Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Tuvalu and FAO

Partnering to improve food security and income-earning opportunities

Tuvalu and FAO have partnered since the Pacific Island Country joined the Organization in 2003. Cooperation is aimed at achieving food security through environmentally sustainable local food production. Development assistance includes a focus on community-based aquaculture, inshore fisheries management and market-oriented agriculture. As a small island developing state (SIDS), adaptation to climate change and disaster risk management are important features of cooperation for Tuvalu.

An ecosystem approach to fisheries

Working through its Technical Cooperation Programme, FAO has assisted the Government with the second phase of a successful project to develop community-based aquaculture systems and inshore fisheries management. The first phase involved the procurement of materials for creating Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), which were then built and deployed in inshore as well as offshore areas.

In cooperation with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), training covered FAD construction, fishing and milkfish farming, including demonstrations and trials for milkfish fry collection.

Promoting a community-based ecosystem approach to fisheries management, the current phase of the project includes establishment of a model community-based aquaculture farm in Vaitupu, and there are plans to extend the model to the country's outer islands.

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SUBREGIONAL SCOPE – COUNTRY FOCUS

Strategic direction for FAO assistance in Tuvalu 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 centred 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

Aligning FAO's expertise to Tuvalu's development priorities

Further to the above region-wide priorities, FAO assistance at the country level takes into account relevant priorities in key national development policies, including the **2005-2015 Tuvalu National Strategy for Sustainable Development (Te Kakeega II),** which aims to boost socio-economic development, including and agriculture, fisheries and environmental management.

Accordingly, FAO's **CPF for Tuvalu** focuses on:

- Strengthened policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for sustainable agricultural development
- Enhanced resilience of agriculture, livestock and fisheries production systems
- Strengthened food safety and quality, and nutrition

4/2015/3

Climate-resilient banana production

Increased production and consumption of local products is a key objective of Tuvalu's National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2005-2015 (Te Kakeega II). Accordingly, FAO is supporting traditional food crop production for household and local consumption.

Technical assistance has focused on sustainable banana production through the propagation of banana plantlets that are free of black sigatoka disease. A nursery and field mother blocks have been established, and more than 20 varieties of disease-free tissue culture plantlets have been propagated and distributed to farmers. The plant material was supplied by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees.

> *"Small island developing states face considerable challenges, but they also have great potential."*
>
> **FAO Director-General**

The country's farmers and extension officers have benefited considerably from field demonstrations and training workshops on atoll-adapted production. Two suitable banana cultivation systems have been introduced: *the narrow pit system* – a traditional planting technique developed in the Cook Islands for atoll soil; and *the large bed system* – developed to address saltwater intrusion.

As well as feeding into other climate-smart agriculture activities, the positive results of FAO's technical assistance in this area were incorporated in Tuvalu's National Adaptation Programme of Action as well as the Global Climate Change Alliance initiative for improved agroforestry systems. Supported by the European Union and SPC, these broader initiatives aim to enhance food security and build resilience to climate change in Tuvalu.

Strengthening plant protection

Threats to biodiversity through the spread of invasive tree species and pests are common to all Pacific Island Countries, endangering biosecurity and affecting farming and agriculture production. Following a damage assessment, FAO provided assistance to Tuvalu for the control of pests and diseases: a baiting campaign was conducted – including the use of a coconut made bait station – to minimize the negative impact of rodents on coconut production.

Building on assistance provided to Kiribati, FAO provided training sessions on ecologically-based rat management and held demonstrations across Tuvalu. Results of the control campaign indicated a significant reduction in rodent damage to coconuts and suggested that one baiting campaign per year would maintain the rat population at a manageable level.

Developing pig husbandry and home gardening

At the village level, agriculture is a way of life and generally involves the cultivation of trees and crops, together with limited chicken and pig husbandry. With a view to enhancing local pig breeds and improving access to fruit and vegetable planting materials, FAO helped to establish a pig farming facility on Vaitupu as well as nurseries on Tuvalu's eight outer islands. In addition, farmers, home gardeners and agricultural practitioners were trained in pig husbandry, the preparation and maintenance of seedlings and home gardening techniques. Interventions have resulted in increased productivity and household incomes.

FAO also conducted small-scale trials on water catchment techniques, establishing a household water collection and irrigation system on Funafuti. Demonstrations promoted the system's low cost, its suitability for home gardens that lack iron roofing to collect rain water, and its adaptability to use in areas with rocky slopes that can harnessed for gravitational irrigation. The system proved to be ideal for home gardening in many low-income households.

Rehabilitating giant taro pits

A significant feature in Tuvalu is the presence of family-owned pits for the cultivation of taro and giant taro (pulaka). Growing pulaka in pits facilitates the plant's access to water. However, this practice has been negatively impacted by seawater inundation, a situation exacerbated by the 2010/11 drought which caused prolonged exposure of crops to seawater and a resulting decline in production.

To reduce such effects of climate change and the rising in sea level, FAO and the Government have devised a monitoring system to control water salinity of pulaka pits across the country. Rehabilitation of the pits now features in the Tuvalu National Agriculture Sector Plan 2014-2023.