

**Eleventh Meeting of
FAO Southwest Pacific Ministers for Agriculture**

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

11–14 May 2015

Theme: Climate Smart Agriculture

Concept Note for a Pacific Agriculture Week



**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**

Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific Islands
Food and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations (FAO)
Apia, Samoa 2015

Executive Summary

This paper puts forward a proposal for a biennial Pacific Week of Agriculture (PWA). The concept is based on the experience of a similar event that takes place in the Caribbean, the Caribbean Week of Agriculture. Over the last 15 years, representatives of Caribbean countries have met at an annual event, known as the Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA). Ministers of Agriculture convene at three inter-ministerial meetings, in addition to other sessions, such as a one-day seminar and two days of workshops, organized by various institutions and agencies to discuss regional issues. The event also offers an exhibition opportunity for participants to showcase their products, which has proved to be very popular. Over time, the duration of the occasion has extended from three days to include one work week, together with a weekend.

The CWA is primarily funded by Caribbean regional development partners and organizations, such as the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and FAO. The main contributors were originally the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), FAO and Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI). In recent years, however, a significant proportion of support has been provided by CTA. More recently – at the CWA 2014, held in Paramaribo, Suriname – one activity was funded by the private sector.

A number of Ministers of Agriculture, representing the Pacific, were supported by CTA to attend the CWA 2014. These Ministers were impressed with the event and strongly recommend a similar initiative for the Pacific islands. There is broad consensus that the gathering would significantly contribute to the enhancement of communication between agriculture stakeholders in the Pacific and that it would also facilitate the sharing of knowledge.

It is proposed that consideration be given to such a meeting as a PWA. The event would enable the formal FAO and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) meetings to be held consecutively in an effort to reduce the cost to Member Countries and promote increased collaboration between the two organizations. Furthermore, the initiative would attract a greater number and wider range of participants at technical workshops, supported by FAO, SPC and other agencies. Regional issues would be addressed with a multistakeholder approach, which would assist donors to identify priority issues for future support on a regional basis.

Assuming that the concept of a PWA is endorsed by Ministers, a number of issues will need to be resolved to ensure that the event embarks on a sound footing. These matters are included in this paper.

Ministers are invited to:

1. **note and endorse** the concept of a biennial PWA; to request FAO and SPC to work with CTA and other stakeholders to develop a detailed approach to the organization of the event; and to provide an update at the meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries (MOAF) and Heads of Agriculture and Forestry (HOAF) in September 2015;
2. **indicate** initial interest in hosting the first PWA; and
3. **nominate country** representatives to be a part of any planning committee that is established to manage the first PWA.

Introduction

1. This paper presents the conceptual framework for a biennial PWA. The proposed PWA draws its inspiration from a similar event, held annually, in the Caribbean over the last 15 years, known as the CWA. PWA is presented in the context of the importance of agriculture and rural life to the economic, social and environmental stability of the Pacific region, as well as to the existing two fora: the FAO Southwest Pacific Ministers for Agriculture meeting, held every two years, and the SPC Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry meeting, held every four years.

2. While the CWA serves as a model for the proposed PWA, circumstances in the Pacific Islands are clearly different from those in the Caribbean. This paper aims not to propose a replication of the CWA; rather, it suggests an event that would be a valuable tool with regard to the agricultural and related development of the Pacific region in its particular context.

3. The CTA has supported the participation of Pacific Island representatives, including Ministers of Agriculture from Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, in the 2013 and 2014 CWAs, held in Guyana and Suriname, respectively. The Ministers were positive about the event and suggested that a similar event be held in the Pacific.

The Evolution of the Caribbean Week of Agriculture

4. The Caribbean Community and Common Market, later known as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), was first established in 1973 under the Treaty of Chaguaramas. CARICOM's role in the Caribbean is similar to those of the Pacific Islands Forum and the SPC.

