

Food and Agriculture Organisation
Rome, Italy

Ministerial Statement – Hon. Taua Tavaga Kitiona Seuala

WORLD SUMMIT ON FOOD SECURITY

16 -18 November, 2009
FAO Headquarter – Rome, Italy

Mr. Chairman
Director General of FAO
Honorable Ministers
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to express the Government of Samoa's great appreciation to the Director General and relevant bodies of FAO, for organizing this very important food summit. It is therefore a pleasure to have this opportunity to make a contribution and speak on emerging issues and priorities for the development of agriculture, particularly in small island nations like my country, as well as other countries of the world.

Samoa is one of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) which all together cover a land area of only 553,959 square kilometers, and spread over the world's largest ocean.

Ladies and Gentlemen, like all of you; Samoa places high priority in the agriculture sector, being the backbone of the economy. Farming, especially in the rural population, plays a significant role in food security and improved livelihood standards.

A success story for Samoa is the revitalization of its taro industry, through its recovery from the taro leaf blight disease. This has demonstrated a positive result of collaborative efforts between Samoa and the International Agencies and Communities. The sharing of genetic diversity in the breeding programme was absolutely essential, and in that context, the improved material being developed can provide a genepool for further developments of a similar nature in the future. The Secretariat for the Pacific Community or SPC and FAO have been instrumental in genebank developments and collections in the Pacific Region and in facilitating PICs contribution to international needs in this area.

Typically Ladies and Gentlemen, Samoa as a small island nation has the potential to realize increased agricultural production and productivity for sustainable food security and stability. However, its obvious vulnerability to natural disasters, including pests and diseases like the taro leaf blight in 1993 as mentioned earlier; are ongoing challenges. The more

recent devastation of its agricultural capacity due to the impact of the tsunami on September 2009, brought home the negative realities of climate changes that have been echoed in this summit since yesterday. The September 2009 tsunami devastation; was a wake up call for Samoa in many aspects, and more so for agriculture and food security in this context. In fact, it took us right back to the insecurity of immediately having no food at the affected areas; and the experience has demonstrated a high degree of fragility and vulnerability with regards to food systems.

The urgency of adopting a *Whole of Government and Whole of Society* approach in understanding and implementing food security strategies, has prompted relevant Government Ministries and Non Government Organisations to put in place appropriate measures to improve the adaptive and resilient capacity of the people.

For example, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture conducted a National Food Summit in August 2009, to further realize the essence of food security in a broader context, outside of the traditional agriculture focus. The discussions concentrated on the FAO and WHO advocacy for *the right to health and the right to food*;

with special emphasis on *the right to the right food*. The latter was of special significance in relation to the increasing number of Samoans affected by non communicable diseases. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment champions in our country the climate change and environmental issues. The Ministry of Women provides the link to the farmers through interaction with village mayors. All such cross cutting areas are captured through a partnership philosophy that has been stimulated by government.

Samoa endorses and implements the concepts highlighted by FAO, such as the “year of the potato” and the “year of the fiber”. At the commemoration of this year’s World Food Day in October 2009, Samoa promoted the “year of the taro”. It marked an achievement when the farmers successfully trialed the improved new taro varieties. The planned focus for 2010 will highlight the “Year of the Breadfruit”. This advocates breadfruit planting around home for food, and signals the potential for flour making as recently developed by the Scientific Research of Samoa (SROS).

The farmers are becoming more organized, creating a better environment for government to provide the essential services. It has also accommodated better

coordination for the efficient delivery of donor assistance to the grass root level.

The Government of Samoa has proactively championed agricultural production for food security at all levels; to ensure that all our people have the basic traditional food requirements. Samoa acknowledges the international support as she embarks in this direction.

At this juncture, I would like to acknowledge the assistance of all development partners and governments who have been helping us recover from the tsunami devastation.

At the upcoming conference, I wish also to state on behalf of the Government of Samoa, our endorsement of the *Signature of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing 2009*. We commend the global response in realizing timely and rapid ratification by all.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, Samoa believes that this current food crisis requires urgent attention at this highest political level.

I thank you.
