

**8th Regional Meeting of the Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services
Partner Statement from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
Thursday, 9 March**

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide a partner statement. I would like to start by acknowledging all First Nations people and particularly to acknowledge their expertise and experience in managing the land and ocean resources on which we all depend.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, through its development program, is proud to be a long-term partner of the Pacific in agriculture and food security.

We are pleased to support the Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry and would like to thank the Government of Fiji for hosting the Week.

We see this Week as an important opportunity for the Pacific to come together to discuss shared opportunities and shared challenges.

For us, it is an opportunity to listen and to learn and to shape our future support in a way that is responsive to Pacific priorities.

As has been stated by Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Australia is committed to working with all in the Pacific to achieve shared aspirations and address our shared challenges.

Agriculture and forestry are critical sectors. They are important for the livelihoods and incomes of many households. As we have heard in the side events and in the Heads meeting today, the agriculture and forestry sectors are in need of investment and research in order for them to meet future challenges. We have also heard how important it is for all parties – Governments, community-based organisations, farmers, researchers and the private sector to work together.

Australia looks forward to continuing to work with Pacific partners and with development partners to build a stronger agriculture and forestry sector. This includes through investments in key regional public goods such as biosecurity, plant genetic resources, soils, climate information and climate-resilient agriculture.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present this statement.

Bula Vinaka.