WORKSHOP REPORT

**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT (ICM) POLICY AND STRATEGY IN THE PACIFIC:
FROM PLAN TO ACTION**

Workshop Organized by The Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA)

in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)

Nadi, Fiji 14 – 18 September 2009

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1. Antecedents

Several studies which were funded by CTA have preceded this workshop. In October 2005 eight Pacific countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga) completed information needs assessment studies. In a follow-up to these studies, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analyses were conducted in April 2006 and these led to the execution of a regional priority-setting exercise between April and June 2006.

CTA continued the process through the commissioning of the preparation of a strategic report for the Pacific in which regional information priorities were identified and accompanying regional project profiles were prepared. The top 3 priorities which emerged from these analyses were as follows:

- Information and communication management policy and planning.
- Audit of information resources and ICM and ICT (information and communication technologies) capacity.
- Training in ICM and ICT

This workshop represents the execution of the top priority identified in the Pacific regional studies and analyses.

2. Objectives of the workshop

The objectives in mounting this workshop are threefold:
1. Decision-makers sensitised and made more aware of the value and importance of effective and efficient ICM
2. Confident and better skilled workshop participants able and willing to commit to the development of ICM policies and plans within their own institutions and in partnership with others, using appropriate ICM tools
3. Enhanced networking and collaboration among participating institutions.

3. Key observations by speakers at the official opening

The speakers at the opening of the workshop emphasized the importance of information and communication in the formulation of policy. The key messages emanating from their addresses were:

1. Information and communication management is the decisive tool that links together all initiatives. …It is the focal point of rural development, without which other policies would not be efficient.
2. Investment in Information and Communication is a pre-requisite for development – but often overlooked in many budgets. Transforming information into knowledge and into policies that affect the lives of rural people and reduce poverty is what brings value.
3. The use of the latest development in ICTs facilitates the delivery of information to far flung rural communities. In the face of budget cuts and other constraints, information providers are confronted with decisions relating to users' needs the relevance of information to be provided, the level of information to be disseminated to different user groups, effective formats and the most appropriate ICTs to be used for maximum impact and desired outcomes. Overarching ICM policies and strategies can inform the direction and action to be taken in addressing these issues.

4. Current challenges in the management of information at the national and regional levels

Challenges and experiences encountered by participants in the management of information were expressed during the opening panel discussion and in institutional/national presentations, both of which were programmed for the first day of the workshop. In many cases the challenges were common to most of the institutions. These challenges/observations are highlighted below:

- Getting right and timely information to farming communities is a significant problem. Linked to this challenge was the need for user-friendly language in printed material to be distributed to farmers
- The need to make greater use of radio broadcasts
- Reduced budgets in Ministries of Agriculture have impacted on programmes for the dissemination of information
- Farmers' tendencies to withhold their traditional knowledge from extension officers and others was seen as an obstacle to the sharing of information among different groups
- Rural populations are significant in most countries and the isolation of these communities present a major challenge for information management

It was noteworthy that while the above challenges were presented, the participants adopted the suggestion by one of the panellists that the Region should start to think "outside of the box". Some of these suggestions included:

- the need for information providers to adopt a "corporate-customer approach" to information management
- the possibility of the use of mobile phones for enhancing the dissemination of information since mobile phone ownership in the Pacific is increasing across communities
- the formation of alliances with community networks for the dissemination of information should be fostered. Such alliances may even extend to the private sector, which support their growers with technical information. In this instance scarce Ministry resources could be reserved for more needy cases.
- off-line media e.g. DVDs could be better utilised in information dissemination programmes
- popular public figures could be used to get messages across to designated target groups
- attaching a cost to information that is distributed sends a message that although the information may be free to the recipient, in reality costs were incurred for the sourcing, compilation and dissemination for the information
- development of one-stop information services should be explored
- journalists could be used to communicate information such as success stories
- involvement of stakeholders can enhance information management and distribution

The general consensus was that there was a need for policy guidelines for information management and distribution.

5. Approach to ICM strategy formulation

The content of the technical sessions of the workshop was structured to achieve objectives listed in section 2.0. The course facilitators – Peter Walton and Byron Mook – focused on tools, methodologies and management issues relating to the development of ICM strategies and policies and a step-by step approach to building a draft institutional information strategy. Presentations were interspersed with discussions and relevant case studies for group analysis. The facilitators provided the opportunity for participants to apply the tools and methodologies discussed during earlier sessions to the task of drafting information strategies for their institutions. These drafts were presented in a plenary session before the close of the workshop.

