



Atoll Agricultural Conference “*The future is here; dialogue for setting the direction for atoll food production, research and development*”

The Government of Kiribati through its Ministry of Environment, Land and Agriculture Development (MELAD) hosted the 2010 Atoll Agricultural Conference “*The future is here; dialogue for setting the direction for atoll food production, research and development*” which brought together representatives of agriculture Ministries from across the Pacific as well as NGO, farmer and private sector stakeholders to discuss the future of atoll agriculture. The Agriculture Ministers of Kiribati and Tuvalu were also in attendance. The Conference, successfully conducted at the Otintaai Hotel, South Tarawa, Kiribati from 26th to 30th April 2010 was financially supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) with the participation of key development partners: The University of the South Pacific (USP), The Taiwan Technical Mission, The World Vegetable Centre (AVRDC) and The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Conference Communiqué

This delegates and representatives to the Atoll Agricultural Conference “*The future is here; dialogue for setting the direction for atoll food production, research and development*” wish to endorse the recommendations and key strategic directions identified during the meeting.

The conference was guided by the remarks of the Minister for Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development of Kiribati, Hon. Amberoti Nikora who noted “the atolls face extra ordinary challenges due to the poor composition of soil. Climate change, in particular sea level rise exacerbates these difficulties. Each country’s experiences, knowledge and approaches in developing agriculture differ. To effectively adapt, we need to share skills, knowledge and experiences. The survival of atoll agriculture depends largely on cooperation and partnerships.”

The Tuvalu Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Hon. Tavau Teii who also attended stated “I have chosen to come to this particular atoll conference because of its uniqueness, timeliness, and its emphasis on atolls, which I have to say is one of the first of its kind for many years. It is also in the interest of my government and people for my presence to learn from other atolls, but also to share some of our experiences and developments, for the common good and interest of our atoll communities, and to participate in working together with everyone in this conference, on a way forward to further enhance our atoll food security and our people’s sustainable livelihoods.”

The overall objective of the Conference was to map the way forward for the Kiribati based Centre of Excellence for Atoll Agriculture Research and Development that was established through an IFAD grant in 2008.

Centre of Excellence of Atoll Agriculture Research and Development

The objectives of the Centre of Excellence are to establish a knowledge base on Atoll Agriculture with the participation of the farmers themselves; improve management for Atoll Agriculture; and also to develop institutional capacity for sustainability of the Centre.

A key strategic direction identified by the Conference was the need for developing an effective governance structure for the Centre of Excellence to ensure ongoing strategic guidance for the Centre and accountability back to the stakeholders. This was recognised as critical development towards sustainability as was the need to ensure that the Centre is well linked with other research centres and existing agriculture practitioner networks such as the Pacific Islands Extension Network, the Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Network and the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community.

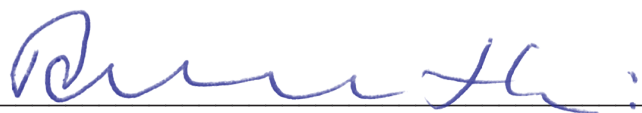
The conference recommended that the Centre of Excellence focus on the following themes:

- **Research:** To address the specific challenges of atoll food production and environmental sustainability in light of climate change issues.
- **Development:** Addressing the most pressing development needs of atolls including food and nutritional security, climate change mitigation and sustainable management of the environment.
- **Trade:** Enhanced livelihood opportunities for atoll farmers through facilitating domestic and international trade.
- **Partnership:** Building strategic partnerships at national, regional and international level to ensure the goals of the Centre are met to the benefit of atoll farmers
- **Capacity Building:** Building the Centres institutional capacity for sustainability and also the Centres contribution to building enhanced human resource capacity within atoll countries.

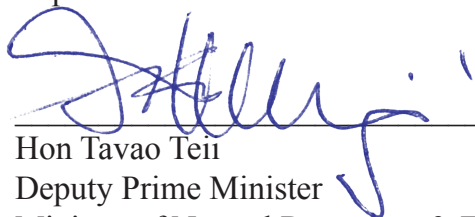
Next Steps

The outcomes of the conference will be presented to the SPC Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Service in September 2010 to further bring to the forefront the development challenges of the Atolls.

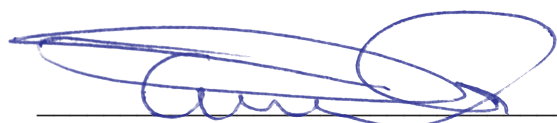
We urge our development partners, leaders of atoll countries and larger countries with atolls to foster the development of the Centre of Excellence in order to address the pressing and challenging conditions of atoll food production and environmental sustainability.



Hon Amberoti Nikora
Minister of Environment Lands and Agricultural Development
Republic of Kiribati



Hon Tavao Teii
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Natural Resources & Environment
Government of Tuvalu



Mr. Inoke Ratukalou
Acting Director
Land Resource Division
Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Dated: 30th April 2010 – Otintaai Hotel, Tarawa Kiribati