July 2021

SUMMARY BRIEF

Advancing Blue Pacific Food Systems

Convenor Summary of the Pacific Regional Dialogue 2021

Introduction

Pacific countries and territories face formidable hurdles in realising equitable benefits from the global food system. This is despite the long history and culture of sustainably managing the ocean and land, which has supported Pacific communities for generations. Supporting and augmenting robust food cultures are core pillars of advancing the Pacific's contribution to global food systems and managing the escalating challenges facing communities and ecosystems.

Multiple global threats are impacting Pacific people and ecosystems. Climate change and climate-related disasters pose a critical threat to Pacific food systems, for example with the increasing risk of pathogens and pests, and through increasing water security vulnerability. The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact Pacific food exports of horticulture products and tuna, and the lockdowns and reduction in tourism have continued to impact rural communities supplying food to local markets.

Within this context, food systems stakeholders in the Pacific have organised several UN Food Systems Dialogues. This brief provides:

1. **A summary of major contexts for Pacific food systems for the Food Systems Summit.**
2. **Lessons from the Regional UN Food Systems Dialogue Summits of what the Pacific is doing to support food systems futures.**
3. **A summary of Action Track calls to address food system challenges.**

A detailed summary contextualising the challenges and contributions of the Pacific Food System can be found in the evidence brief prepared in the lead up to the Regional Dialogue, available here.

Pacific Dialogues held April–July 2021

Between April and July 2021, the Pacific region mobilised national and regional partners and agencies to catalyse conversations about the past, present, and future of food systems in the region. The dialogues held or to be held by the end of July 2021 are as follows:

Dialogue	Date	Main focus
Blue Pacific Food Systems Regional Dialogue	20 May	All Action Tracks, multi-country and multi-agency perspectives
Oceania Pasifika Organic Food Systems Dialogue	10 June	All Action Tracks, through the lens of culture, health and innovation. Organic farmer and sector perspectives
Integrated Sustainable Food Production Systems for a Resilient Pacific Dialogue	30 June	Action Track 5, multi-country and sector perspectives
Fiji (multiple dialogues)	Throughout May and June	Five dialogues, one per Action Track
Vanuatu	July	Two dialogues planned
Samoa	27 May	Varied food systems topics, including regulation, health, evidence base and livelihoods
Papua New Guinea	12 May	Sub-national (regional/provinces) Food System Summit Dialogue: Highlands, Morobe and Madang provinces
Kiribati	June and July	Four dialogues focused on nutrition, nature, resilience, and pathways
Nauru	30 June and 14 July	Two dialogues
Tonga	28, 23 and 25 June, 14 July	Sector specific (livestock, fisheries, agriculture) and national specific focus
Palau	July	
Federated States of Micronesia	7–9 and 13–15 July	National stakeholder and five Action Tracks focus
Solomon Islands	Two dialogues in July	Draft Agricultural Strategy focus
Tuvalu	Two dialogues in July	In planning

Pacific food systems: The context of each Food Systems Summit Action Track

The Pacific food system is globally unique. It is made up of interactions between 22 countries and territories, a diversity of cultures, and distinct landforms and agro-ecological zones. The ocean and agriculture are both vital for Pacific food systems, livelihoods and economies. Between 50 and 70 per cent of Pacific people depend on agriculture and fishing and associated activities for their livelihoods. Coastal fisheries provide a primary or secondary source of income for up to 50 per cent of households.[1] Freshwater resources are varied, with future scarcity posing a food security risk.[2] Pacific countries have significant trade deficits and increasing dependence on imported food. The Pacific, as a whole, is not on track to achieve SDG 2.[3] Health outcomes from food consumption are an increasing challenge, with some of the highest rates of non-communicable diseases in the world, and mal- and under-nutrition persistent in some countries.[4]

During the 20 May UN Global Food Systems Summit Pacific Regional Dialogue, over 100 participants discussed how Pacific contexts are related to the five Action Tracks for the Summit (Table 1).