5. In July 1999, IICA facilitated a CARICOM Ministers of Agriculture Forum to discuss emerging issues for agriculture development in the Caribbean. This was the establishment of the Alliance for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu (The Alliance). Until that time, there was no formal mechanism for the Ministers of Agriculture of the region at which they could meet.¹ FAO and CARDI joined IICA and CARICOM in 2002 to establish a core group that functions as the Secretariat of the Alliance.

6. Through IICA's invitation to participate at the major annual meetings of The Alliance, the CWA eventually formed its own meeting. The event provides a forum for agriculture and related stakeholders to focus on agriculture and rural life, network, showcase their achievements through policy dialogue, share information, learn from workshops, and exhibit their products. The first CWA meeting was held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in 1999. Since then, it has been held every year, with the exceptions of 2002 and 2004. Over the past 15 years, 13 meetings have taken place in 11 different countries – the most recent in Suriname in 2014. The first meeting was held at the same time as the Caribbean Heads of Government meetings. It was recognized, however, that most countries within the region were unable to support the two events simultaneously. From 2000, therefore, the two have taken place separately.

7. In 2001, during the revision of the Treaty of Chaguaramas, it was recognized that the Ministers of Agriculture in the Caribbean lacked a formal mechanism by which to meet.² Consequently, IICA was approached by Ministers of the Caribbean for support. IICA agreed under the condition that the event expand to include wider participation.

¹ FAO does not organize a separate meeting for Ministers of the Caribbean as it does in the Pacific. Ministers of Agriculture participate only in FAO's biennial Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean.

² FAO does not organize a separate meeting for Ministers of the Caribbean as it does in the Pacific. Ministers of Agriculture participate only in FAO's biennial [Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean](#).

Programme and implementation arrangements for the CWA

8. Although the first CWA lasted for only three days, the meeting gradually extended to one full work week and one weekend. An electronic announcement is made ahead of the meeting, targeting the region on a link on the CARICOM web site. The event kicks off with an opening ceremony and gala with cultural music and dance performances, showcased by the host country, followed by a cocktail reception. There are three compulsory one-day meetings:

1. The first is for officials of the Council for Trade and Economic Development, comprising permanent secretaries and representatives of regional organisations;
2. The second is for officials of the Council for Trade and Economic Development, organized by the CARICOM Secretariat and attended by Ministers of Agriculture; and
3. The third is held by The Alliance, following the meeting of Ministers, and is open to all agriculture stakeholders in the Caribbean, including the private sector, academics, farmers, women's groups and youth. All participants are expected to attend on an equal footing.

9. The week's agenda is usually made up of one-day seminars or two-day workshops, in addition to the three mandatory one-day meetings. These are organized and supported by various institutions and agencies and include a media engagement seminar. Separate ministerial meetings are organized by FAO and IICA, which usually host a Ministerial Luncheon during the week. For several years, each day has opened with a media briefing, where representatives from each institution update the media on the main outcomes of the previous day's event.

10. Since 2002, FAO, CARDI, IICA, CARICOM and the host country have collaborated on the logistics and management of the various activities during CWA. In 2003, the ACP-EU CTA became a major partner and sponsor of the activities. As previously mentioned, at the recent CWA held in Suriname, one event was funded by the private sector.

11. Coordination is carried out by a Steering Committee composed of multistakeholders, chaired by CARICOM, with CARDI, CTA, FAO, IICA and the host country as members. The host country normally takes the lead in organizing the event.

12. An important feature of the CWA is that the host country rotates throughout the region. The theme for each year is set by the Steering Committee, in consultation with the host country. In Suriname in 2014, for example, the theme was Transforming Caribbean Agriculture through Family Farming. The theme for the 2013 CWA was Linking the Caribbean for Regional Food and Nutrition Security and Rural Development. The themes for the two-day technical workshops are determined by the Steering Committee, reflecting country needs and the ability of various institutions to fund the discussions, including the travel cost of many of the participants. There is some flexibility for the host country to determine the structure of the event. In the case of 2014, for example, Suriname – in an effort to maximize the exposure of its nationals at the CWA – ensured that plenary sessions were attended by all participants each morning, prior to their attendance at the various technical workshops.

