



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



World Health
Organization

Pacific Regional Workshop on Promotion of Fruit and Vegetables for Health

PROFAV

Nadi, Fiji
20-23 October, 2014



1. Summary

There is growing awareness of the fundamental and vital role fruit and vegetable consumption plays in human health and nutrition in both developing and developed countries. This increased global awareness has been primarily led by the combined efforts of FAO and WHO of the United Nations. The proposed workshop seeks to build on these efforts with a particular focus on South Pacific island communities, which face an array of health and nutritional challenges associated with inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption.

The importance of horticulture on human health and nutrition was also reflected in the sessions of the 29th International Horticultural Congress (IHC2014) that was held in Brisbane, Australia, August 2014. The IHC is the world's preeminent congress on horticulture science and, as such, attracts expertise from research through to education and policy, from both developed and developing countries, to exchange ideas.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community co-hosted IHC2014, along with the Australian Society of Horticultural Science and the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Science under the auspices of the International Society for Horticultural Science, providing an ideal opportunity to highlight the region and focus on its unique challenges. The importance of health and nutrition and the consumption of fruit and vegetables were discussed extensively in this wider context.

The planned workshop in Fiji, comprised of a three day agenda and a field visit, and organized in the framework of the FAO-WHO Joint Initiative on Fruit and Vegetables for Health, will take this discussion further. This will be the first workshop under this crucial Initiative to focus on the South Pacific region.

To highlight the specific challenges faced in the South Pacific region the workshop's first opening technical session will include a presentation on the results of a widespread survey of vegetable and fruit production and consumption, and health and nutritional challenges. The remaining program will comprise invited case study presentations and open forum discussions with a particular focus on integrated strategies for combating relevant non-communicable diseases, obesity, under-nutrition and micro-nutrient deficiency. This workshop will build on the Framework of Action on Food Security in the Pacific¹, which was developed at the Pacific Food Summit held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, 21-23 April, 2010. Many of the country-level activities identified through this Summit related to fruit and vegetable consumption. By building on previous and ongoing programmes, this workshop will introduce the FAO/WHO framework and guide the development of national-level initiatives to improve availability and consumption of fruit and vegetables.

¹http://www.spc.int/lrd/publications/doc_download/1055-towards-a-food-secure-pacific-2011-2015

2. Background and justification

It is widely accepted that daily consumption of fruit and vegetables is important for human health and nutrition because the vitamins, minerals, essential micronutrients, fibre, vegetable proteins and biofunctional components they provide are crucial for bodily function. However, despite this recognition, world-wide per capita consumption of fruits and vegetables is estimated to be 20-50% short of the minimum level recommended by FAO and WHO². Such a deficit has severe consequences for human health and according to the World Health Organization (WHO) low fruit and vegetable intake is among the top ten identified risk factors for global human mortality and poor health³.

The poor health conditions, associated with inadequate consumption of fruit and vegetables and lack of physical activity, favour the development of non-communicable disease (NCD), obesity and micronutrient and vitamin deficiencies. NCDs include cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and respiratory diseases and they are currently the cause of 6 out of every 10 deaths⁴. It is often mistakenly assumed that NCDs are confined largely to the developed nations. The situation is, however, more dire in the developing world where, for example, twice as many deaths are caused by cardiovascular diseases as in developed countries⁵.

Low consumption of fruit and vegetables is often simplistically attributed to unhealthy diets in developed countries and to poverty and food insecurity in developing countries. In reality, however, barriers to adequate fruit and vegetable consumption differ greatly between countries/communities. One region that faces an array of unique challenges is the South Pacific.

Fruit and vegetable intake in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) is well below the recommended level of five servings per person per day, or 400g per day⁶. This, among other risk factors, contributes largely to the high prevalence of NCDs, principally diabetes and cardiovascular disease. A major risk factor for NCDs is obesity, a key concern in this region: over half the people in all of the PICTs are overweight and ten of the most overweight and obese countries on earth are located in the South Pacific⁷. Existing alongside obesity at astonishing rates are, however, under-nutrition and micro-nutrient deficiency. In 15 out of 16 PICTs more than one fifth of children and pregnant women were recorded as being anaemic in 2010⁸.

