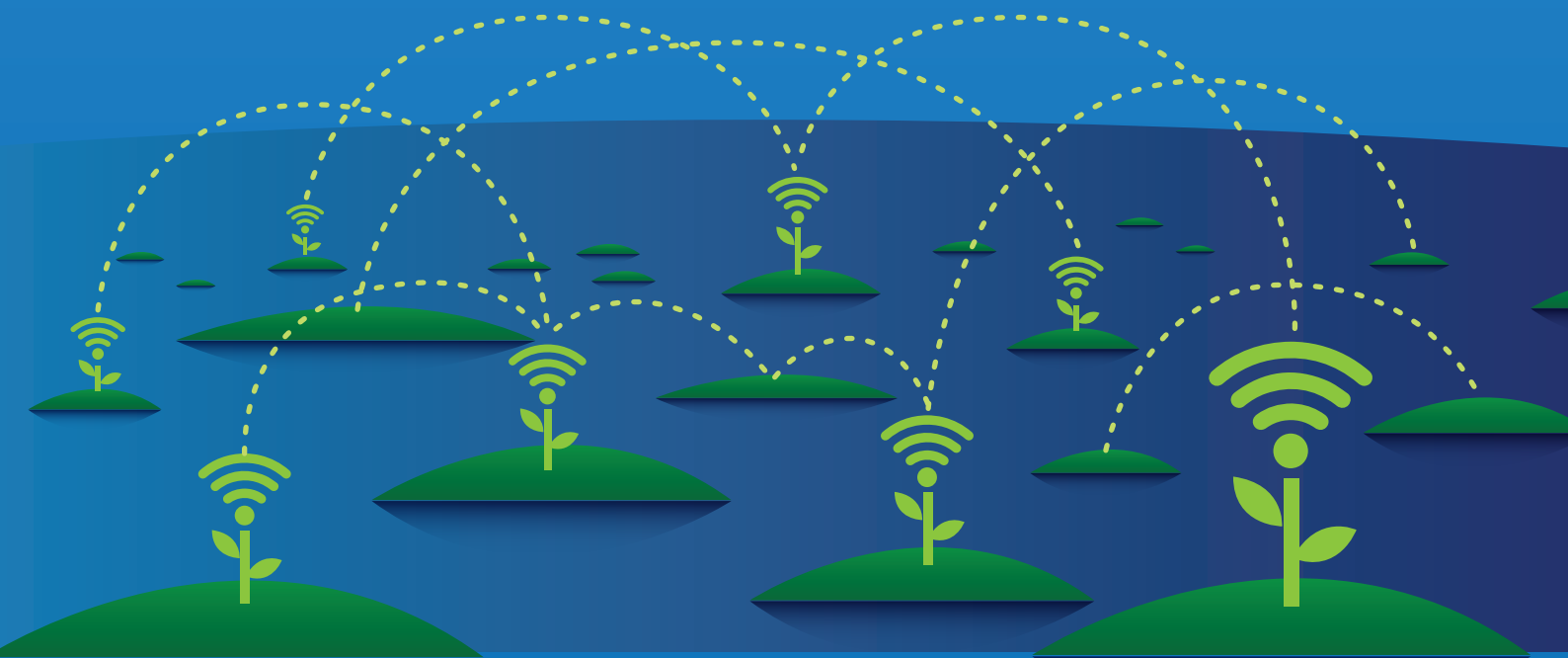




Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

SIDS Solutions Forum

REPORT



SIDS Solutions Forum

REPORT

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Islands States
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
GPD	gross domestic product
GRENCODA	Grenada Community Development Agency
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture Development
IFI	international financing institution
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MVI	Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index
NCD	non-communicable disease
NGO	non-governmental organization
OACPS	Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
PIFON	Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network
PoetCOM	Pacific Organic & Ethical Trade Community
PRESS	Plastic Recycling Samoa
SAMOA Pathway	SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPC	Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SSTC	South-South and Triangular Cooperation
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
VNR	Voluntary National Reporting



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Participants of the SIDS Solutions Forum 2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the 30 and 31 August 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the Government of Fiji and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), organized a successful Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Solutions Forum. The theme of the SIDS Solutions Forum was:

“COVID-19 impacts on the economy and the potential of digitalization and innovation to accelerate progress on resilient agri-food systems; improved nutrition and health; and strengthened climate resilience adaptation within the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

About 1 600 people from various countries attended the Forum, either virtually or physically, in Apia, Samoa. Nine Heads of States/governments and 20 ministers from SIDS; the President Elect of the UN General Assembly (UNGA); Ministers of Agriculture from China and Ireland; the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS); the Secretary General of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS); the Director General of FAO and eight heads of other UN and regional agencies; and senior representatives of international financing institutions (IFIs) were notable attendees. There were also 11 SIDS solutions innovators, women and youth leaders, parliamentarians, policy makers, UN and development partner officials, academics, researchers, farmers, and fishers in attendance.

The Forum was headlined by the FAO Director-General, Dr. QU Dongyu; Prime Minister of Fiji, H. E. Josaia V. Bainimarama; President Elect, 76th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, the Honorable Abdulla Shahid; Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mr. Achim Steiner; Chair of AOSIS and Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda, H.E. Dr. Walton Webson; and Secretary General of ITU, Mr. Houlin Zhao. The most common and recurrent theme from the leaders was the need to support locally grown solutions of innovation and digitalization that can accelerate the achievement of the SDGs while mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

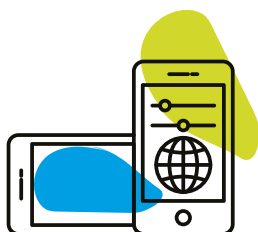
As a key result of the Forum, FAO launched the SIDS Solutions Platform, which will facilitate knowledge sharing within and between SIDS, and between SIDS and other countries. Additionally, 11 innovation and digitalization solutions were showcased by their proponents.

Participants of the SIDS Solutions Forum made several recommendations, which are summarized into 12 key action points.

SIDS Solutions Forum 2021

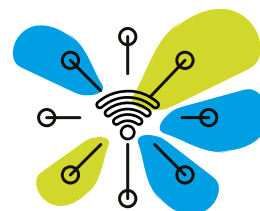
12 action points

1



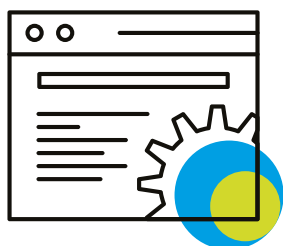
Harness the power of information and communications technology (ICT) to build effective and resilient agri-food systems to enable farmers, fishers and artisans – who include women, youth and people with disabilities – to gain the full benefits of development.

2



Strengthen support to ICT infrastructure with a special emphasis on the agriculture and fisheries sectors.

3



Support the development and implementation of e-agriculture strategies linked to national ICT strategies.

4



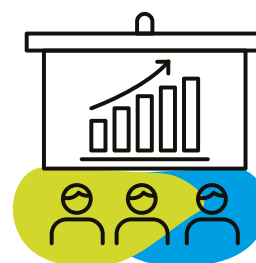
Support, promote, scale up and replicate homegrown SIDS solutions as well as provide tangible, long-term assistance, including a Pacific start-up package.