5.1 Technical advice provided by course facilitators

Below is a profile of the course content drawn from both the facilitators' presentations and ensuing discussions during technical sessions.

Information and Communication Management (ICM) Futures. Byron Mook

- One needs to have some idea of what the future might look like, before developing ICM strategies
- New management cultures are emerging that require information in a different way and for different purposes
- Can the public sector & NGOs compete in the area of ICM systems?
- One needs to establish partnerships that encompass research institutions, schools, religious organisations, private business sector and non-governmental organizations, rather than compete against each other in ICM
- Users of information are not restricted to farmers; others include policy makers, politicians, marketing agents, researchers, health and nutrition workers, planners, etc.
- The business of making strategies is the business of making priorities
- Find a champion, be political, be entrepreneurial

Why do an information strategy? Components and features of an information strategy. Peter Walton

- Categories of information activities were identified viz.: strategic planning, access, dissemination, organization and management and evaluation
- An information strategy is a framework giving direction and identifying priorities. It helps to define the relationships between various information related activities
- An approved strategy is the basis for planning
- The strategy is formalized and presented as a document setting out a shared vision of where the organization is going and the issues and options it need to address to get there
- A typical document would have the following elements:
  Executive summary, Background, Specific objectives, Options (range of factors considered, Outputs, Requirements (resources, organizational structure, capacity skills), Conclusions (options chosen), Implementation plan
- The information strategy must be linked to the overall organizational strategy
- Communication is not a function that is an adjunct to the formulation to an information strategy, it is essential and inherent in the entire process

Questions arose concerning which process comes first – strategy or policy. Discussion indicated that these could be semantic issues. Strategy and policy go hand-in–hand. The process of formulating strategy first and then policy or policy first and then strategy is an iterative one.

Information access & dissemination: who provides it? Where is it? How do we access it? Who are our clients? What do they need?   Byron Mook

The following points were stressed during the presentation:

- ICTs have introduced a new dynamic in formation management that affects ownership, location, access and dissemination of information
- New information providers have carved out a niche alongside the traditional providers utilizing ICTs to their advantage. The use of ICTs has spawned both mini publishers (anyone with a PC and Internet connection can become a publisher) and mega publishers e.g. Elsevier dominates the publishing of scientific literature which can be available as full journals or as individual articles in different types of media

- Access – both conventional and new dimensions; new costs structures and technologies have changed the conditions for access to information.
- New types of consumers in the form of consortia (groups of organizations with a common purpose) have emerged as a result of the dynamics of ownership and access. These consortia negotiate for online discounts from the new publishing players.
- Sources of information – library, government and private sector agencies, farmers, farmer associations, internet
- Clientele/target audience – farmers, decision makers, politicians, marketing agents, input suppliers
- "Ownership" versus "access" In the past libraries subscribed to hard copy journals to which they could claim ownership. Today the technology allows a library or an individual to have digital access to an article in a journal. The difference is that one pays for access and not ownership.
- "Subscription" versus "transaction" – the public is accustomed to subscribing to newspapers in hard copy. Economic hardships are encouraging some newspapers e.g. New York Times to consider the idea of changing to online subscriptions of articles.
- Change of methods of dissemination over last 10 years, consider how these might change further in the future

Based on the above information, the following advice was provided:

- Information needs assessment of the target audience is important in identifying the appropriate ICM tools.
- With reference to access, aim to become active negotiators. Do we buy, license and/or outsource our content and our technology?
- The world of ICTs is changing rapidly, therefore we need to carefully consider the necessary ICM strategies
- Involve beneficiaries in a participatory exercise to assist in determining information strategies
- Form consortia to reduce costs
- Differentiate products and services for different situations
- Develop a strategy first, the policies will come afterwards
- It is necessary for organisations have a vision, for example, is the organization primarily an information based organization or a communication based organization?
- What are its investment priorities?
    - Hardware/software?
    - People (Library and Information Science Professionals)?
    - Content (licences, consortia)?
- Dissemination: we need to consider how we disseminate our information and do we charge or indicate the cost involved to source and provide the information?