Table 1: Pacific contexts for the five Action Tracks

ACTION TRACK	CONTEXT IN THE PACIFIC FOOD SYSTEM
AT1: Ensure safe and nutritious food for all	Traditional nutrition-rich Pacific diets have deteriorated. Trade systems, while enhancing access to diverse food and facilitating economic growth and prosperity, have also created food environments that lead to negative health outcomes, contributing to an NCD crisis in Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). The large geographic area and small populations create challenges for food distribution. Climate change and energy shocks create vulnerabilities in the food supply.
AT2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns	International food value chain sustainability impacts the Pacific's ability to source sustainable food. There are high levels of non-communicable diseases, which are one of the leading causes of premature death. Several PICTs are among the top 10 countries in the world with the highest rates of diabetes. Convenience foods are overpackaged and contribute to increasing waste problems.
AT3: Boost nature positive production	Agroforestry and integrated small-scale systems are common in PICTs. Land has been cleared for food and cash commodities, causing biodiversity loss, soil erosion and water pollution. Ridge-to-reef initiatives link coastal areas with agricultural production systems.
AT4: Advance equitable livelihoods	Poverty and inequality are growing in the Pacific and this influences the food security of different socio-economic groups. Family-based approaches to farming and community-based approaches to managing fisheries are widespread. Women play a critical role in household nutrition and food security and income, but their contribution is not always recognised or supported.
AT5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stress	'Slow shocks' are occurring in areas such as water quality and availability, soil degradation, NCDs and poverty. 'Extreme and cumulative shocks' are also occurring in areas such as Pacific economies, COVID-19, and the increasing frequency and impact of hazards, including cyclones, flooding events, drought and salinity. This is in addition to existing variability from drivers including El Niño and La Niña. Water vulnerability and security are a problem, with unpredictable variability on high islands and increasing scarcity and vulnerability on atolls.

1 SPC (2015). A new song for coastal fisheries pathways to change: The Noumea strategy. Noumea, Pacific Community.

2 Dixon-Jain, P., et al. (2014). Pacific Island Groundwater and Future Climates: First-pass regional vulnerability assessment, Geoscience Australia.

3 UNDP (2018). 2018 Pacific SDGs Progress Wheels, United Nations Development Programme.

4 Win Tin, S. T., et al. (2020). "Baseline status of policy and legislation actions to address non communicable diseases crisis in the Pacific." BMC Public Health 20(1): 660.

Summary of findings from the Blue Pacific Regional Pacific Dialogue (20 May)

As part of the Pacific strength-based approach to development challenges, dialogue participants discussed the major drivers of change for the Action Tracks, as well as Pacific contributions and needs in each Action Track. These are visualised in Figure 1.

