

**GOVERNMENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF VANUATU**

**MINISTRY OF
AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK,
FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND
BIOSECURITY**

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**GOUVERNEMENT DE LA
REPUBLIQUE DE VANUATU**

**MINISTERE de L'AGRICULTURE,
de L'ELEVAGE, de la
SYLVICULTURE, des PECHES et
de la BIOSECURITE**

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OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

Agri-Tourism Policy Setting Workshop

*organized by the Government of Vanuatu and CTA
in collaboration with ICCA and PIPSO*

Port Vila, Vanuatu, 25-27 May 2016

OFFICIAL CLOSING SPEECH

Delivered by Hon Matai Seremaiah Nawalu, Friday 27 May
Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity

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- Madame Isolina Boto, from CTA
 - Madame Ena Harvey, Distinguished Delegate from Caribbean
 - Madame Mereia Volavola from PIPSO
 - Distinguished representative from the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)
 - Representative from Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)
 - Private Sector Representatives
 - Mr. Howard Aru, Director General, Ministry of Agriculture
 - Government Directors
 - Officials
 - Ladies & Gentlemen

1. Tourism is growing at a very fast rate in Vanuatu, and thus the number of Visitors to our shores continue to increase. Tourism contributes some 40% of GDP.
2. Some of our key challenges for the Tourism industry include the following:
 - i) The rural population which makes up 80% benefit marginally from tourism. This 80% portion of the population are involved mainly in subsistence farming.
 - ii) Leakage of the Tourism Dollar is quite high as the tourism industry continue to rely primarily on imported goods.
3. We believe this first-ever Agri-Tourism Policy Setting Workshop which was convened here at Le Lagoon over the last 3 days is quite a timely and welcome initiative for Vanuatu.

It is my sincere belief that outcomes of the this workshop including other similar meetings of this nature will assist the Government to refocus our policy objectives in order to address key linkages between other primary sectors in order that we derive maximum benefits from Tourism Development.

The key is using Tourism as the band-wagon whereby other primary sectors could capitalize on tourism industry by supplying local produce. If the hoteliers and farmers can dialogue and identify markets for locally-grown produce then our biggest market could be the tourism industry.

Agri-Tourism provides an excellent opportunity not only for broadening our tourism base by diversifying the visitor experience, but also offers the potential for sustainable and healthy farm experiences and eating healthy food.

The potential for retaining foreign exchange at the communities is huge as the rural population participates in supplying local produce for the hotel industry.

4. Agri-Tourism calls for all of us both government, private sector, regional institutions and organizations to establish lasting Partnerships. The Agri-Tourism Task Force which was established by my Ministry and the Ministry of Trade & Tourism last month must be seen to be active in order to facilitate and coordinate the relevant stakeholders and important networking if we are to derive any benefits.
- i) These are some of the Important Government institutions directly involve in Agri-Tourism. Tourism, Agriculture, livestock, fisheries, industry, health and Provincial authorities
 - ii) Within Private Sector – between tourism, manufacturing and processing. I wish to see the Ministry of Trade & Tourism take the lead to ensure that hotels are in dialogue with local farmers to look at possibilities of utilizing local food and fruits by the hotels.
 - iii) As Minister of Agriculture, likewise I wish to see the farmers engaging in regular dialogue with department of Agriculture, departments of Livestock, department of Forestry, and department of Fisheries to coordinate their supply chain to look at the importance of :
 - a) Quality of product
 - b) Price of product must be affordable to tourism
 - c) Consistency of supply

At this juncture, I take this opportunity to thank the funding agencies being CTA and ADB for making it possible to host this first-ever local Agri-Tourism policy-setting workshop. This is the first ever, but it is my hope that we will continue to talk and look to hosting additional workshops of this nature in the near future.

I do not believe tourists and all visitors to our shores should be eating imported food. I encourage the Local Agri-Tourism Steering Committee to meet regularly to address the issues addressed at this gathering and implement the strategies.

An important activity that is being mandated by the government to profile Agri-Tourism is a planned “Agri-Tourism Week”. It is envisaged that more advocacy and awareness of the importance of Agri-Tourism would be the highlight of the week-long festivities.

In conclusion, I wish to thank our distinguished delegates from CTA, PIPSO, IICA, and our distinguished Presenter from the Caribbean for the excellent presentations and sharing of live examples of Agri-Tourism initiatives at play in other parts of the world. Merci Beacoup!

Before you leave our shores, please take time to go out and see what Vanuatu has to offer but most importantly, that you make an effort to eat our local food and fruits.

Before I sit down I now have the pleasure, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu to declare the first-ever agri-tourism workshop for Vanuatu OFFICIALLY CLOSED.

Thank you.