

With all due respect to the Chairman, the Honorable Ministers, Your Excellences, Distinguish Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Greetings from the Friendly Island of the Kingdom of Tonga. Tonga is very grateful to FAO and the Government of Bhutan for the virtual meeting of the 35th session of the Asian Pacific Regional Conference.

Agriculture plays a vital role in Tonga's economy. About 82% of the population are actively engages in agriculture and related sector activities, with 99% of farming households are subsistence and semi-subsistence farmers.

The critical assistances from FAO since the 1980's, provides technical assistances in many fields, including the empowerment of small-holder farmers as the foundation of Food Security and Rural Livelihood in Tonga. FAO in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests engages the agriculture sector in diversifying Farming systems, diversifying plant and livestock genetic resources, conservation of soil resources, and in particular, diversifying the ecosystem and the environment.

The main strategy is to mitigate and adapt the agriculture sector to the:

1. challenges of increasing frequencies and intensities of Tropical Cyclones and the *El nino* Droughts,
2. the Rising Sea-levels,
3. the challenges of increasing Reliance on Imported Food supply,
4. the rising challenges of Unhealthy Diets, high rate of Obesities, high rate of Diabetics and Heart diseases

5. but especially, the rising challenges of the current global COVID-19 pandemic.

With all those challenges, Tonga look forward to this key partnership with FAO to assist in resolving these challenges with sustainable solutions to the agricultural sector and the people of Tonga.

Thank You.