

**36<sup>th</sup> FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC(APRC)**

High Level Ministerial Segment

10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Statement for Minister of Niue

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Minister for Ministry of Natural Resources

Niue Government

Hon. Ministers, Excellency's, FAO Director General and Staff, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. Fakaalofa Lahi Atu and Greetings from Niue.

On behalf of the Government of Niue, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the 36<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.

It is indeed an honour to deliver this statement as the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries under the Ministry of Natural Resources.

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge the assistance rendered by FAO to Niue under the Country Program Framework (CPF) through various Technical Cooperation programmes and Telefood projects over the years. We look forward to continue our partnership and ways to further enhance and build from key lessons learnt in delivering key and effective tangible outputs for the people of Niue through the delivery of the programs. We emphasise the need to ensure the programs are tailored to improve livelihoods, economic returns, and food and nutritional security of our people and vulnerable communities.

The Agriculture and Food Sectors in Niue faces many challenges in sustaining development and growth due to various key factors.

Niue's import bill is ten times higher than it exports resulting in significant trade deficit. The economy depends largely on foreign aids to support many of the government operations.

Niue as Small Island Developing State (SIDS) within the Pacific Region, is depicted by its smallness- both population wise and geographically, vulnerable to natural disasters and extreme events linking with climate change impacts.

Increasing reliance on imported food is increasingly recognised as a major cause of the increasing NCD problems in Niue and is more evident than ever before. The overall effects of Covid 19 continue to exacerbate the current situation at the forefront.

The Agriculture sector has been identified in the Niue Integrated Strategic Plan as one of the priority areas for economic development.

Under the Niue Agriculture strategy, five key objectives underpins Niue's overall framework and development of its Agriculture sector.

1. Improve food and nutritional security for all Niueans
2. Develop and promote sustainable food production and management systems
3. Support sustainable economic growth and improve the balance of trade
4. Strengthen natural resource management
5. To improve the capacity-building of stakeholders and agricultural staff.

The key guiding principles under the Strategy include

- the need to recognise food security as an important issue for Niue,
- that the agriculture Sector is to be the engine for economic growth,
- the need to value environmental sustainability,
- the importance of the agriculture sector to the social and cultural values, and
- the need to encourage and foster a strong private sector partnership in promoting agricultural development in Niue.

Achieving sustainable growth will depend on strengthening effective partnership and support for private sector development and increased foreign investment.

Chair, Niue share similar challenges faced by many of our Pacific neighbours in the Food and Agriculture Sectors. However, despite this, the 'one size fits all' approach that have been implemented over the years to solving the challenges are not ideal for Niue. This is because it does not allow to develop tailor-made 'fit for purpose' measures to suit our specific needs.

We welcome and commend the current work of FAO through Technical Cooperation Programs on the following that Niue is part of:

- “Support to the development of Multi-Country Programming Framework for the Pacific Islands (2023-2027)” .
- “Strengthening the enabling environment to enhance food systems in the Pacific.
- “Integrated Climate Smart Agriculture practices and approaches towards sustainability and climate resilience through the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture”

We also acknowledge the Government of Canada for the:

- Canadian-funded project on “Reducing COVID-19 related food insecurity in the Pacific Region that is implemented through FAO.

We want to encourage FAO to continue its on-going commitment under these Technical Cooperation Programs and tailor made it to serve the country specific needs. We have experienced in previous years that FAO support through Telefood Projects have gained great value and more effective and simple to be implemented in targeting vulnerable community groups on the ground level.

We also like to highlight our priority needs that we have embarked on and currently negotiating with FAO.

**Firstly, Biosecurity.** Biosecurity is crucial to Niue. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) and vulnerable to many challenges of emerging exotic plant and animal diseases, our priority is to sustain a low pest status. Therefore, border security is the first line of defence and the need to pay more attention in equipping Niue with its capacity needs and tools to ensure we continue to be free from introducing further pests and diseases.

The introduction of our top 2 unwanted pests and diseases such as the taro leaf blight (TLB) and the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) is very crucial. The level of threat to Niue is becoming more imminent than ever before, with these pests looming within close proximity in our Pacific island neighbours.

We have been working to procure a two way Heat Treatment facility under the current Country Program Framework 2018-2022. This facility is to be used as a Post Treatment facility for incoming goods, and as a treatment facility, for potential fresh agricultural produce for export.

We humbly urge FAO to recognise our needs and our efforts to fast tracking the process in bringing this to a reality. This is one of the Government of Niue's key priorities as we work towards strengthening the trade imbalance and economic development through exports.

**Secondly;** We value and greatly support FAO's work on the development of the new FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031. Climate change as we all know it, greatly impact the basic Agricultural Food Systems of many vulnerable communities. Therefore, there is a need to promote climate smart Agriculture and innovative ways to combatting these effects. We will seek to do our best in utilizing all opportunities in building resilience for key stakeholders under the current TCP on *"Integrated Climate Smart Agriculture practices and*

*approaches towards sustainability and climate resilience through the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture”*

**Thirdly**, we commend and also support the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy that is aligned to sustainable Agriculture development and production. We strongly advocate for the discontinuation of the “one size fits all” practice to ensure that the support that is provided for Niue caters and meet our needs, and that one innovative technology will not solve all problems because of the different context and situations we all operate under.

**Lastly**, Niue supports the drive towards more innovation and capacity building initiatives that is ‘fit for purpose’ within the agriculture sector. We also support FAO’s innovation and data, research and technology, that will entice youth towards working in the Agriculture and Food Sectors.

In conclusion, Chair let me reiterate Niue’s position. We would like to align ourselves to supporting the **four betters** under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 in supporting the 2030 Agenda, through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems. For better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

Niue remains committed to the work of the FAO and we want to be part of improving on all 4 Betters; and **especially, not to be left behind - just because we are small in geographically and population size.**

Fakaue Lahi for the opportunity and Kia Monuina.

God Bless us All.