From the FAO Representative

Welcome to the second quarter newsletter from FAO in the Gambia. In this edition, we aim to update you on the country office’s cross-boundary engagements and activities, where we have tried to forge meaningful partnerships for more profound impacts. These activities are expected to take the country office a step further in achieving its mission of leaving no one behind towards resilience, a better life as well as food and nutrition security.

We are excited about the progress we have made in our initiatives to build the capacities of our partners, such as the National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI), the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA), and the Department of Fisheries, through training and capacity building exercises conducted abroad. FAO Gambia was also able to participate in important events such as the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion (SHEP) Workshop in Senegal and the Business Operations Strategy (2.0) Training of Trainers (ToT) held in Nairobi.

On the backdrop, we were also able to host a delegation of farmers and agriculture officers from Liberia who visited to learn about some of the best agricultural practices in the Gambia.

These stories and more have been put together below, which clearly showcase the unending support of colleagues and partners. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge support from all stakeholders, including relevant Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, civil society and the donors involved in this journey.

Enjoy Reading.

Moshibudi Rampedi
FAO Representative to the Gambia
FAO supports training of Laboratory Staff on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

FAO supported two staff from the Central Veterinary Laboratory (CVL) to undergo three weeks training of trainers (TOT) on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) at the National Laboratory for Livestock and Veterinary Research (LNERV), Dakar, Senegal.

The training, which took place between 28 March to 15 April 2022, was part of activities under TCP/GAM/380 to strengthen government institutions’ preparedness and response capacity and the private and civil society sectors.

Participants learnt about the theoretical and practical diagnostic concept of molecular techniques while also learning how to conduct a diagnosis of Avian Influenza through serological assays. They also received training on sample preparation, sample storage, analysis and result reading and interpretation and were introduced to vaccine efficacy in animals.

"We are grateful to FAO and the Department of Livestock Services(DLS) for facilitating the training. We recommend a step-down training to be held at the Central Veterinary Laboratory to share knowledge and skills gained at the training", said Maoulay Ceesay, one of the trainees. They also requested DLS to set up a molecular diagnostic unit in the CVL to diagnose HPAI and other diseases.

Fisheries Officers take part in Transboundary Demersal Survey

FAO facilitated the participation of two fisheries officers in the transboundary demersal survey, which took place aboard Dr Fridtjof Nansen, a research vessel, from 26 February to 29 March 2022.

The survey was conducted through FAO’s EAF- Nansen Program, which allows coastal developing countries to assess and manage their fisheries for sustainable use of the oceans. Its long-term objective is to improve food and nutrition security for people in partner countries that focus on sustainable fishing.

The survey covered Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Senegal, the Gambia and Mauritania and was designed to assess Demersal Resources of sub-group North-West Africa. It covered the demersal resources in the deeper part of the shelf and the upper slope. The survey’s activities included sampling demersal fish abundance, species and size composition, and distribution. It also included a biological sampling of priority species (including their length, weight, sex and maturity), sampling of environmental variables, and measuring of currents, among others.

Malawi Study Tour Set to Improve Capacity of FSQA Laboratory Technicians

A successful two weeks study tour to Malawi is set to strengthen the capacity of the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA) laboratory technicians and enable them to get a hands-on experience in testing for micro-nutrients in a functioning nutrition laboratory. FAO facilitated the study tour through the European Union-funded project, ‘Improving Food Security and Nutrition in the Gambia through Food Fortification’, in February 2022.

The study tour aimed to support FSQA in strengthening the enabling environment for food fortification. The FSQA technicians visited Malawi laboratories dealing with testing micro-nutrients in fortified foods.

The visit provided laboratory personnel with appropriate skills for managing newly acquired equipment donated to FSQA as part of this project. The project has, since 2018, provided rapid test kits for testing Vitamin A and Iron in selected food vehicles. Furthermore, it has procured various Ultra-High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (UHPLC) and an Atomic Absorption Spectrometer (AAS) laboratory equipment for advanced food testing.
FAO the Gambia Hosts a Delegation of Liberian Farmers on a Study Tour

Two farmers and an Agriculture Extension Worker from Liberia have concluded a week-long study tour in the Gambia in May. The journey funded by FAO Liberia aimed to foster the learning of best agricultural practices between farmers. During the study tour, the delegation visited and held interactive discussions with vegetable farmers at FAO-funded gardens in Njoben in Central River Region, Kuwonkuba in the Upper River Region and Kunjo in North Bank Region.

Ezikiel P. Sayete, one of the farmers from Liberia, said he was very impressed with what he saw and learned during the journey. “I am particularly impressed by the sense of ownership and unity among the farmers. I have learned new things I will introduce with my cooperation back home”, he noted.

Horticulture Promotion Workshop in Senegal

FAO the Gambia’s Assistant Representative for Programs, Mustapha Ceesay, attended a Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion (SHEP) Workshop in Senegal in May 2022. The workshop brought together 100 participants from 14 African countries to review SHEP implementation in West and Central Africa and define an adaptation strategy to scale-up SHEP implementation to benefit vulnerable smallholder farmers in Africa.

The workshop allowed participants to share information and deepen discussions on common challenges among nations that have already introduced the approach with successful implementation. It also sought to launch initiatives to implement the SHEP approach in the structures of new countries. The workshop also presented experiences from participating countries and group discussions on various themes.

By the end of the workshop, participants outlined future interventions to mainstream SHEP in agricultural production systems. The SHEP is an agricultural approach initiated by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as part of efforts toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa.

