



Ministerial Meeting on Food Security and Climate Adaptation in SIDS

14-16 October 2015

Milan, Italy

CONCEPT NOTE

1. BACKGROUND

With their small size, limited resource base and remoteness from market centers, small island developing States (SIDS) face a range of difficulties in ensuring food security and nutrition for their people. As SIDS have joined the globalized economy and moved away from food self-sufficiency, many have become net food importing countries, subject to high and variable import costs and vulnerable to the volatility of global supply. The SIDS experience during the 2008 economic and financial crisis and the associated food crisis provides a recent illustration of the difficulties arising from dependence on food imports.

In addition, the reliance on imported food has had a negative impact on the health of the people of many SIDS. With poor nutrition and consumption patterns, many SIDS have seen a rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including heart disease, diabetes, obesity and other related conditions. NCDs bring a significant economic burden to SIDS in addition to the staggering human costs.

These two sides of food security—food supply and nutrition quality—are critical issues for SIDS in their own right. They are also compounded by other central challenges to sustainable development, in particular climate change and its many negative impacts. The changing climate itself, including the warming of the planet and increasing levels of either flooding or drought (or both), may make agricultural approaches and crops that succeeded in the past difficult or obsolete in the future. More intense and frequent natural disasters undermine food security in SIDS by destroying crops in those countries that continue to produce them, damaging production facilities, and compromising shipping and domestic transport infrastructure. The rising sea level, leading to salt water encroachment, threatens coastal farmland and fresh water supply. And ocean acidification, a result of increasing CO₂ levels in the atmosphere, will deplete fish stocks, both near shore fisheries worked by artisanal fishers and the open ocean stocks pursued by commercial operators.

The outcome of the Third International Conference on SIDS, the SAMOA Pathway, highlights food security and nutrition and the interplay of these issues with climate change and other sustainable development challenges. Member States call for a number of concrete actions to advance food security and nutrition in SIDS, namely (from paragraph 63):

- a) Promote further use of sustainable agriculture practices, crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture practices to improve food and nutrition security, while ensuring sustainable management of the water resources required.
- b) Promote open and efficient international and domestic markets to support economic development and optimize food security and nutrition.
- c) Enhance international cooperation to maintain access to global food markets particularly during periods of higher volatility in commodity markets.
- d) Increase rural income and jobs, with a focus on empowerment of small holders and small-scale food producers especially women.
- e) End malnutrition in all its forms including through securing year-round access to sufficient safe, affordable, diverse and nutritious food.
- f) Enhance SIDS agriculture and fisheries' resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change, ocean acidification and natural disasters.

- g) Maintain natural ecological processes that support sustainable food production systems through international technical cooperation.

In addition, in paragraph 61, the SAMOA Pathway invites the Food and Agriculture Organization to facilitate a meeting on food and nutrition security in SIDS “in order to develop an action programme to address food and nutrition challenges facing those States.”

The SAMOA Pathway also calls for a multitude of actions on climate change, disaster risk reduction and the sustainable development and preservation of the oceans. But the efforts on food security, particularly those focused on domestic production, may offer opportunities for concrete partnerships and early successes that can build momentum for the implementation of other aspects of the Conference outcome.

The treatment of food security issues in the SAMOA Pathway complements and reinforces the integrated approach taken to these issues in the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 2 is to “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture,” and other SDGs also address relevant issues, including SDG 3 on health and SDG 14 on oceans and seas. The SDGs as a whole present an inter-related web of priorities and needed actions, and food security and nutrition cut across the entire SDG system.

The Division for Sustainable Development within DESA provides substantive and analytical support to Member States on the issues of climate change and food security, among others, and the SIDS Unit within the SIDS, Oceans and Climate Change Branch provides integrated support to SIDS in particular. Achieving food security for all is at the heart of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO's) efforts – to make sure people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. The proposed event would capitalize on DSD and FAO expertise in research, analysis and capacity building, to benefit a key constituency: SIDS governments.

2. OBJECTIVES

The proposed meeting will offer SIDS Ministers and Ambassadors the opportunity to explore the implications of the SAMOA Pathway as it relates to food security and nutrition and climate change adaptation. The ultimate objective is **to enhance food security, health and wellbeing in SIDS.**

Ministers and Ambassadors would have space to share experiences and present initial plans for national and regional level implementation, and to articulate areas where further support and capacity development is needed. Perspectives from leading experts in the field of food security

and from representatives of Rome-based UN entities, other relevant regional and global entities, the private sector and partner governments would be included as well. The concrete actions outlined in the SAMOA Pathway will provide a roadmap for the meeting.

The actions outlined in the SAMOA Pathway can be grouped into five focus areas:

1. Sustainable agriculture and fisheries
2. Nutrition
3. Livelihoods, especially for women and small holders
4. Access to food, including through global and domestic trade (including price volatility of food imports and commodities, as well as reliability of transport networks).
5. Resilience of agriculture and fisheries to climate change, ocean acidification and disasters

Sessions would be devoted to each of the five focus areas outlined above. The format of the meetings would encourage a high level of interaction and networking, and ideally the meetings would allow SIDS delegates to not only learn and exchange ideas but also to develop and pursue possible partnerships to advance food security in SIDS. An FAO-led forum on food and nutrition challenges facing SIDS will be featured on the first day, as called for in paragraph 61 of the SAMOA Pathway.

The Milan Expo, with its theme **“Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life,”** will provide an excellent backdrop for raising the profile of SIDS issues and their food security challenges.

3. STRUCTURE, PARTICIPANTS AND OUTCOME

The meeting will consist of two days of expert panels and interactive discussions. On the third day, participants will take part in the World Food Day celebrations at the Milan Expo.

SIDS Ministers and Permanent Representatives to the United Nations will be invited to participate in the expert panels and World Food Day events. Experts from academia, the private sector, Rome-based agencies and other relevant regional and international entities will be invited to participate in the expert panels.

The outcome of the meetings would be published and distributed to a range of policymakers and other stakeholders. In addition, as noted above, ideally the meetings would be a breeding ground for concrete partnerships to advance SIDS food security and resilience. The outcomes will also contribute to the “action programme to address food and nutrition challenges” of SIDS, called for in paragraph 61 of the SAMOA Pathway.