Organisation and management – information management in your organisation; new partnerships; people. Peter Walton

In managing information and communication one needs to:
- Remember who wants what, in what format and languages; decisions need to be made regarding acquisition of internal and/or external information, digital information and/or off-line information
- Consider charging for information in certain cases to get people to appreciate the fact that information doesn't come free
- Recognise that people net-working is critical when organising and managing information for use by a number of users, both within the organisation and outside. Multiple alliances are advantageous
- Develop clearly defined terms of reference for those managing information
- Recognise that budgetary considerations are very important when making IT acquisition decisions
- Recognise that information management demands the possession of specialised skills and that in some countries finding suitable staff is a serious challenge in the organization and management of information and communication divisions/units

- Pay attention to developing programmes for improving information literacy. Suggestions were made for including information literacy as part of the curriculum in agricultural universities and colleges within the region.

Developing an information strategy; stakeholders, analysis, options. Peter Walton

This presentation was based on concepts in the IMARK modules developed by FAO and contributing partner organizations (CTA and GTZ). At the outset of the presentation participants were informed that there is no one strategic plan that could be applicable to all institutions. Each strategic plan is based on issues that are relevant to that institution. The following points were developed during the presentation:

- Identify the institution's or department's stakeholders (e.g. management, staff, suppliers/agents, financial institutions, investors, customers, Government)
- Decide on the approach to adopt (one-person independent preparation of the draft, team of management colleagues or participatory approach involving staff across the institution
- Involve all stakeholders and define an objective for developing the information strategy
- Analyse the data and information collected through the use of a SWOT analysis, information audits, IT assessments and financial assessments
- Identify possible options
- Select option/s

Points made during the discussion period related to practical situations which participants encountered in the Region viz:

- Most information activities do not get financial backup in the organisation's budgetary allocation
- Information managers need to sensitise non-information oriented managers to the importance of an information strategy.
- In developing an information strategy, one needs to consider issues of culture, religious and community structure
- An institution should develop one information and communication strategy based on the institutional mandate, with each of the different units in the institution e.g. information, extension and communication working towards that strategy – having made their inputs at the time of the development of the institutional strategy.
- In instances where multiple institutions are working in an alliance on a project, a joint information and communication strategy could be developed for the specific project based on the overall objectives of the project activity.

Monitoring & Evaluation: How do we know we're doing the right thing? The importance of M&E. Byron Mook

It is always advisable to incorporate a monitoring and evaluation function when formulating an ICM strategy. Attention must be paid to the following issues:

- Identify baseline data or write a statement about the current situation in order to assess the impact of any new procedures that may have been introduced
- Identify the actors. What is the value base of the evaluation – where's the push (this seldom originates from within the organization), who's paying, who's managing, who's implementing, who are supposed to be the beneficiaries
- Decide on objectives. Why are you doing your evaluation – management (to improve performance, to increase accountability (could have an underlying political dimension)), impact (to measure benefits). There is always some difficulty in measuring impact and outcomes
- Decide on indicators. What are you measuring – level 1 (attitudes, knowledge, skills), level 2 (behaviour), level 3 (organisational and/or socio-economic change). Caution: watch out for intervening variables

- Spend time on a "Logic Model". See "Letter to a project manager"[1] – inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes/impacts (as opposed to logical framework)
- Begin with a SWOT ANALYSIS (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
- Be realistic. Form alliances, expect to bargain and do not be averse to compromise. Depending on the circumstances, evaluations are both opportunities and threats.
- Evaluation can be less threatening if the target audience is actively involved
- There should ideally be some balance between monitoring/evaluation and implementation, to avoid the risk of more time being spent on M&E rather than the actual implementation of project.

6. Follow-up support

The course facilitators and Christine Webster, Deputy Manager, Planning & Strategic Services, CTA, encouraged participants to continue the process of building their institutional information and communication strategies on their return home. The hosting of national ICM sensitization workshops is a mechanism that can be pursued. The following support base is available to participants:

- IMARK CDs were presented to each participant, the intention of which is that self-paced learning would be pursued by each participant.
- On completion of institutional ICM strategies, participants were encouraged to send their drafts to CTA for comments by 16 November 2009
- Mentoring and support from CTA are available through advice and guidance in the formulation of ICM strategies.
- TWIKI was developed to foster on-going communication among participants and to share relevant documentation as another form of support for participants who were encouraged to register on the system.

