



## **Ministerial Meeting on Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States Milan, Italy, 14-16 October 2015**

### **Session 4: Improving rural livelihoods of smallholders and family farmers, especially for women**

In the SAMOA Pathway, the international community pledged to support SIDS efforts to “increase rural income and jobs, with a focus on the empowerment of smallholders and small-scale food producers, especially women.”

Historically, SIDS communities have been rooted in subsistence family farms, and smallholder and family farms are still the most common agricultural enterprise in SIDS. However, as many SIDS have become increasingly urbanized and have joined the globalized economy and international food prices have fallen dis-incentivizing local production, they have become net food importing countries. With dependence on food imports comes vulnerability to excessive volatility of international food prices.

To address these challenges, and to increase rural incomes and enhance the livelihoods of SIDS food producers, the demand for SIDS farm and fisheries products must grow, with the productivity of the farms and fisheries rising to meet it. There are opportunities for enlarging domestic markets for local fruits and vegetables, fish and meat, both for the SIDS populations and for the sizeable tourism sector. In some cases smallholders can engage in international trade as well, especially through farmers’ cooperatives and by identifying niche export markets. Bolstering the capacity of small-scale, local farmers and fishers can thus have a positive impact on the well-being of rural people and also on the economy of the country as a whole. And promoting organic and other environmentally conscious farming and fishing approaches can help ensure that their development is green and sustainable. In many cases these sustainable approaches are rooted in the rich traditions in farming and fishing that have defined SIDS food production for generations.

Special attention must be paid to the role of women in farming and fishing. In most SIDS, women play a central role in food production and home-based processing. In the Pacific, women are 52 percent of the agricultural work force. But across the SIDS (as in many other countries) women lag behind men in terms of access to credit and other financial services, technology, land and other resources.

#### **Questions for discussion:**

1. How can SIDS societies and governments encourage a return to local food production and consumption? What role can the international community play?
2. What policies can support local production increase to supply the tourism industry?
3. What concrete measures would help create increased opportunities for women and youth in agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries-related businesses?