

**National Consultation on Policy and Programmatic Actions
To Address High Food Prices in the Cook Islands,
New Hope Hall, Avarua, Rarotonga, Cook Islands,
19-20 April 2012**

Outcome Statement

1. The National Consultation on Policy and Programmatic Actions to Address High Food Prices in the Cook Islands was held at the New Hope Hall, Rarotonga on 19-20 April 2012. The meeting was convened by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN). Participants included representatives of government agencies, private sector and civil society organizations.
2. The objective of the national consultation was to assist government in identifying various policy options and designing immediate actions in response to food price rises.
3. Participants recognised the close linkages between fuel prices and cost of food production and marketing, and the need for the Cook Islands to explore alternative fuel sources.
4. 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 security¹ in the Cook Islands, and its effects on people's ability to meet and fulfil other needs such as health, education, and socio-economic opportunities.
 - b) Recognised that the prices of imported foods will continue to increase into the future. With better management, marketing and regulations, local produce could be made more affordable.
 - c) The most vulnerable group to high food prices include the elderly, children, people with disabilities, low income earners and some people from the outer islands living in the urban area on Rarotonga.
 - d) Create opportunities to encourage employment in food production and agriculture to enhance skills and earning capacity through informal and formal education.
 - e) Recognised the need for the provision of credit facility for agriculture development.
 - f) Endorse government policy on the exemption of import levy on agricultural products and supplies.
 - g) Recognised the need to subsidise freight cost of fertilizers to the outer islands and develop a price support strategy that would reward the growers based on their output.
 - h) Recognised the need to enhance consumer education/awareness regarding healthier choices, food safety, consumer rights and value for money.

¹ "Food Security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life"

- i) Endorse the policy of voluntary compliance of food standards and recommend the adoption of the 2006 draft Food Regulations.
- j) Introduce short term land use policies to enable access to land for agricultural production by more growers.
- k) Strengthen cultural and denominational safety nets and welfare system in looking after families and communities in managing the negative impact of high food price crises. Encourage cultural system of conservation, sharing and earning.
- l) There is a need to encourage import substitution by improving production, and promoting consumption of local nutritious foods.
- m) Strengthen coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Island Councils to facilitate production of and investments in specific commodities and trade including in value added products.
- n) The Ministry of Agriculture with the participants call on the Government of the Cook Islands and development partners to support the implementation of the consultation outcomes to address high food prices impacting on our society.