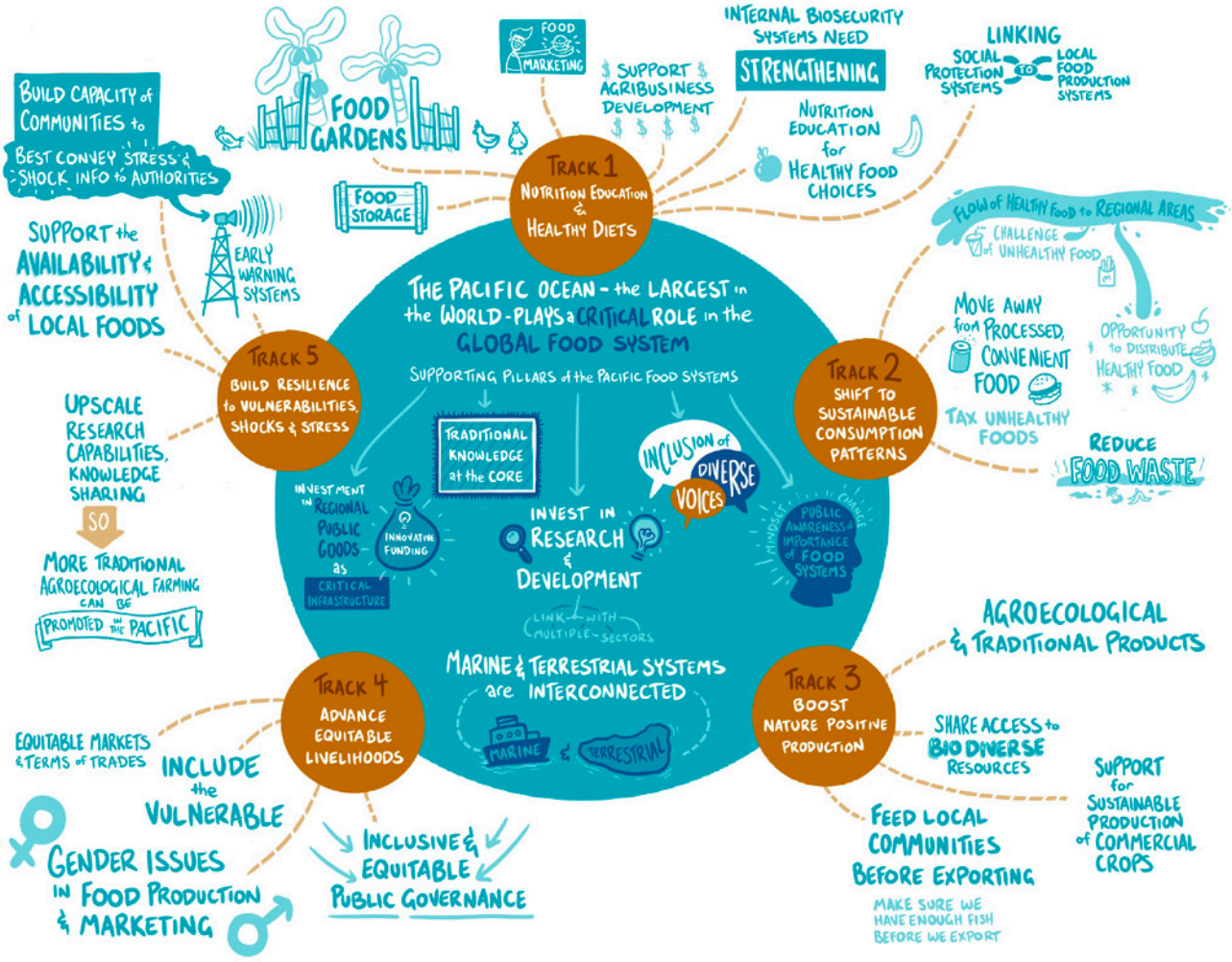

Figure 1: Summary of Action Tracks for the Blue Pacific Food Systems

Finding 1: The Pacific Ocean plays a critical role in the global food system

1. Pacific fisheries are of global importance and the global community has a stake in contributing to the sustainable management of this shared asset.
2. Pacific people have deep knowledge and strong governance systems for the sustainable stewardship of ocean resources, as demonstrated by the sustainable management of Pacific tuna fisheries today. Further global investment is required in the science, governance and management of this invaluable shared resource given future climate and economic pressures.

Finding 2: Pacific traditional and indigenous knowledge and technology are an important lever for the future

1. Future food interventions must better leverage traditional and indigenous knowledge in combination with Western science and technology.
2. Innovative food interventions can use a blend of traditional knowledge with emerging science, social science, policy, business, and technology initiatives.

Finding 3: Sustainable management practices based on evidence can transform agriculture and fisheries

1. There is increasing Pacific evidence of how agroecology, regenerative farming, and community-based fisheries and forest management can support livelihoods
2. Improving circularity and integration between aquatic and land systems can help develop blue and green economies.
3. Innovations in land and sea production must include local communities, and technology implementation must be place-based and co-developed with communities and users.
4. Improved monitoring and data collection of food system activities is essential but requires strong ongoing support and coordination.

Finding 4: Redefining trade systems to improve Pacific food system outcomes

1. A combination of improved food governance, education programmes, technical innovations for traditional foods preservation, and incentives for sustainable and healthy food can help transition diets.
2. Investment is needed in food safety infrastructure and legislation to facilitate access of Pacific food producers to markets.

Finding 5: Resilience requires innovative investment and financing models

1. There is a need for investment in regional public goods, including biosecurity, nutrition-centred disaster preparedness and response, and insurance.
2. Barriers to climate finance mechanisms in the Pacific need to be addressed and ensure that vulnerable households are better enabled to anticipate, plan and rapidly recover from shocks.

