

Press Release,
World Food Day Celebration in the Kingdom of Tonga,
Friday, 16 October 2009

Title: World Food Day, Celebrated in the Kingdom of Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga joined the World Food Day (WFD) celebration on 16 October 2009 at Queen Salote Memorial Hall. The occasion was led by the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Food, Forests and Fisheries, HSH Prince Tuipelehake with invited guests and participation of the community, particularly the Women and Youth Groups in Tongatapu.

The occasion was marked with prize-giving ceremony, promoting food security and sustainable livelihood in Tonga. Among the important prizes given were prizes to households with the most number of fruit trees, best best vegetable garden, and best local chicken and duck shed in their backyard or “api kolo”. Individual prizes include prizes for recipes made from local and traditional foods which include local seafoods.

The theme for this year’s WFD is “Achieving Food Security in Times of Crisis”. This theme is chosen to highlight our need for action and common focus to achieve food security in times of crisis as well as no crisis.

According to the statement of the FAO Director General, Dr Jacques Diouf, *“For the first time in history more than one billion people are undernourished worldwide. This is about 100 million more than last year and it means that one in every six persons suffers from hunger every day.”* This may not be true for Tonga now but this can happen in the future. The Hon. Minister in his speech emphasized that *“this day is an opportunity for us all to be grateful that we have enough food to eat here in Tonga. It is also an opportunity for us to be aware of the plight of millions of people elsewhere, suffering from hunger, and hopefully encouraged us all here in Tonga to work together to ensure food security for our families and for our country.*

The Hon. Minister further emphasized that this day is also an opportunity for us to reflect on food related crisis that we are experiencing here Tonga. It is the crisis of NCD's (Non Communicable Diseases). We have to pay a particular attention not only on the quantity of our food intake but more so on the quality of the food we are eating. Our local foods are "healthy food". They are better and we need to eat more of these.

We are celebrating here the World Food Day with the exhibitions of our local foods to remind us all of the importance of our local food. We need to continue to promote our local food not only for food security but also for our health security. If we are healthy, we are in a better position to act and do more to contribute in securing our food for our family and for our country as a whole".

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Forests and Fisheries thanks all the participants for joining the WFD Celebration, especially to those women and their groups and all the other members of the community who closely work and collaborate with the Ministry. Special thanks also goes to our local sponsors and our regional partners, particularly the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).