7. Initiatives in forging alliances

At the conclusion of presentations on ICM regional initiatives, several participants expressed interest in pursuing collaboration with the presenters to explore either adaptation of the use of specific ICTs or concepts and strategies which could be replicated in their own country. The following initial discussions were observed:

- The Fiji community leader and other participants held discussions with SPC's presenter Mr. Ian Thompson. The topic of Mr. Thompson's presentation focussed on the opportunities presented by the Pacific Rural Internet Connectivity System which utilized a VSAT satellite and resources at Community Centres to provide full digital coverage of the Pacific Region.
- Possible collaboration between PNG and The Solomon Islands for the development of a sub-regional database comprising the PNG NAIS database and the SONAIS database.
- The Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International presented by Jim Bentley and Vikash Kumar. One of their programmes - Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovations Programme (MORDI), is the focus of discussion, initiated by PNG.
- The PestNet representative initiated discussions with the SOPAC representative to explore collaboration for hosting PestNet's publications on the Pacific Disaster Net.

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[1] *Evaluating information: a letter to a project manager.* Byron Mook. CTA Working Document Number 8025

ANNEXES

Annex I. List of Participants in the Information & Communication Management Policy Development Workshop - Nadi, Fiji

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Annex II. Workshop Programme

TIME	ACTIVITY
Monday - 14 September	**PLENARY SESSION**
8.15 am – 8.45 am	**Registration** of delegates
	Official opening
	Welcome Address – Representative / *Director of LRD, SPC*
9.00 am – 9.30 am	*Welcome Address* – Head of Delegation for the Pacific, Delegation of the European Commission, *Ambassador Wiepke van de Goot*
	Welcome Address – *Dr. Hansjörg Neun, Director of CTA*
9.30 am – 10.00 am	**Presentation** – Workshop objectives & CTA – *Ms. Christine Webster, Deputy Manager, Planning & Corporate Services, CTA*
10.00 am – 10.30 am	**Introduction of delegates**
10.30 am – 11.00 am	**Tea / coffee break (+ official photo session)**
	INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT
11.00 am – 12.45 pm	**Panel discussion** – Do information projects, products and services contribute to achieving development goals? Or, are we able to manage our information successfully? – interactive session, structured around a series of questions – Moderator: *Peter Walton, Regional Coordinator – Agricultural Information Needs Assessment Studies, Pacific;* Contributor – Barbara Gumbs - *Regional Coordinator – Agricultural Information Needs Assessment Studies, Caribbean*
12.45 pm – 2.00 pm	**Lunch**
2.00 pm – 2.30 pm	**Presentations** – **Regional Perspectives for Information Policy and Strategies**
	CTA Agricultural Information Needs Assessment – From Study to Strategy, and from Strategy to Plan – Pacific & Caribbean, *Christine Webster, Deputy Manager, Planning & Corporate Services, CTA & Peter Walton, Regional Coordinator – Agricultural Information Needs Assessment Studies, Pacific*
2.30 pm – 4.00 pm	**Presentations – Regional Initiatives**
	SPC, GTZ, ACIAR, FSPI and SOPAC
	Discussion
4.00 pm – 4.30 pm	**Tea / coffee break**
4.30 pm – 5.30 pm	**Presentations – A Selection of National/Institutional Perspectives for Information Policy and Strategies[2]**
5.30 pm – 6.00 pm	**Presentation** – Information and Communication Management (ICM) Futures -- *Dr. Byron Mook, ICM Specialist*
6.00 pm – 7.30 pm	**Welcome cocktail – Novotel Hotel**

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[2] Examples or case studies of things that have worked / not worked.

Tuesday – 15 September	TOOLS, METHODOLOGIES & MANAGEMENT ISSUES
9.00 am – 9.45 am	**Presentation – Why do an Information Strategy?** – Components and Features of an Information Strategy / Information Policy – *Mr. Peter Walton*
9.45 am – 10.15 am	**Presentation – Information Access & Dissemination** – Who provides it? Where is it? How do we access it? – Who are our clients? What do they need? How could we serve them (new ICTs)? – *Dr. Byron Mook*
10.15 am – 10.30 am	**Introduction to case study** – STI – Dr. *Byron Mook*
10.30 am – 11.45 am	**Working group session 1: Information Access & Dissemination** Individual reading, coffee & group discussions (Case: STI)
11.45 am – 12.30 pm	**Plenary discussion** – STI – *Dr. Byron Mook*
12.30 pm – 12.45 pm	Wrap-up – Mr. Peter Walton
12.45 pm – 2.00 pm	**Lunch**
2.00 pm – 2.30 pm	**Presentation – Organisation and Management** – Information Management in your organisation; New partnerships; People – *Mr. Peter Walton*
2.30 pm – 2.45 pm	**Introduction to case study** (CIO – Mr Hussein) – *Mr. Peter Walton*
2.45 pm – 4.15 pm	**Working group session 2: Organisation & Management** Individual reading, coffee & group discussions
4.15 pm – 4.45 pm	**Plenary** role-playing – *Dr. Byron Mook*
4.45 pm – 5.15 pm	Wrap-up – *Mr.* Peter Walton
5.15 pm – 5.30 pm	**Overview of Day Two** – *Ms. Christine Webster*