5

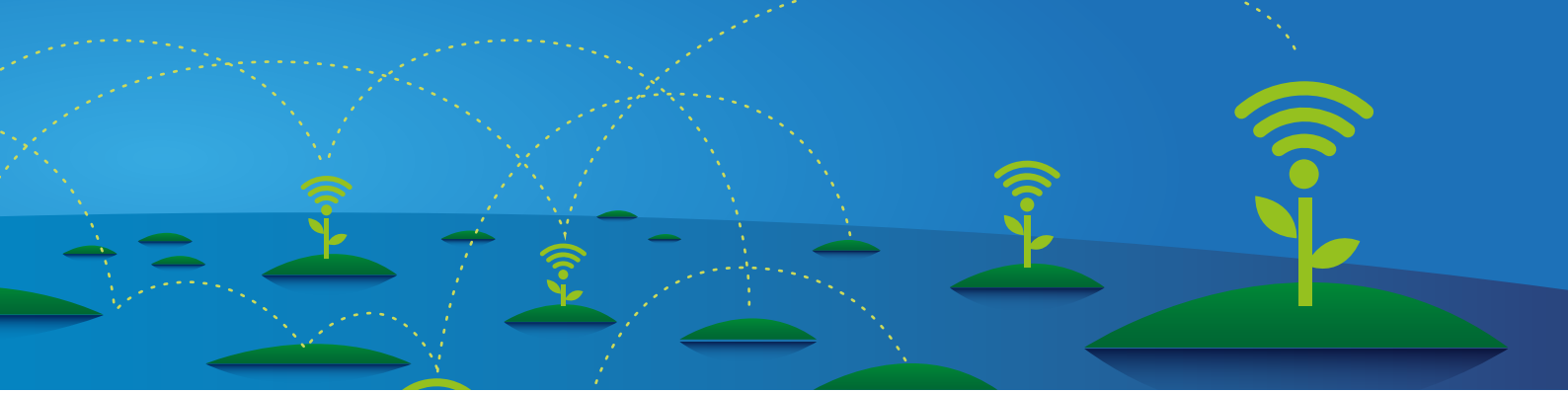


Promote the leadership of women and youth in the use of digital technology in agri-food systems.

6



Build financial and digital literacy and support women and youth to transition into the formal financial ecosystem, especially the digital economy.



7



Submit the SIDS Solutions Platform to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) as a key SIDS partnership to support the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs.

8



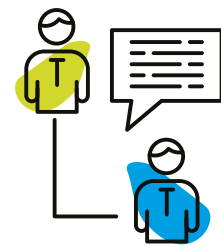
Promote and support the SIDS Solutions Platform, including linking to existing and similar platforms.

9



Mobilize the necessary resources and partnership alliances to catalyze, scale up and replicate identified 2021 SIDS solutions to support the implementation of the agreements of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

10



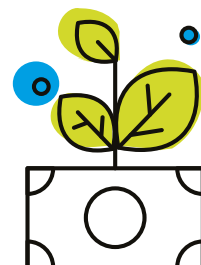
Invest in south-south and triangular cooperation (SSTC) focused on sharing knowledge and technological support, including those offered by China and Ireland.

11



Support the application of the Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) in line with the SAMOA Pathway, which will allow the inclusion of many income-based criteria to assess eligibility for concessionary finance.

12



Establish structured and targeted regional financing appropriate for SIDS as well as a pool of regional experts on accessing financing, including in structured financing.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

SIDS are characterized by remoteness, small and dispersed geographies, populations and economies, high exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters linked to climate change, dependence on imported foods and tourism, and a high incidence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbating these challenges and uniquely rolling back gains that were made in achieving the SDGs in these countries. Within this context, FAO created the SIDS Solutions Platform to facilitate knowledge sharing and accelerate progress for achieving the SDGs, specifically those related to agri-food systems, nutrition and the environment. In order to launch the Platform, FAO, in collaboration with the Government of Fiji and ITU, organized the SIDS Solutions Forum on the 30 and 31 August 2021. This report summarizes the key results of the Forum.

The theme of the 30 and 31 August SIDS Solutions Forum was “*COVID-19 impacts on the economy and the potential of digitalization and innovation to accelerate progress on resilient agri-food systems; improved nutrition and health; and strengthened climate resilience adaptation within the context of achieving the SDGs.*” About 1 600 people from various countries attended the Forum, either virtually or physically, in Apia, Samoa. Nine Heads of States/governments and 20 ministers from SIDS, the President Elect of the UNGA, Ministers of Agriculture from China and Ireland, the Chair of AOSIS, the Secretary General of OACPS, the Director General of FAO and eight heads of other UN and regional agencies, and senior representatives of IFIs were notable attendees. There were also 11 SIDS solutions innovators, numerous women and youth leaders, parliamentarians, policy makers, UN and development partner officials, academics, researchers, farmers, and fishers in attendance. A detailed listing of the participants, speakers and program is available online at the SIDS Solutions Platform.¹

¹ A detailed listing of participants and speakers is available at <https://www.fao.org/asiapacific/perspectives/sidsforum/en/>.



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SIDS Solutions Forum 2021

Opening ceremony, launch of the platform and setting the scene



QU Dongyu
FAO Director-General

The Forum was opened with interventions from the FAO Director-General, Dr. QU Dongyu; Prime Minister of Fiji, H. E. Josaia V. Bainimarama; Administrator of UNDP, Mr. Achim Steiner; Chair of AOSIS and Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda, H.E. Dr. Walton Webson; and Secretary General of ITU, Mr. Houlin Zhao. The President Elect of the 76th Session of the UNGA and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, the Honorable Abdulla Shahid, delivered the keynote address. The most common and recurrent theme from the leaders was the need to support locally grown solutions of innovation and digitalization that can accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway while mitigating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.²



H.E. Josaia V. Bainimarama
Prime Minister of Fiji

The FAO Director General, Dr. QU Dongyu, and the Prime Minister of Fiji H. E. Josaia V. Bainimarama, jointly emphasized the importance of durable partnerships, innovation and digitalization in modernizing agri-food systems and rural economies to ensure food and nutrition security in SIDS. Dr. Dongyu specifically pointed out that SIDS are best placed to identify the solutions that are appropriate for their context and that the SIDS Solutions Platform is a key tool to successfully facilitate this process. For his part, H.E. Bainimarama noted that SIDS speak a common language of shared experience and challenges. He called for SIDS to rally at the COP26 to maintain the global temperature target to 1.5 °C to guarantee their peoples' SIDS survival.



