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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

**Thirty-fifth Session**

**1-4 September 2020<sup>1</sup>**

**Second Joint FAO and Pacific Community (SPC) Ministers for Agriculture  
and Forestry Meeting Communiqué**

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<sup>1</sup> Rescheduled from 17-20 February 2020, Thimphu, Bhutan

## Introduction

1. The Second Joint FAO and Pacific Community (SPC) Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry Meeting convened in Apia, Samoa on 4 October 2019, at the TATTE Conference Centre. The meeting was co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Pacific Community (SPC). Ministers attended from Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga and Vanuatu, and Heads of Delegation from American Samoa, Australia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Tuvalu, and Wallis and Futuna.
2. Representatives from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), Biosecurity Agency of Fiji (BAF), Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centres (CGIAR), Central Queensland University, Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), Kolone Vaai and Associates (KVA Consult), International Coconut Community, International Fund for Agriculture[sic] Development (IFAD), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Landcare NZ, Lincoln University NZ, Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA) Program Plus, Pacific Island Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO), Plant and Food Research (NZ), Samoa Farmers Association (SFA), Savaii Coconut Farmers Association, Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa (SROS), Tonga Farmers Association, University of Technology Sydney, University of the Sunshine Coast, University of the South Pacific, Women in Business Development (WIBDI), World Bank, Wallis and Futuna Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Trades and Agriculture (CCIMA), and World Food Programme (WFP) attended as Observers.
3. The meeting opened with a prayer led by Reverend Maauga Motu, followed by a video message from the Director-General of FAO, Mr QU Dongyu. The Acting Prime Minister of Samoa, The Honourable Afioga Fiame Naomi Mataafa, delivered the opening address
4. The Chair of the Meeting, the Honourable Afioga Lopao Natanielu Mua, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries of Samoa made welcoming remarks.
5. The Deputy Director General of SPC, Ms Audrey Aumua, and the FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Ms Kundhavi Kadiresan, delivered brief remarks.

### **Partnering to Develop Nutrition-Sensitive Food Systems in the Pacific Islands**

6. The meeting noted the progress made in developing the Joint Action Framework for Food Security and Nutrition in the Pacific Islands (Pacific Food and Nutrition Framework), and the outcome of the Nutrition Sensitive Pacific Food Systems Forum, organized by FAO, which called for a high-level Symposium on Nutrition and Food Systems in the region. Ministers requested FAO to consult with its partners on priority areas of focus for the symposium.
7. The Pacific Food and Nutrition Framework was supported as the reference partnership framework and coordination mechanism to develop nutrition-sensitive food systems in the Pacific Islands.
8. It was agreed that a subset of the Pacific Food and Nutrition Framework capturing FAO and SPC's cooperative work become the foundation of a Strategic Partnership Plan for collaboration between the FAO and SPC.
9. Progress was noted in the implementation of the FAO Multi-Country Programming Framework for the Pacific Islands (2018-2022), as a specific input into the Pacific Food and Nutrition Framework.

10. The proposed Technical Cooperation Programme indicative pipeline for the period October 2019 – December 2020 was endorsed.

### **Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) in the Pacific**

11. The meeting noted the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) decision under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

12. The meeting endorsed the development of submissions from Pacific Island Countries, with support from FAO and SPC, on the KJWA that takes into account the context of the region in terms of climate change impacts on agriculture. The recommendations drawn from the Regional Consultative Workshop on the KJWA, held in Nadi on 22-25 July 2019, were noted and supported.

13. The meeting noted that a KJWA inter-sessional workshop was tentatively planned to take place in Christchurch, New Zealand in February 2020, but subsequently postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services**

14. The meeting noted and supported the information provided in the paper on the report of the Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (HoAFS), including progress since the 2017 First Special Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (HoAFS) meeting, and the First Joint FAO and SPC Pacific Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry Meeting. The outcomes of the HoAFS are attached (Annex 1).

### **Pacific Activities for the International Year of Plant Health - 2020**

15. The meeting noted the importance of Plant Health activities to the region and its contribution to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The meeting approved ongoing collaboration and representation on Plant Health activities at national, regional and international levels.