Calls for action: Findings from Action Track discussions

The Summit Dialogue enabled several calls to action for the different Action Tracks. Figure 2 summarises these calls. Table 2 provides details on each opportunity for transforming Pacific food systems.

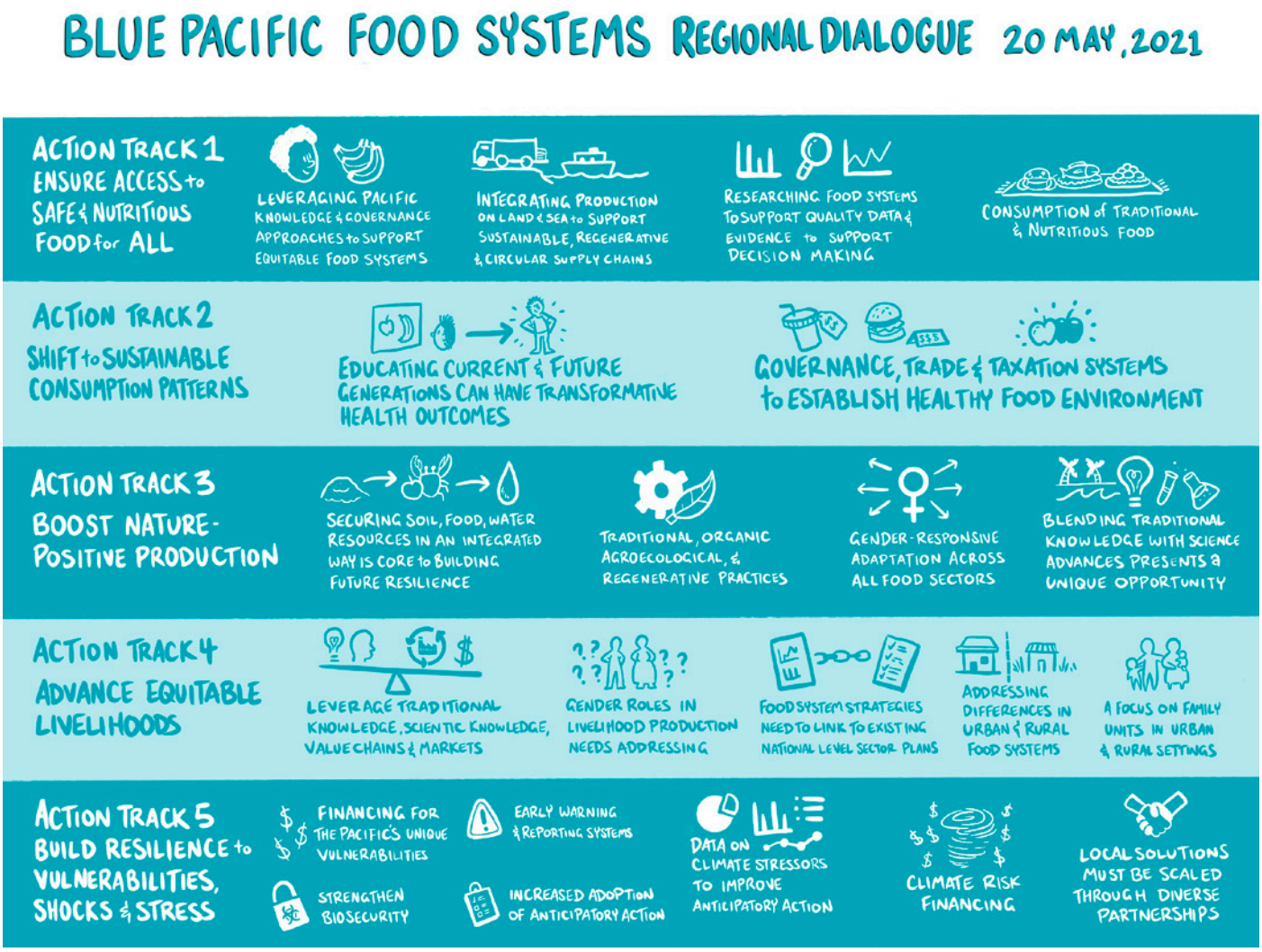

Figure 2: Summary of Action Track findings from the Blue Pacific Food Systems Summit Dialogue

