

FIJI REGIONAL FORUM 7-10 MAY 2018, SUVA

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT TO COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR PACIFIC LOCAL VALUE CHAIN AND AGRI-BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



The Fiji regional forum ‘Developing Pacific Local Food Crops and Fisheries Value Chains – Key Innovations and Critical Success Factors’ held in Suva, from 7 to 10 May 2018, ended on a positive note. The 100 plus delegates committed to strengthening the multi-stakeholder partnerships and mobilising resources, for leveraging the development of local food crops and fisheries value chains for improved nutrition, incomes and sustainable food systems.

The Fiji Forum was organised within the framework of the multi-country project ‘Promoting Nutritious Food Systems in the Pacific Islands’ which is co-funded by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and implemented in partnership with the Pacific Islands Private sector Organisation (PIPSO).

“We believe in a holistic approach that comprises of various mutually reinforcing strategies to ensure that Fiji’s agricultural sector thrives and agribusiness opportunities are extended. Many of our struggles regarding the development of a thriving agricultural sector and nutritious food systems are common among the Pacific communities. It is our goal to learn from one another to identify key innovations and critical success factors for the Pacific region.”
Hon. Viam Pillay, Fijian Assistant Minister for Agriculture, at the official Opening Ceremony.

“The European Union is pleased to support this initiative by CTA, IFAD and PIPSO, which aims at practical and concrete actions to help rural communities, the private sector and government agencies. The result should be more effective agricultural value chains which will promote economic and social development, making a difference to everyday life in the Pacific.” Christoph Wagner, Head of Cooperation, European Union Delegation for the Pacific following the Opening Ceremony.

The agri-entrepreneurs, bankers, community and farmer leaders, public officials and researchers who gathered in Suva came mainly from Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. They not only represented these 7 Pacific Island States which the CTA-IFAD-PIPSO project targets but gave voice to thousands of farmers, communities and other key agricultural and agri-business stakeholders including development finance institutions. With the support of Pacific experts and stakeholders and building on expert insights from other regions; Africa and Asia, the delegates agreed on priority actions to achieve economic stability, food and nutrition security, better nutrition and incomes, and climate resilience. They created and endorsed regional and national action plans and committed to continue to work together and with CTA, IFAD, PIPSO and other Pacific and

international partners by taking ownership of the finalisation and active implementation of the plans to drive the local value chain and agri-business development agenda forward.

“If we want to achieve success and quickly, we need to put the farmer in the middle of it all.”
Howard Politini, Chair, PIPSO.

“Significant achievements were made in the formulation of regional and national action plans which will pave the way for coordinated development actions that favour agricultural innovation.” Sakiusa Tubuna, Regional Coordinator, IFAD.

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. The Fiji forum proved that the Pacific wants to go far. Now we need to make sure that all the stakeholders remain informed and engaged. CTA confirms its commitment to the region for moving the agricultural value chain and agri-business agenda forward” - Michael Hailu, Director, CTA



From left to right: Sakiusa Tubuna, Regional Coordinator, IFAD; Howard Politini, Chairman, PIPSO; Hon Viam Pillay, Assistant Minister of Agriculture, Fiji; Christoph Wagner, Head of Cooperation, EU delegation to the Pacific and Michael Hailu, Director, CTA.

Approach: From evidence based discussion to consensus on action plans

Discussions were launched with catalyst speeches and evidence generated from multi-country studies as well as presentations on key innovations, successes and lessons learned on the potential of weather-based index insurance; ICTs including mobile phone applications; Pacific traditional foods to positively impact nutrition and health outcomes, and novel approaches to accessing finance and rural financial service provision. From there, participants followed a structured process for validating the key innovations and determining the key attributes and critical success factors to achieve the desired impacts. They developed regional action plans based on relevance and high priorities which were then rated by groups representing the various stakeholders e.g. farmers, financiers, public sector officials, SMEs and further refined

and refocused. After achieving consensus on the regional actions, multi-stakeholder national groups then reviewed, prioritised and designed national action plans.



Delegates during group work.

Agreements reached

Weather Risk

“We agreed that Weather Index Based Insurance (WIBI) should be pursued at regional level and that governments and farmers need to be educated on the opportunities and benefits for Pacific Island States.” Simon Cole, Chairman, Fiji Crop and Livestock Council, Fiji.