16. The meeting committed to supporting the International Year of Plant Health 2020 in the Pacific region, and noted the request for regional support in emergency response plans and technical assistance.

### **Developing a Strategic and Coordinated Platform for Future ‘Pacific Week of Agriculture’ Events**

17. The concept of elevating the profile of the Pacific Week of Agriculture (PWA) was endorsed, so that it is recognized as representing the premier biennial agricultural event in the Pacific Region.

18. A PWA Working Group was established and mandated to articulate a PWA vision, and arrangements for events, officials-level and ministerial segments, as well as to provide organizational oversight. The Working Group comprises FAO, SPC, the previous and current Chairs of the Meeting (Vanuatu and Samoa), plus Australia, Fiji and Papua New Guinea. The PWA Working Group was requested to submit the draft guidance and rules of procedure for the PWA by March 2020 and its ministerial segment and events for comments, and expect endorsement by June 2020.

19. The meeting noted that the PWA Working Group will report on its work at the Third Meeting of Pacific Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (PMAFM).

### **Other Business**

20. The Ministers noted that a closed session of FAO Members held the previous day had discussed issues around decentralization, and agreed on a common position to be communicated to FAO. The meeting agreed to attach the minutes of their meeting (Annex 2). FAO was not privy to the discussion records, and will await the communication from Ministers.

21. French Polynesia expressed a desire to be an associate member of FAO, and noted the Pacific islands region is one family.

### **Venue for the Next Meeting**

22. The meeting accepted the offer from the Government of Fiji to host the 3rd Pacific Week of Agriculture, and the Third Joint Meeting of Pacific Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry in 2021.

### **Acknowledgement**

23. Delegates expressed their deep gratitude to the Government and people of Samoa for the excellent arrangements in hosting the Pacific Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry, and for the kind hospitality extended to them in Apia.

**Annex 1**  
**Report from the**  
**Regional Meeting of Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry**  
**Services**

The Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (HOAFS) wish to draw attention to the following issues raised at their meeting on 1-2 October 2019. The Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services from the Pacific:

1. Endorsed the SPC Land Resources Division Business Plan noting the commitment to report back on an annual basis to member countries.
2. Supported SPC's approach of providing services that are flexible and responsive to the individual needs of member countries, recognizing the different levels of support that members require.
3. Welcomed the intention of SPC to continue to build its capability in the areas of economic analysis, statistics, experimental design and data analysis, and encourages SPC to actively work with skilled practitioners in member countries, other CROP partners and our development partners, to share and expand a culture of practice and use of these tools. These should also include the improvement of laboratory services to achieve quality assurance for soil, plant, feed and food safety analysis within the Pacific.
4. Supported the proposals to join in a Pacific response to the declaration of 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH), as part of longer-term integrated plant health program.
5. Noted their deep concern in relation to the lack of capacity in management and surveillance of zoonotic diseases and animal health, and urge SPC to proceed as quickly as possible with the expansion of animal health services, making special note of the need for veterinary services.
6. Welcomed the further development of CePaCT into a Centre of Excellence, including the integration of the Pacific Tree Seed Centre.
7. Welcomed the initiatives under the Pacific Seeds for Life Integrated Program which is contributing to the Pacific Seed Systems Roadmap to continue work with member countries on national seed systems policies.
8. Called for increased disaster risk resilience through increased focus on traditional food crop propagation, and preservation and management of seeds of traditional varieties of plants, to build a sustainable food system and achieve regional public health targets relating to NCDs and malnutrition.
9. Called for inclusion of nutrient measurement into plant selection processes in addition to climate-resilient traits, resistance to pests & diseases, and productivity. They encouraged SPC to engage in further dialogue with development partners about this important means to prioritise work towards sustainable Pacific food and nutrition security.
10. Noted the launch of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) launched at the COP23 and its critical importance to the agriculture sector as a platform for country engagement and urged SPC to facilitate and promote the active engagement of the Agriculture sector leads in the KJWA, as well as with UNFCCC COP opportunities for highlighting climate change and agriculture and forestry issues.
11. Supported the development of women and youth in agriculture and the creation of pathways for more pro-active participation for the betterment of Pacific livelihoods and endorsed the directions outlined in Working Paper 5.3 relating to gender equality and social inclusion in agriculture and rural development:

