



COOK ISLANDS

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE POLICY

2017 -2021



Ministry of Agriculture
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS



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NATIONAL AGRICULTURE POLICY 2017-2021

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Abbreviations and acronyms

BTIB	Business Trade and Investment Board
CIG	Cook Islands Government
CITC	Cook Islands Trading Corporation
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Fund
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
ICI	Infrastructure Cook Islands
JNAP	Joint National Action Plan
MFEM	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
NCD's	Non-Communicable Diseases
NSDC	National Sustainable Development Commission
NSDP	National Sustainable Development Plan
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
SDG's	Sustainable Development Goals
SWOTT	Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunity, Threats & Trends
UN	United Nation's

Acknowledgements

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Alex Herman, Tiare Photography

Foreword

Kia Orana,

In the wise words of Wendell Berry, *“If you eat, you are in agriculture”*. Whether you are a farmer or a consumer, you all play an important role in growing our agriculture in the Cook Islands. In order to understand this better we have consulted with stakeholders across the nation to create a national agriculture policy, which articulates our vision for agriculture, under seven policy goals.



We need to increase the total food production in the Cook Islands in order to move our nation from a predominantly consuming nation to a producing and even exporting nation and to attain food and nutrition security. We must create an enabling environment that encourages business enterprise, as we seek to steadily increase agriculture’s contribution to GDP, making it a viable industry able to sustain livelihoods. We want to improve the link between farmers and markets, creating efficiencies and exploring opportunities for trade. Finally, we will continue to research ways we can work better and smarter through the use of modern technology, science and good extension services.

We acknowledge that tourism is the backbone of our economy but we also recognise the opportunity for agriculture to support and ‘feed’ the tourism industry, which will only boost economic development and diversity.

So please join me in embracing the ‘Cook Islands National Agriculture Policy 2016-2020’ – let us work together, as we strive towards a vibrant and resilient agricultural sector, maximising its potential and ensuring food security for all, through innovative collaborative and sustainable practices.

Meitaki Maata,

Hon. Kiriau Turepu
Minister for Agriculture

Executive summary

The national agriculture policy provides guidance on the way forward to ensure sustainable development for the agriculture sector, an efficient allocation of agricultural resources to maximise the potential benefit for the people of the Cook Islands.

In developing this policy, due consideration has been given to our national vision, Te Kaveinga Nui, the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) under Goals 10, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) under SDGs 1, 2, 5, 8, 13, 15, 17.

While the tourism and the infrastructure sectors are acknowledged as the largest contributing sectors to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the government does not overlook the major role the agriculture sector plays in sustaining the development of the tourism sector and the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Cook Islands.

This policy will discuss sustainable opportunities in the industry as well as the minimisation of threats including the loss of arable land and risks to our biosecurity. The policy will aim to engage all stakeholders to promote accountability and ownership within the sector.

The policy, underpinned by the social, economic, environmental and cultural principles and pillars, is organised into seven policy objectives; Food Security & Nutrition; Enabling Environment; Market Efficiency and Trade access; Science, Research & Technology; Human Resource Development; Biosecurity; and Climate Change and Disaster Risk Resilience.

The policy is to inform a national agriculture strategy that will outline specific actions including activities and programs that, when implemented, will result in a more resilient agricultural sector. This will create employment; increase nutritious local food production, supply and consumption; increase GDP; effective Growers Associations, and improve livelihoods for the people of the Cook Islands irrespective of socio-economic status or geographic location.



SECTION 1 - Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish objectives that will guide planning and implementation strategies for agriculture across the Cook Islands to support:

- increased household and national food security throughout the Pa Enua, and improved nutrition supporting a decrease in the incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD's);
- a positive enabling environment for agricultural growth;
- growth and stability in farm incomes through agricultural productivity;
- greater profitability of agriculture and increased investment in agriculture;
- market efficiency and development;
- trade access and opportunity;
- coordinated applied science research and technology;
- human resource development;
- organisation and coordination of concerted efforts and responses from government, private sector, civil society and development partners at both national and community levels;
- mainstreaming of climate change and disaster risk management issues; and
- mainstreaming of gender and vulnerable groups issues



Scope

This policy will focus on all elements of agricultural food production and products, supply and consumption. It will also discuss biosecurity, market mechanisms of food security, nutrition, soils, sustainable and organic agriculture and the management of existing forestry. It does not address marine based food supply. This policy has a ten (10) year outlook but is to be formally every four years (2016-2020) or as deemed necessary in the interim years.