The geographical isolation of communities in the South Pacific region is a factor that greatly impedes access to fruit and vegetables. The region comprises 20,000 to 30,000 islands spread over the Pacific Ocean that belong to 22 countries and territories. Since the

² FAO (2006) <http://www.fao.org/ag/magazine/0606sp2.htm>

³ FAO (2004) Fruit and vegetables for health: Report of a Joint FAO/WHO Workshop, Kobe, Japan.

⁴ FAO (2006) <http://www.fao.org/ag/magazine/0606sp2.htm>

⁵ FAO (2006) <http://www.fao.org/ag/magazine/0606sp2.htm>

⁶ Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2010) NCD Statistics for the Pacific Islands Countries and Territories

⁷ Mercer, P. (2007) South Pacific is 'fattest region. BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/6396111.stm>

⁸ WHO (2010) Pacific islanders pay heavy price for abandoning traditional diet. Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 88(7): 484–485.

population of the entire region is only 9.7 million (of which 7.6 million live in Papua New Guinea), these countries are characterized by small populations living in remote areas⁹. The extreme isolation of the Pacific creates logistical barriers to efficient fruit and vegetable trade and distribution. Low soil fertility is another key concern, particularly in atoll nations.

The Pacific Island region experiences unique environmental challenges, such as extreme weather conditions and rising sea levels, and socio-cultural issues, such as land tenure disputes, that reduce productivity and availability of fruit and vegetables. Unemployment and more sedentary lifestyles create situations where people are both inactive and poor.

Countries in the Pacific region are generally poor, with four of them classified as least-developed countries. Thus economic constraints also exist and include; high and fluctuating food and energy prices, poorly developed supply chains and infrastructure, and small national economies.

The situation in the South Pacific region has not gone unnoticed. Local and international initiatives have sought to address the need for increased fruit and vegetable consumption but more must be done.

WHO's Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (2002) has increased worldwide initiatives addressing health and nutritional issues. The Strategy was endorsed in the Pacific Islands in 2006. Other positive influences have been: WHO's "5 A Day" Symposium, held in Christchurch New Zealand in 2004; the implementation of FAO's FSSLP and RPFPS programmes; ACIAR's Pacific Partnerships and PARDI Programmes; and AusAid's Nutrition Project. All have contributed to improving food and nutrition security in the region and to increasing fruit and vegetable availability and consumption. Most recently in the 2010 Pacific Food Summit, a framework for action was elaborated that emphasized again the importance of fruit and vegetable consumption for health, as well as the environmental and economic challenges faced for production and access.

The Global Fruit and Vegetables for Health Initiative (PROFAV), was launched in 2003 in Geneva by FAO and WHO in recognition of the importance of fruit and vegetable consumption for health, and underlining of the importance of improved production capacity of local small holder farmers. The first workshop took place in Kobe, Japan, in 2004 where a framework that could be applied globally for implementing national level interventions was developed. Consequently, regional "awareness creating workshops" were held respectively in Lisbon (Portugal) for the lusophone countries, in Seoul (Republic of Korea) for East Asian countries, in Yaoundé (Cameroon) for the French speaking countries of Africa, and in Arusha (Tanzania) for the Anglophone countries of Africa. Successful national workshops have since been run in a number of countries including; Cape Verde, Ghana, and Argentina. This workshop in the Pacific will follow the previous work done on fruit and vegetable consumption for health in the region, identifying challenges the countries are currently facing and share lessons learned from other PROFAV regional or national initiatives, working together to move a step forward towards achieving improved health for the population in the region.

⁹ WHO (2011) Country Cooperation Strategy *at a glance*: Pacific Island Countries.