National Research officials conclude study tour to Kenya

Four research officers from National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI), an officer from the United Purpose Project, and an FAO Project’s Nutrition Officer participated in a 10-day study tour in Kenya in February 2022. It was part of activities by the European Union-funded project “improving food security and nutrition in the Gambia through food fortification”. The objective of the tour was to strengthen the capacity of NARI staff to use new technology to maintain the gene purity of the vines, as well as offer them the opportunity to have hands-on experience working in laboratories working with bio-fortified crops.

FAO, through the food fortification project, has collaborated with NARI to introduce four bio-fortified crop varieties in the Gambia. These are Pro-vitamin A maize, yellow cassava and Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potatoes (OFSP), as well as Iron-rich cowpea.

The team visited Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Organization (KARLO), Kenyan Plant Health Inspection Service (KEPHIS) and International Potato Center (CIP) office and the Bukura Agricultural College.

Commenting on the outcome of their trip, Tom Senghore from NARI said, “The trip has rendered us the opportunity to interact and learn a lot of things which will help us immensely in solving the problems we are encountering with the orange-fleshed potato”.

“The trip was an eye-opener about the available technologies in agriculture within Africa. I believe that if the Gambia learns from these opportunities, we would soon achieve self-sufficiency”, he added.
Business Operations Strategy Training in Kenya

FAO the Gambia’s Asst. FAO Representation for Administration, Mr. Nuru Jobe, attended the Business Operations Strategy (2.0). The training of trainers (ToT) in Nairobi, Kenya, in May. The ToT was conducted in support of the Efficiency Agenda of the UN Secretary-General being rolled out in all member states with a UNCT formation.

The main objective of the BOS 2.0 is to streamline operational activities with the ultimate aim of increasing efficiency and eliminating duplications within the UN. The BOS 2.0 is developed around six thematic/operational areas (HR, Finance, Procurement, ITC, Logistics and Admin/Facilities Management).

The Training in Kenya aimed to train Trainers (ToT) on the BOS Platform and its operational modalities. The Trainers would then return to their respective countries and train the Operations and Management Teams (OMTs) members, the Programme Coordinators and, if necessary, members of the UNCT.

After participating in the training, Mr. Jobe was included in the FAO Business Operations Network (BON) for Africa. The network is tasked with training colleagues in FAO Country Offices in Africa and supporting them in the data capture and validation of the Platform. A number of Countries will be allocated to Mr. Jobe for support in operationalizing of their BOS 2.0 platforms.

Senegal retreat strengthens country-office partnerships

In early June, a team from FAO Gambia participated in a country-office representative retreat in Mbour, Senegal, organized by the West African Sub-Regional Office. The meeting aimed to strengthen ownership of the recommendation of the Multidisciplinary Team meeting (MTD) held in Nigeria in March and the recommendation of the 32nd Regional Conference for Africa (ARC32) held in Equatorial Guinea in April. The priority areas for collaboration among country offices were identified, along with recommendations for implementing and monitoring activities. Team building exercises strengthened team spirit among the participants during the meeting that also featured sessions on South-South Cooperation and the benefits of social media in information sharing and advocacy.

Events and Deliberations

FAO and Partners Discuss Pathway to Conserve Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem

FAO, in partnership with the Ministry of Fisheries Water Resources and National Assembly Matters, hosted a two-day Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME) National Consultancy Meeting on 14 and 15 April 2022. The consultancy brought together stakeholders from national institutions active in the fields of fisheries, environment, marine habitat protection and water quality.

The Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME) is a project executed by FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It is a combined effort to reverse the degradation of the Canary Current large marine ecosystem caused by over-fishing, habitat modification and changes in water quality by the adoption of an ecosystem-based management approach.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), together with co-financing from participating countries and other partners, funds the project. It is operational in seven participating countries that include Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal and the Gambia.

FSQA Receives Smart Phones to Boost Operations of FSIS

FAO staff member handing over smartphones to FSQA representative
FAO, through funding from the EU-funded "Agriculture for Economic Growth" project, presented ten smartphones to Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA) to facilitate field data collection for a Food Safety Information System (FSIS) operation.

The proposed upgrades in the system will enhance efficient and effective data collection, processing and management and ease the utilization and development of risk profiles and assessments. Therefore, it is anticipated that it will enable the utilization of the full potential of the system by FSQA to execute its mandate more efficiently.

**Combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing**

In June, over 40 key stakeholders and experts from across the oyster sector gathered to validate the findings of the FISH4ACP analysis that shows the sector's potential in the Gambia.

Spurred by strong local demand, oyster production in the Gambia offers economic opportunity and social benefits, especially for women, according to the analysis presented today to the sector partners who discussed ways to reverse declining oyster stocks while improving safety and reducing the sector's carbon footprint.

“Mangrove oysters are a small-scale, artisanal sector with great value for the food security and livelihoods of women producers in our country,” said Musa Drammeh, Minister of Fisheries, Water Resources and National Assembly Matters, at an event where the findings of an analysis of the Gambia’s oyster value chain were presented.

He added: “To ensure that future generations can also reap the benefits, we need to make oyster stocks sustainable, improve safety and lessen the impact on the environment.”

The yearly production of mangrove oysters in the Gambia is estimated at 7,000 tonnes in shell, according to the analysis conducted by FISH4ACP with the Institute of Social Research and Development (ISRAD).

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