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- i) to increase knowledge on women's roles and needs in agriculture and rural sectors;
    - ii) implement policies, programs and services that are gender responsive and
    - iii) to support the empowerment of rural women in all their diversities and protection of their rights.
  12. Emphasized the importance of strategic partnerships, to ensure that there are fully integrated programs of work and agreed processes between partners. HOAFS welcomed a joint approach to the conduct of the next meeting, and encourage FAO and SPC to clarify working arrangements.
  13. Endorsed the directions outlined in Working Paper 5.2 relating to Civil Society Engagement and:
    - i) Acknowledge the rationale for LRD to recommend a Civil Society representation mechanism to obtain Observer Status;
    - ii) Provide the Civil Society representation clearly defined opportunities to provide comments on the strategic intent of the HOAFS and on its impact on small farm families and producers.
  14. Endorsed the call to expand the role of PWA, and seek further advice from the Ministers on the composition of the Working Group membership.
  15. Recommended further mobilization of resource development to ensure that LRD services are effectively delivered through the integrated programs.
  16. Noted the call for the establishment of realistic and ambitious national targets for Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR), through an integrated approach for healthy ecosystems and invite Ministers to support this work that will contribute to nationally determined contributions (NDC) and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+).

## **Annex 2**

### **Pacific FAO Ministerial Retreat Outcomes Thursday, 3 October 2019**

#### **Sheraton Samoa Aggie Grey's Hotel and Bungalows, Apia, Samoa**

1. The Pacific FAO Ministerial Retreat was held in Apia, Samoa, on Thursday 3 October 2019 in the margins of the 2019 Pacific Week of Agriculture Meeting held from 30 September to 4 October 2019. The Retreat was chaired by the Hon. Lopao'o Natanielu Mu'a, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of Samoa and was attended by the Hon. Vainetutai Rose Brown of the Cook Islands; Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy and Hon. Osea Naiqamu of Fiji; Hon. Alexander Teabo of Kiribati; Hon. Dalton Tagetagi of Niue; Hon. Koni Iguan of Papua New Guinea; Hon. Ishmael Mali Avui of Solomon Islands; Hon. Kelihiano Kalolo of Tokelau; Hon. Losaline Maasi of Tonga; and senior government officials Mr. Matthew Worrell of Australia; Ms Iva Reimers-Roberto of the Republic of the Marshall Islands; Ms. Karen Adair of New Zealand; Mr. Frenando Sengebau of Palau; Ms. Ethel Tebengi Frances of Solomon Islands; and Tilafono David Hunter of Samoa.

2. Participants noted that there was no formal agenda for the Retreat and acknowledged the opportunity to meet to consider the following matters: Decentralized Offices Network in the Pacific sub region; and enhancing Pacific representation/participation in relevant FAO Committees.

#### **Decentralized Offices Network in the Pacific sub region**

3. The Chair recalled and provided a brief summary of the Pacific Island Countries' Talanoa session that was held on 25 June 2019 at the FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy in which concerns on the issue of decentralization were raised and discussed. In particular, participants at the Talanoa session expressed concerns about the potential separation/breaking up of Pacific Island Countries (PICs) under ongoing efforts to consolidate decentralization as part of the FAO's current reforms. This has the potential to weaken the Pacific's unity and voice in the FAO and other global fora, as well as adversely affect funding and resources allocation and support to the Pacific.

4. Participants also recalled the 34th Asia Pacific Regional Conference held in April 2018 in Fiji in which these specific concerns of the Pacific were raised and discussed. Consequently, the Conference concluded with the decision that 'recognized the need to review FAO's global coverage to provide effective support to Members according to needs and in consultation with governments of concerned countries, recognizing the specific concerns of the Pacific and allowing sufficient time for consultations'.