Table 2: Opportunities for transforming Pacific food systems in each Action Track

ACTION TRACK	LEVERAGE POINT FOR IMPACT FROM THE ACTION TRACK	RECOMMENDED PACIFIC SOLUTIONS
AT1: Ensure safe and nutritious food for all	1. **Coordinated governance:** Food production must be supported by coherent governance and institutional frameworks to oversee sustainable production and supply of food. 2. **Traditional knowledge:** Lessons can be drawn from traditional governance of food systems resources, and contemporary sustainable management systems for land and ocean. 3. **Integrative production systems:** Land and aquatic food systems must be integrated through sustainable management practices such as agroecology, regenerative practices, and circular food systems. 4. **Commercialising:** Commercialisation of crops needs to be developed using more sustainable and resilient models. 5. **Research:** Research projects and programmes can add to and support quality data and evidence that is inclusive of Pacific islands peoples. Research needs to influence decision-making to improve food outcomes and early warning systems. 6. **Healthy consumption:** Linking traditional island foods and embedding them into youth and future programmes can help address the non-communicable disease crisis.	1. Embed healthy, local food in disaster response finance and programmes. This can be used to support traditional food producers in times of financial stress during disasters. 2. Support national governments to work across sectors – for example, a social protection and agriculture nexus – as a way of enabling systems practice in the public space. 3. Develop training, capacity building and long-term markets for commercial crops in relevant countries. 4. Amplify traditional ways of knowing and growing food through research activities, and use this evidence to support decision-making across food sectors. 5. Target poverty reduction through climate sensitive approaches, given poverty and climate change are core drivers of food insecurity.
AT2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns	1. **Education, with a focus on the youth context:** Educating current and future generations can have transformative health outcomes. Targeting youth can help save future Pacific generations and reduce health system risk. Gender-sensitive learning must be embedded into education strategies. 2. **Governance systems for healthy environments:** Trade and taxation can play a role in creating a food environment that supports healthy consumption. Both regional and international mechanisms need to support these healthy environments. 3. **Traditional food preservation:** Investing in traditional food preservation can spur innovation and local businesses, as well as act as a response measure for building community resilience.	1. Build global trade systems for the region that enable affordable healthy food for net-food importing markets. This requires global trade cooperation. 2. Target investments for smallholders to preserve foods in traditional ways and minimise food losses in value chains. 3. Enact cross-sectoral campaigns that amplify Pacific traditional foods and the importance of them for the future of Pacific people. 4. Launch certification systems that label healthy and sustainable food, targeting future tourism and local markets.
AT3: Boost nature positive production	1. **Integrated resource management:** Securing soil, food, and water resources in an integrated way is core to building future resilience. 2. **Production food in traditional ways:** Food production must amplify traditional, organic, agroecological, and regenerative practices and focus on low-input and low-impact farming methods. 3. **Systems thinking and practice on land and in oceans:** The connections between land and aquatic systems needs to be understood as an integrated and complementary contributor to food security. 4. **Gender responsive methodologies:** Gender-responsive adaptation needs to be embedded into short- and long-term climate change strategies across all food sectors, rather than just agriculture and fishing. 5. **Championing women and girls' leadership:** Women and girls need to be recognised as champions in transitioning and driving resilient farming practices. However, women's roles and contributions are hidden in the data as subsistence agriculture and fisheries are poorly monitored.	1. Develop capacities in food systems for socialising the language and practice of systems thinking in the education, government, and business sectors. 2. Ensure a more prominent place in food systems discussions on the role of oceans, fisheries and health both globally and in the region, to avoid reverting to a discussion limited to agriculture alone. 3. Build integrated land-ocean management systems that leverage traditional practices and systems 4. Support innovative extension services informed by agroecological and regenerative capacity building, with a clear focus on men and women roles and norms in food systems.

