

Pacific Civil Society Statement to the 11th Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services Meeting

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for

CSO Consortium (PIANGO, PFO, PIPSO, POETCom)

On behalf of our civil society forum, comprising the Pacific Islands Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO), Pacific Farmers Organisation (PFO), Pacific Organic & Ethical Trade Community (POETCom), and the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO), I am honoured to deliver this statement to the 11th Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services Meeting.

We extend our sincere congratulations to the Government of Solomon Islands on assuming the Chair of this meeting, and express our gratitude to SPC, FAO, and all partners whose commitment has made this gathering possible. We also acknowledge the ongoing dedication of member country governments and development partners in advancing regional agriculture and forestry priorities.

As we gather in 2026, we acknowledge the International Year of the Woman Farmer. Across the Pacific, women are the backbone of our food systems. Yet they continue to face persistent barriers to land, finance, training, and decision-making. We therefore call for stronger investment, recognition, and representation of women farmers across all agriculture and forestry initiatives, policies, and financing mechanisms at national and regional levels.

Ladies and gentlemen, across the Pacific, the current fuel crisis is exacerbating long-standing structural challenges faced by farming communities, particularly in remote and maritime island contexts where the cost of transport and access to services has always been high. For many farmers, the movement of produce, agricultural inputs, equipment, and essential goods between islands already comes at significant expense. Rising global fuel prices are now intensifying these existing burdens, increasing the cost of shipping, domestic transport, and market access even further.

At the same time, the crisis presents an opportunity to strengthen more resilient and sustainable food systems. Increasing fuel and input costs are encouraging greater interest in agroecological approaches, including the use of locally produced organic compost, green manure, and other nature-based farming practices that reduce dependence on imported inputs. It is also an opportunity to value local products in our

domestic markets. The fuel crisis, therefore, highlights the urgent need to strengthen resilient local food systems, invest in renewable energy and sustainable transport solutions, and reduce Pacific communities' dependence on costly imported fuels and external supply chains.

Across the Pacific, civil society organisations, farmer organisations, women's groups, youth groups, faith-based organisations, Indigenous communities, and the private sector are already delivering practical solutions every day. Communities are conserving traditional crops and seed systems, protecting biodiversity, strengthening soil health, responding to pests and diseases, training youth, supporting agroecology, and building climate resilience through the combined use of traditional knowledge and science.

Yet despite their contributions, these same actors often remain underrepresented in the spaces where priorities are set, resources are allocated, and implementation decisions are made.

As civil society, we therefore reiterate our call for more formalised, adequately resourced, and institutionalised participation within regional coordination mechanisms, technical working groups, and partner roundtables. The principle of "Nothing about us without us" must guide the implementation of regional agriculture and forestry priorities moving forward.

We are particularly encouraged by the growing recognition of youth engagement throughout this meeting. However, building a resilient future for Pacific agriculture and forestry requires more than consultation alone. Young people must be supported with access to land, finance, mentorship, innovation, and dignified economic opportunities so that agriculture and forestry become viable and attractive pathways for future generations.

Ladies and gentlemen, building on the opportunity provided to civil society organisations at the 10th PHOAFS Meeting to present a technical paper on the "*Contribution of Farmer Organisations to Agricultural Development in the Pacific Islands*," we respectfully request dedicated space at the next PHOAFS meeting in Honiara for CSOs to present on the work being carried out on the ground across the agriculture and forestry sectors. Such contributions would help highlight the importance and impact that CSOs, farmer organisations, and the private sector are having in communities through strengthening food security, supporting livelihoods, and advancing locally led solutions.

As we conclude this meeting, let us remember that resilience is not built in conference rooms alone. It is built in farms, forests, villages, coastlines, and communities across our Blue Pacific continent.

Civil society organisations, farmer organisations, and community networks remain ready to work alongside governments, regional agencies, development partners, and research institutions to help translate regional commitments into meaningful action and measurable impact for our people.

The Pacific already possesses the knowledge, innovation, and leadership needed to transform our food systems. What is needed now is sustained partnership, trust, and investment in the people who are already leading this work on the ground.

Vinaka vakalevu and thank you all.