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Session 2: Sustainable agriculture and fisheries

Food security and nutrition is an issue that very clearly illustrates the need for an integrated sustainable development approach, with long term attention to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development. Sustainable agriculture and fisheries, building blocks of food and nutrition security, will likewise be achieved only through integrated approaches that take into account the links with water, energy, climate, biodiversity, livelihoods, gender equality and social inclusion.

The global family in general and small island developing states (SIDS) in particular have recognized these complex connections in the recent outcome documents that will serve as roadmaps for sustainable development in the coming years. In the SAMOA Pathway, the international community committed to support the efforts of SIDS “to promote the further use of sustainable practices relating to agriculture, crops, livestock, forestry fisheries and aquaculture to improve food and nutrition security while ensuring the sustainable management of the requires water resources.”

Goal 2 of 2030 Agenda is to: “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.” Targets contained in that Goal include 2.3: “By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment,” and 2.4: “By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.”

The current dominant food production model is based on the intensive use of chemical inputs and natural resources which has increased food production but also caused land and water degradation and the loss of biodiversity. To ensure food for today’s and future generations a paradigm shift is needed to a more sustainable and resilient approach that will allow us to simultaneously increase production, productivity, adapt to climate change and preserve natural resources.. This shift will be particularly critical for SIDS, with their limited land and water resources, and their high level of dependence on fish for protein and for livelihoods. We must also consider the need to protect coastal areas and ensure sustainable fish stock management by all countries, not only SIDS.

While SIDS are primarily net food importers, they have the potential to enhance their agricultural and fisheries production through partnerships but also by deploying their rich local and indigenous knowledge.

Questions for discussion:

1. What concrete actions can SIDS and their partners take to advance sustainable agriculture in the next 15 years? What are the most important means of implementation for SAMOA Pathway paragraph 63 and SDG 2?

2. How can we balance the critical role of fisheries in SIDS food security and sustainable livelihoods with the need to protect and preserve the oceans and seas and their biodiversity? How will sustainable fisheries contribute to the “blue economy” or “ocean-based economy” that the global community called for in the SAMOA Pathway?
3. What policies and action can better promote a blue growth approach in SIDS, supporting food security and poverty alleviation, the sustainable management of aquatic resources, while building resilience of coastal and riparian communities?