Policy setting for improved linkages between agriculture, trade and tourism: Strengthening the local agrifood sector and promoting healthy food in agritourism

Workshop organised by the Government of Solomon Islands in collaboration with PIPSO, SPTO, CTA, IFAD, SPC/PAPP

Honiara, Solomon Islands, 21-22 November 2017

1. Background

Promoting linkages between agriculture and tourism-related markets for improved food and nutrition security

Tourism is the lifeblood of many Pacific economies and agritourism provides a promising avenue for diversification and trade growth. High quality, nutritious and healthy food, available every day of the year, is critical to hotels, lodges and resorts. Often the food purchasing bill of a tourism site is large in comparison to the size of the local economy, yet surprisingly little of this is spent locally, even when supplies are available from farmers, fishermen and small-scale agribusinesses. The challenges of shifting food-sourcing to local suppliers are considerable – achieving this in a way that meets commercial needs and customer preferences and meets food and safety requirements would be one way in which tourism operations can significantly increase their contribution to local economic development.

Tourism has the potential to stimulate demand in the agriculture sector, promote healthy and nutritious food and strengthen the use of local products, so it is important to create linkages between the two, and to develop a policy on agritourism. In addition to the strong economic value of developing a sustainable tourism sector, enhancing the linkages between tourism and agriculture represents an important potential mechanism to stimulate and strengthen traditional local producers and processors and to improve the distribution of benefits along the chain as well as generate investment incentives for local production. The trade policy environment should be more favourable to the private sector and investment, while supporting local entrepreneurs and SMEs through appropriate measures that address import substitution, notably in the form of tariff and non-tariff barriers.

Linkages between agriculture, health and tourism not only potentially increase opportunities for domestic agriculture earnings, new markets and product development and therefore sustainable economic growth, but also offer opportunities to help develop visitor attractions and distinctive tourism destination brands through the creative use and marketing of local produce and production techniques, and use of local landscapes. In order to acquire these benefits, the tourism industry needs to be proactive in utilizing local, high quality, healthy and niche agricultural products in touristic sites and events.

Solomon Is has 40% of the market share in the Pacific Tourism market and it is the biggest tourist destination. Tourist arrivals is almost hitting the one million mark. It has natural and cultural potential to develop its tourist market further by diversifying its tourism policy and strengthening its linkages with the agriculture industry. This will increase resilience of food systems and incomes for rural communities. A policy on agritourism will also develop linkages
with the health sector ensuring that it supports national campaigns towards nutritious and healthy food (embedded in the concept of quality food referred above).

2. Context

The Agribusiness Forum held on 1-3 July 2015 in Denarau as part of the Pacific Agritourism Week, was organised by Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community’s (SPC) and the ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA).

It highlighted successes in strengthening links between agriculture and tourism industries in the Pacific region. A major challenge identified was the lack of favourable policies in place to encourage linkages between agriculture, tourism and trade policies and the need to design and develop Agritourism policies which would facilitate those linkages at national and regional levels. An added element is to link with Health Ministry to promote quality products and healthy food as niche markets.

In view of the positive experience of Vanuatu and Samoa and the greater opportunities in agriculture and tourism in Solomon Is, it recommended supporting an Agritourism policy-setting for Solomon Is which will develop further linkages between agriculture, trade and tourism sectors to support local businesses in serving tourism-related markets.

3. Agriculture and Tourism: Enhancing the Strategic Partnership

According to the FAO (2010), the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors make up about 40 percent of GDP and provide the country’s top three export commodities timber, fish and copra. With an estimated 84% of the population depending directly on the sector, a critical challenge is developing agriculture to stimulate growth in the rural economy and rural incomes. This will be essential to achieve poverty alleviation, manageable rural urban migration, and ultimately societal stability. Whilst there is substantial potential for smallholders to promote agriculture as a driver of economic development in rural areas, this needs to be supported by strengthened institutions, improved infrastructure and appropriate research and extension that emphasizes smallholders, and has an adequate focus on traditional crops. Current production is primarily subsistence, but Solomon Islands’ has substantial arable land available to expand agriculture, and has a climate and soils, which could be harnessed to supply specialty and seasonal products to industrial country markets. The livestock sub-sector consists of local inbred pigs and chickens, which are an integral part of the traditional agricultural systems, as well as some commercial ventures involving cattle, chickens and pigs. Currently the livestock industry in the country is very limited and meat is imported largely from Australia, New Zealand and Vanuatu. Given the robust demand for both fresh and processed meat, potential for import substitution is an important issue for the sub-sector.

According to the ESCAP Country Review Report in 2010, as a productive sector, agriculture is the single most crucial to the wellbeing of Solomon Islanders. Food crops and tubers are mostly for own consumption and, if sold, only at the local market. Only crops such as cocoa, copra, oil palm, kava, and other root crops are being exported. Agriculture, with fisheries and tourism, is identified in the Medium Term Fiscal Strategy as one of the highest priority economic sectors to be developed. Root crop development, livestock development and vegetables production are the major agricultural economic activities. Root crop development is dominated by rural people, 12 with 94.90% of producers in the rural areas. In terms of livestock and vegetable developments, 91.68 % and 95.59% are in the rural areas respectively.

