



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE & LIVESTOCK

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK SECTOR POLICY 2009-2014



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GLOSSARY

To minimize the misinterpretation and to increase clarity of the meaning of different terms used in the document below, are some definitions of words/terms used:

Agricultural Services or Agricultural Support Services: are activities that support agricultural production. These include training, research, extension, plant protection, irrigation, farm power, credit, storage, transport, processing, input delivery system, animal health services, etc.

Agriculture: is defined as that area of human activity involving all aspects of crops and livestock.

Agriculture Technology: implies knowledge, equipment, inputs and practices embodied in modern agricultural production practice.

Agro-Processing or Agro-Industry: is the term used to depict components of the agriculture sub-sector.

Extension Service: is defined as the transfer of agriculture technology from experts to farmers. The word "experts" include farmers who are capable of supplying such services to others.

MAL: means Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in charge of portfolio of agriculture and livestock

Policy: is defined as a set of instruments aimed at reaching specified objectives.

Policy Instruments: are specific unit actions taken by competent to implement a policy e.g. specific tax, law or regulation, etc.

Public Intervention: refers to centralized and decentralized state intervention and non-market intervention institutional arrangement providing public services.

Strategy: the path to be followed to achieve a particular set of objectives.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations	Meaning
AOA	Agriculture Opportunity Area
CBSI	Central Bank of Solomon Islands
CEMA	Commodity Export Marketing Authority
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CNURA	Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FICs	Forum Island Countries
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
GPPOL	Guadalcanal Plantation Palm Oil Limited
LMO	Living Modified Organism
MAL	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MSG	Melanesia Spearhead Group
NGO	Non Government Organization
RIPEL	Russell Islands Plantation Estates Limited
SBD	Solomon Islands Bank Dollar
SI	Solomon Islands
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SPARTECA	South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
WTO	World Trade Organization
SPS	Sanitary & Phytosanitary Standards
HTFA	High Temperature Force Air Treatment
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
PACER Plus	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
DBSI	Development Bank of Solomon Islands
SICUL	Solomon Islands Credit Union Limited
GMP	Good Manufacturing Practices
SIPL	Solomon Islands Plantation Limited
NRRDP	National Rural Rice Development Programme
EU	European Union

FOREWORD

To guide government in achieving its mandate as well as other interrelated National Development Objectives, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) needs a set policy guidelines to serve as a “road map” to meet the target set for a sustainable development of the agricultural sector. A survey of literature and government documents revealed that various policy frameworks for economic development of Solomon Islands exist, however most of these policies are not up-to-date and most of them do not address the needs of the current socio-economic issues.

The aim of the National Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy is to guide agricultural development along the lines of the Government development strategy. Specifically this Policy Document will provide a framework to reorient its agricultural production to meet the developmental needs of Solomon Islands. The National Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy of the Solomon Islands is thus designed through vast consultative process to facilitate a structured approach towards a socially and culturally acceptable, economically vibrant and ecologically sustainable agricultural sector that will contribute towards poverty alleviation, food security and economic development. Though this National Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy is meant to be for a medium term agenda 2009, however it sets the base for long-term Agriculture and Livestock Development Plan to 2014.

Hon. Selwyn Riumana, MP
Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock

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Chapter One: Overview

I. The Agricultural Sector

Agricultural sector is the most important sector for the economy. It accounts for approximately 30% of the GDP (SIG, 2007a). Agricultural export is a major source of export earning. In 2005 agricultural export accounted for 24% of the total merchandise export. It is the main source of employment and livelihood in the rural areas. Agriculture consists of three sub-sectors: subsistence smallholder farming, a commercial sub-sector, and large plantations. Subsistence agriculture is the predominant occupation of the rural population (84% of the total population) and in many cases the sole source of livelihood. Many rural communities also depend on forest products such as leafy vegetables, nuts, honey, and fruits, and coastal communities on fish to supplement their food consumption.

The main crops are sweet potato, cassava, yam, taro, banana, pumpkin, and vegetables. Sweet potato is the major source of energy intake. Coconut, Oil Palm, and Cocoa is only cash crop for many in the rural households. There are a few commercially oriented farmer-processor-traders. These are mostly involved in processing and value adding, mostly for cocoa and copra. Prior to the “tensions”, Solomon Islands had several large-scale plantations of oil palm, coconut, cocoa and after the “tension” almost all were destroyed.

The livestock sub-sector consists of local inbred and free-range pigs, backyard chickens, cattle. Pigs (mainly free range) and backyard poultry are kept for protein intake and in the case of pigs, ceremonial purposes, and wealth accumulation. Volume of domestic meat productions do not meet the local consumption, hence Solomon Islands imports meat from Australia, New Zealand, and Vanuatu. Solomon Islands have the potential to increase its meat production through better animal husbandry and feeding practices, and improved breeds.

Agricultural production has been declining for the past ten years. This is due to a number of factors including lack of improved production technologies in the farming systems, lack of inputs of production, increasing pest and diseases, soil degradation, lack of production incentives, declining export prices, limited market opportunities, limited access to land and most importantly lack of private and public investment in the sector. Furthermore the instability in political and economic environment has hampered the development of the sector.

According to the 2007 annual report of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands, there has been a significant increase in both food import and agricultural export. This is due to the recent increases in commodity prices. Copra and coconut oil exports increased by 138% to SBD33.5 million in 2007 compared to SBD14.1 million in 2006. Exports of palm products more than doubled from SBD30.7 million in 2006 to SBD77.5 million in 2007. Cocoa export in 2005, 2006 and 2007 were SBD64.3 million, SBD31.4 million and SBD72 million respectively. Food imports increased by 45% to SBD239.1 million in 2007 compared to SBD164.6 million in 2006. Share of food import to total merchandise in 2007 was 12.6% of total import. Increase in food imports were related to increased demands for basic food items such as rice, wheat, cooking oil, and canned food. Rice import alone constitutes 58.6% of total food import and was valued at SBD140 million in 2007. Local consumption of rice per head of population is one of the highest in the Pacific at 100 kg per annum.

II. Strategic Options for Agricultural Development in Solomon Islands

In addressing the numerous challenges faced by the Solomon Islands agricultural sector, a well coordinated responses and a proactive strategic approach is required. This will need the support and commitment of all stakeholders, government and private sector. First, the priority of the government must be to mobilize adequate financial and human resources; second, government should implement appropriate policies and enact legislation to provide incentives to enhance agricultural production; third, government and development partners must ensure that appropriate capacity building programme is in place to meet Solomon Islands national commitments and international obligations; and finally government should put in place land use development compatible with its development agenda.

A proactive strategic approach for the Government of Solomon Islands is to follow a twin track approach: (1) to consolidate the sector's strength to enhance the production of staple foods; and (2) to expand its effort for the development of export markets.