Background

Importance of Agriculture – Historical Context:

Agriculture was once the foundation of the Cook Islands economy. Since the 1980's the sector has been in decline with virtually no growth recorded, and a decline in production, competitiveness and exports. The agriculture industry now only contributes 3.4% to GDP (MFEM 2014). Contributing factors to this situation include outmigration, reduction in available arable land, an ageing farmer population, farm work force constraints and climate related extreme weather events including longer drought periods and unusual seasonal trends. Agriculture is essentially a part-time or subsistence driven sector. The 2011 census reveals that the number of active commercial growers dropped from 153 to 31 between 2006 and 2011.

Total imports continue to increase with a total of US\$110 million for 2011, while total exports steadily decline to around US\$3.2 million over the same period. Rising production costs, restrictions and compliance requirements to technical trade barriers, have contributed to the decline in export competitiveness, as has the difficulty in meeting quality, demand and Phytosanitary requirements for the principal markets of New Zealand and Australia. As the single largest revenue earner, the tourism sector presents the greatest potential for the agriculture sector to contribute through import substitution and participation in agri-tourism. Demand from the tourism sector can essentially be seen as the export market without the Phytosanitary barriers.

Why develop a National Agriculture Policy?

With the recent launch of the latest NSDP 2013-2020 and the SDG's, it is important and timely to develop a National Agriculture Policy to guide the sector.

Strong linkages has been identified between the agricultural sector and other sectors such as tourism, which carry implications for national economic growth and development. A clear and comprehensive policy can provide guidance to improve the contribution of the agricultural sector while supporting the growth of other sectors.

This Policy is an overarching policy that will provide a premise for the development of a national agriculture policy suite accompanied by legal frameworks, which have previously failed to take place in the absence of an overarching policy.

The Policy will strengthen institutional linkages amongst various stakeholders (public and private) involved in the agricultural sector. It is recognized that institutional linkages are dynamic and will evolve depending upon the prevailing national and international social, economic, political and cultural environment.



Figure 1. National Policy Framework

SWOT Analysis

The follow SWOT analysis matches an identified list of issues/threats with solutions/opportunities within the industry.

Issue and Threat	Solution and Opportunity
Loss of prime agriculture land: The lack of land use planning by competent authorized institutions results in the increased use of good farmlands for residential, tourism and industrial purposes. There also remains an excess of vacant land not utilised in Rarotonga and throughout the Pa Enea.	Land and labour saving technology: Land and labour saving technology such as small mechanization, drippers, hybrid seeds, shade houses, plastic covers and hydroponics provide an opportunity for farmers to create efficiencies, strengthening Organic and sustainable agriculture, increase yield and quality and increase economic return. Such approaches can also and can assist in providing a more consistent supply to the local market.
Labour Shortages: The gradual decline in number of farmers: Low levels of overall productivity due to factors such as migration and the declining number of households engaged in farming activities and a lack of interest in farming among educated youth	