Tourism has long been touted as having the potential to lead economic development in the Solomon Islands. On many occasions since independence, governments have proposed ambitious visitor number targets, and have always fallen short. However for the last three years, there are promising signs of increase in tourist arrivals. According to Joe Tuamoto, the CEO for Solomon is Visitors Bureau, international visitation in 2016 increased by 7.3 per cent on the previous year when speaking to the Business Advantage in PNG. He added that it was the third year in a row that numbers have risen. The Solomon Islands Government expects that tourism, which is currently one of the country’s top five economic pillars, to become the number one
source of foreign exchange earnings within the next five-to-10 years. Priority is now being placed on tourism development and an effort is being taken to facilitate growth under the country’s National Tourism Policy, as well as bring focus to bear on upgrading tourism accommodation and product

With international visitor expenditure reaching an estimated SBD233 million (US$30 million) in 2016 and annual visitation continuing to increase year on year, the Solomon Islands tourism sector is well on track to becoming an economic pillar for the South Pacific nation. This positive news has been revealed in an intensive study commissioned by the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau and delivered by Sydney-based Stollznow Research to Solomon Islands Government and industry representatives in Honiara.

Key findings presented by Researcher Neil Stollznow show that Australian visitation continues to dominate the Solomon Islands tourism landscape, accounting for more than half of all visitors (53%) with leisure traffic accounting for 30% of the country’s overall annual total. The main reasons cited for visiting the Solomon Islands remain ‘rest and relaxation’ (38%) followed by SCUBA diving which accounts for 28% of all leisure-based arrivals.

Some of the key issues which need to be considered in developing agritourism linkage policy in Solomon Is are as follows:

**At the level of the public sector, agritourism linkages need to be prioritized through:**

- Multisectoral approaches: Agriculture (including fisheries), trade, health, environment and tourism policies are developed separately from each other and very few linkages are identified or pursued.
- Promoting quality food: the nature of island economies having limited land availability justifies focusing on quality and healthy food which contributes to food and nutrition security of local and foreign tourists.
- Branding: there is a need for public campaigns to brand Solomon Is as a unique tourist destination with a strong food and culinary offer. Awareness campaigns should target consumers (locals and tourists) on the various uses and benefits of local products (providing information on nutrition and health characteristics).
- Support to farmer’s organisations production and marketing capacity: There is a need to create new opportunities for women and youth farmers, families and communities in promoting the use of local food.
- Support for coastal fisheries community to support the quality supplies of seafood and assist the women involved in fisheries.
- Increased setting up/compliance of food safety regulations is needed to strengthen the reputation of the health and nutrition quality of local foods. Rating system for food health will reassure tourists.
- Education programmes which feature the various dimensions in the use of local food need to be strengthened which include the nutritional value.
- Promoting access to affordable ICTs and platforms, particularly with respect to the types of crops planted and available, fisheries products available, processing companies and available products, disaggregated demand from local fresh market and distribution sectors, and from hospitality, tourism, and airlines, artisanal actors and their products, level of exports, *inter alia*.

**Private sector has a significant role to play in agritourism development**

- There is a need for a collaborative effort by the private sector actors (including farmers’ networks, processors, artisans, service providers and investors) to work with the various ministries to put in place policies and strategies that bring together the tourism and agriculture industries.
- Farmers’ and fisherfolk organisations need to be strengthened and linked with the agribusiness and craft industries to add value to products.
• SMEs need to focus on product development, product differentiation, marketing and branding to add value to their fresh and processed products. They also need to invest in technology and research to develop their products successfully.
• Developing/strengthening niche markets: Organics, fair trade and origin-linked products can provide a comparative advantage for Solomon Is.
• Multi-stakeholder national platforms need to be established to influence policy bringing the various perspectives from agriculture, trade, health, tourism.

4. Goal and Objectives

Goal: To promote sustainable use of local food by the tourism industry through strengthened intersectoral policies.

Objectives:
- To promote linkages between the agrifood sector and the tourism industry to increase sustainable local sourcing though an agritourism policy in Solomon Islands
- To increase the understanding and awareness of the current deficiencies in the supply of produce along the value chain and to identify the actions needed, including specific projects to upscale
- To design inter-sectoral and inclusive policies which promote PPPs for improved local food use and consumption
- To provide elements for a regional strategy in agritourism development

5. Participants
Government officials from Agriculture, Trade, Health and Tourism ministries, private sector, chefs and actors from the hospitality sector, civil society and academia. International and regional partners will share their experience.

6. Partners
The policy process is led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Tourism of Solomon Islands in close collaboration with the other ministries and private sector representatives. Regional and international partners include PIPSO, SPTO, CTA, IFAD and SPC.