In improving production of staple foods, the government can play a major role. The Government of Solomon Islands has a crucial role in establishing a stable economic environment conducive for exploiting the vast and productive natural resources base by the provision of public goods such as research, extension services and transport and communications infrastructure. To meet the National Development objective, the government has redefined the role and target objective of the MAL. MAL is mandated "*to provide extension, education, regulatory, research and associated activities to improve the agricultural sector's contribution towards increased food production, food security and standards, and economic recovery and development*". Hence MAL should focus in:

- Providing essential infrastructural to support the integration of the rural sector into mainstream of the economy
- Promoting risk management and climate change mitigation
- Promoting agro-processing, value adding, agribusiness and rural credit facility
- Partnering with private sector, NGO's and other rural service providers to enhance the productive capacity of rural/agricultural sector
- Strengthening farmer institutions as well as the research and development capacity to raise productivity of food crops and livestock and of value adding technologies to boost production for both local consumption and export

III. The National Development Framework

In January 2008, the Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement (CNURA) government unveiled its 13 National Development Objectives (NDO), four of which focus on the agricultural sector. These are:

1. Address the basic needs of the people in the villages and the rural areas where the majority of the people live, and ensure real improvement in their standard of living
2. Work towards food security for the nation and ensure a healthy, literate and a contented population

3. Generate job opportunities for the growing population and achieve high economic growth, wealth and social wellbeing for all Solomon Islanders
4. Ensure sustainable utilization and conservation of natural resources, protection of the environment and successful adaptation to climate change

To achieve the National Development Objectives, the government has set the following priority activities and strategies to be undertaken by MAL for the period 2007-2010, these are:

1. Development of Oil Palm Production to target 40,000 ha development over next ten years at Guadalcanal Province (GPPOL), Western Province (Vangunu & Shorthand), Choiseul Province and later to other Provinces Isabel and Makira
2. Establishment of two by 100 ha commercial Rice Production Projects
3. Continue the rehabilitation and development of coconut and cocoa
4. Set-up small livestock projects
5. Revival of the cattle industry
6. Pursue Development of Exotic and Indigenous Fruits

IV. Expected Outcomes and Outputs

The following six priority outcomes are expected following the intervention of the proposed policies in the medium term. These are:

1. Poverty alleviation, enhanced food security and rural livelihood
2. Sustainable management of natural resources and the environment
3. Farm sector readjustment and restructuring
4. Investment in agricultural research and development
5. Food safety and quality improvement
6. Reduced dependency of food imports and increased agricultural exports

Based on priority outcome, the expected major outputs are listed below; this will provide the basis for monitoring and evaluation of policy

Major Output for: Poverty Alleviation, Enhanced Food Security and Rural Livelihood

- a. Food security, livelihoods self-sufficiency and community sufficiency in rural areas improved through targeted multi-disciplinary and multi-sectorial interventions in rural area
- b. Farm productivity increased through capacity development and appropriate technology transfer and local marketing network enhanced for small farmers
- c. Reduced dependency of food imports and increased agricultural exports
- d. Reduced crop and livestock loss due to exotic pest and diseases and increase export
- e. Agricultural production system diversified and agri-business and other alternative activities promoted for income generation in rural communities including promotion of organic farming
- f. Pro-poor policies and strategies strengthened and rural institutions and agricultural services promoted to support small scale farmers
- g. Agricultural strategic plan developed.

Major Output for: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment

- a. Farmers shielded from impacts of natural disasters and climate change through disaster and risk management and climate change mitigation
- b. Soil conservation and management enhanced
- c. Increased land fertility and productivity increase
- d. Land use planning and policies in place
- e. Appropriate regulatory framework in place and enforced

Major Output for: Farm Readjustment and Restructuring

- a. Farm management improved through cluster farm, and cooperatives and Farmers' Associations
- b. Farmers' competitiveness strengthened through enhanced skills and capacity

Major Output for: Investment in Agricultural Research and Development

- a. Capacity in policy analysis and strategy formulation enhanced, in particular agricultural policy analysis
- b. Farm management improved through cluster farm cooperatives and Association
- c. Prevention and control system for emerging plant and animal disease strengthened
- d. System on Agricultural Research and Development strengthened
- e. Increased number of new crop cultivars, new animal breeds, and new food product development

Major Output for: Food Safety and Quality Improvement

- a. Quality & standards of agricultural products improved by means of a certification and traceability system
- b. Certification and traceability system strengthened
- c. Enhance technology transfer and capacity building in food safety and quality improvement, and food chain integration promoted
- d. Enhancing capacity of farmers in agricultural and export
- e. Human resource developed in biosafety and biosecurity diagnostics

Major Output for: Reduced Dependency of Food Imports and Increased Agricultural Exports

- a. Quality standards set for processing and marketing of agricultural produce and products as well as other standards required by international agreements
- b. Increased promotion and understanding that fresh local food is nutritionally superior to imported processed foods
- c. Setup National Seed Committee to control matters related to seeds including to develop seed policies and regulations
Provide coordination, monitor seed production, quality control and seed certification, etc.
- d. Increased production level

V. Methodology and Process

To guide the policy formulation process a Policy Steering Committee was established. With support and direction of the Steering Committee, a series of broad public consultations were conducted with various stakeholders, following a participatory approach. Stakeholder consultations were conducted in Western, Malaita and Isabel Provinces as well as in Honiara to compile stakeholders' views/opinion and identify priority areas of focus relevant to agricultural development to be addressed. A desk assessment of national policies, reports and previous studies were carried out to establish the context and scope of the policy framework as well as to identify existing legislation. A draft version was first presented at a stakeholders meeting for further discussion and to create stakeholder consensus. Based on the discussions the policies statement/focus activities were redefined as required, to reflect the opinions and observations of the stakeholders. Hence the preparation of the Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy is a partnership between Solomon Islands Government, private sector, farmers' groups and FAO.

VI. Structure of Document

This Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy document consists of five Chapters. Chapter I present an overview of the agricultural sector, the introduction, a brief discussion of **Strategic options for agricultural development in Solomon Islands, the national development framework which set the basis for the formulation of the agricultural and livestock sector policy and the expected outcome/output from the implementation of the proposed agricultural and livestock sector policy.** Chapter II discusses is the Agricultural Policy options; first the policy strategies will have a sectoral focus, followed by cross sectoral and specific crop sub-sector focus. Chapter III provides the summary and conclusion. There are two annexes, providing information on existing legislation, instruments for implementing agricultural policy, and highlighting the MAL vision/ mission and values.

Chapter Two: Agriculture Sector Policy

I. Introduction

Although the number and nature of guidelines that constitute an agricultural policy are vast and complex, the ultimate goal of this policy is the improvement of the well being of the population whose principal occupation and way of life is based on agriculture. Due to the current poor state of the economy, the choice of appropriate policy instruments is limited; hence the policy statement/focused activities are confined within a practical and a pragmatic framework. This policy framework document by its own admission is both a statement of principles and one that identifies focused strategies/activities to promote agricultural development and national development objectives. First the policy strategies will have a sectoral focus, followed by cross sectoral and specific crop sub-sector focus. A twin track approach is adopted with specific policies for small farmer, large-scale commercial farmers and plantations.

II. Policy Options for MAL Core Activities

a. Agricultural Extension Services

For the purpose of this document, agricultural extension service is defined as the transfer of agricultural technology from experts to farmers, livestock keepers, and other stakeholders. The experts are the link between the farmer, livestock keepers and research where agricultural technologies are developed, tested and modified. Generally, the experts have three roles; first and foremost the transfer of readily usable technologies; secondly to simplify technologies which cannot be transferred in the form produced by the research institutions; and thirdly to identify and transfer farmers/livestock keepers problems to research institutions. The evolution of extension services in Solomon Islands has a long history. However due to recent economic crises and insignificance of Agriculture Budgetary Provisions the extension services are virtually weak.

Objective: To strengthen the linkage between research - extension - farmer and livestock keeper and to convert the extension services into an instrument of agricultural growth, as well as to provide a framework to interpret research findings and advice farmers on improved technology to stimulate sustainable agricultural growth.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Provide delivery of extension services in a cost effective and sustainable manner. The approaches and methods will involve regular visits to farmers/livestock keepers and groups, regular training of extension staff and frequent interaction between researchers and extension staff
2. Revitalize and strengthen the extension services with more qualified staff and budgetary resources to enhance its effectiveness in delivery of the required services
3. Extension services will develop programmes to enhance women and youth involvement in agricultural production
4. Extension services will be demand driven and will address farmers and other beneficiaries' needs

5. Provide periodical training for extension staff in order to acquaint and increase their knowledge base with new technological changes
6. Extension services will encourage and support farmers; livestock keepers, traders and processors to establish groups, associations, and cooperatives for participatory and collective action
7. Integrated pest management measures, safe handling and use of agrochemical and other plant protection inputs will promoted by extension services
8. Extension services will promote commercialization of crops and livestock enterprises. This will include appropriate mechanisms for minimization of production risks
9. In collaboration with the Health Authorities will promote utilization of local staples and sub-staples through appropriate post harvest technologies, to maximize the nutritional value of local food product
10. Integrate the cooperative advantages of each of the procumbent areas.

b. Agricultural Research and Development

The main aim of agricultural research development is to promote sustainable food and agricultural production system through the development and dissemination of appropriate and environmentally friendly technology packages. An efficient Agricultural Research and Development System need to be put in place urgently to support the development of agriculture to meet the demands of the population. A lack of clear research priorities has undermined the efficient use of both government and donor funds. Hence, a National Research Master Plan needs to be the major priority for the government, which will provide appropriate scientific and technical know how compatible to local conditions. More importantly agricultural research should be demand driven and client oriented. It should take into consideration the lengthy accumulation of experience of the agricultural community and indigenous knowledge. There should be a common platform, which can link the agricultural research with extension, training, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), and other national institutions involved in agricultural technology development and transfer. A similar approach should be adapted to link national agricultural research with regional as well as international agricultural centres.