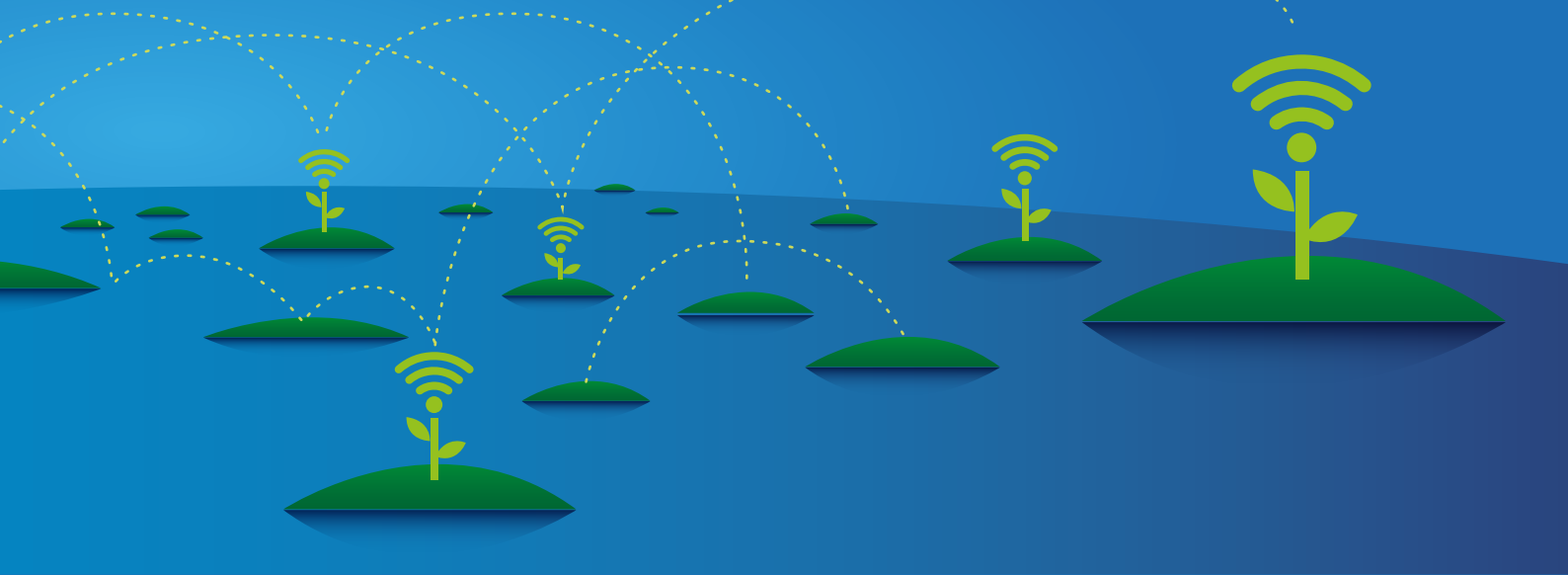
Abdulla Shahid
President Elect of the 76th Session of the UNGA

In his keynote address, the President Elect of the 76th Session of the UNGA and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, the Honorable Abdulla Shahid, hailed the Forum as a timely opportunity to draw global attention to the plight of SIDS. He noted that COVID-19 impacts are rolling back the gains that were achieved in advancing the SDGs in SIDS within a context where the world has already warmed by 1.1 °C and an observed 20 cm sea level rise.

² Videos of the full speeches are accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=570GnAH5E5Y>

“Today’s Forum provides an opportunity for SIDS to share experiences and exchange ideas on how increased innovation and digitalization can help to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway priorities.”

QU Dongyu, FAO Director-General



The UNDP Administrator, Mr. Achim Steiner, noted that SIDS are at the frontline of climate change impacts, for example, the Marshall Islands and Kiribati are at risk of being submerged by the end of this century. Mr. Steiner pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a 9 percent fall in SIDS GDP, compared with a 3.3 percent decline in other developing countries. He called for an urgent need of debt relief and support for using MVI to enable a broader understanding of vulnerability to inform debt and financial reforms.



Achim Steiner
UNDP Administrator

The Chair of AOSIS and Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the UN, H.E. Dr. Walton Webson, highlighted that almost all SIDS import over 60 percent of their food, with many facing the triple burden of undernutrition, obesity and micronutrient deficiencies. He emphasized the importance of using targeted solutions to implement the SAMOA Pathway.



H.E. Dr. Walton Webson
Chair of AOSIS

The ITU Secretary General, Mr. Houlin Zhao, underscored the challenging implications that high electricity and data costs, limited ICT infrastructure, and digital skills have for the digitalization of agriculture in SIDS. It is within this context that ITU, in partnership with FAO, is undertaking the “SMART Islands” initiative to improve broadband connectivity and affordability as well as enhance digital skills and digital services in SIDS.



Houlin Zhao
ITU Secretary General

“Agriculture has been a driver of progress throughout history. By accelerating digital agriculture, I am confident that we can and will drive progress in Small Island Developing States and on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.”

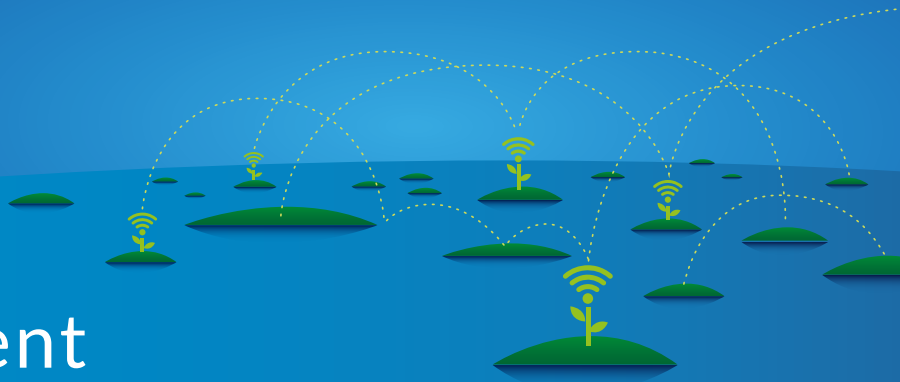
Houlin Zhao, ITU Secretary General



The SIDS Solutions Platform was launched and demonstrated by Mr. Jong-Jin Kim, the FAO Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific.

In his last intervention, the FAO Director General, Dr. QU Dongyu, joined the FAO Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Jong-Jin Kim, to launch the SIDS Solutions Portal as a platform for knowledge sharing. The FAO Chief Economist, Mr. Maximo Torero Cullen, also intervened by spotlighting the negative impacts of COVID-19 on remittances, tourism and fisheries, all of which are reversing development by ten years in SIDS. He emphasized the need to cope with risks through data, innovations and technology complemented by good governance, strong institutions and human capital. Mr. Cullen concluded this ceremony by highlighting the FAO Flagship Digital Agriculture Initiatives, such as Data Lab, Hand in Hand Geospatial Platform, Earthmap and the 1 000 Digital Villages.

High level leaders segment



The High Level Leaders Segment featured country statements from Heads of States and governments from nine Pacific SIDS, four ministers from the Caribbean, and African and Indian Oceans SIDS. The statements were facilitated by the Pacific, Caribbean, and African and Indian Oceans SIDS FAO Sub-Regional Coordinators, Ms. Xiangjun Yao, Ms. Renata Clarke and Mr. Mbuli Charles Boliko, respectively. As the most common themes, the leaders applauded the establishment of the SIDS Solutions Platform as a unique tool for collaboration, knowledge sharing and hope for vulnerable SIDS populations.

Country statements

The Fiji Minister of Economy, Honorable Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, opened this session by noting that the impact of COVID-19 has also positively accelerated the development and adoption of digital technology, for example, data usage has spiked by 300 percent in Fiji since the pandemic. He called for leveraging the digitalization of agri-food systems to support COVID-19 recovery, as well as improve food and nutrition security and resilient societies, partly because digitalization makes agriculture more attractive to younger farmers, reduces food waste and helps in deploying climate-smart agriculture practices.



Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum
Minister of Economy, Fiji

For his part, the President of Kiribati, H. E. Taneti Maamau, revealed that food security, innovation and connectivity are key priorities for his government. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic prompted Kiribati to look at experiences across the region and to invest more in homegrown food systems for resiliency. He highlighted that improving the connectivity of local communities would enhance efforts to innovate and digitalize local agri-food systems and uplift local communities.



