

## Pacific Week of Agriculture – Concept Note

### Executive Summary

This paper puts forward a proposal for a biennial Pacific Week of Agriculture (PWA). The inaugural event would be held in Port Vila, Vanuatu in May 2017. The event would enable the formal FAO and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) meetings to be held consecutively in an effort to reduce the cost to Member Countries and promote increased collaboration between the two organizations. The initial focus of this event would be to establish a multistakeholder approach to deal with emerging regional issues in a co-ordinated way, which would assist donors to identify priority issues for future support on a regional basis. PWA 2017 would also include dedicated sessions on emerging technical issues of interest to a broad range of technical organisations and donor partners active in Pacific island agriculture would also help to facilitate information sharing and co-ordination. In addition, including side meetings between technical agencies/donor partners and each participating Pacific Island country would assist with the co-ordination of current and future bilateral work programme. Finally, the inclusion of a trade fair would raise the profile of the private sector in agricultural development in the Pacific.

### The current situation in the Pacific

The Pacific currently has two fora: the FAO Southwest Pacific<sup>3</sup> Ministers for Agriculture meeting, held every two years, and the SPC Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry meeting, usually held every four years. 17. The FAO meeting, while not an official FAO event, emanated from the initiative of Ministers of Agriculture from FAO Member Countries in the Pacific. FAO provides secretariat capacity and collaborates with the host country to organize the meeting. FAO also prepares papers for substantive discussion. Member Countries cover the costs associated with meeting attendance and the host country provides the venue and logistics at the local level. The occasion provides an opportunity for FAO to update its programme of work in agriculture, food, fisheries and forestry in the Pacific and discuss priorities with regard to future technical assistance. Member Countries and other development partners are able to discuss matters relating to these sectors and have the opportunity of one-to-one consultations with the FAO Director-General, who usually attends the meeting.

SPC is an integral part of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific, mandated by Pacific leaders to work towards the common goal of sustainable development in the Pacific region. SPC is owned and governed by its membership of 26 governments, including 22 Pacific Island countries and territories and the four founding members (Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States). The Land Resources Division of SPC provides technical assistance and services spanning genetic resources, seed technology, forestry, wood technology, soil science, animal health and production, pathology and entomology and crop production. Other SPC projects include technical services for fisheries production and aquaculture.

The Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific functions as a coordination mechanism between the heads of regional institutions in the Pacific and as a high-level advisory body to provide policy advice. It assists in the facilitation of policy formulation at the national, regional and international levels, and provides a forum to enable the heads of Council to collectively review the progress of the contributions of their respective agency with regard to the region's objectives, which are documented in the Pacific Plan.

SPC usually holds a HOAF meeting every two years and a MOAF meeting approximately every four years. SPC is now planning a joint MOAF/HOAF meeting in September 2015. The main purpose of the HOAF event is to update participants on the implementation of ongoing programmes and projects; provide information on new developments, project proposals and funding; and sign off on completed projects. Recommendations by HOAF are passed to the SPC Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (representing the entire SPC) for endorsement. The main purpose of the MOAF meeting is to update Ministers on new developments and to obtain their support for activities to be undertaken by the SPC Land Resources Division.

SPC also convenes a biennial meeting of the Heads of Fisheries. This meeting provides technical oversight of all SPC work in the field of fisheries and aquaculture, as well as an opportunity to discuss, in detail, topics of special interest. It covers the oceanic and coastal programmes of SPC. FAO is invited to this meeting as an Observer.

In addition to these formal sessions, a large number of workshops on different agricultural, food, fisheries and forestry issues are held throughout the region. With multiple bodies organizing these events, there is a potential for duplication of topics and the possibility of repeat participation. There is no single event, such as the CWA, which would bring together a wide range of stakeholders and provide a forum where the relevant stakeholders can interact with policy-makers to discuss the most pressing issues from a regional perspective.

### **The organization of a PWA offers several potential benefits:**

1. A reduction in costs to Member Countries and increased collaboration between FAO and SPC by enabling the formal joint meetings, described above, to be held consecutively.
2. The drawing of a greater number and wider range of participants to the technical workshops supported by FAO, SPC and other organizations.
3. The opportunity for consultations with policy-makers to take place at the national level to promote a multistakeholder approach to address national issues in agriculture.
4. The opportunity for consultations with policy-makers to take place at the regional level to promote a multistakeholder approach to address national issues in agriculture.

5. The ability to identify priority issues and actions for co-ordinated action on a regional basis.
6. The ability to adopt, and monitor the implementation of a regional, multistakeholder plan for the agriculture sector

## Indicative Programme for the PWA

It is proposed that the PWA run over five full days in May 2017, in Port Vila, Vanuatu with the following indicative programme:

1. A technical programme over the first three days of the week that provides opportunities for a broad range of topics of interest to public, private and social sectors and other stakeholders reflecting emerging trends and issues as well as core business across the Pacific. It is anticipated that this will include technical workshops and panel-discussions organised by FAO, SPC and other technical agencies and donor partners. Although, it is likely that there will be parallel sessions through the three days, the Planning Committee will have to determine the maximum number of sessions such that attendance at individual sessions is not prejudiced.
2. A bilateral co-ordination programme over the first three days of the week which provides an opportunity for dedicated consultations between national policy-makers and technical agencies for each PICT, to promote a multistakeholder approach to address national issues in agriculture.
3. A ministerial segment will be programmed in the last two days of the week. This will consist of a one half day meeting of ministers from the FAO member countries from the Pacific and a one half day meeting of ministers from the SPC member countries and territories. Included in the ministerial segment will be a review of and negotiations surrounding the adoption of a multistakeholder regional plan for the agriculture sector, focusing on priority regional initiatives
4. A trade fair inviting private sector organisations and agribusinesses from around the region to exhibit their products and innovative approaches will also be scheduled during the last two days of the meeting.
5. Technical tours, social events and entertainment will be arranged by the Planning Committee in consultation with the host country and sponsors.

## Planning Arrangements

It is proposed to constitute a Planning Committee for which a Terms of Reference has been detailed in a separate document. A further document sets out the obligations and responsibilities of the host country. A timetable for the implementation of planning arrangements is also provided in a separate document.

## Participation

One of the challenges that the Planning Committee faces is to maximise involvement in the Pacific Week of Agriculture by all interested persons and stakeholders, while managing the burden placed on the host country. In the past, attendance at ministerial meetings as observers was controlled because the meetings were by invitation only. This matter is addressed in the Terms of Reference of the Planning

Committee and so it is up to the Planning Committee to address this issue, with the understanding that the desire is to have an event which includes all interested parties.