With the current pressure on natural resources, efforts will have to be made to efficiently utilize the available resources. Research will also pay particular attention to natural and biological methods of pest control, which can be applied by farmers and livestock keepers, and to the development of improved post harvest and storage methods. Agrochemicals will have to be assessed for economy, effectiveness, and safety in use and disposal with special concern for problems, such as environmental pollution and human health. Emphasis on environment and climate change has to be in the forefront due to the recognition and concern that some common technologies can undermine sustainability of island agricultural production.

Objective: Strengthening Research and Development effort to raise productivity of food crops and livestock and of value adding technologies to boost production for local consumption and for export.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Increase investments in research on a sustainable basis
2. Strengthen capacity and increase financial resources of the MAL to conduct R & D
3. Develop new production technologies taking into account indigenous knowledge
4. Ensure that the technologies developed are appropriate to farmers, assessment should be carried regularly to identify beneficiary's impacts, constraints and opportunities
5. Ensure a continuous supply of improved livestock breeds crop and Vegetable varieties through research and breeding programmes
6. Support establishment of gene banks in collaboration with international agencies
7. To ensure that research emphasis is given to exploit the synergy of integration of crop and livestock production
8. Where feasible, will involve relevant NGOs and private sector to participate in research and development particularly in the areas of testing of agrochemicals, development of special technologies, seed, processing, etc.
9. Strengthen information and documentation services, information management and technology, publications and dissemination of research information and networking in information services with internal and external institutions, including national extension services

c. Regulatory Services

For a modern agricultural and food sector there are many regulatory requirements, for example; (1) Food safety regulations, standards, testing for contaminants and chemical residues; (2) Protection of natural/environmental and sustainable management of land use; (3) Biosafety and biosecurity regulations with respect to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), pest and disease control and appropriate quarantine border measures; (4) Verification and certification of seeds and plant propagation materials and registration and regulation of agrochemical use and (5) Inspection services and issuance of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standard (SPS) certificates, and verification and certification that products satisfy relevant standards and quality, and labeling requirements. These requirements must comply with established national, regional and international agreements in order to protect the interest of all stakeholders who are in one way or other dependent on agricultural sector for their livelihood.

Solomon Islands is a member of various international bodies, whereby standards need to be adhered to and enforced by regulations and or legislations. The most appropriate institution to carry out these regulatory services is the Government (the MAL and the Attorney General Chambers). In this context the MAL will have to retain under its jurisdiction all regulatory functions and will establish a legal mechanism for their enforcement under the overall supervision of Attorney General.

Objective: To provide legal support to activities in agriculture and food production.

Policy Statement/Focused Activities

1. Develop legislation and appropriate regulations to support implementation of its mandate and activities. For example, it will develop pesticides acts and regulations to control the Manufacture, import, sale, use and disposal of agricultural chemicals
2. Formulate control mechanisms such as for licensing and permits for imports
3. Collaborate with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and other relevant institutions, to ensure that agricultural inputs and outputs will not endanger the health of man, farm livestock and the environment
4. Work with Public Prosecutor's office to bring regulatory measures inline with the Constitutional resolutions
5. Formulate legislation to protect and conserve the biodiversity (of each of the Provinces).
6. Work with Public Prosecutor's to take action against offenders
7. Provide regulatory support to the enforcement of all legal framework and instruments related to agriculture and food

d. Plant and Animal Health Protection, Quarantine Services and Biosecurity

The quarantine and inspection service is responsible for the protection of the island agricultural resources against exotic pests and diseases. The Plant Protection services will include diagnosis, forecasting and preventing pest outbreaks; inspection, phytosanitary services and quarantine services. More importantly, the plant protection, animal health and quarantine services conform to the obligations of regional and international standards such as World Trade Organization (WTO), Sanitary Phytosanitary rules and movement of GMOs and Live Modified Organisms (LMOs). The MAL will continue to take measures aimed at improving and strengthening plant protection, animal health and quarantine services.

Objective: To prevent and/or minimise crop losses due to pest disease infestations and incursions.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. To fast track the legislation of the Biosecurity Act 2008
2. Review the current Quarantine Services and Regulations
3. Improve border protection strategies, such as passenger clearance at point of entry and clearance of imported plant and animal produce to ensure freedom from exotic pests, diseases and to destroy quarantine risk material
4. Improve capacity to monitor and control pests and animal disease through training and equipment
5. Cooperate with neighbouring countries through bilateral, regional and international arrangements on pest and disease prevention/protection whenever necessary.
6. Improve phytosanitary and plant inspectorate services to prevent both the spread of existing plant diseases and introduction of new pests and diseases through importation of plant materials and animal products

7. Develop import protocol using recognize risk analysis methods and issue permits containing specifications to meet the national and international regulations
8. Promote veterinary services and establish an effective regulation and control system for import and marketing of veterinary products
9. Strengthen the field-reporting system and establish an epidemiology unit for monitoring and surveillance
10. Set up inspection facilities, build post-entry quarantine house. Such facilities will improve the ability/capacity to import improved crop varieties, increase food security and control potential pest and diseases
11. Design systems for operation of facilities such as the quarantine greenhouse to follow a user-pay approach, but with rooms for rebates for small farmer groups. Another approach can be “build operate and transfer” and hence private/public partnership can be sought for such ventures
12. Develop means to control introduction of GMOs and LMOs
13. Prevent and control human diseases transmitted by food of animal origin. Measures to be taken will include inspection of food premises, products quality control, abattoir, hygiene, meat inspection, prevention and control of chemical residues in food including veterinary drug residues and inspection of food imports and exports
14. Develop and maintain Solomon Islands capacity to meet overseas Sanitary and Phytosanitary requirements and conform to regional and international market standards and trade agreement requirements

e. Agricultural Market Information

A common concern raised throughout the stakeholder consultations was the lack of information thus constraining potential suppliers from entering both domestic and international market. In urban market demand for agricultural product may exist in urban areas, suppliers from rural areas may not be aware of them and similar situation holds for international markets. Hence there is a need to disseminate market-related information to both producer and buyer. A proactive trade and market information system should be developed and funded adequately.

The government should facilitate data collection at national, regional, provincial and constituency levels; coordinate information services within the MAL and with other statutory bodies; and will analyse, interpret and widely disseminate such information. Market data will need to be continuous to suppliers and sellers and will also be used for policy analysis and development.