3. Objectives

The workshop will have five main objectives:

1. To create awareness about the FAO-WHO joint initiative on fruits and vegetables for health;
2. To document the production and consumption of fruit and vegetables and their current position in the market in the South Pacific;
3. To map existing policies, and current programmes and activities for the promotion of fruit and vegetables in the South Pacific;
4. To follow up on the relevant national level actions set within the Pacific Food Summit Framework of Action for the countries that have laid this out, identifying current challenges and needs to move forward towards realization, and assist those that have yet to develop action plans, drawing on elements of the “Kobe” framework for promoting fruit and vegetables at national level;
5. To strengthen collaboration amongst sectors and actors promoting fruit and vegetable production and consumption in the South Pacific;
6. To highlight critical food safety issues associated with production and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

4. Expected outcomes

The workshop is expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

1. Increased understanding of the fundamental role that fruit and vegetables should play in improving human health in the South Pacific region.
2. A greater understanding of the current status on fruit and vegetable production and consumption in the South Pacific region;
3. Improved awareness of the current challenges/barriers to increased fruit and vegetable supply and consumption in the South Pacific region;
4. Shared knowledge and experiences amongst representatives from the region.
5. A greater understanding of the FAO/WHO Fruit and Vegetables for Health initiative and the need for establishing interdisciplinary platforms for implementing action plans at the national level.
6. A greater understanding of food safety risks associated with production and consumption of fruits and vegetables.

5. Expected outputs

To contribute to the above objectives and outcomes, the workshop will produce:

1. A compilation of information on the nutritional situation, dietary habits and national nutritional policies;
2. Identification and creation of roadmap for implementing the FAO/WHO framework for the promotion of fruit and vegetables applicable in the countries of the South Pacific region, building on and connecting up existing national food and nutrition security, agriculture and NCD plans;
3. A plan for regional coordination and networking with regards to the implementation of the FAO/WHO framework for the promotion of fruit and vegetables;
4. A plan for continued monitoring and evaluation of fruit and vegetable production and consumption in South Pacific Island Countries consistent with the FAO/WHO framework.

6. Target groups and profile of participants

Policy makers, scientists and development practitioners, representing the horticulture/ agriculture sectors of human health and nutrition, crop production and education from the South Pacific Island countries will participate. Furthermore, representatives from agencies actively supporting the horticulture/ agriculture and health sectors in the region will also be fully engaged in supporting the workshop process. Country participants have been nominated by their Governments and are expected to be able to commit and involve themselves in the operational implementation of the framework in their respective areas of expertise and institutional responsibility.

7. Specific role of the sponsoring and partner organisations

Key organizations and their respective role can be described as follows:

- **FAO** – Convene the workshop, identify appropriate representatives from the agriculture sector, and conduct and present the background assessment, align follow-up elements with current priorities and scope of FAO’s programme in the region.
- **WHO** – Identify appropriate representatives from the public health/nutrition sector, and facilitate the health component of the workshop.
- **SPC** – Key regional institution to support networking and collaboration at regional level and contribute to situate the initiative in the context of the Framework of Action on Food Security in the Pacific.
- **ACIAR** – ACIAR representative to participate, report on ACIAR supported agriculture-nutrition linked programmes and identify opportunities for collaboration in supporting PROFAV follow-up.
- **ISHS** - Links the workshop with the IHC 2014.
- **University of Tasmania** – FAO and ISHS partner on development of workshop concept and regional linkages

8. Survey Presentation

An assessment of South Pacific Island nations and territories has been conducted in the lead-up to the workshop. Representatives from a number of countries have responded and provided feedback on their situation concerning: the *production* and *consumption* of fruit and vegetables and on-going interventions to address constraints in these areas. The result of the survey will be presented at the workshop and reviewed in combination with WHO available data on the prevalence of non-communicable diseases.