ACTION TRACK	LEVERAGE POINT FOR IMPACT FROM THE ACTION TRACK	RECOMMENDED PACIFIC SOLUTIONS
AT4: Advance equitable livelihoods	1. **Traditional Knowledge in a globalised world:** Supporting and improving livelihoods needs to leverage traditional knowledge, scientific knowledge, value chains and markets in an inclusive and coherent way to support livelihoods for all. 2. **Youth engagement and participation:** Engage youth in food system opportunities as a way to expand Pacific knowledge and technology and create opportunities for future generations to develop food markets. 3. **Linking existing national plans and strategies:** A lot of work already exists but it must be implemented and supported. Food systems strategies need to draw from and link to existing national level sector plans that already have a focus on different parts of the food system. 4. **Urban-rural divides need to be managed purposefully:** Addressing the differences between urban and rural food system needs and opportunities is important as poverty, livelihoods and food systems are differentiated throughout the region. 5. **The family unit as an asset:** A focus on the family unit in urban and rural settings is important given how important family is to food production and consumption in the Pacific.	1. Implement programmes targeted at youth futures, leveraging their capacities, training and interests to support emerging food system activities. 2. Support connections between urban consumers and food service businesses with rural food production systems. 3. Promote innovative Pacific Fair Trade and Organic mechanisms that amplify traditional knowledge and practices in agriculture.
AT5: Build resilience to vulner-abilities, shocks, and stress	1. **Innovative and sustainable climate finance models:** Pacific countries and territories are currently under-represented amongst recipients of climate-related development funding. Forecast-based financing and climate risk insurance needs to be more widely used to increase resilience. Increasing the Pacific voice in climate finance systems is critical to reduce vulnerability. 2. **Biosecurity capacity:** Biosecurity systems at national and regional levels need strengthening, given Pacific exposure and vulnerability to pest and disease outbreaks. 3. **Accurate early warning systems:** Early warning systems and integrated multi-sectoral monitoring and reporting systems need to be in place to facilitate timely responses and informed decision-making. They should incorporate telemetry and remotely-sensed data for improved coverage, accuracy and timeliness. 4. **Practice anticipatory planning with accurate data:** Planning for future shocks can greatly reduce the cost of humanitarian responses and ensure governments and vulnerable households are better enabled to anticipate, plan and rapidly recover from shocks. 5. **Blended science and traditional knowledge:** Advancing traditional preservation, replication, cultivation and genetics, including in practices such as agroforestry and organic farming, can help build resilience into farming systems. This can be supported with data and evidence of the benefits of these practices. 6. **Integration of sectors**: Strengthen integration of water and livestock management systems in farming systems offers opportunities for policy and science innovation. 7. **Equitable and diverse partnerships:** Local solutions must be scaled through diverse partnerships that include scientists, private sector actors, fisher and farmer groups and citizens to support common challenges including crop production, food waste and packaging reduction and traditional ways of preparing and sharing food.	1. Urge and join global commitments to emissions mitigations and reduction. 2. Build adaptative capacities into public and business sectors, and traditional adaptation skills embedded into adaptation programmes. 3. Manage resources (biodiversity, water, etc) with climate adaptation knowledge embedded throughout. 4. Ensure data informs evidence-based policy and programmes to support the resilience of the most vulnerable. 5. Strengthen social protection systems to be more shock responsive, including through horizontal and vertical expansions. 6. Promote climate risk finance, including forecast-based financing linked to anticipatory action and micro/inclusive insurance for the most vulnerable.

Looking towards the future

The Pacific region is actively mobilising food systems thinking and practice through governments, community groups, business and development partners, and research agencies. Pacific people have a history of using traditional and indigenous knowledge to work with the land and sea. We have also built a base of scientific and technical expertise in elements of the food system such as fisheries and resilient agriculture. Despite multiple shocks to our region, including climate, health, and socio-economic shocks, Pacific people continue to demonstrate resilience and adaptive capacity. These strengths can be built on to improve the outcomes of our food systems. The Food Systems Dialogues have helped advance food systems communities of practice in the Pacific. Through leveraging interest and traditional knowledge, combined with new transdisciplinary evidence-based solutions, the Pacific stands ready to work with partners and its diverse communities to help build sustainable and resilient food systems for the future that contribute positively to health, environment, social and livelihood outcomes for our region.

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