Objective: To provide effective agricultural market information to enhance agricultural productivity and profitability.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Improve the capacity of the Agriculture Information Unit with competent staff and appropriate equipment to prepare and distribute extension materials and mass media programs – linking research to farmers
2. Strengthen the collection, dissemination and monitoring of information at national, regional and international levels

3. Ensure that data analysed is disseminated regularly through various means of communication
4. Provide timely market information *via* different exist medium of communication. Information will include supply and prices of the major staples, fruits and vegetables, and betel nut at the main local centres
5. Trained Extension Officers and NGO field workers in collection, interpretation and timely transfer of market information to farmers in an accurate and understandable form
6. Link with other relevant ministries, such as Trade and with the Commodities Export Marketing Authority (CEMA) to establish effective market information systems for inputs and outputs, in order to make markets transparent and inform traders and farmers about supply, shortage, availability and prices
7. Establish linkage with both inter-island and overseas shippers for schedules and other relevant information such as freight costs, space and types, etc. as part of market information

f. Market for Farm Inputs Supplies

Since marketing systems for inputs almost non-existent, the government needs to provide market information and monitor market performance. Timely availability of agricultural inputs is a major problem in remote areas and islands. In many cases the farm input supplies are not readily available and if available it is very expensive hence unaffordable.

Objective: To enhance accessibility of farmers to inputs of production.

Policy Statement/Focused Activities

1. Continue to encourage and promote the private sector into supply channels, which should fulfil effective demand from farmers at reasonable prices
2. Consider fiscal incentives for farmers' associations to get involve in input supply business and exempt farm inputs from import tariffs
3. Create an Inputs Trust Fund to facilitate availability of soft loans for local distribution of inputs to farmers
4. Promote credit lines from commercial banks and other financial institutions societies for farmers and traders to finance, input supply to farmers
5. Continue to improve the supply of agricultural inputs of production which should be compliant with the framework of all international and regional agreements to which Solomon Islands is signatory
6. Advocate for reduction of numbers and levels of taxes and levies to agricultural inputs in order to enhance competitiveness and incentives in the industry

g. Financing of Agricultural and Livestock Services

For the public investments to be effective, it is essential to develop an enabling environment for pro-poor agricultural growth. In general governments are called upon to provide public goods and establish supporting legal, administrative, and regulatory systems to correct for market failures, facilitate efficient operation of the private sector, and protect the interests of the disadvantaged.

The need for sustainable development in the Solomon Islands are manifold, however capacity and resources are limited and will remain so in the medium-term. Strict priorities and hard choices have to be made to focus development efforts especially in rural areas. Despite the importance of agriculture and livestock sub-sectors to food security, poverty alleviation and national economy at large, funding for key public agricultural and livestock services has been declining in real terms for a decade. Information available indicates that central government expenditure on agriculture and natural resources has remained below 2 percent of Gross Domestic Products (CBSI Annual Report, 2007). This is clearly inadequate especially in light of the importance of agriculture to the economy. Low recurrent budget (SBD15.6 million) from the central government for MAL is a major constraint to provide effectively and efficiently essential services to rural population.

Objective: For MAL to effectively and efficiently execute its core responsibilities in a timely manner.

Policy Statement/Focused Activities

1. Allocate budget resources to Increase public investment
2. Advocate for a policy that saving arising from rationalization of its functions and services be retained by MAL to strengthen priority core functions

h. Institutional Capacity Building

Investments in institutional capacity are critical to ensure that the public sector can effectively carry out its functions, which include coordination, participatory development of sector strategies, policy formulation, research and development and allocation and monitoring of public investment in agriculture. MAL over the years have faced numerous setbacks due to number of reasons, the most common one being limited budgetary allocation. The “tension” crippled the economy of the country including the agriculture sector. The Research Institution at Dodo Creek was destroyed. The impact of the current economic status of the country has severely handicapped MAL with a significant reduction in number of staff and particularly in the extension service. Capacity building across the whole ministry is essential for effective impact of its services.

Objective: To strengthen the delivery capacity of MAL.

Policy Statement/Focused Activities

1. Strengthen MAL with trained, competent and motivated staff
2. Prioritize and align activities of MAL to available resources especially human and allotted budget
3. Develop and implement a Human Resource Development Plan for MAL
4. Undertake an audit of existing staff capacity for key areas to standardize level of technical proficiency. Appropriate training should be devised to bridge skills gaps
5. Improve monitoring of staff performance to assess training needs and effectiveness of current training programs

6. Improve morale of staff through incentives and rewards on performance based

i. Large Scale Commercial Farming and Plantations

The large-scale plantation sector has been negatively affected by social unrest, land disputes and the recent civil unrest. These events have forced the closure of many plantations; including the Russell Islands Plantation Estate Limited (RIPEL), RCSymes Plantations in Isabel and Baunani Plantations in Malaita.

The successful restoration of these plantations and the future expansion of the sector will depend on the resolution of sensitive social and land issues and a stable macroeconomic environment as well as a business friendly environment to create confidence in investors.

Objective: To increase production, export, export earnings, employment and encourage agricultural diversification.

Policy Statement/Focused Activities

1. Encourage and strengthen involvement of the private sector in agriculture development through appropriate policies, tax incentives and other incentives
2. Maintain a cohesive and consistent policy commitment on private sector led growth and reduction of barriers faced by the industries
3. Encourage and facilitate the involvement of smallholder groups or cooperatives in commercial agriculture including plantation out-growers schemes
4. Reassess the functions of the Commodities Export Marketing Authority (CEMA) and strengthen its pivotal role in the development, regulating and marketing of agriculture commodities
5. Develop and consolidate estate plantations (crops/livestock) linked to out-grower schemes particularly on alienated land and registered land, with new allocations of arable land for estate type projects not precluding the expansion or resettlement of smallholder farmers
6. Provide secure land tenure by resolving sensitive social, cultural and land issues

j. Cooperative Development Services and Cluster Farming

Cooperative development functions include promotion, registration and deregistration of cooperatives, inspection and mobilization of rural savings and credits. Encourage more commercially oriented smallholder farmers particularly those within easy access to urban centre maximizing market opportunities by producing vegetables, fruits and needs of urban markets.

Objective: To empower small farmers in rural communities for adoption of appropriate production technologies and maximize market opportunities.

Policy Statement/Focused Activities

1. Promote and strengthen the Cooperative movement in the sector as an important rural institution to serve farmers interests and provide support services and enabling environment

2. Take the lead in facilitating the formation and growth of democratic producer and marketing organizations, which together with individual businessmen and private companies will endeavor to serve the farming and livestock keeping communities to the best of their ability. This includes encouragement and support for the formation of sub-sector associations for specific crops
3. Strengthen the existing Cooperative Society Act to meet the current challenges
4. Provide fiscal incentive for agricultural cooperatives to their endeavor to modernize small farmers production system
5. Pursue Enactment of Farmers Association Legislation

k. Market Infrastructures and Marketing

A common concern raised throughout the stakeholder consultations was the lack of opportunities to sell agricultural produce for much needed cash. The Solomon Islands must increase trade and facilitate sustainable economic growth to improve the welfare of its people. Agriculture offers the major opportunity and in many cases the only opportunity to make sustainable improvement in the wellbeing of the majority of the population living in rural areas. Trade in agricultural produce both in domestic and export markets are an important means of improving the socio-economic status, particularly of rural communities, and subsequently the economy of the country.

Objective: To link producers to the market.

Policy Statement/Focused Activities

1. Support and build market and improve market facilities in the provinces and strategic areas where farmers can trade
2. Develop logistic programme to minimize transport cost for both domestic and export market
3. Establish a network to provide market information on existing and potential of local and export overseas
4. Conduct aggressive trade fair in both domestic and export market and matchmaking and seller of SI Agricultural and food product
5. Ensure obligations and conditions of regional and international trade agreements to which Solomon Islands is signatory are met
6. Establish a database and disseminate information on high value resources and market requirements to producers
7. Develop value chain studies (commodity pathways and competitiveness enhancing strategies) for potential export crops
8. Identify and exploit opportunities to increase supply and varieties of quality fruits and vegetables for the local retail and tourist markets
9. Develop Solomon Islands product branding
10. Develop market product profile for each potential marketable products
11. Review and analysis of current situation regarding trade and marketing information availability; and base line surveys/studies

1. Policy Formulation, Monitoring and Evaluation and Implementation

Policy formulation, implementation and management should be one of the core functions of the MAL. Implementation of the formulated policy is crucial to achieving the stated vision and target objectives and outcomes. Following the endorsement of the policy by Solomon Islands Government, plans and programs must be developed and implemented. The MAL should be the key policy implementation agency for agricultural development and should lead the preparation of a programme for implementation. For cross-sector issues MAL should work in collaboration with other ministries, for policy formulation, evaluation, management and implementation.