Issue and Threat	Solution and Opportunity
<p>Inability to engage youth in farming activities:</p> <p>Increased youth urbanization in recent years is related to the perception that agriculture is not the most desirable occupation further resulting in a loss of traditional agricultural knowledge and a decline in stock of local varieties of food crops;</p>	
<p>Difficulties accessing trade and marketing opportunities:</p> <p>Limited opportunities for trading and market access and compliance issues of agricultural products results in a lack of motivation for farmers to meet market demands; No government authorities take responsibility for identifying new market opportunities resulting in an over reliance on a narrow range of traditional cash crops and limited opportunities for expanding income and revenue generation in the agriculture sector.</p>	<p>Local demand and supply:</p> <p>Interested growers would benefit from greater coordination - crop scheduling programmes and management linking to value chain approach, which offer guidance on what to grow to reduce the gap between market demand and supply. Crops can be selected from a popular high value range of vegetables varieties, depending on the seasons, as well as fruit trees, root crops, nuts and herbs for import substitution and food security.</p>
<p>Little control over pest and disease:</p> <p>High risk of contamination posed by neighbouring countries and non-scheduled vessels to the outer islands with serious pests such as oriental fruit fly, taro leaf blight, giant African snail and banana scab moth. Difficulties controlling the domestic infection of such pests.</p>	
<p>Absence of an appropriate policy for agriculture sector:</p> <p>The agriculture sector currently need to review its 2008 sector policy direction linking value chain marketing approaches to tourism which combines the diverse interests and aspirations of all agricultural stakeholders hindering stakeholders from collaborating to effectively manage or grow the sector.</p>	<p>Tourism:</p> <p>There is opportunity to encourage the innovative use of local fresh produce in the food and beverage experience as a competitive advantage as a destination that offers superior local cuisine and rewards tourism operators for use of fresh and cheaper local produce.</p> <p>Ageing health conscious population:</p> <p>Due to an ageing population, there is an opportunity to review our pricing policy to further increase the demand for healthy foods and support the reduction in NCD's into the future. There is evidence that there is a positive sentiment towards 'going local' with efforts are made by sellers to differentiate local and fresh products in the market.</p>

Issue and Threat	Solution and Opportunity
<p>Changes to administration arrangements in the Pa Enua:</p> <p>The agriculture program for the Pa Enua is restricted because of the new administration arrangements that limit the role, responsibilities and budget of the Ministry of Agriculture in relation to the Pa Enua.</p>	<p>Pa Enua development :</p> <p>To support livelihoods in the Pa Enua, there is an opportunity to support growers and farmers to improve and adopt growing techniques to be able to provide for their families, their local communities and perhaps export. Local production of livestock, fruits, vegetables, root crops and floriculture in the Pa Enua agriculture can increase with the assistance of development partners.</p>
<p>Delays due to donor funding conditions:</p> <p>Changes in donor funding conditions can affect the delivery of planned development programs or project outputs.</p>	
<p>Lack of proper infrastructure:</p> <p>Poor conditions of existing infrastructure and lack of investment in additional infrastructure in economically strategic locations results in high production costs and low production.</p>	<p>Support an enabling environment:</p> <p>Ensure that the adequate environment exists to help farming ventures thrive.</p>
<p>High cost of communication and transport:</p> <p>High costs associated with communication and the transportation of products to main market centres and inconsistencies in the shipping industry result in a loss of confidence and interest in agriculture sector as a preferred sector for investment.</p>	
<p>Lack of information for accessing credit to expand business enterprise:</p> <p>Difficulties associated with accessing credit for agricultural activities results in insufficient investment and minimal expansion of existing and new agricultural business enterprises.</p>	

National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP 2011-2015)

The national vision as set out in the **NSDP 2017-2021** is;

“To enjoy the highest quality of life consistent with the aspirations of our people in harmony with our culture and environment

This NSDP document further defines sixteen national development goals underpinned by key performance indicators. It is a scorecard for development rather than an explicit plan.

The NSDP Goal 10 is of most relevance to this policy.



Other NSDP goals closely related to this policy are:



The NSDP identifies four indicators to monitor the progress of Goal 10.

Increase import substitution

NSDP Indicator 10.1-Percentage of all food purchased that is produced locally.