Wednesday – 16 September	BUILDING AN INFORMATION STRATEGY
9.00 am – 9.45 am	**Presentation – Developing an Information Strategy** – Stakeholders, Analysis, Options – *Mr. Peter Walton*
9.45 am – 10.00 am	**Introduction to case study** (Dr. Mannen) -
10.00 am – 11.30 am	**Working Session 3: Developing an Information Strategy** Individual reading, coffee & group discussions
11.30 am – 12.15 pm	**Plenary discussion** – *Dr. Byron Mook*
12.15 pm – 12.30 am	**Wrap-up** – *Mrs. Barbara Gumbs*
12.30 pm – 1.00 pm	**Presentation – Monitoring & Evaluation** – How do we know we're doing the right thing? The importance of M&E – *Dr. Byron Mook*
1.00 pm – 2.00 pm	**Lunch**
2.00 pm – 2.30 pm	**Presentation –** SPC Rural Internet Connectivity System and its potential uses – *Mr. Ian Thomson, SPC RICS and OLPC Coordinator*
2.30 pm – 2.45 pm	**Presentation – The Information Strategy Document** – *Mr. Peter Walton*
2.45 pm – 3.00 pm	**Introduction to working group exercise**

3.00 pm – 6.00 pm	**Working Session 4 – Draft an Information Strategy Document for your Institution**
	Individual or group work on their own institution's draft information strategy document – help provided (& coffee included)

Thursday – 17 September	**THE JOURNEY CONTINUES**
9.00 am – 10.30 am	**Presentation of draft information strategies**
10.30 am – 11.00 am	**Tea / Coffee break**
11.00 am – 12.00 pm	The Journey Continues (after the Workshop concludes) – Discussion of opportunities for self-paced or group learning using IMARK; support and advice, e.g. mentoring; national initiatives; social networking (e.g. D-groups, wiki)
12.00 pm – 12.15 pm	Closure of the Workshop
12.15 pm – 1.30 pm	**Lunch**
1.30 pm – 5.00 pm	**Field visit – destination TBA**

Friday – 18 September	Informal networking meetings with Pacific institutions
	Wrap up by CTA staff, ICM team and SPC staff
	Departure participants

Annex III. Welcome addresses

Annex III (a):
Marita Manley, Agriculture and Forestry
Policy Adviser, LRD, SPC

Distinguished guests, Ambassador van der Goot of the European Union delegation, Deputy Manager of Planning and Corporate Services at CTA, Ms Christine Webster, country participants, resource people and representatives of development partners and regional organizations, ni sa bula vinaka and welcome to Nadi for this important workshop.

There are a number of familiar faces present but for those of you that don't know me I work as an Agriculture and Forestry Policy Adviser for the Land Resources Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in Suva and I am honoured to say a few brief words of welcome on behalf of the SPC.   We are delighted that Ambassador van der Goot is able to be with us this morning and thank him for taking time out of his busy schedule to be here. Mr Aleki Sisifa, the Director of the Land Resources Division, sends his apologies this morning but is hopeful that he'll be able to join us later in the week.   We are very pleased to be collaborating once again with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) in organizing this workshop and their funders, the European Union and thank them for their ongoing support. We are also very happy to have excellent resource people and representatives from various regional development partners here with us today, SOPAC, FSPI, and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), to share with us case studies and their experiences of information and communication management from the region and elsewhere.

And last but definitely not least, welcome to all the country participants and the various government departments, educational and research institutes, and non-governmental organizations that you represent. Thank you for taking the time to attend this workshop and committing to working this week on progressing information and communication management within your institutions.

SPC is a regional technical assistance organization working with 22 pacific island countries and territories. The Land Resources Division provides technical assistance, advisory services and capacity building and training in the land, agriculture and forestry sectors. At the moment this is complemented by the Marine Resources Division and the Social Resources Division and we will be joined later in the week by a colleague working in rural connectivity. But we meet at a time of significant institutional changes at the regional level and SPC will soon be welcoming a portion of SOPAC and will be taking on an increased role in energy and infrastructure coordination. This will present information and communication challenges of its own but will also present opportunities for better collaboration and information sharing and ultimately, we hope, more effective service delivery for our members.