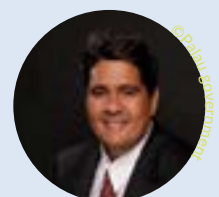
H. E. Taneti Maamau
President of Kiribati

The President of the Marshall Islands, H. E. David Kabua, highlighted the chronic health problems and premature deaths associated with poor diets in SIDS, and that his government will prioritize transforming agri-food systems through digitalization to ensure more local food production and improved health.



H. E. David Kabua
President of the Marshall Islands

The President of Palau, H. E. Surangel S. Whipps Jr., noted that as a result of the pandemic, Palau faces decreased food supply and tourism. To mitigate the risk of food insecurity, Palau introduced a shortened four-day workweek to allow the population to farm and fish for sustenance. His government also invested in national vaccination campaigns to achieve herd immunity and facilitate rapid economic recovery.



H. E. Surangel S. Whipps Jr.
President of Palau



Hon Mark Brown
Prime Minister
of the Cook Islands

The Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Honorable Mark Brown, pointed out that during the COVID-19 pandemic, his country created a SMART AgriTech scheme and grants to facilitate investment in technology, efficiency and profitability across the agricultural value chain. Cook Islands also created the CookSafe+ COVID-19 contact tracing app that is helping the safe reopening of borders. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of partnership and information exchange through the SIDS Solutions Platform to make smart connections and investments that can deliver transformative results.



H.E. Josaia V. Bainimarama
Prime Minister of Fiji

The Prime Minister of Fiji, H. E. Josaia V. Bainimarama, noted that Fiji is readjusting to ensure green growth recovery that is driven by increased local production, farm productivity and effective distribution systems; adopting climate-resilient varieties; and developing niche agricultural and fisheries products. Fiji's experience demonstrates how digitalization can have outsized benefits for SIDS. His government is investing in new technology, mechanization, better production and harvesting practices to ensure better systems to distribute agricultural information, ensure effective market linkages and improve public-sector support.



Hon Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa
Prime Minister of Samoa

The Prime Minister of Samoa, Honorable Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, noted that the COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity for SIDS to use digitalization to build resilience and meet the SDGs. Samoa will prioritize investment in its digital economy to stimulate opportunities in e-commerce and e-services as well as increase productivity and growth in agriculture and tourism. Samoa has linked mobile money wallet(s) to bank accounts, enabling customers to send and receive money, pay water and electricity bills, check bank balances, and shop online. Samoa has developed apps for contact tracing, improved farming and health information systems.



Hon Lord Tu'ilakepa
Minister for Agriculture,
Food and Forests of Tonga

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forests of Tonga, Honorable Lord Tu'ilakepa, noted that the loss of income from tourism as a result of COVID-19 produces a positive effect of increased local agriculture production and access to international markets through digitalization. High mobile phone penetration in Tonga is enabling real-time access of farmers and fishers to expert advice, while online banking is helping the Tongan diaspora contribute to the economy.



Adaljiza Magno
Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Cooperation of Timor-Leste

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste, H. E. Mrs. Adaljiza Albertina Xavier Reis Magno, noted that for Timor-Leste, the impacts of COVID-19 have combined with natural disasters to put thousands of people at risk of poverty and malnutrition. Timor-Leste welcomes the SIDS Solutions Platform to share technical and scientific knowledge and present different production methods to promote best practices in agri-food systems.

“As Pacific SIDS, given our shared experiences and cultural similarities, we have a tradition of looking to each other to see what has worked, and what has not, and using this to our collective advantage.”

Hon Mark Brown, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands



The Prime Minister of Samoa, Honorable Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa (right), and the FAO Subregional Coordinator for the Pacific Islands during the High Level Leaders Segment of the Forum.

The Minister for Agriculture and Livestock of Papua New Guinea, Honorable John Simon, noted that the challenges of rugged topography and inadequate roads make it difficult to connect, access markets, and deliver needed infrastructure and development programs, especially to isolated populations. Despite the COVID-19 lockdown, there were increases in local agriculture production, although this is hampered by the existing poor market network. Papua New Guinea’s priority is to improve connectivity.



Hon John Simon
Minister for Agriculture,
Papua New Guinea

The Minister for Agriculture and Food Security of Barbados, Honorable Indar Weir, noted the importance of knowledge sharing, innovation and digitalization in bridging productivity gaps and fostering sustainability and inclusion in SIDS. Barbados is pursuing a whole of government approach that prioritizes research in climate-smart agriculture, climate change resilience, water availability, yields and agriculture mechanization. The country is establishing an innovation center and digital fabrication laboratories to feature exhibits in agriculture, applied technology and devices related to extended reality and other Internet applications.



Hon Indar Weir
Minister for Agriculture,
Barbados

"The Government of Papua New Guinea is aware of the risks associated with digital technologies and we are taking steps to ensure a safe and secure cyber environment that will build trust and confidence for our people to engage in digital activities, such as e-commerce, small and medium-sized enterprises and others."

Hon John Simon, Minister for Agriculture,
Papua New Guinea



Address by the Prime Minister of Fiji, H. E. Josaia V. Bainimarama, during the High Level Leaders Segment of the Forum.

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Hon Saboto Caesar
Minister for Agriculture,
Saint Vincent and Grenadines

The Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Rural Transformation of Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Honorable Saboto Caesar, revealed that as COVID-19 disrupted supply chains, farmers were prompted to use digital platforms and social media to market local commodities. His country is building on this momentum by modernizing technology, for example, the use of drones, which could improve productivity in agriculture and fisheries and make them attractive to youth.



Hon Francisco Ramos
Minister for Agriculture,
Sao Tome and Principe

The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Sao Tome and Principe, Honorable Francisco Martins Dos Ramos, highlighted that SIDS are at risk of being one of the biggest losers if aggressive and innovative counter-measures are not implemented to address climate change and COVID-19 impacts quickly. His country will promote innovation and digitalization to accelerate the transformation of agri-food systems; support the private sector to access affordable finance to create agro-industries and jobs; build institutional capacity; promote policy dialogues, including improving cooperation between SIDS; strengthen data and information systems; and target vulnerable groups, including women and youth.



Hon Flavien Joubert
Minister for Agriculture,
Seychelles

The Minister for Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment of Seychelles, Honorable Flavien Joubert, called for urgent action to ensure that African and Indian Oceans SIDS have sustainable access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food for all. There is a need for Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles to consider intra-regional food trade with neighboring islands to address their high dependence on imported food from faraway countries. They are shifting to nutrition-sensitive food systems to support local family-based production, while supplying sufficient quantities of high-quality, affordable and nutritious food. Mauritius and Seychelles are focusing on strengthening fisheries and fish farming communities, such as empowering women's groups to market their fish and improving the quality of fish products through better practices and storage.

Development partners' statements

Ministers from China and Ireland, heads of UN agencies, and other development partners provided statements on the theme of the Forum and highlighted existing and potential support to the SIDS Solutions Platform.

The China Vice Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Honorable Ma Youxiang, noted that China views the SIDS Solutions Platform as an additional tool to its Forum of China and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States for strengthened dialogue and south-south cooperation that can advance knowledge sharing over agricultural technology. The SIDS Solutions Platform is a new opportunity for China to share its experience in digital agriculture transformation, agribusiness and building digital villages. China invites SIDS to the International Conference on Food Loss and Waste and the World Digital Agriculture Exhibition in Shenzhen in September and November 2021, respectively.