9. Themes for Discussion Groups:

Based on the challenges identified through the assessment, as well as country case studies, elements, entry points and next steps will be identified for immediate, medium term (2-3 years) and long term (3-5 years) action at country level through group discussions. Groups will be divided in accordance to the characteristics of the countries. Each group will analyse and discuss:

- The policy and strategy environment related to availability and accessibility of produce, production capacity, and supply policy; public health policy and system; education policy and system – in terms of strengths and challenges;
- Charting the challenge of increased F&V supply and consumption;
- Elements of a framework for action;
- Strategies to foster and promoting coordinated action.

10. Number of participants expected

There will be representatives from the agriculture, health and education sectors (where possible, and funds allowing) for the countries that responded to FAO's invitation.

Countries	Number of Participants
Samoa	2
Cook Islands	2
Fiji	4
Niue	3
Tonga	2
Tuvalu	2
Kiribati	2
Palau	2
Vanuatu	2
Marshall Islands	2
SUBTOTAL	22

Sponsor and Partner Organisation representatives	Number of Participants
ACIAR	1
SPC	1
FAO	4
ISHS/IHC/University of Tasmania	1
WHO	2
TOTAL	9

11. Venue and dates

The workshop is scheduled to be held in Nadi, Fiji, from 20-23 October, 2014 at the Tanoa International Hotel.

12. Provisional Programme

Monday, 20 October		
08:00	Registration	
09:00	Opening Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Ropate Ligairi, Permanent Secretary, Agriculture, Fiji - Mr. Peter Hoejskov, Technical Officer, WHO - Ms. Alison Hodder, Senior Officer, FAO - Mr. Siosua Halavatau, Deputy Director (Food and Nutrition Security Program), SPC 	
10:00	Introduction of participants	
10:30	Group photo and health break	
11:00	Promoting Health through Horticulture	Alison Hodder, FAO
11:15	Importance of Fruit and Vegetables for Public Health and food safety	Peter Hoejskov, WHO
11:45	ACIAR nutritious leafy vegetables activity in the Pacific	Graham Lyons, ACIAR
12:00	The increasing mismatch between consumer-demand, health, and supply of fruit and vegetables in Tasmania	Alistair Gracie, Univ. of Tasmania
12:15	Lunch	
14:00	Keynote – Improving the nutritional status of the population in Fiji	Ateca Kama, Min. of Health, Fiji
14:30	Presentation of STEPS methodology for surveillance of major health risk factors or other key topic suggested	Peter Hoejskov, WHO
14:50	PROFAV survey analysis and introduction of detailed survey	Minwook Kim, FAO
15:10	Discussion	
15:45	Health break	
16:15	Keynote - Increasing production of fruits and vegetables in the Pacific Islands - <i>Challenges and Strategies</i>	Siosua Halavatau, SPC
16:45	Invited case study presentations	
17:15	Discussion	
17:30	Introduction of working group sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formation of working groups - Working group objectives, themes, methods and expected results 	Facilitation Team
18:00	Close for the day	

Tuesday, 21 October		
09:00	Opening for the day and recap of yesterday	
Working group sessions		
09:30	Session 1 : Policy and strategy environment (health break at 10:30)	Facilitation Team 1: Alison Hodder, Siosuia Halavatau 2: Makiko Taguchi, Peter Hoejskov 3. Minwook Kim, Alistair Gracie
13:00	Lunch	
14:00	Session 2 : Charting the challenge of increased F&V supply and consumption	
15:30	Health break	
16:00	Session 3 : Elements of a framework for action	
17:30	Close for the day	

Wednesday, 22 October		
09:00	Session 4 : Promoting coordinated action (health break at 10:30)	
13:00	Lunch	
14:00	Session 5 : Outcomes of the workshop - Review and conclusions in groups	
16:00	Health break	
Plenary		
16:00	Session 6 : Working group reports and discussions	Moderator: Alison Hodder
18:30	Close for the day	

Thursday, 23 October		
10:00	Draft report review and adoption of the workshop conclusions	Facilitation Team
12:30	Closing ceremony	
13:00	Lunch	