The topic of the workshop – Information and Communication Management Policy and Strategy - is very timely. We find ourselves increasingly bombarded with information as information and communication technologies continue to evolve. We absorb information constantly from newspapers, radio, television, the internet, our mobile phones. The rapid expansion of mobile telecommunications infrastructure in the Pacific at the moment presents new opportunities to reach rural communities with relevant information. But what is relevant information? And how do we ensure that our institutions are providing the right or most appropriate information to assist farmers and rural communities in their development efforts? And how can we use the media and ICT to present this information in useful and interesting ways?

Information is vital for effective policy and planning at all levels – designing policies to address food and nutritional security relies on robust underlying information about the current food and nutritional situation in a country in order to most effectively identify the priority areas where interventions should be targeted. Assisting farmers with pest and disease management for

food security and trade facilitation requires that detailed pest surveillance is conducted and records maintained so that new incursions can be identified and responded to. Reaching farmers with up to date information on agricultural and soil management practices requires the dissemination of research in a timely and user friendly manner. Providing current marketing and price information can help them access better returns for their produce. Assisting communities to adapt to climate change will rely on information systems that can marry traditional knowledge and practices that communities have used to adapt in the past with current scientific knowledge about expected changes and effective communication strategies for sharing this information in a responsible way.

Given continued budget cuts and constraints in this area meeting these information challenges relies on deciding what information is relevant, to whom, at what level and in what format and taking advantage of the latest technological advances to ensure that the priority information needs of rural communities, farmers, researchers, educational institutions and policy makers are met. Overarching policies and strategies can help work through these issues and put in place frameworks that raise the profile of the importance of information, ensure that relevant data and information is gathered in the most cost-effective manner, is managed and organized effectively and is communicated to users in a timely fashion. We all need to position ourselves and our institutions to meet these challenges.

You'll notice that the topic of the workshop is 'from plan to action'. We want to ensure that in addition to being introduced to the latest information and communication management tools, we take the opportunity this week to work together and start drafting strategies and policies that we can take back to our own institutions to drive the process of improving information management and dissemination. I too will be an active participant in the workshop and will be drafting a strategy for information and communication management for the Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy Network that I manage during the course of the next few days. So with those few words I wish us all well in our deliberations and in getting tangible outcomes from the workshop that will result in improved service delivery to stakeholders at all levels.

Vinaka vakalevu

Annex III(b)

WELCOME ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR WIEPKE VAN DER GOOT
EC HEAD OF DELEGATION FOR THE PACIFIC

AT THE JOINT CTA-SPC WORKSHOP ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY IN THE PACIFIC: FROM PLAN TO ACTION,
14TH SEPTEMBER, 2009

THE DIRECTOR OF THE TECHNICAL CENTRE FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL
COOPERATION (CTA)

THE DIRECTOR OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY'S LAND
RESOURCE DIVISION (LRD)

THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

THE STAFF OF CTA AND SPC

MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Good morning, Ni Sa Bula and Namaste!

It is my honour and great pleasure to be here with you today for the official opening of this workshop on Information and Communication Management Policy and Strategy in the Pacific.

Let me first of all thank the organisers of this workshop – the representatives and staff of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community – for their kind invitation to speak here on behalf of the EC Delegation for the Pacific and the European Union.

I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate CTA on the 25th anniversary that it celebrates this year, and on its continuous effort and commitment towards improving the living conditions of agricultural and rural communities in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Ladies and gentlemen, since CTA was established under the Lomé Convention in 1984, important changes have occurred and major challenges have arisen in both the area of rural and agricultural development and the field of information and communication technologies. Whilst the world officially became predominantly an urban one in 2007, with over 50 per cent of the world's population living in towns and urban cities, the significance of rural development challenges for both industrialised and developing countries has grown, and not diminished. And although information and communication technologies have developed in an unprecedented manner during the last decades, many ACP actors, especially farmers, still have limited access to appropriate and timely information which could improve their production capacities and their market access at local, regional and international level.

Today, rural areas are still those regions in the world that are most affected by insecure livelihood opportunities, with three-quarters of the world's poor estimated to live in rural spaces. This persistence of rural poverty is a major challenge for the development community as a whole and a moral obligation for all of us.

