



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## OPENING ADDRESS

by

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at the

### **Workshop on Strategic Planning for Agricultural and Fisheries Statistics for the Pacific Island Countries**

Nadi, Fiji

5 October 2015

**The Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Fiji, Inia Seruiratu, Ambassador Andrew Jacobs, EU Head of Delegation, Distinguished Participants and Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is a great pleasure to extend, on behalf of the Director-General of FAO and on my own behalf, a warm welcome to the participants of the “Workshop on Strategic Planning for Agricultural and Fisheries Statistics for the Pacific Island Countries”.

I am delighted to acknowledge the participation of country representatives from some 13 Pacific countries, as well as from the European Union, SPC and our other FAO colleagues. I am thankful to the SPC for co-organizing of this event with FAO, and for your interest in supporting the Global Strategy on Agricultural and Rural Statistics and for travelling long distances to participate in this event despite your busy schedule. I do hope that your active involvement in guiding this global initiative in the Pacific will ensure the relevance, effectiveness and impact of our activities at the sub-regional and country level.

I am happy to note that many international organizations are collaborating to improve agricultural statistics. FAO is privileged to take a part in this joint effort and host the secretariat. I am pleased to acknowledge as well the contributions of our partner institutions, – UNESCAP, SIAP, ADB, SPC, ASEAN, and SAARC – in this global initiative. Working together using our comparative advantages and pooling of knowledge and financial resources will indeed have a lasting impact on agricultural statistics systems.

The Global Strategy is a ground breaking effort to improve agricultural, rural and fishery statistics systems. The availability of these statistics is crucial to monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and to inform national policies and programs.

The Regional Steering Committee for the Global Strategy has selected 15 countries in the region as the priority countries as of January 2015 out of a larger number which volunteered to be selected. Regarding the Pacific sub-region, the RSC has selected 3 individual countries, including Samoa (2013), Fiji (2014), and Papua New Guinea (2015). Technical assistance and training activities have been implemented in these countries, according to the guidelines of the Regional Action Plan of the Global Strategy.

This meeting is of particular importance as it will provide a forum to share the information/progress and challenges/good examples of the GS project with Pacific countries and the stakeholders in this region, and discuss the

appropriate sub-regional strategy to improve agricultural and fisheries statistics in Pacific Island Countries.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

You are aware that FAO's main mandate is to combat hunger and malnutrition, and monitor progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG one, which aims to reduce hunger by half by 2015. The Asia-pacific region has achieved the largest reduction in the absolute number of undernourished people at 236 million. However, this was not sufficient to meet the target set by the World Food Summit of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015. Nearly 12 percent of the region's total population who have been left behind and have not shared completely in the benefits of economic growth. Without supporting this population, we cannot achieve 'Zero Hunger' in the region.

This unfinished agenda has been taken up under SDG 2, "End Hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture". A number of other SDGs relate to FAO's work on Food, Nutrition, agriculture, livelihoods and gender issues. FAO's new Strategic Objectives focus on sustainability of agriculture, reduction of rural poverty, and increasing resilience of livelihoods to threats and crisis. Policies and regulatory frameworks prepared through inclusive approaches in the food systems will contribute to achieving these objectives at the country level.

Needless to say, monitoring progress towards these Global Goals places new demands on the data systems, as well as the current unmet data gaps. In some leading countries, only 25 to 50 percent of data required for preparing SDG progress indicators is available. The Monitoring Framework for the SDGs, which will be finalized soon, recognizes the need to build the capacity of statistical systems. I expect that this meeting will result in the initiation of a comprehensive long-term plan for building capacities of statistical systems for the monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals for the people and communities of the Pacific.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

The Global Strategy recommends that agriculture be integrated into national statistical systems. The Regional Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific defines the areas of support that the Asia Pacific region needs in terms of technical assistance, training and research to strengthen national capacities in a sustainable way. We need to ensure its success by contributing our best.

We must acknowledge that the Regional Action Plan has a funding gap and support is available only until 2017. The plan thus needs additional complementary efforts to achieve the goals of Global Strategy. The main purpose of this meeting is to inform countries in this region of the developments at the global and regional levels, and consider adapting them to the needs of this region for implementation through a Strategic Plan that is well harmonized with on-going strategies such as the Ten Year Pacific Strategy on Statistics (TYPSS).

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

This is a historical opportunity to help countries develop sustainable statistical systems which will produce accurate and reliable agricultural and rural data – comparable over time and across countries for use by decision-makers. However, a necessary condition for the Strategy to succeed is the political will and commitment of your governments. Governments need to demonstrate ownership and commitment by funding regular statistical services that produce a minimum core set of data.

I am convinced that with our strong partnership with regional organizations such as SPC, our member countries and other leading partner institutions present here such as the European Union, together we will improve the evidence base of policy making of the agricultural sector in the region.

Finally, let me acknowledge the hard work of the secretariat staff in SPC and FAO in the preparation and organization of this meeting. I would also like to thank our colleagues and partner organizations for the presentations they will make to assist our understanding and discussion.

I wish you all success in your deliberations, and a pleasant stay in Fiji.

Thank you.