

http://www.islandsbusiness.com/news/index_dynamic/containerNameToReplace=MiddleMiddle/focusModuleID=130/focusContentID=15454/tableName=mediaRelease/overrideSkinName=newsArticle-full.tpl

Climate change in the Pacific is key focus for increased development assistance: FAO

Tue, 2 Jun 2009

ALOFI, Niue ----- In the face of a serious economic and financial crisis that is compromising the world's food insecurity, Jacques Diouf, director-general of FAO, today appealed on the Pacific Island Forum countries to improve food security and income earning opportunities.

Dr Diouf was speaking at the opening session of the 8th Meeting of the FAO South West Pacific Minister of Agriculture, hosted by Niue from 20 to 22 May in Alofi. Pacific Island countries are environmentally fragile and particularly vulnerable to external shocks such as natural disasters, sudden increases in food and fuel prices and price volatility.

The Pacific thus needs a coordinated and multi-sectoral response, involving stakeholders along the food chain. "There is an urgent need for a new international system for agriculture and rural development", said Dr Diouf, "and bringing all countries together to agree on main policies and strategies to address the root causes of hunger." FAO is proposing a World Food Summit in November 2009, and stands ready to provide support to a follow-up initiative from the region to convene a Pacific Food Summit in conjunction with the 2010 Forum Leaders Meeting, to agree on a Pacific Declaration on Food Security.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation, and disaster preparedness and prevention are becoming a key focal area for increased development assistance to the Pacific. Poor nutrition and dietary practices are seriously affecting the health and well-being of increasing numbers of Pacific Islanders, and the countries in the region need to address the lack of updated food safety legislation, standards and regulations, the FAO statement emphasized. Acting Premier of Niue O'love Jacobsen,, stressed that the theme of the meeting – Earning a living from agriculture – reflects "the face of global and national socio and economic circumstances, effects of climate change, and cultural lifestyle changes and attitudes." Fourteen countries are attending the FAO meeting in Alofi (Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu).

Chaired by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Niue, Pokotoa Sipeli, the meeting will also address enhancing competitiveness of the agricultural sector through agribusiness and marketing. National Medium-Term Priority Frameworks for Pacific Island Countries aim at enhanced national coordination, and will enable more productive partnerships with donors and programmes active in the region such as agencies of the UN and the Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific (CROP).

In close cooperation with IFAD, FAO has prepared a new programme - Food Security and Sustainable Livelihood Programme for the Pacific Islands (FSSLP) – with an initial budget of US\$41.8 million over the next six years, to have a harmonized framework to support development initiatives.