Hon Ma Youxiang
Vice Minister of Agriculture,
China

For the Ireland Minister of State for Overseas Development Assistance and the Diaspora, Honorable Colm Brophy, his country has an ongoing portfolio dedicated to SIDS. For example, the Strategy for Partnerships with SIDS contains a postgraduate fellowship program in Ireland for Pacific and Caribbean students, a EUR 12 million SIDS Irish Trust Fund supporting climate change and disaster resilience programs, and a SIDS Policy Forum for experts from Ireland and SIDS. Ireland also supports the UN-led Global Action Program on Food Security and Nutrition in SIDS. Through the SIDS Solutions Platform, Ireland is willing to share its world-class experience in digital agriculture transformation and agribusiness.



Hon Colm Brophy
Minister of State for Overseas Development Assistance and the Diaspora,
Ireland

The Under-Secretary General for the UNDESA, Mr. Liu Zhenmin; the High Representative for the Office of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Mr. Courtenay Rattray; and the Executive Secretary for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana all reiterated the international consensus that recognizes SIDS' unique and chronic vulnerabilities, which are further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Liu Zhenmin
UNDESA

The UN leaders emphasized the need to support SIDS in the areas of climate change and sustainable oceans, socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, enhanced social inclusion, and improved national data management and monitoring. They called for support for the SIDS Solutions Platform and the need to link it to existing initiatives, such as the SAMOA Pathway, the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development, the Voluntary National Reporting (VNR) multi-stakeholder platform and the Asia-Pacific Knowledge Management Hub. The leaders also called for increased support for mobilizing finance, for example concessional finance, to implement the practical solutions presented at the SIDS Solutions Forum.

"ESCAP would like to offer our existing intergovernmental platforms, such as the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development, as well as the VNR multi-stakeholder platforms and processes. These could provide a space where various stakeholders, particularly youth and women, can demonstrate collaborative leadership".

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, ESCAP



Day 1 of the SIDS Solutions Forum 2021, Apia, Samoa



George Pinto Chikoti
OACPS Secretary-General

The Secretary General of OACPS, Mr. George Pinto Chikoti, noted that the SIDS Solutions Platform should be used to promote greater resilience and transform agricultural food systems in SIDS. The Nairobi Declaration adopted by the OACPS Heads of States and governments in 2019 affirmed that SIDS were inherently vulnerable and face significant challenges, including food insecurity. The SIDS Solutions Platform provides a timely and greater opportunity for the cross-fertilization of ideas to promote the interests of SIDS. OACPS will support multilateral engagement, for example via the SIDS Solutions Platform, to eliminate poverty, attain Zero Hunger and ensure SIDS benefit from greater access to concessional finance.



Woochong Um
ADB Managing Director

The Managing Director for the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Mr. Woochong Um, echoed the need to support SIDS in climate-smart urban farming and coral reef insurance to increase the climate resilience of coastal businesses and community livelihoods. The ADB is scaling up renewable energy in SIDS like the Maldives by introducing solar panels to power ice-making machines in the outer islands for fishers, and developing a natural capital financing facility comprised of a natural capital laboratory, an agribusiness service platform and a natural capital fund.

Closing high level leaders segment

Facilitated by the FAO Deputy Director General, Mr. Laurent Thomas, the Leaders Segment was closed with remarks from the Executive Secretary of the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), Ms. Preeti Sinha; the Prime Minister of Fiji, H. E. Josaia V. Bainimarama and the Director General of FAO, Dr. QU Dongyu (delivered by Mr. Laurent Thomas). A summary of their closing remarks is as follows:

The Prime Minister of Fiji and Director General of FAO thanked the Pacific leaders and ministers, Caribbean and African ministers, and development partners and other stakeholders for attending the High Level Leaders Segment. Special thanks were conveyed to the governments of China and Ireland and the heads of international and regional organizations. The organizers were encouraged by the positive statements, in particular the unanimous support for the SIDS Solutions Platform. The level of participation in the Forum was a testament that no matter how small a country might be, its voice and its people count.

The SIDS Solutions Platform opens a new frontier of cooperation between countries for sharing innovations and digitalization to support SIDS. SIDS will recover from the pandemic; build sustainable, clean food systems; and continue to strengthen climate resilience to deliver economic prosperity. But SIDS cannot do it alone and need strong partnerships, resourcing and financing that is fast deploying, affordable and accessible. SIDS have fallen behind in the achievement of the SDGs, which will require multiple and complex partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. The launch of the Platform provides a key partnership tool to help deliver on the promises made in the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs to improve the lives of SIDS.

The innovators in SIDS cannot work in a vacuum; they need support to thrive. The UN system, inter-governmental organizations and development partners should support the SIDS Solutions Platform, including linking it to existing and similar platforms and portals. The speakers noted the innovative financing solutions available through UNCDF, such as the Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Program, the Global Coral Reef Fund, and the Pacific Financial Inclusion Program that is innovating technology and financial products to improve access to financial services.



Technical sessions



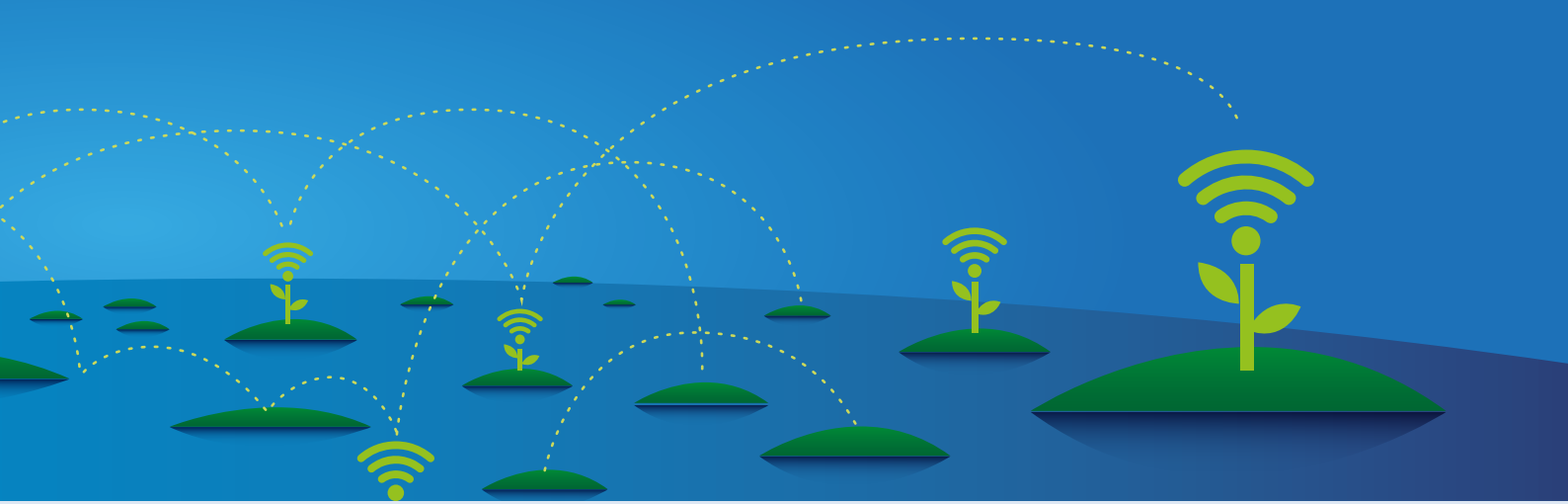
The High Level Leaders Segment was followed by four technical sessions (3, 4, 5, 6) that focused on the following topics: the ten SIDS solutions; existing knowledge exchange platforms and potential linkages with the SIDS Solutions Platform; existing and required investments in digital technologies; the engagement of women and youth; and access to digital technologies and key messages from the speakers on successes, challenges and required support. This section of the report summarizes the discussions and priority actions from the four sessions.

Innovators: The drivers of digitalization and innovation in SIDS

Facilitated by the FAO Nutrition and Food Systems Officer for the Pacific Islands, Mr. Joseph Nyemah, this session featured statements by Ministers of Information, ICT and Agriculture from PNG and the Cook Islands, and an officer from ITU. The session showcased ten of the 21 SIDS innovations that FAO profiled prior to the Forum.³

The PNG Minister for ICT, Honorable Timothy Masiu, and the Cook Islands Minister for Health, Justice, Parliamentary Services and Agriculture, Honorable Vainetutai Rose Toki-Brown, drew attention to the transformative power of ICT to address the multiplicity of SIDS challenges exacerbated by COVID-19. They noted that the pandemic has made the use of digital technologies compulsory, helping SIDS to coordinate and manage their COVID-19 responses. Governments must take the lead in putting in place the necessary infrastructure for digital transformation. The ministers congratulated the SIDS innovators for harnessing and adapting digital technology to overcome common challenges in SIDS.

³ <https://www.fao.org/asiapacific/perspectives/sidsforum/en/>



SMART AGRITECH SCHEME

Smart Agritech Scheme innovation is a USD 1 million initiative of the Cook Islands Government in response to the COVID-19 economic and food security impacts. The scheme provides grant funding to commercial farmers and agribusiness ventures to encourage investment in technology and smart processes to improve yield, efficiency and profitability across the agricultural value chain, including honey production, greenhouses and technology to improve efficiencies.

MY KANA APP

My Kana App innovation was developed by the Fiji Ministry of Health and the University of the South Pacific. It provides information about healthy food and nutrition and healthy meals. The app allows you to store personal information about diet and meals so you can visualize and track your food intake. It also provides an electronic booklet and advice on how to grow your own vegetables and make organic homemade pesticides. The app is in Fiji but can be adapted in other SIDS.

TUPAIA MEDITRACK

Tupaia MediTrack is a data management system developed by Beyond Essential Systems from Australia. It is currently being used in Samoa, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands to help collect health information and data about health facilities resource distribution, including medications, vaccines and equipment, as well as monitor and track disease distribution. The solution helps inform health decision-making and contact tracing for any disease, including dengue and COVID-19. Tupaia can be applied in any sector.

PLANT HEALTH

Plant Health innovation is an initiative of the Pacific Community (SPC), Australian Aid and the University of Queensland to help strengthen plant health advisory services. The innovation enables farmers to seek advice from extension officers who are trained plant doctors, and it has facilitated nearly 1 000 digital diagnoses since 2017. The identification of champions to support scaling up in countries will be needed.

COOKSAFE+

CookSafe+ innovation is a contact tracing solution developed by a partnership between the Cook Islands Ministry of Health, the Chamber of Commerce, the New Zealand Ministry of Health and software developers in New Zealand.

TRASEABLE FARMS APP

TraSeable Farm App innovation collects farming data that is easy to access and use by farmers, governments, development partners and the private sector for grant application or for farm management and third party certification. It has profiles of the farmers that are accessible by extension officers on their mobile phones. TraSeable Farms aims to be a platform that can create opportunities for farmers to earn a decent income and leverage this data to connect buyers and farmers.



Innovator Andrew Pedrana delivers his presentation on a plastic recycling solution during the Forum's first technical session.

MAUA APP

Maua App is an e-commerce, payment and delivery platform created by SkyEye Pacific to solve SIDS ICT and development challenges with regards to access to markets and digital payments. A key priority is ensuring that women farmers in rural areas and people living with disabilities are able to access the online domestic and estimated 700 000 Samoan diaspora to sell their produce and products and receive payments on their mobile phones from anywhere without paying costly bus fares or market fees and wasting the day at local markets. The solution confronts low digital literacy, which is a key challenge.

VAOALA VANILLA ORGANIC FARM

Vaoala Vanilla Organic Farm is an innovative offshoot of the ongoing COVID-19 border closure in Samoa as the farm coped with the loss of its tourist clientele by going online in search for markets and revenue. Using Facebook, and creating an online shop, Vaoala Vanilla started promoting online and, importantly, partnered with Shopify to be the main agent in Samoa. This opened up significant markets and increased sales with clients and orders from Canada, Ireland, Japan, United States of America, Australia and New Zealand. A key challenge is having a national payment gateway for online transactions. Vaoala Vanilla is willing to help women entrepreneurs set up online shops and progress their businesses.

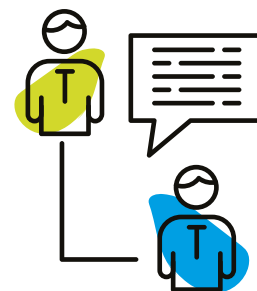
JEDOM ORGANIC FRUITS LIMITED

Jedom Organic Fruits Limited in Solomon Islands developed a low-cost, low maintenance Hot Air Dryer that is fueled by energy from the coconut shell to air dry excess fruits and vegetables, which are sold as healthy snacks. Jedom is training around 200 farmers to provide the raw produce and use the hot air dryer. To help scale up and replicate, financing and support from development partners and government are needed through an accelerator package.

PLASTIC RECYCLING SAMOA

Plastic Recycling Samoa (PRESS) worked with the Samoa Civil Society Support Program to purchase simple and low-cost recycling machines for recycling plastic waste. PRESS works with village communities to make school rulers, cups and plates that can be reused and sold. The challenge is to educate the community to stop throwing away plastic waste in favor of recycling and generating income. PRESS aims to recycle plastics into value-added products that can then be resold back overseas, shipping the plastics off Samoa.

Knowledge exchange and South-South, Triangular Cooperation



Facilitated by FAO Chief Scientist, Ms. Ismahane Elouafi, this session discussed how knowledge sharing, especially through the SIDS Solutions Platform and SSTC can help SIDS recover from COVID-19.

Dr. Stuart Minchin, the Director General of SPC; Mr. Kosi Latu, the Director General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); and Dr. Manumatavai Tupou-Roosen, the Director General of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) all highlighted that their organizations host important regional knowledge portals that should complement the SIDS Solutions Platform. These portals include the Pacific Data Hub; the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees; the Pacific Climate Change Centre; FFA's Integrated Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Framework; and the Regional Information Management Facility.



Mr. Kosi Latu, Director General of SPREP

The Assistant Secretary General of Trade and Economic Integration of the CARICOM Caribbean Community, Mr. Joseph Cox, noted that due to COVID-19 impacts, CARICOM has experienced about a 20 percent contraction in GDP, and some Caribbean SIDS have experienced increased unemployment, by about 30 percent, and increased food insecurity, by about 57 percent, since April 2020. The Caribbean region is home to several of the world's most water-stressed nations. He called for SIDS-specific solutions that prioritize innovative knowledge exchange and the pooling of technical and financial resources to develop new trade models and agri-food systems.