In the Pacific region, where the Island states are subject to many natural disasters, all opportunities to mitigate the negative impact on the agricultural sector need to be explored. Dr Peter Book, a reinsurance broker and operators of WIBI schemes from other parts of the world including Dr Stephen Muchiri from East Africa Farmers’ Federation, shared their experiences and guided the discussions. Focus was on increasing understanding and finding a balance in the complex issues of designing a product suitable for the Pacific region. Insurance relies on having access to significant and robust data to design the right product. WIBI is a long established mechanism to provide disaster relief. A pathway for implementing WIBI that is context specific for the Pacific was established with Fiji as the leader given the country’s advanced state of readiness. The plans are to be further validated by national and regional stakeholders; in particular farmers, financiers and governments.

Finance

“Making the farmer ‘bank’ ready and banks to be ‘farmer’ ready are priority actions. This would not only address issues from the demand and supply side but will enhance the dialogue

between both parties and improve farmers' (and SME's) ability to access finance". Tukana Bovoro, Former Banker and Finance Consultant, Fiji.

Forum delegates agreed that there was need to open up financial service provision to rural areas. They acknowledged that while development finance institutions (DFIs) and donor agencies were operating in the same developmental space, they often do so in isolation. Mechanisms were identified for financiers to talk to each other and work more closely together to leverage their efforts and serve their clientele; farmers and SMEs, better. Local DFIs are on the ground, know the environment, have local experience and in the process can make the development dollar have a bigger imprint in ensuring the sustainability of agriculture programs and investments.

Nutrition

"We agreed to invest in community based agriculture and health projects which promote the development of local food crops and fish in the Pacific and are showing impact on the ground; we need to build on these successes. The Innov4AG project will provide seed funding to support projects aimed at improving agricultural productivity and value chain development for better nutrition and incomes". Judith Ann Francis, Pacific Project Leader & Senior Coordinator, Science and Technology Policy, CTA, The Netherlands.

The Forum delegates gave high priority to up-scaling community based agricultural projects that focus on the use of traditional foods for addressing the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases and assuring improved nutrition outcomes and higher incomes. They endorsed the need for strengthening national coordinating mechanisms for greater policy coherence, multi-sectoral collaboration and public-private-producer-community partnerships and for aggressively marketing local food crops and fisheries value chains in the region. They acknowledged and committed to generating the evidence through research and product development so that public and private investments can be channelled to local food crops and fisheries value chain and agri-business development. Quantifying the bioactive components in priority commodities e.g. taro leaves and sea cucumbers, increasing the human resource capacity in agronomy, food science, engineering and technology and generating impact stories from community initiatives will give the Pacific farmers and SMEs a comparative advantage and satisfy policymakers and investors who need the evidence for decision-making.

ICTs

"We have broad commitments to develop new and where possible build on and improve existing ICT solutions that have proven to be successful. ICTs are core to the integrated development of efficient Pacific value chains." Dr Bibhya Sharma, Associate Professor, University of the South Pacific, Fiji.

The main ICT4Ag regional action plan aims to enhance information flows and connection between rural areas, producers and markets as well as improve communication and production and transportation efficiency. The solutions will focus on user friendliness as well as easy access e.g. using USSD technology. By making ICT solutions user friendly especially for farmers and building capacity at all levels, there will be greater uptake of Climate Smart Agricultural practices, disaster management and early warning systems, and increased access

to rural advisory systems and financial services which will ultimately improve the value chain performance by supporting a timely and sustainable distribution. The aim is for a strong relationship between ICTs, weather based index insurance, nutrition and funding schemes (Web/Mobile based).

"ICT's are a key tool for development. We need to connect agriculture, health and education ICT infrastructure so that maximum use is made of government investments." Hon Siaso Sovaleni, Member of Parliament & Chair of the ICT committee of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Way Forward

"The action plans provide a clear pathway, for the way forward to contribute to the development of regional food systems. Access to finance is essential as without it nothing major can be achieved. The forum really enriched my knowledge in topics I believed I knew well." Jiu Daunivalu, CEO, Fiji Crop and Livestock Council.

All the actions plans will be finalised building on the multi-stakeholder participatory process that was adopted during the Forum. Further consultation and refinement will take place using the [Value Chain Coordination/ Agricultural Innovation online Innov4AgPacific platform](#) that provides a space for national and regional discussion groups. Face-to-face consultations and training sessions will also be supported through the CTA-IFAD-PIPSO project. This will ensure that what was agreed in the Fiji Forum in Suva is mainstreamed into national and regional policies and programmes. Delegates and development partners are already showing interest in the Forum outcomes, to integrate priority actions that they can support in their ongoing programmes at national and regional level. What the Fiji Forum has already shown is that there is multi-stakeholder commitment to collective action that can lead to tangible results in the development of Pacific local food crops and fisheries value chains.