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PACIFIC NEWS

FAO Pacific Website

From Eriko Hibi

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Climate change, drought and conflicts have a major impact on agriculture. FAO has developed an Early Warning, Early Action System (EWEA) to translate warnings, such as for drought, into anticipatory actions to reduce disaster impacts on agriculture sectors. In this edition, we highlight work to develop a EWEA system in the Solomon Islands.

We also cover tackling post-harvest waste in Samoa through a survey recently conducted on pineapple and breadfruit harvesting. And finally, a FAO funded project is currently underway in Solomon Islands to strengthen the capacity of farmers and food vendors to supply safe and nutritious food.

We hope that this newsletter will keep you informed of the work we do in partnership with others in the region.

Eriko Hibi
FAO Subregional Coordinator for the Pacific Islands

Signs of the times: Early warnings translate to early actions

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Increasing scientific evidence over the past two decades indicate that the global climate is changing.

As a result of a climatic shift, humanitarian actors and donors are facing new challenges to respond in a timely and effective way. Expanding needs, competing priorities and scarce resources globally mean that new tools are needed to ensure smart, effective investments to help attenuate the impact of disasters before they occur. One tool that is addressing this need is Early Warning - Early Action (EWEA) of FAO

Early Warning - Early Action
FAO has developed a EWEA System to translate warnings into anticipatory actions to reduce disaster impacts on agriculture sectors. It focuses on consolidating available forecasting information and putting plans in place to make sure we act when a warning is at hand.

The concept of acting early before disasters strike is gaining increasing attention as the international community recognises the importance of exploring new and cost-efficient ways of disaster management. Being able to forecast and mitigate the impact of disasters is critical – not only to save lives and livelihoods but also to protect development gains.
The EWEA System works at two levels, globally and country-specific. At global level, FAO has developed a quarterly EWEA report which flags the biggest risks to agriculture and food security over the upcoming three month period. The report links early warning analysis with recommendations on which actions should be taken to mitigate or prevent the disasters.

Nationally, FAO develops specific EWEA Plans for major disaster risks. These plans are tailored to each country and utilize existing early warning systems to develop indicators and evidence-based triggers for prompt action.

Fluctuations in climate
While changes in average climate conditions can have serious consequences by themselves, the main impacts of global climate change are felt due to fluctuations in climate variability and weather extremes. The 2015–2016 El Niño weather phenomenon, for example, is one of the most intense and widespread on record in the past one hundred years. Agriculture, food security and nutritional status of more than 60 million people were affected by various El Niño-induced conditions including droughts, floods and extreme hot and cold weather.

In the Pacific region
The Pacific is known to be one of the most prone regions to natural disasters in the world. In 2016 alone, the region experienced drought induced by the recent El Niño and the strongest tropical cyclone on record, Tropical Cyclone Winston.

In February 2017, the EWEA team went to Solomon Islands to develop the Pacific Region regional cyclone early action plan and a drought early action plan tailored specifically for the country. The mission in the Solomon Islands involved meeting various government counterparts to establish the EWEA system and weave the programme into existing government activities.

The team met with various stakeholders to understand the potential effect of the disasters on livelihoods and key agriculture sectors. The mission also included understanding what early warning systems are available and how cyclones or drought impact livelihoods. The latter was done with the help of community consultations in Malaita Province, Solomon Islands.

“The plans aim to harness existing early warning structures in the Pacific, such as rainfall outlooks and ENSO alerts provided by the Solomon Islands Meteorological Service”. Said Catherine Jones, the EWEA specialist from FAO. “The early warning system will equip the FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands, based in Apia, Samoa, to act early. By preventing or mitigating such disasters we can safeguard assets and livelihoods of communities in the Pacific and build resilience to natural disasters”.

Drought early action plans are currently in the making for the Republic of Marshall Islands and Federal States of Micronesia.

