

TONGA’S STATEMENT
FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE
PACIFIC FAO, ROME
Thirty-sixth Session
Dhaka, Bangladesh, 8th-11th March 2022

Hon. HU’AKAVAMEILIKU

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished Heads of States and Governments

Director General of FAO

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Malo e lelei from the Kingdom of Tonga

On behalf of the Government and the People of the Kingdom of Tonga, I have the honour to congratulate the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation, for convening this Thirty-sixth Session of the FAO Asia and Pacific Regional Conference, as well as to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting this conference.

Mr. Chairman

Food Security and Agriculture production is a constant concern of the people of Tonga. That is because Tonga is currently rank second, as the world's most at risk country to *tropical cyclones, droughts, tsunamis* and *earthquakes*.

Tonga is also rank third, as the world's “most at risk” country, to the effects of climate change, with 80% of its population living on the coastlines.

On the 15th January of this year, the unprecedented eruption of *HungaTonga-HungaHa'apai* marine volcano, caused tsunami waves that hit most of our coastlines and volcanic ash that covered 84% of Tonga. The inflicted damages according to the World Bank was about 18.5% of our GDP.

On the first week of February this year, we had our first outbreak of the Omicron variant of the Covid-19 epidemic. The impacts of the subsequent lockdowns on Tonga's Food and Agriculture status had slowly materialised since then.

Despite these many challenges, FAO has always been a key partner of Tonga for more than 50 years. The numerous FAO's technical and financial assistances has always been instrumental, in Tonga's development of Food and Agriculture. FAO's timely and key assistances to our recovery programs from numerous disasters that occurred, including the recent volcanic eruption disaster, has been instrumental in getting Tonga back to road of recovery.

Mr. Chairman

To date, Tonga currently imports a lot of food, but especially protein products of meat and fish, thereby imposing a vulnerability on our food security to external factors. Therefore, one of the main focus of the Ministry of Agriculture is to increase the local food production of livestock, crops and fruit trees, for the local and export markets.

Mr. Chairman

Tonga firmly believes:

that Agriculture is key to Tonga's sustainable development,
that Agriculture is a key driver of Tonga's economic development,

that Agriculture is the key to poverty reduction and rural livelihood,

that Agriculture is the key to adaptation to climate change,

that Agriculture is key, to food security during this covid-19 pandemic, and finally

That Agriculture is key to building Tonga's resilience to disasters.

With that, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of our delegation, Tonga has the honor to offer our sincere wish, for an inclusive, productive and a successful Thirty-sixth Session of the FAO Asia and Pacific Regional Conference.

I, Thank You for your Attention.