

8th Regional Meeting of the Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services
Partner Statement from the Government of New Zealand
Thursday, 9 March

Tēnā koutou katoa. Bula vinaka and thank you to our hosts, the Government of Fiji, and to the SPC and FAO for their excellent work organising this 8th meeting of Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services.

The theme of “growing together, transforming agriculture and forestry” is timely.

As we have heard this week, Pacific communities are relying increasingly on agriculture and forestry for their food security and livelihoods, given the ongoing impacts of climate change and COVID-19. This brings urgency to our work to transform our agriculture and forestry sectors to meet future needs.

My delegation supports the decisions taken by this meeting to ensure a member-driven approach to agriculture and forestry in the Pacific region, including the development of a regional Agriculture and Forestry strategy, the Regional Research Agenda framework, and a climate adaptation tool to support Pacific food systems planning. New Zealand shares your view that we cannot take a business as usual approach to our agriculture and forestry sectors. Regular meetings of senior officials will help us keep pace with challenges such as climate change, through sharing our knowledge and identifying opportunities.

Unfortunately, my own country has witnessed first-hand the devastating impacts of climate change on our people and land. In February, northern areas of our north island were hit by Cyclone Gabrielle, bringing months of rain in matters of hours and days. Sadly, people have lost their lives, homes and livelihoods and our country is now in clean up and recovery mode, but also thinking about the long-term ramifications of climate change for where we live, our infrastructure, the way we farm and how we use our forestry resources.

Mr Chairman, New Zealand has many agriculture and forestry partnerships across the Pacific region. We have listened carefully this week to the priorities you have highlighted and the work you have underway. This will help us identify further partnerships through which we can continue to work with you all to achieve the Pacific region’s agriculture and forestry goals.

Congratulations on a successful 8th regional meeting. Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.