Increase food production

NSDP Indicator 10.2-Total food production

Retain arable land

NSDP Indicator 10.3-Total land used and reserved for agriculture

Improve biosecurity

NSDP Indicator 10.4 -Number of reported biosecurity outbreaks

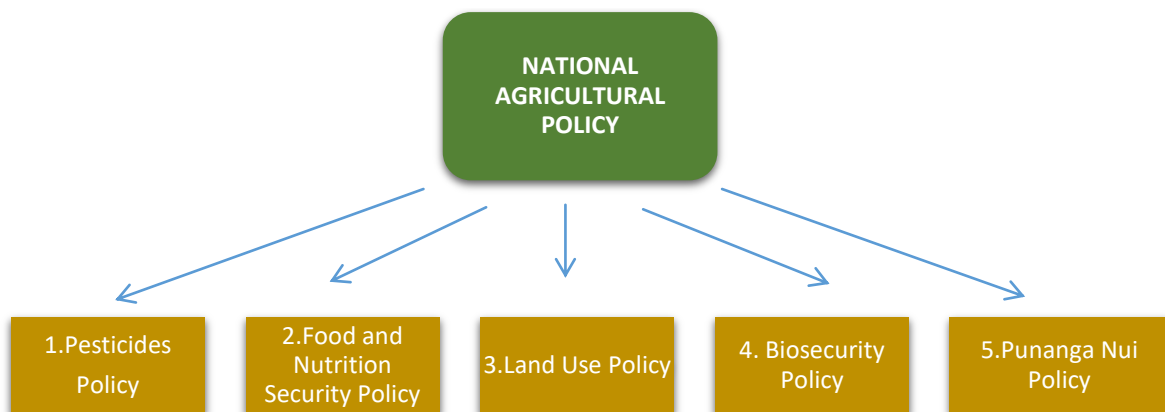
Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)

A United Nations initiative, the sustainable development goals are an intergovernmental set of 17 aspiration Goals with 169 targets. These included ending poverty and hunger, sustainable agriculture, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting oceans and forests.



National Agriculture Policy Suite

This Policy is the overarching policy for further policies within the sector.



Our Vision, Mission, Values & Guiding Principles

Our VISION

“Healthy Soils, healthy food, local and appropriate while sustaining our common livelihoods”

Our MISSION

“By advancing our common threads of agriculture in food security and nutrition and livelihoods, we transform our sector to being innovative resilient, collaborative empowered for future generations to enjoy a healthy living.”

Our VALUES

Our values guide the way we operate and deal with our partners and our communities (CIG, 2016);

Outlook:	A cohesive goal oriented workforce, being ambitious, passionate, reliable and dedicated.
Converge:	We focus collaboratively with our people needs to better our social/cultural, economic and environmental development.
Operational Excellence:	Acknowledging our customer purpose for quality and efficiency, constant innovation, communication excellence and leadership will be our success.
Innovation:	Recognizing our performance to be the forefront is to innovate, to produce, be resilient, and grow healthy as a nation.
Ethics and integrity:	We will work the talk. We will be committed to a consistent, honest in a liable way of action.

Our PRINCIPLES

In developing and applying this policy, the following list of principles takes into account;

Governance centered:	A sector that is centered on good governance structures to grow public trust in our agriculture program distributions and disseminations.
Dynamic system based:	A Joint planning processes and procedures that allow good decision making policies based on evidence for best farming systems and practices.
End market guidance:	Trade potentials are economically viable based on stronger long-term partner networks and better efficient organized market structure.
Innovation focused:	An integrated approach for improved resilient food crops and vegetables from appropriate island technologies while strengthening capacity of extension providers to deliver.
Vision and strategy driven:	Family and community vision for resilient and healthy productive

people are valued, implemented on the strategies for better sustainable agriculture livelihoods.

Partnership engaged: Working with civil society partners and the private sector in a participating market economy that is essential for a sustained local food and nutritional economy.

Enabling environment: An enabling sector for high degree on program participation, ensuring government investment is place at the center of the farmers needs for support.

Socially and culturally owned: A sector that leads in the preservation of social, cultural and environmental agriculture farming resources, climate resilient practices and knowledge owned by future generations.

Economically sustainable: Creating an integrated, environmentally, socially and economically sustainable agricultural production system for all.

Gender and disability inclusive: Agriculture interventions shall be gender and disabled prioritization driven for all families and communities.

SECTION 2 – Policy Goals

The following policy goals are recognised as the key areas to be addressed during this policy period. These are;



Policy goal 1:

Strengthen household and national food security and nutrition



Policy goal 2:

Promote an effective and efficient enabling business environment supportive of agriculture sector development.



Policy goal 3:

Increasing incomes from improves labour substituted technologies, food processed quality, food safety and market efficiency and trade.



Policy goal 4:

Improve food production and products through science, research, technology and the sustainable practices.



Policy goal 5:

A united agricultural sector aimed to grow the industry and develop human resource potential



Policy goal 6:

Improve biosecurity to cope with border protection challenges.