The Director of SSTC for FAO, Mr. Ye Anping, noted that SSTC is a key FAO priority to catalyze agriculture development, food security, rural development and improved nutrition. SIDS should consider drawing on the SIDS Solutions Platform to optimize SSTC in nutrition, the sustainable agriculture value chain and youth employment.

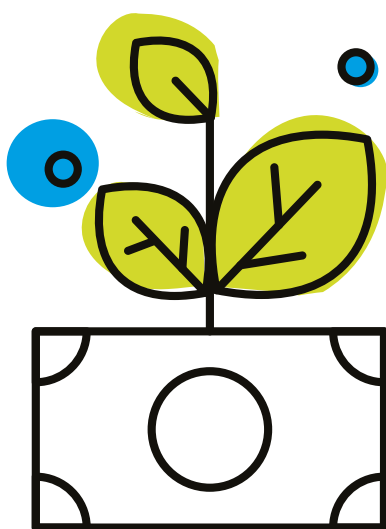
The leaders of the Grenada Community Development Agency (GRENCODA) and the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) – two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Grenada and the Pacific – noted that coping with COVID-19 allowed them to adapt to online platforms to continue their operations. GRENCODA piloted a six-week school program working with students who had challenges learning via online platforms, while PIFON is connecting technology with farmers. A key priority for both NGOs is to train farmers to adapt to climate-smart technology.

Scaling up SIDS Solutions through partnerships and investments

Facilitated by the Deputy Director General of FAO, Ms. Beth Bechdol, this session allowed Ministers from Fiji and Jamaica, representatives of the ADB, World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the European Union and the UN system to discuss ICT in SIDS, infrastructure and financing challenges, and strategies to attract investments and enhance partnerships to improve the livelihoods of farmers and value chain actors.

The Fiji Attorney General and Minister of Economy, Communications and Civil Service, the Honorable Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, and the Jamaica Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Honorable Floyd Green, noted that limited economies of scale in SIDS do not attract investors and service providers, such as telecommunications companies. Vulnerability to climate change disasters also inhibits infrastructure development. For example, one-third of Fiji's GDP was wiped out over 36 hours in 2016 due to Cyclone Winston, while Jamaica was hit by hurricanes Grace and Ida in 2021 with significant impacts on the agriculture industry.

The UN Resident Coordinator for the Samoa Multi-Country Office, Ms. Simona Marinescu; the World Bank Agriculture and Food-Practice Manager for the East Asia and Pacific Region, Ms. Dina Umali-Deininger; the IFAD Associate Vice President, Mr. Donal Brown; the European Union Head of Sustainable Agri-Food Systems and Fisheries, Mr. Leonard Mizzi; and the ADB's Chief of Rural Development, Dr. Qingfeng Zhang all reminded the audience of the amplifying impact of COVID-19 on the unique challenges of SIDS that the national leaders have already listed. However, the SIDS Solutions Platform is an opportunity to promote healthier diets by making a diversity of affordable, healthier foods available.



The leaders emphasized that access to appropriate, coordinated development support and financing for SIDS are critical. Development partners need to map the types of development support and financing available that can be accessed by SIDS. A pool of structured finance experts should be created to tap into financing opportunities for digital innovations, nutrition, agriculture and natural capital through the SIDS Solutions Platform.

Development partners should ensure that the promises in the Paris Agreement are enabling the global transfer of technology to SIDS to address their unique needs. At the UNGA in 2021, the global community should consider financing based on the MVI, especially for SIDS. SIDS biodiversity should be protected. The Food System Summit, COP26 and the UN Ocean Conference should be used to discuss suitable financing opportunities for SIDS.

Engaging women and youth in agri-food systems via innovation and digitalization

Facilitated by the UN Women Representative for the Caribbean Country Office, Ms. Tonni Brodber, this session explored the gender and digital divide and the potential solutions, including gender-centric policies, and incentives that can bridge this divide.



Honorable La'aulialemalietoa Leuatea Polataivao Fosi, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries of Samoa

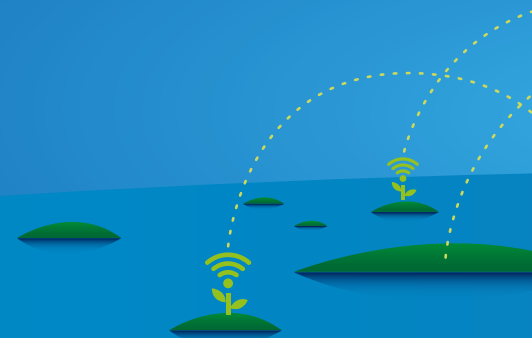
The Samoa Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Honorable La'aulialemalietoa Leuatea Polataivao Fosi, noted that family farming - a sector in which women and youth play significant roles - is important in Samoa and other SIDS. He, however, reminded participants that rural women face greater constraints than men in accessing technologies, markets and employment opportunities. His Ministry is targeting 30 percent of project beneficiaries to be women. The Minister called for the use of the SIDS Solutions Platform for peer learning to support farmers and fishers, including women and youth.

The UNCDF Regional Technical Specialist, Mr. Ajay Jagannath, noted that the majority of the unbanked in the Pacific are farmers and women, which is disconcerting because accessing financing requires a bank account. UNCDF is addressing these challenges by supporting e-literacy training, e-commerce and payment mechanisms. The SIDS Solutions Platform is a complementary tool.

Ms. Menka Goundan, Fiji Women's Fund; Ms. Gia Taylor, Network of Rural Women Producers, Trinidad and Tobago; Ms. Litia Takave, Loving Islands; Mr. Kalau Moses, PoetCOM; and Mr. Philip Henderson, Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association all emphasized that rural women and the urban poor are marginalized groups regarding access to resources, ICT, markets and land. While mobile wallets have helped women farmers access markets and receive payments, many share their phones with their husbands and families, which diminishes their control. In addressing these challenges, these leaders and their organizations are training women producers in how to use technology for improved record keeping, business, value addition, and nutritious food and product development.



Way forward and closing



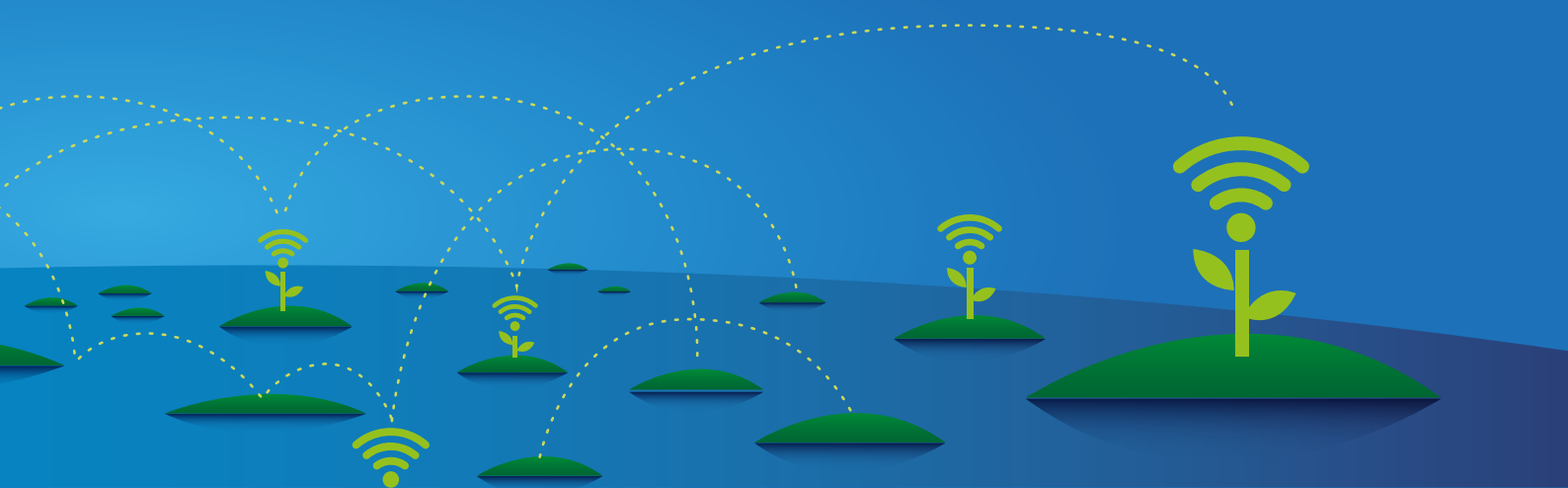
Facilitated by Mata'afa Keni Lesa, FAO Communications Specialist, the closing of the Forum was preceded by a short discussion on the way forward by Ms. Shelley Burich, one of the innovators; Ms. Simona Marinescu, the UN Resident Coordinator for the Samoa Multi-Country Office; and Ms. Angelica Jacome, Director of the FAO Office of SIDS, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries.