7. Expected results
- A better common understanding of the opportunities in agritourism in Solomon Islands
- A platform promoting linkages between Trade, Agriculture, Tourism and Health is established
- Identification of priority areas for development and support by development partners which will lead to identification of projects
- The main elements of the Strategy/policy on agritourism developed and validated by the multi-sectoral focus group
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PROGRAMME

**Tuesday 21st November 2017**

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<tr>
<td>8h30-9h00</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>9h00-9h15</td>
<td>Opening Address</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs &amp; External Trade, Mr George M Tozaka</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Livestock</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Honourable Minister of Culture &amp; Tourism</strong></td>
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<td>9h15-11h</td>
<td>Session 1: Setting the scene: what do we know about opportunities to support linkages between agriculture, trade, tourism and health</td>
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This session will set the scene on the opportunities that the tourism sector can bring and the needed linkages with other sectors such as agriculture and trade. It will look at successful models in other countries and regions and what could of interest to Solomon Island agritourism policy.

**Moderator:** Solomon Islands

- Setting the scene: Agritourism Policy for Solomon Islands
  *Permanent Secretary Agriculture & Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture, Solomon Islands*
- Global trends and evolution of agritourism and food tourism
  *Isolina Boto, Manager, CTA Brussels Office*
- Promoting Food Tourism and Strengthening Chefs’ Skills Across the Pacific
  *Josefa (Joe) Tuamoto, Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau (SIVB) and SPTO Board*
- Agritourism Development in the Pacific
  *Kristyn Lobendahn, Programme Officer, PIPSO*
- Learning from Asian successes
  *Ron Hartman, Country Director, IFAD South East Asia and the Pacific Sub-Regional Office (tbc)*

Moderated discussion on key messages for Solomon Island context

**11h00-11h15 Coffee Break**
11h15-13h00: The Solomon Is context: Opportunities for Agritourism Development

This session will look at the Solomon Is context. It aims at reaching a better common understanding of the opportunities in agritourism in Solomon Is. It will assess the situation in the key areas important to set up an agritourism policy.

Moderator: Solomon Island
- Overview of tourism development and opportunities for greater connection with the agriculture industry at policy level
  Permanent Secretary of Culture & Tourism
- Overview of main agricultural and fisheries fresh and processed products with potential for the tourism-related markets
  Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock
- International Tourists Expectation
  Joseta (Joe) Tuamoto, Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau (SIVB) and SPTO Board
- Gaps and opportunities for market linkages of agricultural products supplies to the Solomon Island tourist markets
  Dennis Meone, CEO Solomon Island Chamber of Commerce

13h00-14h00 Lunch

14h00 – 16h00 Product Development and Branding
This session will discuss key areas to promote quality product development and branding quality for the tourism-markets and will present specific examples of success.
- Challenges and Opportunities of supplying certified fresh and added-value food to the hospitality sector –What can be done better at Policy Level?
  Ministry of Agriculture and private sector
- Building seafood supplies to the Tourism Industry
  David Fatai, Honiara Fish Exporters in Solomon Islands
- Linking farmers to Agribusiness for Quality products
  Dr Shane Tutua, Kastom Garden

16h00-17h30 Working groups in each of the 3 areas to identify key elements of the strategy/policy on agritourism and proposed actions. Identify 3 key areas for priority development and support.

Wednesday 22nd November 2017

9h00-13h00 Session 2: Promoting Agritourism through Value Addition, Value Chains and Safety standards

9h15-11h00 Session continues
- Building a Brand: experiences and lessons learned
  Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Building and Branding Niche Tourism Products
  Private sector example
- Building Food Tourism in Solomon Island – What needs to be done?
  Colin Chung, Chef, Fiji
- Product Development and Branding: experiences from other regions
  Ena Harvey, Agritourism exert, IICA

11h00-11h15 Coffee Break
- Building Sustainable Value Chains in Solomon Is to Support the Tourism Industry
  *Kylie Stice, PIFON*
- Benefits and Opportunities for Value Addition Product Development
- Importance of Food Safety Standards in Agritourism – Benefits and what must be done?
  *Apiame Cegumalua / David Haberfield, Food Safety Expert*

13h00-14h00 Lunch

**14h00- 16h00 Chefs for Development: the link between agriculture & cuisine**

This session will look at the role of chefs and the hospitality sector in stimulating demand of local products and its use by chefs. It will share experiences from other regions and contribute to the Chefs for Development Platform.
- Trends and expectations of international visitors
  *Kelera Cavullati, Executive Adviser, SPTO*
- Best practices and new opportunities in sourcing local food by the Chefs and linking with agribusiness actors
  *Solomon Island Chef*
- Promoting Food festivals and Food celebrations
  *Experience from Solomon Islands*
  *Experience from Vanuatu*

14h00-17h30  **Agritourism Policy Consideration and Priority Developments – Group Presentations**

Key elements of the strategy/policy on agritourism and proposed actions. Identify 3 key areas for priority development and support.

**Conclusion** — Moderator provides concluding remarks focusing on agreed future actions