Policy goal 7:

Promote climate change and disaster risk resilience



Policy goal 1: Strengthen household and national food security and nutrition

Food Security exists when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life¹. This goal recognises the potential for local producers, on Rarotonga and the Pa Enua, to increase food production to meet the local demand for fresh and nutritious meat, fruit and vegetables.

Policy objectives

To promote household and national food security for the Cook Islands, we will:

1-1: Increase overall food crops and livestock at all levels of production for household consumption, socio and cultural needs and livelihood income.

1-2: Promote the consumption and preservation of nutritional foods and the increase in growing of highly nutritional crops.

1-3: Strengthen linkages between farmers and the hotel and restaurants to create culinary culture that utilizes crops grown locally in the Cook Islands.

1-4: Develop crop and livestock diversity towards a sustainable supply that covers a wide range of nutritional food needs to support a healthy Cook Islands.

Increase import substitution

NSDP Indicator 10.1- Percentage of all food purchased that is produced locally.

The greatest immediate potential for our agricultural industry is in import substitution. Therefore, this indicator measures how much of the food we buy are produced locally. Successfully producing more of the food we consume will help grow the industry, reduce economic leakages and improve food security.

Increase food production

NSDP Indicator 10.2 - Total food production

With the impacts of climate change, such as increased drought conditions and desertification, global food prices are expected to continue rising in the near future. As our country is currently heavily reliant on imported foods, there is a real need to increase local food production. This indicator is closely linked to the Indicator 10.1, but also offers an insight into potential food exports.

¹ 2011 - Republic of Kenya – National Food and Nutrition Security Policy.



Policy goal 2: Promote an effective and efficient enabling business environment supportive of agriculture sector development.

It is an essential prerequisite for any economic development to create a supportive enabling environment. That is an environment defined by policies, institutions, support services and other conditions that collectively improve or create a general business setting where enterprises and activities can start, develop and thrive (Gabor, Carlos, & Mhlanga, 2013).

Policy objectives

In order to create an enabling environment supportive of agricultural development, we will:

2-1: Establish standards and quality assurances for effective farming system technologies and best practices.

2-2: Develop regulations and policies that enables access to viable markets, product branding and trading opportunities.

2.3: Promote investment in infrastructure and facilities necessary to support agricultural industry for example Punanga Nui Market, regular transport.

2-4: Improve institutional co-ordination and partnerships with development partners in the implementation of funded projects .

2-5: Encourage local governments to enact and enforce bylaws for use of resources while monitoring agriculture practices that protect the use and reserve resources.

2-6: Promote organization institutions that strengthen improved coordination of agriculture development and marketing strategies.

2-7: Promote the participation of women and girls, disabled and elderly in the development of policies, program, projects in the agricultural sector.

2-8: Provide regular and accessible market information to improve supply decisions and market decisions. E.g. Domestic market survey – volume, prices and demand, market newsletter.



Policy goal 3: Increasing incomes from improved labour substituted technologies, food processing quality, food safety and market efficiency and trade.

Linking farmers to markets (both domestic and international) is the simple solution to revitalising the industry. The long-term vision of the trade policy framework for the Cook Islands is to build productive capacity to competitively produce goods and services and encourage increased value addition activities to create employment opportunities that will result in increased trade and therefore lead to a higher standard of living for all.

Policy objectives

To improve market efficiency and trade and increase income opportunities, we will:

3-1: Establish value adding opportunities, food handling standards and *“farmers to market”* distribution links.

3-2: Develop Agri-tourism for efficient and effective market coordination and trade income opportunities

3-3: Establishing crop management best practice principles for agri-business opportunities and market efficiency strategies.

3-4: Provide quality and timely information to improve the efficiency of the market through the strengthening of farmer’s organisations.

3-5: Increase local livestock production (pigs, poultry and goats) to meet local demand.

3-6: Facilitate and promote production, marketing and service delivery.

3-7: Investigate an effective and appropriate harvesting system for sustainably managing existing forest resources.

3-8: Explore international market opportunities from crop production feasibilities and food safety treatments, bio security compliances and CODEX export standards.



