



**Statement of the
Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forests, and Minister for Fisheries of the
KINGDOM of TONGA**

Lord Tu'ilakepa

**on the occasion of the
United Nations Food Systems Summit**

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Pre-recorded Statement
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Check Against Delivery

Mr. President,

I am pleased to be given the opportunity to join other leaders in such a critical and timely call for a revamp of our food systems at this historic “*2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit*”, while under one of the deadliest pandemics in history, the COVID-19. It is evident that the food supply chain is crumbling in many parts of the world due to the impacts of the global pandemic. Many people are severely affected with food shortages because of disruptions to the chain in the production, storage, and distribution system of food. Hence, the world is increasingly more food insecure.

While the remoteness of Tonga from the rest of the world could be viewed as a challenge to development and the trading system, the global pandemic has proven it otherwise in our country who remains COVID-19 free. Given it is increasingly relying on innutritious imported foods while struggling to control the rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) owing to its heavy consumption of unhealthy imported foods – trading halt can be seen as a blessing in disguise at this point. According to a recent study, about 80% of all deaths in Tonga are attributable to NCDs compared to the global average of 70%. The call for a serious revamp of the system to a more healthier and nutritious food systems for Tonga is therefore needed, more than ever, at this juncture.

Mr. President,

Tonga was able to hold Food Systems Committee consultations and the National Food Systems Summit Dialogue leading to this summit, recognizing the need for the country to revamp its Food Systems through the development of a roadmap that will address key pillars of the food systems based on a **sustainable, health, safe and secure** methods of processing, storage and distribution of food within the country.

Accordingly, our national dialogue acknowledged, after holding extensive consultations, four key areas that Tonga proposes to develop in the next 10 years in order to accomplish a sound, equitable and sustainable food systems by 2030, which are the: 1) Fishery Sector; 2) Livestock Sector; 3) Agriculture Sector; and 4) Local Food Processing, Manufacturing, Value Added and Primary Industry. The outcomes of the National Dialogue on Food Systems Summit emphasize special developments on the production sectors and the processing sector to ensure: 1) Food security and nutritious food are available and accessible at all times; 2) People are educated to understand how eating nutritious food help to minimize NCDs; 3) That the Food Systems development is environment-friendly; 4) That Food System development will create employment and to assist the most vulnerable groups in the society; and 5) Food System transformation must enhance Equity and Livelihood;

This summit has given us more a focused outlook in reaffirming the need to ensure sustainable and secure food systems with nutritious food made available and accessible to all while processed in an environment-friendly manner. We look forward to innovative solutions shared among Member States after this summit with the view to a robust recovery from the pandemic thereby taking this agenda forward in support of the achievements of SDGs by 2030.

I thank you.