



Ministry of Agriculture
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

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COOK ISLANDS COUNTRY STATEMENT

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your path.

Honourable. Sitiveni Rabuka, Prime Minister of Fiji, thank you to your Government and the people of Fiji for hosting this meeting

Chair Hon. Kalaveti Ravu, Minister for Forestry, Fiji
Hon. Laauli Leuatea Polataivao Fosi - Minister of Agriculture, Samoa
Chair - Hon. Vaitimi Rayalu, Minister for Agriculture, Fiji
FAO Deputy Director-General, Mr. Laurent Thomas
Pacific Community Director General, Dr Stuart Minchin

MC- Dr. Vinesh Kumar, Permanent Secretary - Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, On behalf of the people and Government of the Cook Islands, I extend a warm Kia Orana to you all.

In the absence of my Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Vainetutai Rose Toki-Brown, I am honored to be given the opportunity to address you all, on her behalf.

I am Temarama Anguna-Kamana, Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Cook Islands.

Kia Orana to the FAO Deputy Director General Mr Laurent Thomas and the Pacific Community Director General Dr Stuart Minchin. Thank you for the two organization's continued assistance to member countries persevering with the safe management of our people and resources through this challenging time in the world's history.

Like other Pacific Island Countries, the Cook Islands are highly reliant on imported food. We have therefore been strongly affected by the large increases in global food prices that have occurred over the past few years. As an example, in the space of just one year, the price of chicken and eggs rose by 17 percent. These developments constitute an incipient threat to our food security.

Ongoing global developments remind us that such excessive reliance on imports of essentials such as food carries significant risks. We are therefore keen to reduce our reliance on food imports.

We also recognize that food systems transformation is about more than agriculture; it is also about health and wellbeing, livelihoods, and the environment and therefore the Cook Islands is eager to develop a food systems pathway as soon as possible.

Food security, nutrition & health is a vital element of my country's survival and increasing the production of our traditional food and advocating more healthy diets, will be at the forefront of these transformational pathways. In the meantime, we endeavor to maintain our long-standing food systems objectives, such as increasing our domestic food production.

We are also looking at improving conditions for our small-scale livestock capacity and animal rearing. Although we could be self-sufficient in pork meat and eggs, we struggle to compete with imports as these animal products rely mainly on imported breeders and feed.

The concept we have developed would enable us to address some of the key constraints to the development of the livestock sector, improve animal husbandry and animal waste management practices and apply international standards of food safety. This would help link the sector with the tourism sector, which would open further avenues for its development.

Broadening the range of value-added products, establishing new livelihood options, supporting detailed enhancement of domestic value chains, changes to production methods and seeking to establish the Cook Islands in international niche markets is critical to the diversification of our economy.

Therefore we are proposing to establish a Food Innovation Centre (FIC) on Rarotonga as an effective method of encouraging and supporting the increased production of agricultural commodities. Expanding the range and volume of agricultural products will broaden the domestic market and provide the opportunity for import substitution and increased exports.

Our primary industries must improve resilience to climate change through adaptive methods; utilising new and better technologies to improve and increase production and processing techniques.

Our Biosecurity systems must be robust to prevent intrusions by exotic pests and diseases that threaten our way of life, our unique island environment and ecosystems, and the health and wellbeing of our communities.

We look to FAO, the Pacific Community and our development partners to aid the implementation of our new focus. Together with the strength of our people, we will achieve our long term vision.

The Cook Islands looks forward to engaging with you our partners, on supporting us on the way forward.

Thank you for your attention.

Kia Orana, Kia Manuia and God Bless.