



**Remarks
by
Ethel Tebengi Frances
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock for
the Solomon Islands
at**

United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021: Pre-Summit, 26-28 July 2021

Honorable Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Warm Greetings from the Solomon Islands.

The Solomon Islands Government extends its appreciation to the United Nations and the Government of Italy for organizing this first major hybrid structured meeting event in light of the COVID-19 era we are now in. Whilst we may not be with you physically in Rome, Solomon Islands is honoured to be participating virtually in this very important ‘United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021: Pre-Summit’.

The Solomon Islands contemporary food systems was underperforming even before the COVID19 health pandemic and has seen its worst since. People are unable to afford healthy diets and the way in which we produce, process, trade and consume food is taking a high toll on our health, environment and economic growth. While this current health pandemic may ushered in many sad incidences and devastates economies around the globe, including us, it is offering an opportunity for us to rethink our food system, to redesign new path for self-reliance and access to healthy nutritious affordable food for better health and wealth creation in 2030.

Solomon Islands underlying challenges to its food systems includes;

- High levels of food insecurity among rural and urban population;
- Dependency on imported processed food is changing our patterns of food consumption with cheaper imported foods increasingly forming part of Solomon Islander diets, with consequent health implications including malnutrition and a rise in non-communicable diseases;
- Highly agricultural society but predominantly on subsistence farming against a 3% population growth meant local production is not supplying to the demand, this is exacerbated by depletion of natural resources and limited access to land;
- Therefore food access and affordability remains a key challenge: annual consumption expenditure urban household twice the rural expenditure as they mostly have to purchase the food;
- Increased vulnerability of food systems to shocks and stresses (climate change, COVID-19 etc.) and environment degradation (impacts on land and marine resources, as pollution and biodiversity loss)
- High gender inequality issues that affect the agriculture food systems as women play important roles in food production, processing and marketing in the country;
- Inadequate national annual financial budget allocation to support the agricultural sector production of nutritious food; and,
- Rising unemployment high among median sector (15 – 30 yrs) of the population with consequential effects on the health services and the economy, as this is the productive sector of the population which should be utilized to grow the economy, let alone pay taxes to pay for services such as health, education, infrastructure, security, etc.
- with susceptibility to the impacts of climate change such as rapid sea level rise and increasing natural disasters, our limited arable land and freshwater resources, fragile land and marine environment and vulnerability to external economic shocks to name a few.

Some of the priority actions needed in light of these challenges to shift our national food systems to its desired state by 2030 requires the:

- 1) Promotion of resilient local food production systems, less dependent on distant supply sources to increase accessibility, availability, affordability and diversity of nutritious food for all Solomon Islanders
- 2) Enhancement of efficient food supply chains, adding value to agriculture (including fisheries and forestry) products for the export as well as domestic market

- 3) Facilitating and encouraging changes in consumer behaviour
- 4) Generating opportunities for decent jobs and income opportunities across the food system in an inclusive manner
- 5) Creating an enabling environment for innovation and research, and providing public access to information and best practices that promote sustainable growth of the Agriculture Sector

Aligning these needed actions to government policy priorities is essential for resourcing purposes. Analyzing our existing food systems to identify critical trade-offs and current practices for achieving synergies is critical to successful delivery of our desired 2030 targets.

On that, chair, excellences and colleagues, Solomon Islands current redirection policy is *economic recovery and health* and our National Development Strategy 2016-2035 visions are a sustained and inclusive economic growth, poverty alleviation, improved food security and access to good health and education. Therefore our theme for the Food Systems 2030 is *Sustainable Food System for Health and Wealth*.

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