Objective: Strengthened policy framework for sustainable agricultural development.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Utilize the information gained through monitoring evaluation and impact assessments for policy development, review and refinement
2. Responsibly articulate the sector priorities within the National Policy framework, macro-policy decisions into sector specific special actions and monitor the impact of sector policy reforms and rural development
3. In order to effectively carry out this important function the Ministry will undertake efforts to enhance its capacity in sector policy analysis and monitoring, evaluation and impact assessments
4. Establishing various expert task groups as the need arises and to collaborate with other established committees in Government, private sector and civil societies in order to operate in an action-orientated environment for policy formulation
5. Set quantitative benchmarks for the achievement of targets and accountability for implementation of policy

III. Policy Options for Cross Sectoral Services

The agricultural sector is inextricably intertwined with the rest of the economy. Measures to improve performance in the sector have implications at macroeconomic level and for other sectors. The MAL will strive to strengthen linkages and coordination with other Ministries which deal with issues which directly or indirectly affect sector development. Priority Areas include: Environment, Climate change, Land use, Credit availability and food safety.

a. Soil Conservation, Access to Land, Land Use Planning and Land Tenure

Agriculture involves the use of natural resources. High on the agenda is land. Land has to be managed in such a way that agricultural production is sustainable and that negative environmental externalities are avoided or at least kept to a minimum. Nutrients extracted from the soils should be replaced, forests replanted, soil degradation and overgrazing reversed.

Patterns of land utilization are determined largely by the customary land tenure system, which controls about 85 per cent of the total land area in Solomon Islands. The current traditional system of land ownership provides a welfare safety net for the vast majority of Solomon Islanders. Customary land tenure also supports the country's robust village-based subsistence farming. At the same time, customary ownership is a major constraint that hampers economic development and integrated land use management and planning. Mobilizing land for large-scale economic projects is especially problematic, costly and fraught with uncertainty due to the inevitable and often multiple disputes that arise between owners and developers, or different landowner groups. The preferred method for gaining the rights to use land is through lease arrangements. However, even legally binding leases and contracts do not ensure that the terms of the agreement will be honoured.

Solomon Islands do not have a coherent land use policy. Such a policy could provide an invaluable roadmap, directing towards more effective solutions to land issues affecting agriculture development, such as land disputes and land use planning (zoning). Similarly, the legal framework for land management needs to be reviewed. Land matters are covered under the Lands and Titles Act of 1970. This Act is regarded as being inadequate, outdated, and is in need of thorough overhaul as it does not meet the additional burden population growth and globalisation has put on the land.

Objective: Sustainable land use and management to increase soil fertility and productivity

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. In collaboration with other relevant Ministries will develop a coherent Land Use Policy and Land Use Plan covering both the rural and urban centres
2. Develop land tenure rights to minimize the long-drawn out procedure of acquisition of land and secure land titles for agricultural development
3. Careful considerations of challenges posed by the complexities of customary land tenure, and determine viable mechanisms for a more integrated and effective system of land use and management
4. Protection of Agriculture Opportunity Areas (AOA) from other indiscriminate and competing commercial interests: and easy access to land for agricultural development
5. Support the establishment of a Land Reform Commission under the Ministry of Lands, to draw up appropriate legislation to ensure that all new leases are signed with special conditions attached to protect agriculture leases against competing interests
6. Facilitate the customary landowner's engagement in dialogues with other stakeholders from government, the private sector, and the civil society, to develop workable partnerships in land use
7. Promote crop and livestock husbandry practices that conserve natural resources, enhance soil fertility and sustain production
8. In collaboration with other relevant institution will assess land potential for zoning and prepare land use plans as well as land capability and carrying capacity in various areas will be determined to prevent land degradation, soil erosion, depletion of water resources, and encroachment on forests
9. Increase productivity through use of improved technology to lessen pressure on land.
10. Develop soil database

b. Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management

The Solomon Islands is located in a high disaster prone area. In recent years, there have been cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic activities, floods, droughts and tsunami causing substantial damage to agriculture. Soil degradation, contamination and erosion have become increasingly important issues in agriculture. The traditional practice of shifting cultivation that allowed for regeneration through fallowing for extended periods is no longer possible due in most areas to increasing population pressure on land.

Objective: To mitigate the effect of climate change.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Support the development and implementation of a National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction & Disaster Management, promoting disaster risk management as a sustainable development issue with strong linkages to agriculture development
2. Develop mitigation plan for climate change in collaboration of other relevant ministries and relevant regional and international agency
3. Encourage use of conservation farming techniques such as agro-forestry, fallow, cover crops, intercrop and contour planting
4. Develop and implement a Contingency Plan for speedy recovery of food production following natural disasters
5. Promote traditional ways to protect crops from natural hazards and methods to preserve food and seed stocks
6. Promote agro-forestry with the use of intercropping to reduce vulnerability to natural disaster, soil degradation and erosion and improve farm productivity
7. Discourage slash and burn methods that lead to soil and environment degradation
8. Develop crops that are resilient to natural disasters
9. Develop a crop insurance schemes where possible
10. Mainstream climate change adaptation into national policies, strategies and programmes related to agriculture, forestry and fisheries
11. Develop community-based approaches to climate adaptation

c. Rural Finance and Credit facilities

Financial services in rural areas are extremely limited and where existent are mainly located in provincial centres. Hence Credit facilities for rural area are non-existent, which implies no investment or working capital. Although a Credit Union Act was enacted in 1986, which regulated the operation of Credit Unions in Solomon Islands, many Credit Unions have ceased their operations. Out of 180 only 20 is currently functioning. Even microfinance schemes have not been successful. Thus many rural farmers do not have much in terms of formal savings for investment.

Objective: Credit availability to meet the needs of farmers and livestock producers.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Collaborate with the financial and monetary authority to devise ways to provide access to financial services to rural areas
2. Provide initiatives designed to promote rural financial institutions to be owned and run by farmers and NGO's
3. Encourage Rural Credit and Savings schemes and other formal and informal lending schemes with incentives in order to promote agricultural growth, agricultural trade and rural agro-processing activities
4. Establish an Agricultural Micro Credit system to replace the defunct Development Bank of Solomon Islands as it has a major role to play in rural lending for long-term developmental agribusinesses
5. Encourage financial institutions such as Development Bank of Solomon Islands (DBSI), Solomon Islands Credit Union Limited (SICUL) and Central Bank of Solomon Islands (CBSI) to establish credit facilities to provide loan funding to smallholders and agro-business ventures

d. International Trade

The Solomon Islands, is a de facto General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) contracting party since 1978. In July 1996, SI acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO) as an original member. Solomon Islands is not a signatory to any of the Plurilateral Trade Agreements. SI is also signatory member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) and provides tariff preference under the MSG Trade Agreement of 1996 for selected products to other members of the MSG.

As a signatory to the Cotonou Convention, the Solomon Islands, together with some other Pacific Island Countries are currently negotiating the Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU. The Solomon Islands belong to the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA). SPARTECA is a non-reciprocal preferential agreement covering the Forum island countries (FICs) with an aim to achieve duty-free and unrestricted access for FIC exports including agricultural products to Australia and New Zealand. SI is also a member of Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement and Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER plus).

The Solomon Islands must increase trade and facilitate sustainable economic growth to improve the welfare of its people. Agriculture offers the major opportunity and in many cases the only opportunity to make sustainable improvement in the wellbeing of the majority of the population living in rural areas.