5. Participants acknowledged that effective coverage of the 14 Pacific Island Countries by the FAO remains a challenge notwithstanding ongoing efforts to increase the FAO's presence in the Pacific through its Sub-Regional Office in Samoa. Participants also recalled that as recommended in the 33rd session of the Asia Pacific Regional Conference (APRC) an International Officer (FAO) has been placed in Papua New Guinea while four national Assistant FAO Representatives have been appointed in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

6. Participants further noted that consideration was being given to supporting the Northern Pacific countries (Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau) through the multiple accreditation offices (Philippines) arrangements, and of upgrading the office in Papua New Guinea into a fully-fledged FAO Representation with multiple accreditation to Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

7. While acknowledging the specific needs and development priorities of each Pacific Island country, including their vulnerabilities, Participants agreed that Pacific Island Countries are stronger together as one group and family, and decline to support the proposed modalities for the FAO's coverage and service delivery to the Pacific under the Decentralized Offices Network in the Pacific sub region. Some Participants indicated that while their Governments have sought additional information on the proposed multiple accreditation offices arrangements from the FAO, it is vital that the PICs work together as one and therefore supported the consensus of the meeting.

8. Participants agreed that all Pacific FAO members are informed of the decision of the Ministers' meeting before formal advice is conveyed to the FAO. As a collective, the Pacific can bring about positive influences and responses to challenges that they face as a region as well as engender more effective collaboration, inclusivity and durable partnerships to achieve the sustainable development aspirations of all Pacific Island countries.

9. Further, and noting current budget and resource constraints of the Pacific Sub-Regional Office, Participants agreed to further consider and cooperate on how to better affect increased funding and resource allocation to the Pacific commensurate with the level of needs and country contexts within the Pacific region.

10. Participants also recalled the importance of existing international and regional frameworks such as 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SAMOA Pathway, and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism amongst others, and their linkages to the objectives of the Global Action Plan for Small Island Development States (SIDS) and the Pacific Multi-Country Programming Framework (2018 – 2022 ). These will continue to inform and guide the work of the FAO and other regional and international organisations, as well as development partners to strengthen sustainable development in the Pacific.

### **Enhancing Pacific representation/participation in relevant FAO Committees**

11. Participants noted current representation of the Pacific in the FAO Council and Committees as follows: FAO Council – Australia; Finance Committee – Australia; Programmes Committee – New Zealand; and the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters – Fiji. Participants expressed their appreciation to Australia, Fiji and New Zealand for their contribution to the work of the FAO and in representing and promoting, where possible, the interests and concerns of the Pacific in the work of the organisation.

12. Participants were informed that the recent PICs' Talanoa session in Rome highlighted the need for enhanced presence and participation of PICs in the work of the Council and Committees to shape and guide discussions and decisions on issues of importance to the Pacific. In particular, Participants were urged to consider engaging in the work of the various technical committees of the FAO. While cognisant of national budgetary and resources constraints to support dedicated representation in Rome, Ministers were urged to consider ways to improve the Pacific's presence and contribution to the work of the FAO, including through increased support and assistance from the Pacific Sub Regional Office to PICs.

13. In urging wider and more regular consultations between Rome-based Pacific missions and Pacific capitals on issues of importance to the region, Participants welcomed advice that Brussels-based Pacific missions were also being engaged on FAO matters, with some now fully accredited to the FAO.

14. Participants agreed to encourage greater coordination and collaboration amongst PICs, the FAO Sub Regional Office and the Pacific Community on FAO Council and Committee work, including preparations in advance of the various meetings of the FAO Council and APRC (Bhutan, 2020).



### **Other matters**

15. Participants further agreed to:
- i. consult on Pacific Island countries' preparations for the 2020 APRC in Bhutan;
  - ii. advocate strongly for a session on PICs in the Communique of the Joint FAO and SPC Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry Meetings, including the 2020 APRC in Bhutan and other future FAO meetings;
  - iii. strongly encourage the FAO to consult PICs on issues requiring focused attention in advance of future joint FAO and SPC Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry Meetings; and
  - iv. continue to utilise opportunities of future Pacific Week of Agriculture events to convene meetings of Pacific FAO Ministers to consider developments made relating to issues raised.

3 October 2019 Apia, Samoa