

AGRICULTURE

FIJI

THEME-SPECIFIC ISSUES:

1. Policies and programmes to achieve food security and sustainable agriculture

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) in 2002 formally endorsed the Regional Strategy for Agriculture Development and Food Security, and the Regional Programme for Food Security (RPFS) in the Forum Island Countries (FICs), which encompasses all FAO Member countries in the Pacific.

In Fiji, agriculture is organized more along commercial lines, although the subsistence sector remains important. Large-scale agriculture comprises mainly of palm oil, coconut, sugarcane, cocoa and coffee plantations, and beef cattle. Typical constraints faced by producers include a shortage of labour, poor quality and availability of planting material, a lack of efficient pest control and monitoring programmes, high post-harvest losses, poor animal health and high cost of purchased feed, and weaknesses in both domestic and export marketing.

2. Policies and programmes to enhance agricultural productivity and farmers' incomes

The objective is that Fiji is served by a thriving commercial agriculture sector; sustaining Fiji's food security. The strategies for this are:

- Through the Rural and Outer Islands Project (ROI), rescoped Alternative Livelihood Project (ALP) and related rural development projects, build the capacity of rural communities to diversify agriculture to higher value crops and commercial agriculture to improve on and off farm livelihoods and opportunities for processing and value added;
- Establish commodity protocols with existing and new markets (China, Australia, NZ, EU, US, Japan) and promote formation of industry councils to spearhead/coordinate commodity development;
- Strengthen agricultural training institutions to improve training services to all stakeholders;
- Strengthen demand driven research in partnership with the private sector;
- Improve accessibility of farmers to saving and credit facilities and develop micro-finance institutions;
- Provide infrastructure to facilitate market access of agricultural produce, particularly in the rural and outer islands;
- Enhance tourism industry and agriculture sector linkages to match demand and supply, therefore reducing imports;
- Promote food safety and quality programmes; and
- Revitalize coconut industry to move into value adding and product diversification.

The achievement of these strategies will be measured by the following key performance indicators:

- Maintain agriculture sector's contribution to GDP at 12%.
- Value of non-sugar agriculture exports increased from \$40m in 2006 to \$80m by 2011.
- Value of food imports reduced from \$370m in 2006 to \$260m in 2011.
- Increase lending to agriculture sector of commercial banks to 1% of total loan portfolio by 2011 from current level of 0.6% in 2005.

3. Recent agrarian reform and other measures designed to secure equitable access to land resources by both genders

Ongoing tripartite discussions on the future nature of leasehold agreements are currently being held involving the NLTB (representing the land owners), the tenants, and government (represented by the ALTA unit in MLMR). A large portion of existing leases administered under the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act (ALTA) are due to expire. However it is essential that a mutually satisfactory agreement will be reached for both land owner and tenant - the productivity of land and the future viability of this key sector depend on this. Government has a leadership role to play in assuring that this issue is resolved.

4. Community-based and indigenous approaches to sustainable food production

An impressive quantity and range of traditional food crops are grown in Fiji. These are grown throughout the country and are identified as a "hidden strength" of the economy. It is estimated only 40% of energy needs come from locally grown food. Food imports are still relatively low when compared with other small island developing states (SIDS). These imports have fallen slightly as a percentage of total imports over the last decade despite deregulation, suggesting that food supply has been able to expand to meet increases in demand from a rapidly growing urban population. Government's investment in providing assistance and infrastructure developments has been a major contributing factor to this process.

5. Programmes for environmentally-sound agricultural pest control

The diamondback moth is the leading pest of Brassica crops in the Pacific islands. Both large and smallholder farmers grow Brassicas, mainly head cabbage, Chinese cabbage and watercress. With production increasing in recent years opportunities for the moth to spread have expanded. The use of insecticides is the main form of control. Integrated pest management (IPM) approaches to diamondback moth have been used elsewhere in the world, limiting insecticide use while maintaining control. What is needed is the adoption of IPM with a locally relevant program. Research will develop an increased knowledge of the moth to develop the appropriate IPM packages for each country.

