

**Sub-Regional Consultation on Policy and Programmatic Actions
to Address High Food Prices in the Pacific Sub-region**

**Nadi, Fiji
14-15 April 2011**

Outcome Statement

1. The Sub-Regional Consultation on Policy and Programmatic Actions to Address High Food Prices in the Pacific Sub-region was held in Nadi, Fiji on 14-15 April 2011. The meeting was convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and participants included representatives of national governments, regional and international partners, and civil society organizations.
2. The main objectives were to: 1) share country experiences regarding rising food prices, the commodities involved, the government priorities, policies and action programmes, and the implementation problems/constraints and their impact; 2) raise awareness of the various policy options and programmatic actions and their implications to facilitate appropriate policy and programmatic decisions at the country level; 3) internalize lessons from the 2007-08 crisis based on country and development partner experiences in the region as appropriate; 4) identify the needs and opportunities for external financial assistance and technical support to governments and potential development partners and stakeholders; and 5) identify the way forward and processes to design, coordinate and implement appropriate policy and programmatic actions as well as the arrangements for monitoring, updating and sharing of information on price changes, policy measures and results.
3. The participants discussed the trends and impacts of high food prices and agreed that the following principles could guide their actions:
 - a) The Sub-Regional Consultation recognised that high food prices have impacted on food security for Pacific people, and affected their ability to meet and fulfil other needs such as health, education, and socio-economic opportunities.
 - b) The most vulnerable group to high food prices are the poor who spend a large share of their income on food. Higher food prices force the poor to reduce their food consumption to meet their nutritional requirements, reduce expenditure for other needs such as education and health, lead to the selling off of productive assets, and push more people into poverty.
 - c) There is a need to increase the productivity, production and consumption of local nutritious food to promote food security and reduce the impacts of high imported food prices. Partnerships with the media, and other avenues for public awareness, can help to promote local nutritious foods for consumers. Processing of local food for more convenient use is also helpful.
 - d) The Pacific region has a strong subsistence sector and hunger is thus rare: poverty usually means hardship. Hardship includes a lack of access to basic services, lack of access to adequate nutritional food, lack of economic opportunities, and a lack of resources to meet the basic household needs and customary obligations.
 - e) A better understanding is needed on the contribution of the subsistence sector to food security and Pacific island economies, to help guide improved policy responses and programmes for action. Effective policy measures may include consumer policies that do not undermine

producer incentives, government interventions that support private sector activities, government commitments to develop the agriculture sector, and strong partnerships between countries including regional and international cooperation.

f) The community-based social systems in the Pacific islands are the most important safety net for ensuring welfare and food security, and complement the safety nets provided by governments and other stakeholders. This needs to be factored into policy and programme responses so that they do not undermine the social systems. Safety nets such as cash vouchers and other targeted approaches need to be promoted.

g) High food prices may also benefit smallholder farmers. The benefits may depend on whether they are net food buyers or sellers, how their benefits are protected in the marketing chain, their access to financial resources, the competitiveness of markets, the timing of harvests and planting, and accurate and timely information on local and other markets. One of the main issues affecting the prices of local products is seasonality. There are good opportunities to meet demand and stabilise prices in different seasons through innovative technologies such as hydroponics, using off-season crop varieties to extend the harvesting period, and growing crops under cover.

h) More investment is needed in capacity development in data collection and analysis. This will assist in making informed policy decisions and the delivery of programmes as reliable data is critical to assessing and monitoring food security, policy decisions, and outcomes.

i) There is a need to make farming more attractive to young people as a career choice, where they can earn a living, by changing mindsets and building skills. The agriculture sector generally has a declining and aging population and farming needs to be promoted more vigorously by government and other stakeholders.

j) Governments and other stakeholders should invest more to improve agricultural infrastructure, including better transport links and the development of local market places.

k) Regional trade integration offers opportunities for intra-island trade to address issues such as food security, market development, income generation and economic growth.

l) Improved public awareness is needed regarding the impacts of high food prices and possible responses by consumers, governments and other stakeholders. Information sharing, and the identification of actions, should maximise the use of stakeholder engagement to share experiences and lessons learned.

m) Particularly in urban areas, vulnerable people are switching to cheaper less nutritious food. There is a need to recognise and accelerate support for the urban poor. Nutrition education and awareness, as well as crop and agricultural diversification to increase supply of nutritious food such as vegetables, fruits, meat and milk at an affordable price should be promoted.

n) Maximise the utilization of the Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods Programme for the Pacific Island Countries (FSSLP) for the implementation of actions. Additional financial resources need to be mobilised.

o) The Sub-Regional Consultation needs to be followed by further dialogue at national level and involve government, development partners, private sector and other key stakeholders.