



## **PAPUA NEW GUINEA COUNTRY STATEMENT**

**FOR THE 35<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC  
(APRC), 1<sup>ST</sup> TO 4<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020, BANGKOK, THAILAND**

**Chairperson**

**Director-General of FAO**

**Excellences**

**Distinguished Delegates**

Firstly, let me offer my congratulation to Mr. QU DONGYU for his appointment as the new Director-General for FAO and wish him well in his tenure as the Head of FAO.

Secondly, let me also congratulate Honorable LYONPO YESHE PENJOR, Minister of Agriculture and Forests of Bhutan for assuming the Chair of the 35<sup>th</sup> Session of APCR Conference.

Let me also thank the Government of Bhutan and FAO for the excellent organization and arrangements of this virtual conference.

The Papua New Guinea (PNG) economy is dominated by Minerals, Oil and Gas resources; however, Agriculture, Forestry and fisheries are important sectors in the country as well, because they are the renewal resources and are critical for long term food security; income generation; export revenue and employment.

Agriculture sector alone supports about 85 % of the population mainly in rural areas, who depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

In terms of national economy, the agriculture sector contributes about 18% of total GDP and agriculture exports accounts for about 17% of total value of exports mainly from exports of industrial crops such as palm oil, coffee, cocoa, coconut (copra & copra oil), rubber and tea.

The important role of agriculture in PNG afore-mentioned, renders agriculture a top priority in PNG national development policies such as the PNG Vision 50, 2010-2050 and the PNG Strategic Development Plan (PNGSDP) 2010-2030.

Agriculture will play a pivotal role in contributing to the achievement of the goals set by these two higher national development plans- *to make PNG a smart, fair, wealthy, happy and healthy nation by 2050, and to ensure that PNG becomes a middle-income country by 2030*, - these are the goals of PNG Vision 50 and PNGSDP respectively.

Achievement of these higher goals, will be done through implementation of specific social, economic and support services programs in a series of five -year Medium Term Development Plans (MTDP) from 2010-2030. The goal of agriculture in the MTDP, *is to have a world class agriculture sector that is responsive to international and domestic markets for a diverse range of products and provided the best available income and job opportunities.*

The MTDP agricultural goal, will be delivered using a number of key strategic interventions such as land reform and access; provision of adequate extension services; institutional reform in the agriculture sector; improving road infrastructure to facilitate farmers access to markets and support services; rehabilitation of the industrial crops and livestock sector; eradication and control of pest and diseases; and adoption of proper product standards to facilitate export of agricultural products.

Due to the paramount importance of food security to PNG, the country has formulated a specific dedicated National Food Security Policy 2017-2027 and its Action Plan, 2018-2022, which have been submitted last month to the cabinet for endorsement.

The Policy has the following features:

- 1) It comprehensively covers and is underpinned by four important pillars of food security namely: food availability, accessibility, utilization and stability.
- 2) It sets the medium to long-term direction to address food and nutrition insecurity based on local food and nutrition security needs.
- 3) It promotes multi-stakeholder approach in the planning, implementation, coordination and management of food security programs and activities and
- 4) It empowers women through profitable commercial farming to enhance their capacity to improve child and family nutrition and health.

The vision of the policy is for all Papua New Guineans to be food secure principally from locally produced food and lead healthy, active and productive lives.

The goal is to enable all Papua New Guineans to access and consume sufficient, safe, affordable, and nutritious food at all times.

The Policy will also contribute towards global efforts to end hunger and eliminate all forms of malnutrition in 2030 as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goal number 2.

The PNG National Food Security Policy will deliver the following five outcomes:

1. Local nutritious food production increased and producers better linked to markets

2. Enhanced stability and resilience in food production and supply
3. Improve access to nutritious foods for vulnerable households and individuals
4. Sustainable income generating opportunities for women increased to enhance economic access to nutritious food for children and families
5. Successful implementation of food security policy and programs at national, provincial and districts levels.

The key indicators and targets to be achieve by the PNG National Food Security Policy by 2027 are:

- (a) Malnutrition in the form of Stunting will be reduce by 30%; Underweight to be reduce by 10% and Wasting to be reduce by 2%.
- (b) Overweight in adult population will be reduced by 20%
- (c) Staple food production will increase by 70%
- (d) Livestock numbers to increase by 20%
- (e) Increase protein consumption beyond 0.8 gram per kg of body weight per day.
- (f) Improvement in household diet diversity consumption (Diet Diversity score greater than 5 for 50% of population)
- (g) Women share of household income will increase.
- (h) Poverty in rural areas reduced by 20%

Achievement of these targets will mitigate the food and nutrition security challenges in PNG, caused mainly by high rates of poverty and malnutrition, and climate change.

These challenges will now be compounded by the presence of COVID-19 pandemic and biosecurity issues such as African Swine Fever (ASF) and Fall Army Worm (FAW), which are already present in the country.

High level of poverty of about 39% is prevalent in rural areas and limits food availability and accessibility. Incidentally, it is the 85% of the population in rural areas that depends on agriculture are also highly vulnerable and in trapped in poverty.