6. Actions to improve water management in agriculture (e.g., more efficient use, improved irrigation); measures to make more efficient and effective use of energy and other essential inputs for sustainable agricultural production

The Land and Water Resource Management Division is responsible for maintenance of existing Irrigation Schemes, Sugar Drainage and Land Drainage & Flood Protection activities. The program on Watershed Management is anticipated to take-over the flood protection in the medium term. The program will improve soil conservation, conserve water and provide irrigation for rice and other crops.

Given the abundant rainfall and relatively intact forest cover that allows capture and retention of water in underground aquifers, and the presence of several important perennial rivers and streams, the larger islands within the Fiji archipelago have adequate supplies of water to meet the needs of the population. However, fragmented authority for the use of water creates the principal barrier to effective and efficient management of this critical resource.

At least four separate agencies share primary responsibility for regulating water use or ensuring adequate water delivery to the public: (i) the Department of Drainage and Irrigation (Ministry of Agriculture) regulates the uses of water for irrigation of farmland; (ii) the Department of Lands (in the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources) has responsibility for the utilization and management of water resources within river basins; (iii) the Department of Mineral Resources (in the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources) has authority for licensing the abstraction of groundwater to be used for production of bottled mineral water; and (iv) the Water and Sewerage Section, Public Works Department (PWD) (in the Ministry of Works) is involved with the delivery of safe drinking water to the public, primarily in urban areas. Correspondingly, there is no piece of legislation that confers authority on a single government entity for water management. As a result, there is no clear ownership within any single government department when it comes to addressing the issues of regulating, managing, and delivering water resources and services.

Provision of reliable potable water sources on the smaller outer islands is problematic, since these small low-lying islands lack significant freshwater aquifers or lenses. Here, rainwater collected in roof catchment systems provides the principal source of drinkable water for residents. The Ministry of Provincial Development is conducting programs in outer island locations (Lau and Yasawa Groups) to develop improved roof catchment and ferro-cement or plastic storage tank systems. At some sites, desalinization facilities are being planned.

Wastewater management, though not as fragmented as the management of clean water resources, is also problematic. As is the case for water supply, the Water and Sewerage Section of the Public Works Department has responsibility to provide sewerage services to users, primarily in urban areas.¹⁶ In rural areas, responsibility for ensuring that wastewater is safely disposed of rests with the respective Rural Local Authorities, but in reality is often left to individual landowners to deal with. It is estimated that more than 50

percent of the rural population does not have access to proper waste disposal services. In areas where no sewerage connection is available, typically septic tanks are employed. Peri-urban populations are also underserved, although ultimately, a number of the sewerage systems serving urban areas may be expanded to reach peri-urban communities as well.

Government is presently considering ways in which the issues of water and wastewater management can be addressed in a more integrated manner. A National Water Policy statement has been drafted, and consultations with stakeholders are ongoing, which can hopefully lead to a comprehensive and integrated “Water Resources Management Act” being developed and put in place by 2005. Given the overlapping and sometimes conflicting responsibilities ascribed to various ministries at present, creation of a new ministry may be required to fully harmonize and integrate the responsibilities that are now divided among multiple departments, and this is being considered as one possible institutional scenario.

7. Measures to improve and develop infrastructure to enhance distribution to markets

Since a large proportion of agricultural produce such as root crops, fruits, vegetables and fish are marketed fresh locally, development of appropriate post-harvest processing and storage technologies are extremely important. Government provides annual budgetary support for market access roads. State assistance is also provided to Agro Marketing Authority and Food Processors United which facilitate marketing of agricultural produce.

8. Measures taken to diversify agricultural production systems, including development of new markets for value-added agricultural products

In the recent years, there has been a significant development of agro-processing industries and considerable opportunities exist for further expansion and diversification in this area to produce value-added products. This will generate employment opportunities in rural areas.

Some of the major agro-industries include sugar, industrial alcohol and spirits (from molasses), processing of ginger, fruits and rice, coconut (copra and oil) coconut cream and soap manufacture.

The processing of livestock products remains rudimentary except for milk processing (butter and powdered milk), meat canning and processed sausages

There is a huge potential agro-processing of taro, banana and breadfruit into chip. Agro-processing by private sector is limited except for Punjas and Motibhai going into commercial production.

The establishment of Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA) through Government assistance with rural market centers at various localities is anticipated to facilitate marketing of agricultural produce for local and overseas markets.