13. The CWA also offers an exhibition area, which has gained popularity. Exhibitors are requested to ensure that their exhibits relate to a range of topics selected by the Steering Committee. In 2014, the topics included family farming; agricultural innovation; women and youth in agriculture; climate smart agriculture; protected cultivation and organic farming; and agricultural health and food safety. The event provides exhibitors the opportunity to network and establish regional markets for their products. The cost of hosting a CWA varies from year to year, depending on the activities and the location of the host country. There is no single budget source for the CWA;

in some cases, funding agencies have chosen to schedule workshops during the week rather than hold them as separate activities, thus reducing the cost to the CWA. The cost of meeting rooms and logistics at the local level are expected to be met by the host country. Some participants stay for the entire week, while others attend only the mandatory sessions and/or specific workshops, seminars, exhibition and trade fair. Very few participants (under ten percent) meet their own expenses, and most travel and accommodation costs are covered by the agencies that organize the various technical workshops. The workshops generally take place as four half-day sessions but can be spread out over more than two days, with no more than three sessions being held in parallel. The cost of each two-day technical workshop is approximately US\$60,000 and the CWA normally has three to four workshops each year. In 2014, the three workshop topics were Policy and Strategy for Development, Climate Change and Climate Smart Agriculture, and Value Chain Development. Shorter seminars were also offered during plenary sessions.

Benefits and challenges of organizing the CWA

14. So far, there has been no formal evaluation of the CWA; however, the comprehensive post-event reports, prepared by the host countries following the conclusion of the event, have highlighted several of the benefits of and challenges to organizing the event. While it is fully recognized that there is a need for a systematic review of the implementation of recommendations that have emerged from the various discussions at CWA, a general consensus suggests that the region benefits from the event. It is deemed that the meeting significantly contributes to increased communication between regional agriculture stakeholders in terms of knowledge sharing. The one-day meeting sponsored by The Alliance, in particular, has provided an opportunity for agricultural stakeholders to hold discussions with policy-makers, although it is recognized that more could be achieved from this particular meeting. The CWA is also viewed as a means to increase the exposure of agriculture in the Caribbean media, which has proved successful, to the extent that some countries now have specialized media channels relating to agriculture. As a result, the event now receives widespread press coverage throughout the region.

15. The work of the Steering Committee members focuses on identifying ways whereby the practical impact of the event can be escalated. The development of a more fitting management structure would encourage the rapid enlargement of the gathering. With this in mind, CARICOM has recently appointed a permanent staff member to act as Secretary of the CWA in an effort to continue improving the CWA, as well as reduce the challenges of last-minute planning and ensure the timely launch of the web site announcement each year prior to the event taking place. Other issues to be addressed in the planning cycle include the dissemination of reports of the technical discussions and the introduction of a post-evaluation mechanism to identify and address areas that need improvement.

The current situation in the Pacific

16. While the CWA was originally established to create a venue for Ministers of Agriculture to meet, the situation in the Pacific Islands is somewhat different. The Pacific currently has two fora: the FAO Southwest Pacific³ Ministers for Agriculture meeting, held every two years, and the SPC Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry meeting, usually held every four years.

17. The FAO meeting, while not an official FAO event, emanated from the initiative of Ministers of Agriculture from FAO Member Countries in the Pacific. FAO provides secretariat capacity and collaborates with the host country to organize the meeting. FAO also prepares papers for substantive

³ Southwest Pacific is a regional group for the purpose of FAO Council elections, composed of 16 Member Country Ministers of Agriculture from across the Pacific.

discussion. Member Countries cover the costs associated with meeting attendance and the host country provides the venue and logistics at the local level. The occasion provides an opportunity for FAO to update its programme of work in agriculture, food, fisheries and forestry in the Pacific and discuss priorities with regard to future technical assistance. Member Countries and other development partners are able to discuss matters relating to these sectors and have the opportunity of one-to-one consultations with the FAO Director-General, who usually attends the meeting.

18. SPC is an integral part of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific,⁴ mandated by Pacific leaders to work towards the common goal of sustainable development in the Pacific region. SPC is owned and governed by its membership of 26 governments, including 22 Pacific Island countries and territories and the four founding members (Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States). The Land Resources Division of SPC provides technical assistance and services spanning genetic resources, seed technology, forestry, wood technology, soil science, animal health and production, pathology and entomology and crop production. Other SPC projects include technical services for fisheries production and aquaculture.

19. The Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific functions as a coordination mechanism between the heads of regional institutions in the Pacific and as a high-level advisory body to provide policy advice. It assists in the facilitation of policy formulation at the national, regional and international levels, and provides a forum to enable the heads of Council to collectively review the progress of the contributions of their respective agency with regard to the region's objectives, which are documented in the Pacific Plan.

20. SPC usually holds a HOAF meeting every two years and a MOAF meeting approximately every four years. SPC is now planning a joint MOAF/HOAF meeting in September 2015. The main purpose of the HOAF event is to update participants on the implementation of ongoing programmes and projects; provide information on new developments, project proposals and funding; and sign off on completed projects. Recommendations by HOAF are passed to the SPC Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (representing the entire SPC) for endorsement. The main purpose of the MOAF meeting is to update Ministers on new developments and to obtain their support for activities to be undertaken by the SPC Land Resources Division.

21. SPC also convenes a biennial meeting of the Heads of Fisheries. This meeting provides technical oversight of all SPC work in the field of fisheries and aquaculture, as well as an opportunity to discuss, in detail, topics of special interest. It covers the oceanic and coastal programmes of SPC. FAO is invited to this meeting as an Observer.

22. In addition to these formal sessions, a large number of workshops on different agricultural, food, fisheries and forestry issues are held throughout the region. With multiple bodies organizing these events, there is a potential for duplication of topics and the possibility of repeat participation. There is no single event, such as the CWA, which would bring together a wide range of stakeholders and provide a forum where the relevant stakeholders can interact with policy-makers to discuss the most pressing issues from a regional perspective.

23. FAO and SPC have strong ties with the Caribbean. FAO has a field office in the Caribbean, based in Barbados, and SPC is currently implementing an intra-ACP Regional

⁴ The members of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific are Forum Fisheries Agency; Pacific Islands Development Programme; SPC; Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; South Pacific Tourism Organisation; University of the South Pacific; Pacific Power Association; Pacific Aviation Safety Office; and Pacific Island Forum Secretariat.

Policy Project which formally involves CTA and the Caribbean. Both agencies are well placed to draw on lessons from the CWA.

A proposed Pacific Week of Agriculture

24. The organization of a PWA offers several potential benefits:
 1. A reduction in costs to Member Countries and increased collaboration between FAO and SPC by enabling the formal joint meetings, described above, to be held consecutively.
 2. The drawing of a greater number and wider range of participants to the technical workshops supported by FAO, SPC and other organizations. In this context, it should be noted that CTA has confirmed its intention to fund an Agribusiness Forum, to be held in conjunction with SPC's September 2015 meeting. This event will be organized by the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation and SPC. SPC's intra-ACP Pacific Policy Project has also allocated funding for a regional exchange of farmers and commercial sector actors.
 3. The opportunity for consultations with policy-makers to take place at the regional level to promote a multistakeholder approach to address regional issues. While there are usually extensive consultations between policy-makers and other interested parties at the national level, the same cannot be said with regard to regional topics, such as climate change, intra-regional trade development and Sanitary and Phytosanitary matters.
 4. The ability of donors to identify priority issues for future assistance on a regional basis.
25. Provided that the concept of a PWA is endorsed by Ministers, there are several considerations which must be addressed to support the successful planning and launch of the event. These include:
 1. **Frequency.** The CWA is held annually. It is proposed that the PWA be a biennial event. This will facilitate the efficient use of limited resources, particularly in light of the greater travel costs to and within the Pacific compared with the Caribbean. It also recognizes the limited resources available to Member Countries to cover travel costs and for FAO and SPC to jointly support the preparation of a PWA.
 2. **Coverage.** In principle, the PWA will include the current regional meetings that take place. The FAO Southwest Pacific Ministers for Agriculture event addresses agriculture, food, fisheries and forestry, while the SPC meetings – organized by its Land Resources Division – cover agriculture and forestry. In SPC, issues relating to the fisheries sector are addressed at a separate Heads of Fisheries meeting. This may require FAO and SPC to reconsider the status of FAO at the SPC Heads of Fisheries meetings as a means to include FAO in substantive discussions on fisheries.
 3. **Participation by other agencies.** While other agencies are unlikely to want to incorporate formal meetings that are part of their governance structure into the PWA, they should nevertheless be invited to participate. Some may wish to organize and fund the workshops, which may include agencies such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme, as well as AusAID, CTA, International Fund for Agriculture Development and NZAid. Regional organizations, such as the Pacific Islands Farmers Organisation Network and Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation, should also be invited to play an important role.