Policy goal 4: Improve production through science, research, technology and the sustainable practices

The role of science and research is to create efficiencies and enhance sustainable agricultural practices to ensure that we as a national can meet the demands of today, without compromising our ability to meet future demand. This requires an interdisciplinary and participatory approach to research, education, policymaking and implementation to ensure that relevant solutions lead to sustainable outcomes.

Policy objectives

To improve production through science, research, technology and sustainable practices we will:

4-1: Improve crop and livestock resilience against climate change through science and research collection, analysis and dissemination of information including technology and practices.

4-2: Strengthen the application of research and advisory services and education approaches in crop development goals.

4-3: Promote integrated pest management, organic based fertilizer and pesticides through enhanced technologies for efficient production and green agriculture.

4-4: Promote preservation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge to enhance sustainable agricultural practices

4-5: Strengthen sustainable livestock production through environmentally friendly and cost effective technology investment.

4-6: Promote appropriate sustainable farming and food production technologies and practices that protect our environment (land and sea), our health, and our way of life.

4-7: Strengthen integrated management and the robust monitoring and evaluation of natural resources and soil quality preservation and land protection.

4-8: Introduce appropriate and sustainable mechanization for agricultural production.

Retain arable land

NSDP Indicator 10.3 - Total land used and reserved for agriculture

The rise in tourism and consumerism has coincided with the decline of agriculture as an industry. One consequence of this, especially on Rarotonga, is that land once used for agricultural production has been converted to residential or commercial (usually tourist) use. The less land that is available for agriculture, the greater the limitations on our ability to produce food. We need to ensure that there is land available to increase and improve food production and security.



Policy goal 5: A united agricultural sector aimed to grow the industry and develop human resource potential

There is increasing evidence and recognition that what matters for development, more than natural resources and man-made physical capital, is the capability of people to be effective and productive economic agents, in short, human capital. In the particular case of agriculture, the education and skills of agricultural people are significant factors in explaining the inter-farm and inter-country differences in agricultural performance, along with the more conventional factors such as availability of land and water resources and credit². With the help of strong renewed legislations and policies and strategic goals are put in place the expectation of a united sector enable a sustainable industry to grow while coping with the domestic food demands towards also a healthy and active human resource.

Policy objectives

To improve human resource development, we will:

5-1: Provide improved training needs for all agriculture related development programs are provided to enhance industry production and efficiency.

5-2: Improve the foundation for agriculture human resource development in schools, youth through gender advocacy, community empowerment towards poverty reduction, malnutrition and environment concerns.

5-3: Strengthen agriculture school curriculum to attract new graduates into agriculture as a career and the private sector industry.

5-4: Manage and strengthen professional groups to engage in the implementation of agriculture development programs and projects.

5-5: Build the capacity of government and the community to implement national and community climate change and disaster risk strategies and initiatives linked to the agriculture sector.

5-6: Establish legislations, regulation and policies, strategic plans that support a sustainable national agriculture industry sector.

² Retrieved 19 June 2016, FAO Web site <http://www.fao.org/docrep/v4200e/v4200E11.htm>



Policy goal 6: Improve biosecurity to cope with border protection challenges.

Biosecurity plays a critical role in reducing risk and keeping our country free from many of the world's serious pests and diseases. While the geographic isolation of the Cook Islands contributes to maintenance of this status, our isolation as a small island state becomes less relevant as technology advances and the increase in international arrivals in tourism and trade.

The Cook Islands MoA has been successful in containing two major outbreaks of Oriental Fruit Fly and the Brown Widow Spider by working quickly to impose bans and remove nests³. In order to protect our agriculture industry as well as our biodiversity, unique environment and tourism industry, we must continue to implement measures (*Pests Surveillance Strategies*) that minimises any further risk of pests and diseases entering the Cook Islands.

Policy objectives

In order to protect our agriculture industry and maintain our biosecurity, we will:

6-1: Biosecurity legislation strengthened and regulations developed for the Pa Enua boarder control management and surveillance monitoring.

6-2: Strengthen national, regional surveillance monitoring systems for pests and diseases, invasive species and zoonotic outbreaks.

6-3: Strengthen Biosecurity Area and update approved international treatments (Import & Export) in compliance to International trade requirements or rules.