Trade in agricultural produce, both in domestic and export markets are an important means of improving the socio-economic status, particularly of rural communities, and subsequently the economy of the country

Objective: To enhance agricultural trade and increase the contribution of agricultural export in total merchandise export

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Improve the profile of Solomon Islands' agricultural products in bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations through awareness of means and strong negotiation skills
2. Promote development policy space for agricultural by provided targeted tariffs structure
3. Ensure the commitment on tariff reduction do not jeopardize agricultural sector develop
4. Coordinate all agricultural trade interventions aimed at increasing production and build links to general trade policy
5. Develop a national trade policy based in collaboration with MAL. This policy should strengthen the export potential by developing the supply side and address the supply side constraint. It should also include agricultural SPS standards.

e. Trade Facilitation

Given the importance of the agricultural sector to the livelihoods of the majority of rural population of Solomon Islands, improvements in the physical setting to facilitate trade activities is critical in obtaining and maintaining market access for its exports, vis-à-vis other traditional barriers to trade. In this context agricultural standards will have a major impact.

Objective: To enhance SI export potential.

Policy Statement/Focused

1. Revamp the National Trade Facilitation Committee with the active participation of MAL
2. Create systems for the development, promotion, monitoring and certification of a range of agricultural produce standards
3. Provide essential infrastructure to support commercial and export growth
4. Establish an enabling environment for dialogue with stakeholders on trade issues
5. Consultations on trade issues at regular intervals with an inter-institutional focus with all interested parties in domestic and international trade to identify and resolve their respective trade facilitation
6. SPS Architecture and Capacity to issue SPS certificates, conduct SPS market research, and negotiation of protocols
7. Cost of importing and exporting goods seems to be high suggesting a more in-depth review of the area to determine the driving factor for such high costs
8. High costs of transport, storage and wharfage make Solomon Island less competitive, hence initiatives should focus on reduce these costs
9. Increase the accessibility to timely shipping facility
10. Upgrade port and wharf facilities

11. Revitalize the capacity of the High Temperature Force Air Treatment (HTFA) plant to handle volumes requiring pre export treatment
12. Update current customs-related legislation, in particular the outdated Import of Goods Control Act, to address gaps and bring it into line with modern trade practices

f. Food Safety

The Solomon Islands is a member of World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The basic food law for food safety in the Solomon Islands consists of the Pure Food Act of 1996. The Act is relatively unique in that it makes provision for collaboration between agricultural quarantine inspectors and health inspectors, covering both food imports and exports. The Act also regulates the slaughter of animals for human consumption and the obtaining, processing, storage and transportation of milk and dairy products. The act is supported by food regulations, which were revised in 2007 (with FAO assistance) through an extensive stakeholder process order to allow their finalisation for gazetting. Additionally, Pure Food (Fishery Products) Regulations 2005 were developed by the Environmental Health Division of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, with EU assistance, to reflect current best practices. They were introduced over a 12 months period and are in line with European Union (EU) requirements to facilitate exports to the EU. The Solomon Islands has a National Public Health Laboratory, which has recently been reconstructed and equipped. Covering a broad spectrum of agricultural food commodities, the food legislative framework is an essential foundation for the development of the agriculture sector and food security in the Solomon Islands.

Objective: To provide a framework to boost agricultural sector development and food security.

Policy Considerations:

1. Given the cross-sectoral nature of the Solomon Islands Food Regulatory framework, and the fact that the Ministry of Health is the competent authority for the certification of food manufacturers and food exports including fish, it is crucial to foster collaboration, coordination/exchange and capacity building between the MAL, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of Health
2. While analytical facilities have recently been revamped, there is a need to obtain international accreditation and conduct related capacity building to strengthen its recognition by competent authorities of trading partners
3. The development of the agriculture export sector, in particular value adding / food processing businesses needs to give attention to good manufacturing practices (GMP) and the hazard analysis critical control point system (HACCP) or its equivalent to assure the safety of food produced/exported
4. From a food safety policy perspective, there are currently different levels of protection for the domestic market and the export market. As industry in the Solomon Islands develops, consideration should be given to ensuring equal protection for both domestically consumed food and food for export by introducing a requirement for all food to be handled under GMP and HACCP principles

g. Agricultural Statistical Services

To allow better policy formulation to meet the goal of national agricultural development, the quality and timeliness of relevant data is needed. MAL in collaboration with the National Statistical Office in areas needing improvement in its role as data provider.

Objective: To provide support to policy formulation, planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Policy Statement/ Focused Activities

1. Provide greater powers and sufficient resources to collect information on agricultural sectors and to produce timely analysis of issues of interest to the public
2. Conduct timely agricultural census
3. Develop capacity to collect and compile agricultural data
4. Draft legislation for Agricultural Statistics

IV. Policy Options: Sub-Sector Specific Policies

a. Coconut

Coconut is an important food crop, which is exported as whole nuts, copra, copra oil, and coconut virgin oil. Coconut provides a small but relatively reliable source of cash income for rural household scattered throughout the country that have few other sources of income. Copra is the most widely spread cash crop and supporting the copra industry has the potential to increase the cash income of more rural people than any other single activity. Coconut not only provides cash income but also make an important contribution to the people's daily diet. Despite its importance, coconut has been neglected, that is there has not been any proper replanting for more than 20 years, and thus a high percentage of palms are old and in the declining phase of production. The copra industry went through a period of upheaval over the last 20 years as it has moved from a parasitic monopoly marketing arrangement to deregulation and private sector marketing. The closure of the RIPEL operation has had significant negative impacts on the industry and on the country as a whole, and including the negative view of potential foreign investors.

Objective: To enhance the economic contribution of coconut in livelihood system.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Review the coconut sector and develop a focused strategy to support its development
2. Financial support on a cost recovery basis the construction of copra dryers in strategic location in rural areas
3. The Government will provide seeding financial support for copra buyers in remote areas of the country
4. The Provincial as well as National governments should support shipping of copra from remote areas

5. The Government should speed up the reopening of RIPEL
6. Program a major coconut replanting scheme

b. Oil Palm

Palm Oil was the country's most successful agricultural industry before the "tensions", exporting 36,900 tons of palm oil products in 1998. The closure of the Solomon Islands Plantation Limited (SIPL) factory in 2000 had devastating effects on the export of this product and hence the economy and foreign exchange generation of the country. However, the company reopened under a new management [Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Limited (GPPOL)] in 2006 and production increased markedly to 21,979 tons of oil palm products in 2007. GPPOL in 2007 employed 2,000 workers and engaged about 100 households in an 'out-grower' scheme managing an estimated area of 500 hectares with potential to expand production and acreage.

Objective: To enhance the economic contribution of oil palm sector in livelihood system.

Policy Statements

1. Review the Oil Palm Sector and develop a focused strategy to support its development
2. Government will facilitate oil palm development Guadalcanal Province (GPPOL) Western Province (Vangunu & Shortland), Choiseul Province and later to other Provinces of Isabel and Makira/Ulawa
3. The MAL extension service will support 'out-grower' schemes working together with nucleus plantations

c. Vanilla

Vanilla is currently a minor cash crop in the Solomon Islands that has generated a lot of interest over the last few years. The world market for Vanilla is a small niche market at around 2500 tons annually. The Northern Guadalcanal area, which has a distinct dry season, is suitable for Vanilla production. Vanilla production is labour intensive and well suited to the Solomon Islands farming household. Vanilla curing is however a specialist process and is normally carried out in central entities rather than by farmers.

Objective: To enhance vanilla production and increase farmers' ability for income generation.