But rural development and agriculture must also matter to us because of its crucial importance for the food security of expanding urban populations, the conservation of globally valued resource functions and landscapes and the climate change adaptation and mitigation process in the next decades.

Today, rural development is marked by numerous major challenges including pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, increasing complex trade rules at global and ACP-EU level, climate change, pressure on natural resources, migration and brain-drain and the need to include gender-supportive policies in the agricultural sector.

Against this backdrop, the management of information and communication and the sharing of knowledge and resources is of decisive importance, not only for an adequate response to these challenges, but also to help rural communities and farmers in the Pacific to benefit to the largest extent possible from the opportunities that arise out of their countries' richness in primary products and agricultural commodities such as cane sugar, coconut products, cocoa beans and coffee.

Of course, knowledge-sharing and information management are only one element of a comprehensive rural development policy. Other elements such as education and good governance are of no lesser importance. But information and communication management is the decisive tool that links together all initiatives. It is the focal point of rural development, without which the other policies would not be efficient.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is said that knowledge grows when it is shared.

In this spirit, I would like to thank the staff of CTA and SPC once again for their common effort to share knowledge and improve rural livelihoods in the Pacific, and I wish you all a very inspiring and productive workshop!

Thank you.

(ENDS)

SPEECH OF CTA DIRECTOR – DR. HANSJORG NEUN ON THE OCCASION OF THE ICM POLICY WORKSHOP – NADI – FIJI (SEPTEMBER 14 – 18, 2009)

Distinguished government officials, Ambassador Van der Goot, representatives of the SPC Land Resources Division, representatives of international and regional organisations, ladies and gentlemen:

First of all, please accept my apologies for not being able to travel to Fiji. I would have wished to be with you in person on this very important topic of Information and Communication Management. Investing in information is key.

What is information – what is NEWS?
 "When a dog bites a man – it's not news. However, when a man bites a dog …." This will make it to the cover page of any newspaper.
CTA wants Agriculture and Rural Development to be seen regularly on the front page of newspapers, on the Radio and TV in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. To sensitize media on this issue we organise our annual seminar on "**The role of media in agricultural development in ACP countries**". It will be in Brussels in October 2009. Please consult our website (http://annualseminar2009.cta.int/).

CTA's mandate since 25 years is to assist in sharing information, improving communication and building capacities to improve rural livelihoods. Our target group includes the entire spectrum of actors in agriculture and rural development – from policy makers such as yourselves, to scientists, researchers and farmers. CTA is funded by the European Development Fund (EDF).

In the Pacific, we have worked closely with institutions such as:
(i)   **SPC** to address the needs of policy makers through our science technology and innovation strategies programme and provided support to the Pacific Agricultural and Forestry Policy Network;
(ii)   **SOPAC** to mainstream gender into development projects and to generate and disseminate knowledge on community based processing of coconut oil across the Pacific; while
(iii)   our **Agritrade website** provides key information on WTO/EPA issues to ACP trade negotiators including those in the Pacific.

This current workshop builds on a priority identified through a series of CTA needs assessment studies conducted in the Pacific.

Investment in Agriculture and Rural Development is a MUST to address the challenges to feed the world's population. Investment in Information and Communication is a prerequisite for development - but often overlooked in many budgets.

Transforming information into knowledge and into policies that affect the lives of rural people and reduce poverty is what brings value. Over the next 4 days, you will be asked to prove just that.

Let me wish you all a very successful and mutually beneficial workshop, where information is shared, networks are forged and strengthened, and experiences and positive outcomes are multiplied for the benefit of the agriculture and rural development policies in the Pacific.

And please remember the following: "Knowledge is the number one commodity, and it is the only good that actually multiplies when shared".

Thank you.

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Annex IV. Synopsis of Regional Initiatives

Representatives from the following regional organizations made presentations on their work in the Region. The focus of the presentations was on their activities as these related to dissemination of information and the use of ICTs in reaching distant and isolated rural communities. Below is a synopsis of each presentation. Contact information for presenters is available in ANNEX I.

SPC[3]
SPC is a regional technical assistance organization working with 22 pacific island countries and territories. The Land Resources Division provides technical assistance, advisory services and capacity building and training in the land, agriculture and forestry sectors. The LRD works closely with the Marine Resources Division and the Social Resources Division. The Secretariat will strengthen its capacity in rural connectivity with the additional staff resources. In the very near future SPC will also acquire additional capacity to facilitate an increased role in energy and infrastructure coordination. This additional capacity will be achieved when a section of SOPAC merges with SPC.

