretary
Farmers,
Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me much pleasure to give the opening remarks, on behalf of the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Quarantine, Fisheries & Forestry. And also on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu, at this very important workshop - The National Consultations on Policy and Programmatic Actions to address High Food Prices in Vanuatu

In setting the scene for this workshop, let me remind us all that Vanuatu is not only the happiest place on earth as reported widely in the media a year ago, it is also one of the most expensive countries in the region to live in. I still don't understand why paying more makes one happy but that's a discussion for another time. People, especially those on the lower end of the salary scale, spend a higher proportion of their income on food in this country and it does not help at all when food prices keep rising every year.

Access to adequate food is a basic human right and the Government of Vanuatu will make everything possible to ensure that food remains affordable and that food security concerns are addressed effectively.

Many of us in Vanuatu will recall vividly that during the most recent food price hike of 2008, people were paying more than doubled for imported foods such as rice and wheat flour. Similarly price increases were seen on produced foods from the main market centres." If the - situation then had persisted longer, Vanuatu would have faced a major challenge in food security that it was not well prepared to handle.

I am pleased to note that now we are here to discuss and agree on some practical things that we can do to help mitigate the impacts of increasing food prices on the people of this country.

Let me remind us again that the vast majority of the people of this country fortunately still farm and grow their own food. If imported food prices go up, they will stop buying food and eat only what they produce. This is good as people have access to land to grow their own food. However we should pay particular attention to the growing population of the Municipalities and Provincial centres who rely on purchased foods. These population centres are growing at the rate of more than 4% annually. This is the group that is most at risk of food price hikes.

It is also important to note that Vanuatu is increasing dependent on imported foods to feed -its growing population. Rice and flour imports have shown a steady increase over the last decade. National food security, more and more is dependent on imported foods even though our environment is well endowed to feed our own people. This is the challenge I believe this 2-day

workshop will try to address. How do we reverse this trend of high imports and if it is possible at all with the technology we have available to be able to produce and preserve our own local foods to draw on when world food prices rise.

I believe that with the ongoing erratic weather patterns caused by climate change, the Region, will continue to experience greater volatility in food prices in the years ahead. The Government will do its part in terms of policy development but what we need is a concerted effort by all stakeholders if we must see long term positive outcome emanating from this workshop. I am asking the Donor community and the Business Sector also to engage meaningfully in these discussions to see how best we can move forward in reducing vulnerability of our population.

Let me list a few points for you to ponder on in the next 2 days of this meeting;

- Let us be practical and propose actions that will work in Vanuatu. Each country in the region is different so our situation in Vanuatu may not be the same as that of Fiji or Samoa.
- Secondly we have at this meeting the best pool of people that we can gather on this topic so I encourage everyone to share their work and personal experience in order to get the most out of this meeting.
- Thirdly, let me note that the lack adequate food in homes poses a serious threat to national development aspirations and stability. We have seen pictures of food riots happening in some countries during the last food crises

The message I am putting across is, let's be prepared rather than remain indifferent and be caught off guard. The Government of Vanuatu looks forward to receiving the report of this workshop and to implement the actions recommended in the report.

May I thank the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for their leadership in bringing forth this issue for discussion this week and the Donor community who have supported this initiative this far. I also thank the Private Sector; individuals and Company representatives, farmers and Department Directors and DGs for availing time to attend this 2-day consultation. I wish you all the best in your deliberations.

With these few remarks, on behalf of the Hon. Minister and Government I now declare that the National Consultation on Policy and Programmatic Actions to address High Food Prices for Vanuatu is now opened

Thank yu tumas