NSDP Indicator 10.4 - Improve biosecurity

Number of reported biosecurity outbreaks

One of the major risks to agriculture is biosecurity threats that come from abroad. Biosecurity breaches such as outbreak of fruit fly have threatened entire species of crops and severely affecting fruit quality and to a point of affecting livelihoods. Having adequate biosecurity measures in place, it is crucial for the survival and growth of our agricultural industry. Biosecurity threats need to be monitored and appropriate policy interventions needs to be developed.

³ Cook Islands Ministry of Agriculture Business Plan 2015/16



Policy goal 7: Promote climate change and disaster risk resilience

The effects of climate change are evident throughout the Cook Islands as we record more frequent and intense weather events as well as slow onset climate effects such as ocean acidification, sea level rise and changes to the ecosystem. Through effective early warning systems and adaptation practices, producers can protect their investments and minimise the effect of these events on their crops and livestock.

It is important to the industry that we prioritise activities that prepare producers for the impact of climate change and disaster to minimise these impacts.

Policy objectives

To assist producers to adapt and strengthen their resilience against climate change and disaster risk, we will:

7-1: Strengthen the management of risks associated with food standards, pest and disease outbreaks, invasive species and natural disasters.

7-2: Establish and maintain effective early-warning and mitigation systems and improve access to seasonal forecasts for farmers.

7-3: Explore resilient food crops that are tolerant to the impacts of climate change and promote traditional and organic growing techniques for taro and other traditional crops such as Puraka, Yams, Ti, Kape, etc. for times of emergency.

7-4: Establish national and community based disaster management plans specific to the agricultural sector

7-5: Promote resilient food crops and tolerant to the impacts of climate change and encourage traditional and organic growing techniques and traditional food crops for time of emergencies.

SECTION 3 – Implementation

Implementation Strategy – Next Steps

The success of this policy relies on its effective implementation and regular monitoring.

The next steps for the Ministry of Agriculture are as follows:

- Firstly, the Ministry of Agriculture will develop and implement key strategies. These strategies will include an array of activities and programs that executed to achieve this policy.
- Structure the ministry to allow for implementation of this policy. Identify and address gaps in staff capacity to implement the policy and identify and allocate budget.
- Regular monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of the policy including measurement of the policy indicators (see Monitoring and Evaluation)
- Strengthen grower associations to improve capacity and improve ongoing public awareness.
- Review of the Ministry of Agriculture Act (1978) subsequent to the development of the Agriculture Strategy.
- Complete a midterm review of this policy in the year 2018 to determine changes and gaps while resourcing any additional developments relating to the implementation of the policy.
- Conduct the first review of this policy every four years. The final evaluation of the outcome of this policy will be carried out in the year 2021.



Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is an essential part of measuring the success of our efforts to revitalise the agricultural sector. The first priority in monitoring and evaluation will be to assess the set of key indicators chosen to underpin the 7 goals. These indicators must be measurable and quantitative with data that is readily available or easily obtained through existing surveys, databases, HIES or the census.

The Ministry of Agriculture will lead the monitoring and evaluation process with the support of supporting agencies of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Infrastructure Cook Islands, Business Trade and Investment Board, Ministry of Health and other Government and Private Sector Organizations. Annual reporting to stakeholders and the Minister of Agriculture will support this process.

Communication strategy

The Ministry of Agriculture will develop a comprehensive communication strategy following Cabinet approval of this policy. This strategy will address agriculture and agriculture related information and knowledge from within and from outside the sector. It will set out a framework for communicating with agricultural stakeholders, the Minister of Agriculture and the public.

The information provided will improve awareness and understanding of agriculture in the Cook Islands and enhance dialogue, buy-in, collaboration and participation of all agricultural stakeholders in the implementation of this policy. Two-way communication between government and other stakeholders institutionalised by facilitating opportunities for public dialogue, knowledge sharing, and enabling information flows from grassroots levels.

These communication activities will promote and inform evidence-based planning at all levels. The Ministry of Agriculture will use this information to debate and provide appropriate feedback on Government strategies for agricultural development. Awareness of the potential for agricultural development in the Cook Islands and political commitment to development, fostered through communication between and among different technical and non-technical audiences, government and non-government audiences, development partners, and the wider population.