4. **Scheduling.** If the meeting cannot be organized on an annual basis due to cost constraints, it would appear essential that the event be held at least every two years. The question is whether it should be held in even-numbered years (i.e. 2016, 2018, 2020) or in odd-numbered years (i.e. 2017, 2019, 2021). From the perspective of FAO, a meeting in odd-numbered years would provide an opportunity for Member Countries to prepare for the biennial FAO Conference and to provide guidance on priorities for work in the next biennium.
5. **Duration.** It is suggested that the overall duration of the PWA be one full week in order to maximize the time available for multistakeholder discussions and for technical workshops within the context of the PWA. It may be desirable for FAO and SPC to reduce the duration of their respective formal meetings. For example, the FAO Southwest Pacific Ministers for Agriculture meeting could be reduced to one and one half days, instead of the present three.
6. **Location.** At present, there are significant cost advantages to holding Pacific Island meetings in Nadi, Fiji, as it has the most convenient air connections and has fairly inexpensive hotels. This is the location preferred by SPC for most of its regional workshops. Alternatively, rotating the meeting location is likely to significantly increase costs, thereby reducing the number of ministers and officials who can attend; it may also present problems for some of the smaller countries, given accommodation constraints. At the same time – and as described above – the rotation of the hosting country is considered to be a major feature of the CWA and it is also consistent with FAO's policy for its biennial meetings in the Pacific. It is important, therefore, that countries hosting the PWA are aware of the obligations that they will assume and are clear on what they perceive to be the benefits to hosting the event.
7. **Management structure.** Lessons learned from the CWA are that management of the event by committee may not be the most effective way to operate. The individual events, such as the technical workshops, are usually well organized, but there may be a need for one organization to provide overall coordination. While the PWA should certainly have a Steering Committee, consisting of FAO, SPC, the host country and other agencies that are interested in contributing their support – including CTA, which has already expressed an interest – it would seem appropriate that one of them should take the lead. This leadership, perhaps, can be rotated between FAO and SPC.
8. **Funding.** This proposal should not be interpreted as a funding commitment from either CTA, FAO or SPC. While it may be anticipated that FAO and SPC will maintain their past levels of support, Member Countries must, nevertheless, anticipate that they will also incur costs.

Ministers are invited to:

1. **note and endorse** the concept of a biennial PWA and to request FAO and SPC to work with CTA and other stakeholders to develop a detailed approach to the organization of the event and to provide an update at the MOAF and HOAF meetings in September 2015;
2. **indicate** initial interest in hosting the first PWA; and
3. **nominate country** representatives to be a part of any planning committee that is established to organize the first PWA.

Acknowledgement

This paper is based on a draft prepared by former FAO and CTA staff member, Andrew W. Shepherd. He would particularly like to acknowledge assistance received from Dr. Arlington Chesney, former Executive Director of CARDI; Mr. Michael Hailu, Director of CTA and his staff; and Mr. Inoke Ratukalou of SPC. The paper was reviewed by CTA, SPC and FAO.