Although Poverty level has declined by 26.7% (53.2% to 39%) from 1996 to 2017, it is expected to worsened under the COVID-19 pandemic, and the people that will be worst affected are the 85% of population living in rural areas.

The current Government has taken an executive decision to promote and finance the development of Micro Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), to be led by the agricultural sector.

This in line with objectives of PNG National SME Policy 2016-2030 to create 500,000 SMEs and 2 million jobs by 2030. The agricultural MSMEs will play a critical role in alleviating poverty in rural areas through wealth creation, resulting in improvement of food and nutrition security.

The malnutrition problem in PNG, as reflected in high level of stunting of 48% in children under five years old, is due mainly to low consumption of protein rich foods in rural areas.

Suitable agricultural and health approaches are being used by agriculture and health agencies and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to address the malnutrition problem.

The agricultural approach to improve protein consumption, involved farm diversification by integrating protein rich food into the farming systems mainly through livestock and aquaculture farming and cultivation of nutrient rich food crops.

The main climatic threat to food security in PNG is the El Nino drought. The lack of water caused by the drought, reduce food production and severely affect food security for large population of people especially in rural areas, who are most vulnerable to this climatic event. El Nino climate event is now occurring frequently and the last event in 2015-16 affected about 3 million people in PNG.

Drought tolerant food crops varieties and small scale irrigation technologies are available in PNG, which can be delivered to farmers to enhance the resilience of their food systems to adverse effects of climate change.

PNG is a net importer of food and relies heavily on food imports to complement its local food production. PNG imports huge quantities of food from abroad to meet its domestic food requirement, worth more than K1 billion (US 280 million) per year.

PNG National Development Policies such as PNG Vision 50, advocate local food production and import substitution to achieve food self-sufficiency. The current government has also taken executive decision to support local food production and food imports substitution.

Promotion of local food production is also in line with the vision of the aforementioned PNG National Food Security Policy, which aspire PNG to be food secure principally from locally produced foods.

The impetus for local food production is also being reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic, that disrupted local and international food supply chains of main staples like rice and wheat.

The disruption to international supply chain of rice will have a major impact on food security in PNG, since rice is a major food staple in PNG and PNG relies on imported rice from countries like Viet Nam, Thailand, Myanmar and China for its rice supplies.

As a result of this, PNG has now taken measures to promote and initiate local commercial rice production to achieve rice self-sufficiency and to buffer against the future disruption to international rice supply chains.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a new challenge and paradigm shift to agriculture and food security. The lockdowns and restriction to movement of people, disruption to food supply chains and food marketing requires new innovative ways to conduct farming business and to deliver information, services and technologies to

farmers and clients using virtual and digital technologies like E-Agriculture, E-Commerce etc.

PNG has also formulated an E-Agriculture Strategy, which has been submitted to cabinet for endorsement. The E- Agriculture Strategy will provide guidance on the development of suitable ICT applications and solutions using digital technologies to virtually deliver E-farming, E-commerce etc. services to food value chain actors to sustain their operation, under COVID-19 situation.

The planning, technical and implementation support for the national food and nutrition security programs and activities are done in collaboration with relevant key international partners.

One such key partner is FAO. PNG is fortunate in benefitting from FAO Technical assistance provided to agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Climate Change sectors, due to the presence of an FAO Country Office in the Country, which was established in line with the FAO decentralization policy, initiated by the former Director-General of FAO.

In fact, PNG is now reaping the benefits of the presence of the FAO in the country as indicated by the significant increased number of Projects and funding. The 45-year partnership between Papua New Guinea and FAO was strengthened with the opening of a country office in 2013. Over the course of those years, FAO has supported Papua New Guinea (PNG) through the implementation of over 100 plus technical cooperation programs worth an estimate of USD50 million.

This year alone, FAO has enhanced its portfolio incredibly through mobilizing USD100 million from the European Union for a rural development value-chain program focused on cocoa, vanilla and fisheries commodities. The program 'Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade in PNG (STREIT PNG) is unique as it will enable 'hard components' (transport infrastructure, improved energy access) to be connected with 'soft components' such as financing, training, market access, trade and other value chain support services for commodities, facilitated by the sustainable implementation of digital technologies, services and solutions, under a conducive business environment to foster and stimulate climate-resilient rural development activities.

Papua New Guinea is also proud to see that the STREIT PNG programme is featured as a Hand in Hand (HiH) Initiative as a case study, which emanates from great partnership and collaboration between the Government of PNG and the FAO. The HiH initiative will also help channel additional resources into the country to accelerate economic growth and sustainable development, especially during this global pandemic of COVID-19.

To conclude, let me assure the Director-General of FAO that the government of PNG fully support the operation of FAO in the country and will work closely with FAO to deliver suitable programs and activities to improve food and nutrition security and contribute to agricultural development in the country.

Thank you very much for your attention

**Honorable John Simon**

**Minister for Agriculture & Livestock**

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA**