

POLICY PAPER

Food Security and Nutrition in
SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



The outcome document of Rio+20, “The Future We Want” (United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, June 2012) acknowledged that SIDS remains a special case for sustainable development. Building on the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, the document calls for the convening in 2014 of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. This was later ratified by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution under the theme “The sustainable development of Small Island Developing States through Genuine and Durable Partnerships”. The objective is to seek renewed political and financial commitments for further implementation, establish new or strengthen existing partnerships and agree on priorities for the sustainable development of SIDS to be considered in the preparation of the post-2015 development agenda.

FAO has been actively involved in supporting SIDS in addressing the sustainable development issues related to food security and agriculture and has contributed to the preparatory process for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The outcome documents of this preparatory process consistently acknowledged food security and nutrition as a priority area in order to achieve sustainable development. They also called on FAO to facilitate a meeting on and develop an action programme to address food and nutrition security in SIDS. The preparatory process has also highlighted the environmental and natural resources issues that are essential for attaining sustainable development. Areas such as sustainable agriculture, marine and coastal ecosystems, small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, freshwaters, forests and mangroves, and land are core activities of FAO.

This policy document focuses on the economic and social issues around food security and nutrition in order to advance sustainable development in SIDS. It highlights key topics such as governance, institutions, gender, partnerships and family farming and provides concrete examples of FAO's support in each of these areas. It also provides an overview of the food security and nutrition situation in the different SIDS regions, identifies some priority actions, creates and advances the consultation process that would eventually help respond to the member countries' request that FAO assists in addressing food and security challenges. Environmental, natural resources and climate change issues are closely intertwined with food security and better nutrition. These are further illustrated and presented in the policy paper “Natural Resources Management and the Environment in SIDS” that is part of FAO's contribution to the SIDS Conference along with factsheets.

FAO and Food Security and Nutrition

According to the World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996, universal food security will only exist when everyone has permanent physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

FAO's approach to food security is based on four dimensions or pillars: a) availability, (the "supply side" of food security - level of food production); b) access (to an adequate supply of food which requires a greater policy focus on income and employment, markets and prices, and should also reflect intra-household distribution, as this can be an important factor); c) stability, (referring to access to food at all times and the impacts of markets and prices); utilization, commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in food. FAO's programmes contribute to these dimensions by focusing on poverty and hunger reduction through a twin-track approach. Track one aims at improving agricultural productivity and incomes, as well as promoting better nutritional practices while track two aims at enhancing direct and immediate access to food by those most in need.

FAO'S NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

In 2012 FAO launched the Strategic Thinking Process which resulted in the new Results Framework that defines FAO's work in five trans-sectoral strategic objectives and two cross-cutting themes (gender and governance). These represent the renewed ambition and purpose of FAO to help member countries to achieve food security and nutrition while promoting the sustainable use, conservation and management of natural resources and ecosystem services.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

"Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition" identifies the root causes of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition as the lack of physical and economic access to the resources needed to secure enough food and consume a nutritionally adequate diet both in terms of quantity (energy) and quality.

FAO's goal to eradicate food insecurity and malnutrition focuses on: a) explicit political commitments made and resources allocated; b) evidence based and inclusive governance mechanisms adopted and implemented; and c) policies, programmes, investments and legislation formulated, implemented, monitored and evaluated.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

"Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner"

focuses on maximizing production without bringing adverse impacts on the natural resource base and ecosystem services. It emphasizes the integration of FAO's work relating to the three "pillars" of sustainable development (environmental, economic and social) and ways to generate the necessary wide-scale transition to more sustainable practices. This strategic objective will assist member countries in identifying and implementing policies, strategies and technologies for sustainable and enhanced provision of products and services from agriculture (including fisheries and forestry). This will also contribute to SO 1 by producing more nutritious food and generating income and enhancing the resilience of ecosystems.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

"Reduce Rural Poverty" focuses on supporting member countries in improving governance, creating and improving access to employment and markets and promoting social protection of rural people. The rural poor, particularly women, need the knowledge and skills that will enable them to innovate, identify and exploit new economic opportunities and manage risk.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

"Enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems at local, national and international levels" addresses inclusive food and agriculture systems that link smallholder farmers,





foresters and fisherfolk and their organizations with agribusiness enterprises and supply chains for their effective and sustainable participation in rapidly changing global, regional and national markets.

FAO's contribution to this focuses on supporting the development of: a) policies and regulatory frameworks that enhance inclusiveness and efficiency of food, agriculture and forestry systems; b) enhanced public-private collaboration in addressing the challenges and risks faced by smaller and disadvantaged participants in food and agricultural systems; and c) international agreements and mechanisms that promote inclusive and efficient markets.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

“Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises” aims at increasing the resilience of agriculture and natural resources based livelihoods which is important to food and nutrition security and enhancing the resilience of ecosystem services and natural resources base, and is linked to Strategic Objective 2. In the Caribbean and Pacific SIDS hurricanes, storms and severe weather shocks seriously affect food security, which is also closely linked to Strategic Objectives 1 and 4.

ISSUES OF FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION IN SIDS

The progress of SIDS towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the areas of gender, health, education and the environment has been uneven. However, as of June 2013 eight out of the forty SIDS that are FAO members have met internationally established targets for 2015 on hunger and food security. The Dominican Republic, Fiji and the Maldives achieved MDG 1 (to halve the proportion of hungry people) while Cuba, Guyana, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa and São Tomé and Príncipe achieved MDG 1 and the World Food Summit (reduce by half the absolute number of undernourished people between 1990-92 and 2010-2012) goals. The Bahamas, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu were identified as being on track to meet the MDG 1 hunger target, while Barbados and Dominica had a hunger rate below 5 percent dating back to at least 1990.

Although the food security situation varies for each island many issues are of common concern. This document will consider three dimensions for analysis: a) policy and institutions (governance); b) economic and c) social. Each dimension highlights the main issues, proposes actions and highlights the work of FAO in this area in SIDS.

Policy and Institutions (Governance issues)

Governance refers to formal and informal rules, organizations, and processes through which all participants express their interests and make and implement decisions. Creating the enabling environment will largely determine success in achieving food security and nutrition. The challenge is to implement effective and efficient problem solving policies in ways that are regarded as legitimate by the stakeholders who are involved, enabled, or otherwise directly affected by the decisions and actions undertaken by any governance structure or regime, as well as building and strengthening the capacities of national institutions according to priorities.

The gaps, inconsistencies, fragmentation and contradictions in the existing portfolio of policies and programmes remain a major challenge for governance. A key step towards creating a common vision is to bring the various sectors, stakeholders and institutions together and mainstream objectives and concerns to be achieved through integrated approaches. Experience shows that broader and more collaborative governance institutions and mechanisms are necessary to improve coordination.

Strategic decision-making and improved policy development for the primary sector (and not only) in SIDS is critically constrained by isolated, fragmented or missing data. It is important to generate and disseminate essential data, statistics and information in order to base policy on evidence rather than perception. Governance as a process of social coordination requires quality assessments and information systems as well as constant monitoring to measure progress. To achieve this it is essential to increase the capacity of institutions responsible for providing food security and nutrition information and consolidating harmonized information systems.

BOX 1

Zero Hunger Challenge in SIDS

FAO assists SIDS to undertake analytical and policy work to improve food security and build greater awareness on key issues. The Zero Hunger Challenge (ZHC) was launched at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development with the aim of eradicating hunger, serving as a tool for governments to formulate national action plans and implement national food security policies. FAO coordinated a UN joint effort in formulating a Regional Zero Hunger Challenge Guiding Framework. In 2012, Antigua and Barbuda began implementing the ZHC Initiative. In 2014, Timor-Leste became the first country in the region to translate the global commitment into national action. The ZHC has also been taken up by Grenada and Saint Vincent and Grenadines.

FAO Support and Activities

FAO acts as an independent intergovernmental body and as a multi-stakeholder forum for debate and negotiation of all issues related to food, nutrition and agriculture. As the UN specialized agency mandated to collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information and knowledge related to food and agriculture, FAO is able to provide the necessary evidence based analysis leading to political commitments and advocacy.

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was set up in 1974 to be the most inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together in a coordinated way to ensure food security and nutrition for all. The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) was created in October 2009 as an essential part of the CFS to provide independent, scientific knowledge based analysis and advice.

FAO, in partnership with WHO, will organize the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) to be held in November 2014. This Conference represents a positive proactive global policy response to tackle unacceptably persistent high levels of malnutrition, to discuss the nutrition situation and major challenges and to assess progress made in addressing nutrition at global, regional, subregional and country levels since the first ICN held in 1992. One of the outstanding results of the ICN was the preparation of National Plans of Action for Nutrition (NPANs) which represent countries' priorities and strategies for alleviating hunger and malnutrition.

FAO and other UN and regional agencies convened the Pacific Food Summit in Vanuatu in response to a request for action on food security from Pacific leaders at the 39th Pacific Islands Forum. This was the culmination of a series of technical consultations and national food summits and led to the development and adoption of a regional Framework for Action on Food Security in the Pacific. In the Caribbean, FAO has been a major participant the process that led to the preparation of the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy and an Action Plan in 2010, as well as the more recent National Food and Nutrition Policies and Action Plans of most CARICOM states.

Economic Issues

The great distance of SIDS from markets undermines export led development, suggesting the need to focus on opportunities that are less impacted by geographical disadvantages. Farming is mostly small-scale and dependent upon family labour. There has been limited investment in commercial agriculture and improved agricultural technology. Consequently, agriculture is relatively uncompetitive compared with imports and has difficulties in export markets. The challenge is how to obtain greater food security and improved livelihoods for the region by assisting the large number of semi-subsistence producers to move to more commercially oriented production (focusing on selected crops both tropical and perishable) through sustained access to competitive markets.

Food prices have declined slightly in recent years. However, they still remain high both in nominal and real terms when compared with prices from ten years ago. High imports and a narrow range of exports result in increasing trade deficits. On average SIDS import more than 30 percent of their cereal consumption. Where tourism is the dominant activity between 50 and 90 percent of food and beverages are imported. The sharp rise in the March 2014 FAO price index, with the greatest increases in sugar (+7.9 percent) and cereals (+5.2 percent) highlights the level of vulnerability resulting from this dependence on imported food. In order to respond to food price volatility and ensure food security and good nutrition, farmers must diversify and the increased utilization of local products must be promoted.

The small countries of the Caribbean have seen their exports decline and their food and agricultural imports increase during periods of growth in recent years. The WTO Uruguay Round trade rules and higher global and private standards have led to a loss of competitiveness and markets. Non-tariff barriers, high cost of transport services, inadequate port and storage facilities and very high logistics costs are only some of the difficulties small islands face in increasing the sale of their products in agrifood markets. Apart from traditional export commodities such as coffee, cocoa, round logs and copra, vertical integration into global value chains has not been well developed. While there may be market opportunities, the capacity to get products into the market is lacking. This calls for increased

investment to improve productivity, adoption of new technologies that offer improved efficiency (reduced labour and land inputs) and the ability to meet standards all along the agrifood value chain. These improvements should in turn result in an improvement in the price competitiveness of locally produced food.

Expanding the productivity of food production systems requires investment. The unsustainable debts of small, mainly middle-income, vulnerable states significantly compromise governments' abilities to channel resources into sectors such as agriculture and fisheries. This problem is especially pronounced in small Caribbean states where average public debt levels for the region amount to up to 84 percent of GDP and in some states exceeded 130 percent of GDP at the end of 2012. SIDS need the support of the international community to reduce their debt burden and address future financing challenges because of their inherent structural vulnerability,

Access to financial services has been difficult for both the public and private sectors, with international financial mechanisms frequently failing to fully recognize and account for SIDS vulnerabilities. Small and medium producers also need access to finance in order to develop and expand their enterprises. It is important to strengthen and modernize rural financial institutions and investment mechanisms, as well as work on the development of principles for responsible investment.

There is much opportunity for agriculture to re-focus on domestic markets in order to improve food security and nutrition and advance rural development. Increasing urbanisation favours this process. Identifying and realizing real growth market potential in domestic markets, including tourism markets and developing production, processing and marketing skills is required to meet the quality and consistency in standards demanded. In this case, intraregional markets also represent an opportunity as they enable a faster transition towards new production patterns that could increase equity.

SIDS traditionally sold commodities such as coconut products, cocoa or coffee to bulk international markets. In these global markets volumes required are high and prices are low. Supplies from SIDS

are therefore less competitive under free market conditions. However, many opportunities exist for higher value niche export markets such as origin branding, certified and premium quality products. These usually attract higher prices from clients concerned about environmental (organic) friendly production and fair returns to the primary producers. The scaling up of such ventures and improved ability to access new niche markets can make an even more significant impact on economies and rural livelihoods. However, the private sector only invests in such partnerships where a sufficient volume of product is available and readily marketable. It is also challenging to provide the inputs necessary to develop the products and systems of quality control and management, and market intelligence required to successfully identify and compete in global niche markets.

The growth in international tourism in recent decades has been of significant economic benefit to a number of SIDS. However, the benefits from the tourism industry are reduced by a high reliance on imported goods and services and repatriation of profits. Efforts would need to focus on the supply of fresh fruit and vegetables as well as meat and seafood products by domestic producers. It is estimated that up to 80 percent of the food consumed by the tourism industry in Pacific islands is imported, and a similar situation can be found in most SIDS.

Developing the traditional staple food crops sub-sector, including root and tuber crops, plantains and breadfruits has the potential to reduce food imports and contribute to improved economic development. Support to traditional staple food crop value chains includes research and extension to improve production and increase on-farm productivity as well as processing efficiency. Another sub-sector is tropical fruits, especially in countries with a high number of tourists. Improvements in marketing, processing and strengthening of support services will contribute to increased employment and incomes, and thus improve livelihoods and food security in the agribusiness sector in SIDS.

FAO Support and Activities

FAO in collaboration with the Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) conducted various country studies to assess the constraints and

emerging needs in the coconut sector in the region. This culminated in a high-level expert consultation and a regional strategy which is also part of the effort to share experiences where domestic food markets, tourism markets and niche export markets have been successfully developed to the advantage of small farmers.

As part of its global work programme, FAO promotes Food Security through the Commercialisation of Agriculture (FSCA) programme in the Caribbean. This programme sought to enhance the capacity of national stakeholders in the application of a market oriented development approach based on value chain concepts, in order to improve farmers' income through improved links to markets. The European Union (EU) agreed to continue to support the promotion of value chain type approaches in the CARICOM through an Intra-ACP project in partnership with two regional organizations the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research Institute (CARDI).

BOX 2

Papua New Guinea and the Third Party Certified coffee

With assistance from donors and the private sector, Papua New Guinea's (PNG) coffee growers sought to capitalize on the Third Party Certified (TPC) market trend by increasing the coffee sold to this market niche by 25 percent. It was a challenge to reach the levels of quality consistency and volume of supply sufficient to provide a positive return on this investment. Eighty five percent of the coffee produced in PNG is produced by smallholder farmers on less than 2 hectares, with poor transport and communications infrastructure. Only relatively large groups of farmers (1 000 or more) located in areas easily accessible by road or in close proximity to buying stations, provided a net positive return on investment and by 2013, only 10 percent of PNG's coffee production was certified.

Social issues

SIDS have made considerable progress towards achieving certain social development goals. Changes in lifestyles however impact heavily on food security and nutrition of SIDS populations. Malnutrition in all forms imposes very high social and economic costs on countries at all income levels. The two types of malnutrition: undernutrition (which includes micronutrient deficiencies) and overnutrition (overweight and obesity) contributing to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) may coexist within the same country, or household. Together they are referred to as the double burden of malnutrition.

Increasing urbanization (a common trend in SIDS) is leading to the emergence of a growing retail sector offering highly processed, energy dense, micronutrient poor foods. These consumers are dependent on income to purchase food, and inadequacies in marketing systems often limit access to locally produced food, increasing reliance on imports. SIDS possess a wealth of food tradition with the potential to connect people, culture, knowledge and the natural environment. Promoting the consumption of traditional food, especially fruits and vegetables, among the local population is an important aspect of changing consumer behaviour in favour of better choices. Food labelling is an important tool but education in coordination with other initiatives, such as home or school gardens proves particularly effective.

Social protection is important for agriculture as it can facilitate changes in productive activities by relaxing credit constraints. As a result, it can allow the accumulation of productive assets or help farmers to adopt new crops and new technologies. In addition, by providing insurance, it gives households a better ability to deal with risks and shocks. This helps smallholders to avoid distress sales of productive assets and premature sale of farm output, and can also facilitate diversification into new crops, livestock or aquaculture. These factors can lead to increased resilience for households and a more dynamic and productive agricultural sector. It is important that policy-makers involved in social protection coordinate with those in the agriculture and natural resources sectors to maximize synergies. This is highlighted in the natural resources and environment paper related to the protection of



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critical habitats such as coral reefs in their role as safety nets in times of crises.

Women and girls play an important and largely unpaid role in agriculture. They generate family income by providing labour for planting, weeding, harvesting and threshing crops, and processing produce for sale. In the Pacific, women constitute 52 percent of the agricultural labour force. However, they have less access than men to productive resources (including human capital) and opportunities according to country and state/province.

Gender mainstreaming will make the concerns and experiences of both women and men an integral dimension of all agriculture and rural development efforts. Key areas for reform include mainstreaming gender considerations in policies, financial services and programmes and investing in productivity enhancing technologies and infrastructure in order to free women's time for activities that are more productive and involve less drudgery. Empowerment of women and girls has a transformative and multiplying effect on development activities and gains. Women have the potential to be powerful agents of change.

Young people provide a sense of continuity in rural societies by strengthening the social capital, increasing their sense of belonging and reducing their exodus from rural areas. Limited opportunities exist for productive and decent employment for young people in the agricultural and in non-farm rural activities. As a result, many young farmers abandon agriculture and rural areas to migrate to urban centres, either within the country or abroad. Getting young people involved in agriculture and boosting support for farmers is key to improving food security and economic well-being in the medium and long terms.

FAO Support and Activities

FAO's Policy on Gender Equality recognizes that gender equality is central to the Organization's mandate to achieve food security for all by raising the levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and natural resource management and improving the lives of rural people.

In Antigua and Barbuda, young people are considered to be a very important element for the long-term development of the agriculture sector. FAO provided assistance to the government in the development of a "Strategic Plan for Youth Development/Involvement in Agriculture." The government's high-level commitment to the plan is reflected in the creation of the National Youth Policy.

Since 2003, FAO has developed an innovative project design to promote farming as a business and to provide a much needed source of income for small farmers, with special attention to rural youth in the Pacific. This design was put into practice through numerous projects with the common objective of

creating awareness and capacity for using marketing and farm management concepts and methods in Pacific Island countries. The approach introduced small farmers to the concepts of commercialization and "farming as a business" and has led to their wider acceptance and adoption in the region.

BOX 3

Non-Communicable Diseases in the Cook Islands

The Cook Islands has undertaken a review of import levies and identified that in order to combat rising obesity and NCD rates in the country, it is imperative to introduce tariffs that ensure that goods with more sugar face a higher rate. This new policy aims to shift the diet of Cook Islands away from sugary foods by imposing a price disincentive, and making healthier alternative products relatively more price competitive. It is estimated that the tariff will raise NZD 200 000 a year to spend on NCD awareness campaigns and health education.

FAMILY FARMING

Family and small-scale farming are inextricably linked to food security and play an important socio-economic, environmental and cultural role in achieving sustainable development. In SIDS, farming is mostly small-scale and dependent upon family labour. On the other hand, the concept of family farming as an entry point for rural development is relatively new to most farmers. Although family farming is broad and heterogeneous, most of its problems and opportunities are shared and cut across various regions. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming, and FAO has been invited to facilitate its implementation.

A survey of livestock farms in the Caribbean shows that the vast majority use 'predominantly family

labour'. This is true for smallholdings with a few animals and also for relatively large holdings. The importance of the livestock family farm is not well recognized in many countries in the region, despite the fact that family farms are the predominant producers of many commodities such as poultry meat, eggs, and goat and sheep meat. Urban and periurban farming is also an important part of food production in family farming and is gaining popularity, as cases in Cuba and Haiti show.

Evidence shows that poor family farmers can quickly deploy their productivity potential when the appropriate policy environment is effectively put in place. Family farming development requires the introduction of public policies and programmes that go beyond the scope of agricultural institutions. A multisectoral rural development strategy must also include infrastructure investment (roads, irrigation, electricity, telecommunications, etc.), service development with suitable availability of essential public goods (such as schools, hospitals, housing and sanitation) and social protection and development programmes.

Small farmers are embedded in territorial networks and local cultures, and spend their incomes mostly within local and regional markets. Local production and consumption circuits based on family farming have a major part to play in fighting hunger, especially when linked to social protection policies that address the needs of vulnerable people.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Third International Conference on SIDS identifies genuine and durable partnerships as the core to achieving sustainable development. SIDS recognize that despite being geographically dispersed across the globe, their strength lies in a shared vision and a commitment to collective action and that it can only be realized through inclusive dialogue anchored in national ownership and through empowered partnerships based on mutual trust, equality, respect, and accountability.

Multiple level partnerships will contribute to creating an enabling environment that enhances food security and nutrition. This environment could be created through greater alignment of policies, financial investments and institutional arrangements. Major gaps in capacity building and technology

must be addressed jointly in partnership with international bodies such as FAO. More so than for larger countries, SIDS must rely on joint action across regions to address the threats to food security and nutrition. Regions can learn from each other and can also work together in implementing and monitoring changes.

In addition to the traditional North-South cooperation agreements, South-South Cooperation (SSC) highlights the horizontal level of cooperation, as opposed to vertical official development assistance, and recognizes the ability of developing countries to create, acquire, adapt, transfer and pool knowledge and experience for their mutual benefit. FAO has geared its South-South Cooperation Strategy to the new context, growing participation of countries in the global south in SSC and highlighting its importance in subregional and regional processes. This is coupled with a trend towards a more global approach and more efficient use of resources.

Regional integration has been prompted by a wide array of economic, social and environmental issues, including the desire to fight hunger. Regional and subregional bodies, such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) or the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC) currently in operation, represent the acknowledgement of the need to gather around common solutions and strategies in order to achieve results. In the Caribbean concrete efforts of regional integration in agriculture and food security include CARICOM's Regional Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) Policy and Action Plan; the CARICOM Common Agricultural Policy; the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Regional Plan of Action for Agriculture 2012–2022 and the development and implementation of National Food and Nutrition Security Policies and Action Plans in almost all of the Member States.

Primary sector producers and firms in small island states face strong competitive pressures in both their export and domestic markets. There is therefore an urgent need for public and private sector cooperation in order to facilitate investment in greater productivity and value chain efficiency necessary to maintain their market share and food security. Multisectoral stakeholder bodies should be developed to harness the input of the private sector; this will be critical to developing targeted



and effective policy. Civil society is another relevant and essential stakeholder in facilitating improved governance of food security and nutrition and attention is being drawn to the emerging and important role played by social movements at national and local governance levels.

Existing partnerships must be supported and strengthened in order to ensure the participation of all parties involved and obtain concrete results. The process of establishing and strengthening partnerships should be documented, impacts assessed and lessons learned with recommendations produced and disseminated across SIDS. FAO recognizes that partnerships are paramount for assisting SIDS in achieving food security and nutrition and as an inter governmental organization; it is in a good position to help countries organize policy dialogue activities directed at improving understanding on important issues and to help establish agreements between stakeholders and/or countries.

PRIORITY ACTION FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN SIDS REGIONS

Based on the findings and analysis presented above the following priorities actions are proposed to help improve food security and nutrition in SIDS regions.

Caribbean region

The Caribbean region is characterized by high poverty and inaccessibility related to high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Poverty levels in the region range from a low of 9.3 percent in the Bahamas to 41.3 percent in Belize and as high as 77.0 percent in Haiti. The region is also trying to reduce a significant food import bill estimated at over USD 4.25 billion (2012).

The issue of inclusive governance is a major challenge to agriculture and the rural development process in the Caribbean. The general weakness of the public sector is largely the result of a reduction in government administrative bodies because of declining fiscal revenues. The contribution of the agricultural sector to total domestic output has continued to decline in Caribbean countries (varying between 1 and 21 percent). This is shown by the lack of competitiveness, ageing agricultural population, inadequate investment by both the public and private sectors, non-innovative entrepreneurship and increased scarcity of natural resources worsened by natural disasters and climate change.

BOX 4

Priority action in the Caribbean

- **Increasing local food production, reducing imports and restructuring the sugar industry are priorities, as well as developing sustainable markets. Efforts are needed to widen and encourage open regionalism and develop the scope for expansion and cooperation with trading blocks in the region.**
- **Agricultural diversification is essential to strengthen productive capacities and to enhance the viability of the Caribbean's export sector.**

Pacific region

The double burden of malnutrition is a major concern in many Pacific Island countries. The prevalence of overweight adults in some Pacific Island countries is among the highest in the world. Over 80 percent of adults are overweight in the Cook Islands, Kiribati and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Tokelau, Tonga and Samoa. An estimated 75 percent of all adult deaths in the Pacific are due to NCDs, with the majority of deaths occurring in adults in the economically active age bracket. On the other hand, chronic undernutrition is still a serious public health problem in some Pacific Island countries with stunting rates above 40 percent in Papua New Guinea according to WHO. The prevalence of anaemia in children under the age of five years and pregnant women exceeds 40 percent in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Nauru, and the Solomon Islands. This is a significant public health problem.

BOX 5

Priority actions in the Pacific

- Pacific agriculture has much to gain by focusing on the domestic market and import substitution.
- Private sector growth will be a key contributing factor in this initiative and therefore Pacific governments will need support to create a more conducive policy environment for private sector growth, including pricing policies (taxes and subsidies), land tenure reform and investment in marketing infrastructure.
- There is a need to undertake an assessment and mapping of productive and senile palms in order to enable the replacement of old palms by planting selected elite local varieties and hybrids. This will also encourage germplasm exchange and capacity building on mass selection techniques, coconut breeding and creating hybrids.

Farming in the region is mostly small-scale and there has been limited investment in commercial agriculture and improved agricultural technology. As a result, agriculture in the region is not competitive against imports and has difficulty competing in export markets. Apart from traditional export commodities such as coffee, cocoa, round logs and copra, vertical integration into global value chains has not been developed. Some countries in the region have explored high value niche markets, particularly through organic certification and origin branding, but difficulties in sustainably scaling up such ventures has reduced their ability to make a significant impact on economies and rural livelihoods.

AIMS region

The Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) region is different from the Pacific and the Caribbean, as it is a group of countries that is not based on geography; therefore, the regional identity is particular. This represents a major challenge when gathering around common issues, as countries have very different situations concerning food security and nutrition. The lack of a regional body providing support by accessing financing, technology transfer and capacity building as well as in the development of common strategies is much needed to strengthen AIMS identity.

BOX 6

Priority actions in AIMS

- Establishing a regional mechanism that enables the region to enhance collaboration in food and nutrition security, and to assist the region in its dialogue with other regions and globally.
- Propose a regional strategy for food and nutrition security that responds to national requirements, common aspects and exchange of capacity building and know-how.

CONCLUSIONS

- a) The lack of physical and economic access to the resources needed to secure enough food and consume a nutritionally adequate diet are the prime causes of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.
- b) Governance issues need to be addressed with a cross-cutting and multidisciplinary approach. Creating the enabling environment is fundamental, as well as increasing the capacities of institutions responsible for providing food and nutrition security information, and consolidating harmonized information systems.
- c) A multilevel and holistic market oriented approach is required to ensure that a response to the economic issues benefits small producers, including family, farmers and semi-subsistence producers, and contributes to the reduction of food price volatility as well as the food import bills of SIDS countries.
- d) There is a need for increased public/private partnership and targeted investments in the primary sector, especially agrifood value chains with an identified market opportunity.
- e) Targeted investments can lead to a transformation of traditional agriculture systems towards a dynamic, commercially oriented sector and to economic growth. The identification of new domestic and international markets, improvements in productivity and efficiency, and compliance with market access requirements are areas in which such investments can contribute to more equal growth.
- f) The double burden of malnutrition (undernutrition and obesity) is a major problem in many SIDS, particularly in urban areas. Education and raising awareness are critical in order to address these issues as they are largely caused by consumer choices.
- g) Family and small-scale farming which are predominant form of production in SIDS require prioritized attention. Evidence shows that poor family farmers can quickly organize their productivity potential when the appropriate policy environment is put in place. Local production and consumption circuits based on family farming have a major part to play in fighting hunger, especially when linked to social protection policies that address the needs of vulnerable peoples.
- h) Despite being geographically dispersed across the globe, the strength of SIDS lies in a shared vision and a commitment to collective action. Inclusive dialogue and multiple level partnerships will provide the right conditions to support the changes necessary to improve their food security and nutrition.
- i) FAO supports SIDS through multi-stakeholder fora, provides advocacy and catalytic action for strengthening national and regional efforts. Its established capacity to disseminate and share expertise as a global knowledge organization is also a major advantage in developing institutional and individual capacities at national, regional and global levels.

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This policy document focuses on the economic and social issues around food security and nutrition in order to advance sustainable development in SIDS. It highlights key topics such as governance, institutions, gender, partnerships and family farming and provides concrete examples of FAO's support in each of these areas. It also provides an overview of the food security and nutrition situation in the different SIDS regions, identifies some priority actions, creates and advances in the consultation process that would eventually help respond to the member countries' request that FAO assists in addressing food and security challenges.

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