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FAO supports farmers to reduce post-harvest loss

© FAO / Steven Underhill

FAO is supporting Samoan farmers to consistently market top quality produce through a project targeted at the community, private sector and institutions.

In December 2016, FAO conducted a survey of pineapple and bread fruit producers in Samoa to understand postharvest handling practices in terms of harvesting, packaging, transport and product quality. The survey was led by Prof Steven Underhill from the University of Queensland, Australia.

The survey is a continuation of prior assessments undertaken since early 2015 by Prof Underhill of postharvest loss in various markets and by farmers throughout Upolu and Savaii. This project involves a close partnership with FAO and Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa (SROS) who will examine food safety risk. FAO also works closely with the extension staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

A key finding from assessments this time was access to transport significantly influenced when farmers harvest fruits and vegetables in Samoa, the volume harvested and the type of packaging used.

“Farmers dependent on local buses, which run intermittently, try to maximise the volume of product they transport to markets ". Said Prof Underhill. “Public transport can already be full with passengers and other goods and can lead to mishandling or damaged product”.

"Postharvest loss is a major issue for Samoa, not only does it reduce smallholder farmer profit but it decreases the amount of fruit and vegetables available for sale to consumers" Prof Underhill explained. “Poor harvesting practices for breadfruit, for example, was evident with more than 50 percent of the fruit being allowed to drop from a height of more than of 5 metres in some cases”.

The focus of Professor Underhill's research in Samoa is the assessment and analysis of current commercial postharvest practices, quantifying wastage, and using this information to work with local farmers to identify practical strategies to improve postharvest quality and reduce wastage.

“We have conducted a series of training activities and testing practical tools and equipment to assist market vendors, smallholder farmers and commercial growers”. Said Prof Underhill. “Our priority to do this in-market, with local communities and in partnership with commercial farmers with hands-on training specifically tailored to Samoa conditions and undertaken in the field. Dr Seeseei Molimau-Samasoni from SROS co-presented in these workshops”.

Prof Underhill will return to Samoa at the end of March to conduct a series of food safety and postharvest handling seminars as well as community-based postharvest training.

“We are undertaking the next round of smallholder postharvest farmer training in Savaii on Wednesday 15 and Thursday 16th March”. Said Prof. Underhill. “There will also be daily one hour food safety and postharvest handling presentations – each covering a different topic – from the March 20-24 at the Fugalei markets in Apia. Dr Seeseei Molimau-Samasoni will again be heavily involved in the Savai’I and Fugalei market training”.

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Call for input on the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States

FAO is seeking stakeholder input on the **draft Global Action Programme** on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States.

Who should participate?

All stakeholders, including national governments, private sector, civil society, academia, the scientific community, local authorities, international organizations, donors and development partners.

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What is needed?

Your input on the **Draft Global Action Programme**

(The final version will be presented at the FAO Conference: 3-8 July 2017)

Background
FAO is working in close collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing (UN-OHRLLS) to respond to the invitation of the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway by developing a “Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States."
The Global Action Programme (GAP) aims to accelerate action on food security and nutrition to support the sustainable development of SIDS, assisting their efforts to reach the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Developed for all SIDS, the GAP is global in scale and has been developed as a guidance document to align existing strategies and plans and to identify and fill in gaps.
The GAP recommends actions at local, national, regional and global levels to achieve three objectives:

1. Create enabling environments for food security and nutrition;
2. Promote sustainable, resilient, and nutrition-sensitive food systems; and
3. Empower people and communities for improved food security and nutrition.

The final version of the GAP will include an implementation plan and will be launched at the 40th Session of the FAO Conference (3-8 July 2017). A High-Level Political Forum side event to present the GAP is also planned.
For more information or for additional assistance in using the e-consultation system, please contact: Armine Avagyan at armine.avagyan@fao.org
Small Island Developing States
The following is a list of Small Island Developing States that are UN/FAO members:

By when?
April 12, 2017

How should I submit my input?
Through an e-consultation system. **Please register here**.

Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Cook Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

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FAO funded project commences

Teddy Kafo – Solomon Star

© FAO / Catherine Jones

FAO funded project called Strengthening the Capacity of Farmers and Food Vendors to Supply Safe and Nutritious Food is currently underway in Solomon Islands. FAO is providing technical assistance and necessary support towards the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) in three provinces in Solomon Islands namely Guadalcanal, Malaita and Temotu.

This project will increase domestic agricultural production through improved root and cash crops production practises; strengthening farmers' group capacity; value addition and food safety and access to market.

During the project inception and workshop held recently at the Department of Livestock conference room, MAL Permanent Secretary Jimi Saelea thanked the FAO team for their great support and highlighted the importance of such a project in the country.

"A very timely intervention as the regional countries including Solomon Islands is faced with the dilemma of increased nutrition related illnesses including Non-Communicable Diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, hyper tension or high blood pressure etc."We must do whatever it takes to curtail these diseases getting out of control".

Mr Saelea said the Solomon Islands Government through MAL is committed to support the empowerment of farmer's rural communities through the adoption of improved production technologies, whereby the MAL Provincial Agriculture Extension Services will ensure continuity in the provision of support to additional farming communities using the knowledge generated by this project.

"It is expected that the results of this project will be integrated into the programme that address nutrition issues at schools through linkages with the "Healthy Schools Programme" which the Ministry of Health and Medical Services supported by World Health Organization and United Nations Children Fund are implementing".

"As we all know children at an early stage learn to adopt and adapt new ideas therefore, food nutrition must be instilled into the learning process, in schools at the primary level," Mr Saelea remarked.

Mr Saelea believed that this project will invoke new ideas and innovations that will bring about an end to poverty, hunger, and good health to children and the three provinces involved.
The project inception and workshop was attended by farmer's representatives from the three provinces and other stakeholders from Ministry of Health and Taiwan Technical Mission.

The Assistant FAO Representative for the Solomon Islands, Rosemary Kafa expressed FAO's continuous commitment and support to the development of agriculture in Solomon Islands for enhancing food security and improving the livelihoods for the households and people of the country.

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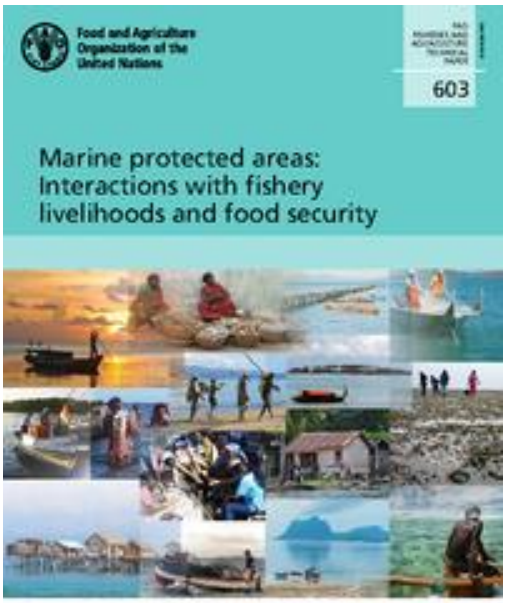
New Publication:
Marine protected areas: Interactions with fisheries livelihoods and food security

Building on work presented at the IUCN World Parks Congress (WPC) held in Sydney, Australia, on 12–19 November 2014, this document explores experiences with aquatic protected areas (PAs), marine protected areas (MPAs) and protected areas in inland waters in the context of livelihoods and food security. It includes: (i) ten papers reporting on the interface of MPA/protected areas with livelihoods and food security, based on case studies in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania; (ii) an eleventh contribution providing a more general overview of MPAs and food security and how to assess their impact; and (iii) a final paper synthesizing the conclusions of the papers and discussing the observed outcomes of aquatic PAs, together with problems and solutions.



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