

**35th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
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NEW ZEALAND COUNTRY STATEMENT

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- Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Director General, distinguished delegates friends and colleagues, it is a pleasure to present this country statement on behalf of New Zealand at this, the 35th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.
- COVID 19 has of course had a huge impact globally. FAO has a critical role to play in the response and recovery through the provision of sound policy advice, analysis and technical assistance.
- A key challenge for all countries during the pandemic has been to minimize disruptions to domestic food and agriculture production, and to ensure there is adequate food supply to meet their needs.
- This calls for concerted global action, not merely to address food production issues at the domestic level, but to ensure that food supply chains remain open and not distorted by restrictive trade practices, unjustified trade barriers, and short-term support measures which become embedded with time.
- New Zealand is pleased that the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations are on track to be completed in 2020, as committed to under the UN's Sustainable Development Goals Target 14.6. It is a priority for New Zealand to advance the elimination of harmful fisheries subsidies, which can contribute to economic losses, and serious distortions in global fish markets. Moreover, Pacific Fisheries Ministers highlighted in August the importance to the region of concluding these negotiations in their Forum Fisheries Committee Ministerial Meeting communique.
- New Zealand, as a member of the South West Pacific region of FAO, has been acutely aware of the vulnerabilities of the small island states to the pandemic, and

has actively worked with our Pacific partners to protect national borders and security of food supply.

- For example, we have worked with the countries in the region to limit the spread of COVID-19 through fisheries sectors, recognizing that the continuation of fisheries is important for economic and food security reasons, whilst also emphasizing the protection of the lives of observers and the wider population.
- New Zealand supports the FAO's priorities for this region, and in particular, the programmes to support sustainable fisheries management, initiatives for strengthening the food value chain, and promoting better food security and nutrition outcomes. This is in the context of climate change, changing dietary patterns, and a rising burden of non-communicable diseases.
- New Zealand welcomes several recent FAO initiatives which respond to some key contemporary challenges. These include:
 - Ongoing decentralization and greater devolution of responsibilities;
 - The establishment of a new office for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to strengthen FAO's focus and capacity to address the specific needs of these countries;
 - The establishment of a Joint FAO/WHO Centre for Codex Food Standards and Zoonotic diseases, and a new division on Food Systems and Food Safety; and
 - The commitment to extra funding for food safety related scientific advice.
- To close, I note that FAO has a central role in the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021. This is a key priority for New Zealand. With an estimated two billion people in the world without regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food, and food systems contributing over 20% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, we are not on track to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- We urgently need a discussion on the global food systems that is based on science and evidence; that rejects ideological and "one size fits all" solutions; and that appropriately balances environmental, economic, health and social objectives.

- We look forward to working with FAO and other members on preparations for the Summit next year.
- Thank you all for your attention.