Policy Statements

1. Considering the climatic requirements of Vanilla, identify agro-ecological zone for farmers where the crop could be successfully grown
2. Develop a "how to grow Vanilla" pamphlets and provide training to farmers on how vanilla should be grown and cured

3. Provide support for stocking and propagating Vanilla planting materials in potential production areas
4. Regulate harvesting, processing and marketing of Vanilla to maintain quality standards essential for export to niche market

d. Coffee

The import market for coffee in the SI is 150 tons annually. The country has areas that could produce high quality Arabica coffee such as high elevation locations in Central Malaita. Robusta coffee could be grown in lowland areas where cocoa is currently grown although return for coffee will be significantly lower than that for cocoa. The volatile world coffee market, small new entrants to the world market like the Solomon Islands have little chance succeeding. However, there is opportunity for a small coffee industry in niche market and import substitution.

Objective: To enhance coffee production and increase farmers' ability for income generation.

Policy Statements

1. Encourage and support development of the Coffee industry for import substitution
2. Conduct trainings on how to process and dry coffee beans
3. Support the development of and export marketing of a specialty differentiated Solomon Islands coffee

e. Cocoa

Cocoa has been the third most important export crop in the Solomon Islands and was the least affected by the "tension". Exports in 2005 were SBD64.3 million and increased to SBD72 million in 2007 (CBSI, 2007). The increase in 2007 stemmed largely from improved production and high export prices. The industry is almost entirely smallholder based. Cocoa production is widely distributed throughout Solomon Islands, grown in all provinces except Rennel/Belona which makes cocoa the second most important cash crop after coconut. The high rainfall in production areas led to severe outbreaks of the Black-pod disease having devastating effects on production

Objective: To enhance the economic contribution of the cocoa sector.

Policy Statements

1. Support construction of cocoa dryers as is for copra dryers
2. Provide seeding financial support for cocoa buyers in remote areas of the country
3. The Provincial as well as National governments should support shipping of cocoa from remote areas
4. Promote and facilitate the marketing of cocoa as an organic product to obtain premium price
5. Conduct trainings on post-harvest processing especially on fermentation at farmer level and quality control throughout the marketing chain

6. Introduce improved varieties from other countries especially black pod-resistant varieties
7. Facilitate the rebuild of the cocoa facility at Marasa on the Guadalcanal Weather Coast
8. Setup appropriate mechanism to control black pot diseases
9. Establish protocol to stop incursion of Cocoa Pod Borer from neighboring Papua New Guinea

f. Rice

Rice consumption per capita (100 kg) in the Solomon Islands is the second highest among the Pacific Islands. Increasing import and the rising cost of rice and the burden it places on the import bill (valued at SBD 140 million in 2007) prompted the Government to embark on rice development and import substitution programs over the years, however this continues on a very small scale. The failure of large-scale rice plantation style operations between the 1960s and 1980s compelled government to shift its renewed rice development focus towards village-level production. However, the National Rural Rice Development Programme (NRRDP) is planning to start two commercial rice farms in 2009/2010. Local rice production in 2007 fell to 2,800 tons from 3,250 tons in 2006.

Objective: To decrease the dependency on imported rice.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Introduce appropriate varieties suitable for Solomon Islands farmers' context
2. The MAL will bulk up seeds of appropriate varieties making it available for farmers at affordable price
3. Provide the necessary rice processing facilities at strategic locations where farmers could process their own grown rice at affordable price
4. Expedite the development of the planned commercial rice production program
5. Provide farmer-training programs on rice production while at the same time emphasize to farmers the superior nutritional value of their traditional food crops
6. Revisit rice trade regime and provide appropriate support to enhance rice production, in term tariffs
7. Provide tariffs rebates on rice development equipments
8. Provide technological support to promote efficient production scheme

g. Livestock

Livestock keeping is an important component of the subsistence production in Solomon Islands. It is estimated that 75% of rural households have some backyard chicken production and free range pigs. Pigs (mainly free range) and backyard poultry are kept for protein intake and in the case of pigs, ceremonial purposes and wealth accumulation. Pigs have high cultural importance for feasts, pay for bride price and other traditional function. Pigs and chickens are the dominant livestock kept by most rural households. A very limited number of cattle and goats also part of the rural livestock. SI does not produce enough livestock to meet the domestic demand for meat and depend heavily imports.

SI has the potential for meat production in a large scale. In this sense cattle has great potential for a major contribution to the economy and the livelihoods of the rural poor and can reduce the dependency on imported meat.

Objective: Diversify the livestock base; increase income generation capacity and reduction on import dependency.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Review and perform a situation analysis of the sector
2. Formulate a development strategy for the livestock sub-sector.
3. Revive the Cattle Industry Project
4. Facilitate the import of improved cattle breeds and establish artificial insemination program
5. Make provision to subsidise the import of improved breeds
6. Build meat-processing facility for slaughter of animals and set procedures and standards for animals and meats sold to the public
7. Upgrade the Vet service and provide this much needed service to rural areas
8. Encourage foreign and private sector direct investment in cattle and other Livestock Sector
9. Facilitate marketing of smallholder cattle through private sector marketing linkages, road and sea transportation and development of local butcheries
10. Support for improved smallholder production of poultry and pigs

h. Traditional Food Crops and Fruits and Vegetables

Many rural communities depend on forest products such as leafy vegetables, nuts, honey, and fruits, and coastal communities on fish to supplement the food consumption. The most important occupation of majority of the rural population is subsistence food production and small-scale income-generating activities. The farming system commonly practised in food production in the rural area is a mixed-relay system. Major traditional food crops of the Solomon Islands consist of root and tuber crops, bananas and fruits normally cultivated under subsistence system, and nuts and leafy vegetables usually harvested from the wild. The country has a rich biodiversity of food plants. Traditional food crops, fruits and vegetables have an important contribution in alleviating food shortages and hunger.

The traditional food crops form the basis of both the subsistence and cash economies but are being replaced by imported foods. The rural population representing 84% of the total population relies mainly on subsistence production of mainly sweet potato, cassava, bananas and other roots crops such as taro and yams. Some fruits and nuts are cultivated while others are collected from the wild. The increased domestic production of traditional food crops will reduce dependence on imported food.

The MAL has few activities aimed at supporting subsistence food production. In part it is a result of a chronic lack of capacity. Also traditionally, the focus was mainly on cash crops, which has resulted on comparatively little resources being directed towards subsistence production given its size and critical importance to the vast majority of the population.

Problems in subsistence farming and food production are related to factors such as the reduced yield, increased pests and diseases and lack of improved variety, poor planting materials, but most importantly, the lack of outlets or market opportunities for their produce. The low yield and increased pest and diseases could be directly related to reduced fallow period and thus low soil fertility.

Objective: Enhance food security and rural livelihood.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

1. Review the tradition food, fruits and vegetable sector and develop a strategic development plan for these traditional food crops
2. Develop appropriate technology to improve productivity and increase production of local food crops
3. Introduce improved technology such as high yielding and disease resistant food crop varieties for evaluation by Solomon Islands farmers
4. In collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry develop a plan to protect the rich biodiversity of food plants in the country
5. In collaboration with Health and Education authorities promote increase utilization of wholesome local foods for better nutrition as compared to imported processed foods
6. Promote organic production of traditional food, fruits and vegetable sector
7. Development plan for process and value adding

i. Organic and Fair Trade

The Solomon Islands has a comparative advantage in agricultural organic products, as most of the local food production is without added fertilizers or pesticides. All “push foods” including leafy greens, fruits and nuts are collected from the wild could be certified organic. The country could not effectively compete by selling high volumes at world commodity prices, except perhaps with one or two commodities. However, there are opportunities in accessing niche markets of high-value products such as native nuts and “organic” products. Cocoa production in SI is almost totally organic; therefore could over a period of time, be easily steered towards organic certification and marketing. The company Kokonut Pacific SI Ltd is successfully exporting NASAA – certified organic virgin coconut oil. Cocoa is another crop with potential as organic product for export.

Objective: To increase income generation capacity through diversification.