Ms Burich thanked FAO, Fiji and ITU for organizing the Forum and noted that the innovators look forward to receiving long-term technical assistance, networking, access to markets, and financial support from governments and other development partners. She called for the inclusion of local innovators in national and regional policy dialogues.

Ms. Jacome and Ms. Marinescu noted that there is significant potential for the people of SIDS to create more homegrown solutions and to connect the SIDS Solutions Platform to other platforms and facilitate SSTC. They called for a new vision for SIDS financing to accurately reflect the vulnerability of SIDS and consider carbon credits, noting that SIDS contribute only 0.2 percent to global carbon emissions.

The Fiji Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, Honorable Mahendra Reddy, noted that the Forum is a success that should contribute to building back greener and better from the impacts of COVID-19, which highlight the limitations of the tourism sector and the need to focus on primary sectors, mechanization and digitalization. He called on SIDS to be cautious with the use of oceanic resources to ensure that extraction activities address issues of equity and environment.

The FAO Assistant Director General for Africa, Mr. Abebe Haile-Gabriel, noted that SIDS need partnerships to address their challenges in transforming agri-food systems through innovation and digitalization so as to become more inclusive, sustainable and resilient. The SIDS Solutions Forum provides an excellent opportunity to generate and replicate more local solutions.



Innovator from Samoa, Ms. Shelley Burich

The FAO Assistant Director General for Latin America and the Caribbean, Mr. Julio Berdegue, highlighted the need to use the SIDS Solutions Platform for concrete support on the ground to expand and replicate existing solutions. He called for creative collaboration, partnership, finance and investment, and he said that innovators should not have to fight the system but that the system should be changed to support them.

The FAO Assistant Director General for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Jong-Jin Kim, acknowledged that there is a clear political desire to find solutions to issues that disproportionately affect SIDS and that the SIDS Solutions Platform is being welcomed with high expectations. Mr. Kim called for the creation of a community of practice and for the platform to become a two-way tool. He noted that discussions at the Forum highlight challenges related to finance and the need to explore various financing options for SIDS, youth and women engagement. The high level engagement at the Forum is a testament of commitment to hearing the voices of different countries, however small.













CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COVID-19 highlights the unique vulnerability of SIDS. This is because although many SIDS have so far escaped the negative health consequences of COVID-19, they suffer the major economic impacts of border closures due to their high dependence on tourism and external markets. This is exacerbating their existing vulnerabilities to climate change disasters and NCDs. Moreover, this is reversing the gains that were made in advancing the SDGs and SAMOA Pathway. Also in coping with the negative economic impacts of COVID-19, many SIDS have accelerated the development and adoption of digital technology, such as online business, digital payment and contactless delivery systems, allowing increased interactions between people over huge distances. The establishment of the SIDS Solutions Platform is timely as a key SIDS partnership tool that should be used to increase knowledge exchange to help deliver on the promises made in the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As a key result of the Forum, FAO launched the SIDS Solutions Platform, which will facilitate knowledge sharing within and between SIDS, and between SIDS and other countries. Additionally, 11 innovation and digitalization solutions were showcased by their proponents.

KEY ACTION POINTS

Participants of the SIDS Solutions Forum made several recommendations, which are summarized into 12 key action points, calling for stakeholders to:

-  1 Harness the power of ICT to build effective and resilient agri-food systems to enable farmers, fishers and artisans – who include women, youth and people with disabilities – to gain the full benefits of development.
-  2 Strengthen support to ICT infrastructure with a special emphasis on the agriculture and fisheries sectors.
-  3 Support the development and implementation of e-agriculture strategies linked to national ICT strategies.
-  4 Support, promote, scale up and replicate homegrown SIDS solutions as well as provide tangible, long-term assistance, including a Pacific start-up package.
-  5 Promote the leadership of women and youth in the use of digital technology in agri-food systems.
-  6 Build financial and digital literacy and support women and youth to transition into the formal financial ecosystem, especially the digital economy.
-  7 Submit the SIDS Solutions Platform to UNDESA as a key SIDS partnership to support the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs.
-  8 Promote and support the SIDS Solutions Platform, including linking to existing and similar platforms.
-  9 Mobilize the necessary resources and partnership alliances to catalyze, scale up and replicate identified 2021 SIDS solutions to support the implementation of the agreements of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
-  10 Invest in SSTC focused on sharing knowledge and technological support, including those offered by China and Ireland.
-  11 Support the application of the MVI in line with the SAMOA Pathway, which will allow the inclusion of many income-based criteria to assess eligibility for concessionary finance.
-  12 Establish structured and targeted regional financing appropriate for SIDS as well as a pool of regional experts on accessing financing, including in structured financing.

ANNEXES

Programme	http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/perspectives/sidsForum/sids-Forum-programme/en/
Profiles of speakers	http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/perspectives/sidsForum/sids-speakers/en/
Video recording of the entire two-day Forum	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57OGnAH5E5Y
Profiles of innovations	https://www.fao.org/asiapacific/perspectives/sidsforum/en/
SIDS Solutions Platform web link	http://www.fao.org/sids-solutions/en
Promotional Video #1	https://youtu.be/PzauAlYyLhQ
Promotional Video #2	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsQ40E8C7Hw
Promotional Video #3	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8ldUXRVfWs
Promotional Video #4	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1e4ivwcldl
Technical Paper 1: Gender, women and youth: Implications for innovation and digitalization Pacific	http://www.fao.org/3/cb5760en/cb5760en.pdf
Technical Paper 2: Poverty, malnutrition and food security in Pacific Small Island Developing States	http://www.fao.org/3/cb5758en/cb5758en.pdf
Technical Paper 3: Overview of the challenges and opportunities associated with innovation and digitalization in Pacific Small Islands Developing States	http://www.fao.org/3/cb6228en/cb6228en.pdf
Technical Paper 4: Overview of existing knowledge exchange platforms in Pacific Small Island Developing States	http://www.fao.org/3/cb5756en/cb5756en.pdf