SPC, LRD has three key objectives for the period 2009-2012 – improved food and nutritional security; integrated and sustainable agricultural and forestry resource management and development and improved biosecurity and increased trade in agriculture and forestry products.

Pacific Rural Internet Connectivity System (PACRICS)[4]
The PACRICS project utilizes a VSAT Satellite that must be operated by Community Information Centres which must be located in rural or remote locations with no access to the Internet. This approach was strongly endorsed by ICT Ministers in the Region. A $2mil Australian Aid project provided resources for setting up the system with 16 pilots, 100 Public Good sites and free bandwidth for 2 years. SPC's responsibility is to prove the sustainability of the system.

The 16 successful pilots in operation in the Region provide an indication of the impact that could be generated. In the interest of sustainability a multiuse approach is planned in which PACRICS drivers will be made available for application in the following sectors: education, health, disaster management, rural development and e-government. The critical issue in striving for sustainability is in aiming at a critical mass of users through capacity building.

GTZ[5]
This presentation was based on a manual entitled "Climate Change Information for Effective Adaptation: A Practitioner's Manual". The manual is a bridge between science and practice. Dr. Fickinger used the manual as an example of an information product. He outlined the process of its development and emphasized the information strategies which were adopted. These strategies included – involvement of stakeholders from the inception of the project, utilization of historical information to provide a background for the manual, careful and adequate interpretation of information, substantiation of sources of information, consideration of issues from both a global and local perspective and communication of the information in a timely manner.

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[3] Marita Manley, Agriculture and Forestry Policy Adviser; Emil Adams, Information Officer
[4] Ian Thompson, Rural Internet Connectivity System (RICS)
[5] Hermann Fickinger, Chief Adviser, SPC/GTZ Adaptation to Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region

Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI)[6]

FSPI is a network of South Pacific island non-government organization and overseas affiliates working in partnership across the South Pacific. The main function of the Secretariat of FSPI is to coordinate the planning and design of regional development projects based on the needs identified by the members and their constituencies. Programme areas include – governance, communities and coasts, health, disaster preparedness and mainstreaming of rural development innovations programme (MORDI). The structure, objectives and communications mechanisms of MORDI were presented. One of the objectives of MORDI is to document and share learning experiences from good practices and innovations. The MORDI communication web consists of a network of several stakeholders – community groups, communities and villages, NGOs, local governments, national governments, private sector, the national MORDI office, the regional MORDI office, regional bodies and donors. MORDI makes full use of free communications networks to get messages to target groups and stakeholders. These networks include Skype, Google Talk, and free social websites, for example, Youtube, Bebo and Facebook.

PestNet[7]

PestNet is a registered NGO based in Fiji. It was formed to help Pacific island countries obtain quick advice on pest identification and management. PestNet uses email and consists of an international network of taxonomists, plant protection specialists and farmers. There are 800 subscribers from around the world with 5 volunteer moderators based in Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa and Thailand. The network handles queries and disseminates information on quarantine concerns, pest alerts, biological control and pest management.

A project entitled "Linking farmers to Crop Protection Networks" was presented. This project is funded by The infoDev programme of the World Bank, AusAid, SPC and PestNet. The objective of the project was to explore if PestNet is able to reach farmers through NGOs and farmers' groups. The link in the Solomon Islands carries out pest surveys, conducts participatory rural appraisals and helps farmers experiment in the control of pests. The successes, failures and recommendations from the participatory evaluation exercise in the Solomon Islands were presented.

South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC)[8]

Pacific Disaster Net is a portal for Disaster Risk Management in the Pacific Region. It provides a platform for facilitating and hosting the distribution of alerts, documents, events, contacts, a calendar, country pages as well as fora and a wiki.

The information hosted on Pacific Disaster Net is up-to-date and live in a range of formats and from different sources. Such information relates to governance, risk assessment, early warnings and monitoring, disaster risk management, training and tools. A local edition of the database is available offline on DVD and a mobile edition is available for PDAs.

Pacific Disaster Net was developed by SOPAC, IFRC, UNDP-PC and OCHA as an initiative under PDRMPN.

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[6] James E. Bentley, Communication Media Consultant and Vikash Kumar, Regional Training, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer (MORDI)

[7] Grahame Jackson

[8] Jutta May, Information and Database Management Adviser