

**Republic of Palau Remarks delivered by the
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Environment:
Video Remarks to the UN Pre-Summit on
Global Food Systems**

Alii from Palau

Food plays a big role in our tropical island nation. Food is how we strengthen relationships and connect families; how we welcome visitors and send off guests; how we express our culture and keep our traditions alive. Taro and fish are the cornerstones of our society.

Transforming our food system requires a whole of society response.

Palau has never shied away from a challenge. With only a small population, our societal bonds are strong, and we are tightly connected. Our deep culture of sharing and collective responsibility has allowed us to tackle big problems with big solutions. We have created a framework of Protected Areas Network that brings together our communities, State Governments, multiple National Government Ministries, and NGOs into a coherent system that protects, funds, and manages lands and waters for our peoples' future. In addition we have created a National Healthcare system, jointly implemented across Bureaus of health, finance, infrastructure, and the private sector, that supports every employee in the country and ensures a minimum - and dignified - standard of care for all. We have developed our domestic fishery to

provide sustainably caught fish to feed ourselves and for limited export. Throughout these initiatives, we have relied on our global partnerships for technical expertise, sustainable financing, and innovative ideas. Together with our partners, we have successfully transformed our systems in the past, and we will do so now with our food system.

Transforming our food system requires transforming our perspective. So far, the responsibility for our food system has fallen on our Bureau of Agriculture and Bureau of Fisheries alone. Yet, ensuring that farming supports desirable jobs, that crops contribute to health, and that food supports our cultural practices, requires a combined and comprehensive government process focused on economic and societal aspects of food more so than on the environment. Palau is committed to reforming our national government's fragmented approach to food, and to coherently managing the economic, societal, cultural, and environmental aspects of agricultural production. Just as we manage national emergencies across sectors, we will manage our food system across sectors as well.

Increasing our resilience requires replacing imported foods with diverse, healthy agricultural products while simultaneously increasing our economic, societal, cultural, and environmental resilience. Our long-term goals mean we need to triple our agricultural production while tackling a climate crisis that brings both storms, draughts, and rising seas. Our global partnerships are essential to collectively raising the bar on improved access to nutritional food for everyone, and to utilizing the best available traditional knowledge and modern innovation to maximize yield

with minimal impact on our environment. Doing this will rely heavily on our culture of sharing.

We need to change our perspective about healthy food. On our lush islands, there are literally vitamins growing off every tree. We will expand our outreach programs across every sector - from farming to dining - and focus on our youth as drivers of change and to celebrate the healthy foods that our islands can produce.

The Government is committed to serving sustainably fished pelagic fish at government functions; and we will make this same commitment about nutritious crops as well. Our government buying power can support more nutritionally balanced diets, especially for our most vulnerable Palauan people, and thus secure livelihoods for more Palauan farmers.

Our culture will always guide us. From educational programs that increase the number of Palauan cooks making traditional foods or creating innovative local recipes, to linking our individual sectors' data systems to each other, to using our customary networks to recycle food waste arising from customary events, we in Palau are excited about the transformation we are about to make.

We look forward to welcoming you to Palau and sharing our fresh, nutritious, sustainably farmed food with you!

Thank you and Mesulang....