



Vanuatu and FAO

Partnering to improve food security and income-earning opportunities

FAO has a long history of cooperation with Vanuatu, a Pacific Island Country which joined the Organization in 1983 and, as of 2014, hosts a country office. Over the past three decades, FAO cooperation with Vanuatu has focused on agricultural data collection, strengthening capacities for local food production, developing market linkages and building resilience to the effects of climate change.

Responding to disasters

In the past 30 years FAO has responded to several post-crisis requests for support to rehabilitate Vanuatu's agriculture and fisheries sector. Following Tropical Cyclone Pam which swept through Vanuatu in March 2015, and building on earlier collaboration in disaster preparedness, FAO worked alongside the Government of Vanuatu to assist more than 48,000 people resume agricultural production by providing seeds and technical guidance. A sample of 10% of all households is being monitored to assess their food security status during the current drought. Ten thousand tree seedlings are being delivered to the 1,000 most affected farm households to re-establish agroforestry woodlots in home gardens and in the wider forest landscapes.



SUBREGIONAL SCOPE – COUNTRY FOCUS

Strategic direction for FAO assistance to Vanuatu is provided by the 2013-2017 Country Programming Framework (CPF) for the Pacific Subregion, which balances regional-level initiatives with demand-driven country-specific plans for 14 Pacific Island Countries. Across the region, assistance is focused on five priority areas:

- Improved policy plans and legislation
- Enhancement of ecologically sustainable agricultural production (including forestry and fisheries)
- Improved food quality and safety
- Improved production, processing and marketing of agricultural produce
- Protection and sustainable use of biodiversity

Matching FAO's expertise to Vanuatu's development priorities

In addition to the above region-wide priorities, FAO country-level interventions reflect strategic areas contained in Vanuatu's Overarching Productive Sector Policy 2012-2017, including but not limited to product quality and safety; production, productivity and value added; environmental services and resilience; capacity building; and policy development.

Accordingly, the dual focus of FAO's Vanuatu CPF is on:

- Sustained access to markets
- Environmental management and resilience, including disaster preparedness, emergency response and climate change.

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Building the evidence base for local food production and marketing

A major hurdle faced by Pacific Island Countries in securing domestic food security is a high dependence on food imports. Vanuatu also faces the challenge of supporting a predominantly rural population dispersed across more than 80 islands. In this context, strengthening agricultural data collection, including marketing information, is important for increasing local production as well as trade of food products.

A successful achievement in this area has been the elaboration of a national market information system by Vanuatu's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, with technical assistance from FAO. Following an initial market survey, an information system was devised for the main agricultural products that are traded locally, and staff were trained in data collection, processing and dissemination procedures. Data for markets in Luganville and Port Vila are now produced and disseminated regularly.

Extension workers and farmers have been trained to use the information generated. They have also been introduced to the principles of marketing and pricing, production planning, quality requirements for local and export markets, transportation and post-harvest handling.

"Vanuatu communities have longstanding traditional coping mechanisms to address immediate food needs and resume agricultural production. FAO must ... address long-term rehabilitation of the agriculture sector."

FAO Director-General

to domestic markets was recently completed, featuring a specific focus on chicken production and the tourism sector's demand for fruit and vegetables. Using an evidence-based approach, the plan provides a detailed value-chain analysis of domestic market opportunities, actions required to improve local producers' market access, and the responsible institution required to implement each action.

As the basis for further activities, FAO is currently analysing five potential fruit and vegetable market chains, including possible market barriers.

Building resilience – preparing for disasters

Vanuatu is ranked by the 2014 United Nations World Risk Report as the world's most vulnerable country in terms of exposure to natural hazards.

To step up the country's preparedness for and management of natural disasters, as well as its ability to rebuild in the aftermath, FAO collaborates closely with the national Food Security and Agriculture Cluster, led by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Validated guidelines and tools for conducting post-disaster agricultural assessments have been produced as a result of in-depth training on needs assessment methodologies, conducted together with partners.

FAO is also to commence implementation of a project to enhance capacities for integrating disaster risk reduction in agriculture. With funding from the Disaster Preparedness Programme of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department, the purpose of the intervention is to strengthen communities' capacities for identifying and mitigating risks that affect their access to food. A key project component consists in the development of tools for community-based food security monitoring, early warning and early action.

Climate-smart agriculture

In partnership with UNICEF and the UNDP, since 2011 FAO has been implementing a project in all six provinces of Vanuatu to build up community resilience and coping mechanisms in the face of climate change and natural disasters. The project integrates food security components, including support for food production systems that are resilient to climate change, appropriate food preparation and preservation practices, and the establishment of cooperatives.

Having been trained in the establishment of climate-smart farming plots suited to their specific locations, farmers returned to their communities to set up plots using the knowledge, tools and improved planting materials received as part of their training. Additional training was provided at the community level to introduce women to nutritious recipes as well as food preservation techniques that can enhance food security in times of emergencies.

Under its Technical Cooperation Programme, FAO has also provided technical assistance to increase local capacity for off-season vegetable production. Extension officers, research staff and farmers have been trained in affordable technologies and systems for producing vegetables in open field and modified tunnel house conditions during the off season. Guidelines have been developed to assist in the selection of open pollination varieties and on preserving, packaging and storing vegetable seeds, while a series of fact sheets address 20 of the country's most serious plant pest and disease problems.