



Tonga and FAO

Partnering to improve food security and income-earning opportunities

FAO has a long history of cooperation with Tonga, a Pacific Island Country which joined the Organization in 1981 and which, as of 2014, hosts a country office. Over the past three decades, FAO cooperation with Tonga has focused on strengthening policy and planning capacities, supporting agribusiness and building resilience to the effects of climate change.

Building the evidence base and capacities for policy-making

Over the past 30 years, FAO has been supporting Tonga's public sector development through institutional capacity building, policy advice and data collection and management in the agricultural and rural sector.

- Technical assistance has been provided for the implementation of regular agricultural surveys and censuses – including the country's next census which is currently in preparation.
- In support of Tonga's Land Administration Project, initiated in 2010, FAO helped develop a customized version of a dedicated software system known as "Solutions for Open Land Administration" (SOLA). Use of SOLA for cadastral and land registration purposes has improved access to geospatial information for surveying, hazard mapping, urban planning and streamlining land dealings. A further benefit of improved access to information is increased foreign investments.
- FAO has supported development of Tonga's fisheries sector, providing technical assistance in fisheries management, including revision of national legislation. It has also contributed to the country's first national forest policy and is currently finalizing a new forestry law.

SUBREGIONAL SCOPE – COUNTRY FOCUS

Strategic direction for FAO assistance to Tonga 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 Tonga's development priorities

In addition to the above region-wide priorities, FAO country-level interventions reflect strategic areas contained in the **Tonga Strategic Development Framework (2011-2014)**, including but not limited to community development and support for the private sector, especially investment promotion. Increasing agricultural production for domestic consumption and export is also accorded high priority.

Accordingly, the CPF for Tonga focuses on:

- **Policy, legislation and strategic planning**, including capacity building for policy formulation as well as agricultural data collection and management systems
- **Supply chain management and efficiency**, with a view to increasing agricultural production and productivity
- **Environmental management and resilience**, including disaster preparedness, emergency response and climate change

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Supporting agribusiness and rural development

Targeting youth in agriculture

Under the national “Future Farmers of Tonga” programme, which promotes agricultural activities for youth, FAO provided technical expertise to build the capacity of young farmers in farm management, marketing and agribusiness. Pilot youth groups were assisted in the development of a business plan for their farm enterprises, receiving initial support to start up farm-based group businesses. The project included a capacity development component for extension staff, who also received training in farm management and marketing. Implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Tongan National Youth Congress, church groups and the United States Peace Corps, the intervention was the first of its kind in the region and it has informed the development of similar projects in other countries.

Floriculture development

In support of Government efforts to diversify income sources for rural populations, FAO has helped build floriculture capacities, particularly among women’s groups. Nurseries were established for the propagation of ornamental plants on Tongatapu and Vava’u, and selected growers from all the country’s island groups were trained in ornamental plant production. The intervention has proved to be sustainable, as a number of women’s groups continue to engage in income-generating floriculture activities.

Building resilience to climate change and natural disasters

Climate change-related risks represent a significant challenge for all Pacific Island Countries, including Tonga.

With the aim of strengthening agricultural disaster preparedness, FAO recently conducted disaster risk management training for Tongan policy-makers, planners and practitioners. The training event highlighted the key responsibility of agriculture-related sectors in: guiding the transition from reactive emergency response to proactive disaster risk management; and promoting long-term disaster risk reduction strategies and measures as part of an integrated approach to risk management. In addition, under the banner of the Pacific Food Security Cluster, FAO has provided support to the Government-led national Food Security Coordination Cluster, with a particular focus on tailored agricultural post-disaster needs assessments and institutional mechanisms for crisis preparedness and response.

Over the years, FAO has responded to several post-crisis requests from Tonga, supporting recovery and rehabilitation of the country’s agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. The emphasis has been on assisting ministries with coordination, needs assessments, the formulation of response plans and resource mobilization. Cooperation has also facilitated linkages to regional and global humanitarian and donor mechanisms.

“We want more than just survival. We strive for sustainable development.”

FAO Director-General

Improving sustainable fisheries management

Tonga has a large exclusive economic zone for exploitation of marine resources. Its marine and coastal resources include complex and vulnerable ecosystems, which provide livelihoods for many Tongans. As fish forms an important part of Tongan tradition and culture, increased fishing efforts to meet the demand from a growing population could result in a significant depletion of inshore fisheries.

To address this issue, FAO has been supporting the development of commercially viable and environment-friendly milkfish aquaculture systems on Nomuka and Tonga’tapu, the aim being to revive local milkfish resources as a sustainable source of food and income for the islands’ communities. Project activities should demonstrate the commercial viability and local employment benefits of pen and pond farming systems for milkfish, including cost-effective technologies and techniques for input production and supply, grow-out management, post-harvesting and marketing.

Project: Development of Community-based Milkfish Farming in Nomuka Island and Tonga’tapu in Tonga. Implemented under FAO’s Technical Cooperation Programme.