Policy Statements/Focused Activities

- 1 Promote organic farming as means of income generation and poverty strategies for rural communities
- 2 Build alliance with partners in the region to develop organic farming systems.
- 3 Evaluate food plants including those in the wild, having potential to export as organic products

- 4 Engage an organic certification process with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to develop certification procedure for SI produce and develop legislation to adopt SPC organic certification
- 5 Develop SI into a reputable producer of numerous certified organic product brands recognized internationally
- 6 Provide support to develop organic inputs of production

Chapter Three: Summary and Conclusion

The suggested policy options are anchored in a set of values which define the societal goals and a set of beliefs about the best ways to achieve the developmental goals as in the National Development Objectives. As stated earlier, the proposed policy interventions are expected to generate the following six priority outcomes in the medium term, *viz*; (1). Poverty alleviation, enhanced food security and rural livelihood; (2). Sustainable management of natural resources and the environment; (3). Farm sector readjustment and restructuring; (4). Investment in agricultural research and development; (5). Food safety and quality improvement and (6) Reduced dependency on food imports and increased agricultural exports. However, two important elements of poverty reduction namely, increasing food security and livelihood systems involve the creation of an investment climate conducive to pro-poor and rural growth as well; as the need to empower the poor to share the equitably benefits of that growth. Hence, strong institutional setups are required both in MAL and the Ministry of Rural Development. Since institutions provide the rules for enforcement and organization to support market transactions. Institutions also help transmit information, enforce legislations and contracts; provide a mechanism to prevent market failure; and provide incentives to engage in fruitful economic activities. Together, policy and institutions can create the enabling environment, where markets can guide the allocation of resources for efficient outcomes. Hence, investment in policy and institutional capacity are critical to ensuring that the public sector can effectively carry out its core functions, including: coordination; participatory development of sectoral strategies; and policy formulation, allocation and monitoring of public investment in agriculture.

Although specific policies relevant to various subsectors within agricultural sector and cross-sectoral are addressed in this policy document, the means to promote growth goes beyond. First and foremost, it is critical to establish macroeconomic conditions, which will ensure undistorted exchange rate policies; minimal market barriers; macroeconomic stability; and more importantly government credibility through the rule of law. Furthermore, it should be reinforced here that macroeconomic stability is a precondition for the success of any developmental policy, agricultural and rural development policies are no exception.

Finally, the key challenge and a precondition to success will be to create stakeholder consensus around the implementation strategy and the identification of realistic objectives and sequencing of policy implementation. It is critical to design an implementation plan and agricultural sector plan as a companion to the sectoral policy.

Finally, the government needs to devise and establish an action plan for implementation taking into consideration the socioeconomic setting and environment and natural resources, thereby establishing a sustainable agricultural development plan with target aimed at increasing both food security and welfare of the people of the Solomon Islands.

Annex

Annex 1. Existing Legislation, Instruments for Implementing Agricultural Policy.

a) The Constitution:

The Constitution is known as the Solomon Islands Independence Order of 1978 (LN. No. 43). It is the supreme law of the land protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual citizen of the country. The Constitution states, that the natural resources of the country including the land are vested in its people and government. Landowners are empowered through national legislation, to act as decision-makers for natural resources and environmental management practices on their land. It is therefore presumed to be the resource-owners' responsibility to manage natural resources wisely for benefit of present and future generations. The Constitution recognizes the defector rights vested by customary law of ownership.

b) Trade Facilitation and Revenue Collection:

The Custom Act (Cap. 121) 1960; various amendments during 1963-1987:

It also regulates and collects taxes and duties imposed on dutiable goods. Custom Act plays an important role in the control of levels of imports of goods. There is need for revision of this Act to consider current needs of international trade agreements such as WTO.

c) Cooperative Society Act (Cap.164) 1953 amendments 1987:

The act provides for the formation and to regulate the operation of cooperative societies.

d) Plant/Animal Pests and Diseases:

The Diseases of Animal Act (Cap. 37) amendments-1972; the Agriculture and Livestock Order (Cap. 80) 1978; the Agriculture Quarantine Act 1982; the Quarantine Order (Cap 34) 1986 and the Handling of Container Rules 1994. All these instruments make provisions for the purpose of preventing the introduction into and spread of plant/animal pest or disease. It prohibits, regulates and controls the importation and movement of plant/animal and products.

e) Livestock Development

Livestock Development Authority (Cap.41) 1977: covers all aspects of livestock production and commercial development of its products. It also promotes development of the livestock industry in Solomon Islands. This act needs revision to cater for the planned cattle rehabilitation and small livestock development programs.

f) Export Promotion and Export Marketing

The Commodity Export Marketing Authority (CEMA) (Cap. 36) 1985. is to promote the export of commodities, assist and develop commodities industries with a view to secure efficient marketing of nominated/regulated products such as coconut and coconut products (green or dried), copra, cocoa, palm oil, palm kernel, palm based products, spices/chillies and other products. CEMA played an important role in facilitation of and enhanced export trade of agricultural commodities.

Failures of CEMA were due to a number of factors including: the crash of the world price of coconut oil in 1999/2000, over expansion in its commercial undertakings such as Real estate development and shipping services; and the involvement of politics and politicians in its management.

g) Credit Union Act (Cap.165) 1986:

It regulates the operation of Credit Unions in SI. To provide for matters connected to CUs and to promote thrift and create a source of Credit at fair and responsible rate of interest primarily for productive purposes. It also covers the savings of members either as payments, shares or deposits.

h) Bee Industry Act (Cap. 173) 1996:

Protects the Bee Industry and makes provisions for the purpose of preventing the introduction and spread of pests or diseases affecting bees. It prohibits and regulates the importation or movement of bees, comb, bee products, hives, containers or other appliances used in connection with bee keeping.

i) Environment Act 1998:

It protects the environment and natural resources including land. The Act was introduced to facilitate major developments including in agriculture, which set the rules for conducting Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), however the Act as it stands falls short in regulations and enforcement.

j) Wildlife Protection and Management - Draft Bill 1998:

Protects and regulates any trade in wildlife. This is essential in compliance to Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) international obligations especially for protection of indigenous wild life and conservation of local biodiversity.

k) Pure Food Act 1996 and Pure Food (Fishery Products) Regulations 2005:

Control safe use and trade of food products. Regulations are needed to cater for new developments such as roadside preparation and sale of cooked food. Act is essential in agriculture sector development in terms of chemical residues including pesticide and herbicide residues in processed, cooked and fresh produce.

l) Consumer Protection Act (Cap.63) 1995:

Guides safety and quality standards for good food (e.g., GMO free). The Act makes provisions for the protection of the consumers for the establishment of Trade Practices.

m) The Biosecurity, Draft Bill 2008:

The Biosecurity Bill has the objectives of preventing the entry and spread of animal and plant pests and diseases into and throughout the country; to control their establishment and spread. It also caters for global changes that are occurring and in compliance with international trade and relevant obligations such as WTO, SPS Rules and movements of GMOs and LMOs.

Chapter Four: MAL Vision/Mission and Values

VISION

Enhance and promote a sustainable agriculture and rural development in the Solomon Islands for economic stability, food sovereignty and improve rural livelihood.

MISSION

To promote, improve and lead agriculture development in Solomon Islands to a profitable and environmentally sustainable future by being the premier provider of information, research, extension, education, regulatory and other services to improve the agriculture sector.

VALUES

In the development and delivery of practical solutions to the national and provincial governments, tribal communities, resource holding groups, women and youth, non-state actors and church groups of the Solomon Islands. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock is committed to provide information, technical advice, transfer of practical skills and knowledge through:

- Consultative, cooperative and partnership development;
- The development and application of innovative yet rigorous scientific techniques;
- The engagement of an active participatory approach to an effective delivery of extension service;
- The recognition of the invaluable role women and youth play in agriculture;
- The facilitation and involvement of private sector in agriculture trade and commodity development; and
- The principle of empowerment of resource owners; and a fair, equitable and a timely enforcement of regulatory measures.