



**Papua New Guinea Live-Virtual Statement**

**to the**

**United Nations Food Systems Summit**

**at the**

**United Nations General Assembly**

**76<sup>th</sup> Session High-Level Week**

**by**

**Hon. James Marape, MP**

**Prime Minister**

**and Minister for Bougainville Affairs and Defence**

**23 September 2021**

**New York, USA**

**Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies and distinguished delegates;**

I am honoured and pleased to join this important United Nations Food Systems Summit on my country's behalf.

I want to thank the UN Secretary-General and the Food Systems Summit Special Envoy Kalibata for your courageous leadership to progress the Food Systems agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially during this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and also in the midst of the global climate crisis.

Mr. Secretary-General, my Government is appreciative of the strong support we have received from the United Nations Country Office, particularly FAO, on this agenda.

Let me also pay special tribute to the multitude of global citizens who made it their business, in an excellent way, to make this Summit a "People's Summit."

**Excellencies,**

The Food System Summit is important for my country given that agriculture is our national backbone and our future success will depend on how we address the issues involved. The importance of protecting our rich organic food heritage cannot be overstated.

Of the majority of our people who still live in rural areas the agriculture sector is where 75 per cent are engaged in a variety of subsistence and cash income activities involving our local food systems.

However, Papua New Guinea is concerned with the alarming increase in lifestyle-related diseases and health concerns, including from food choices. This is further compounded by our vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, which impact our fragile food systems. The recent impacts of COVID-19 on our food supply chains has only worsened the situation.

These are putting huge strain on the limited capacity of our Government system, including in our SDGs national implementation efforts.

Let us use this occasion to take stock of the existing opportunities and challenges of our food systems at all levels. We must work in partnership and in an inclusive and timely manner to address our food systems issues, including raising awareness for global commitments and take actions that will transform food systems in a positive way to resolve challenges relating to hunger, malnutrition, other diet-related issues, food security and investments in better health for our peoples and communities.

### **Excellencies,**

At the national level, Papua New Guinea successfully convened two Sub-National Food System Dialogues and a National Dialogue. We also participated in the Pacific regional Food Systems dialogue and the Pre-Summit in Rome and may I thank Italy for their important contribution to this Summit.

We are pleased to note that our National Dialogue involved broad stakeholder participation, including from the government, private sector, academia, research institutions, development partners, civil society, farmers, pastoralists and fisheries communities.

The five (5) Action Tracks of the UN Food Systems Summit guided our National Dialogue.

### **Excellencies,**

We have identified five (5) Key Priority Actions that will form our National Pathway to transform our Food Systems for a sustainable, equitable, resilient, and healthier food system in our country.

- Firstly, to "Strengthen the role of women and youth as key drivers in transforming food systems. From our National Dialogue, we decided to add this as our Sixth National Action Track, in addition to the five (5) Action Tracks the UN Food Systems Summit has identified.

- This is in view of the high importance my Government places on the critical role women and youth play in the food systems in our country. We therefore intend to harness and enhance their participation as key drivers to transforming the food systems in the country.
- Secondly; to facilitate partnership with education agencies to promote healthy and nutritious food;
- Thirdly, to harness and promote innovation and best practices in the Food Systems based on science and research;
- Fourthly, to strengthen responsible, sustainable and resilient food systems in times of vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses, without degrading the natural environment; and
- Fifthly, to foster multi-stakeholder partnership to transform food systems.

My Government believes that these five priority actions are critical to transform our national food systems and also complement our efforts to progress the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Excellencies,**

Like many other countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed our vulnerabilities and continues to hinder our efforts to progress the SDGs among other existing challenges, hence, our commitment to transform the food systems will be no exception.

For the food systems national pathways and strategies to be meaningful and transformative, we call for effective and enhanced partnership between governments, the private sector, development partners and financial institutions to mobilize finance and other investment resources to support our national ownership and leadership efforts towards long-term sustainable development solutions.

Human resources and key institutional capacity building support, the sharing of best practices and lessons learned are but also some of the important areas that could benefit from the food systems partnerships. Doing so will help us achieve inclusive growth, environmental sustainability and social justice, while leaving no one behind.

In closing, I want to affirm my Government's strong commitment to this important agenda.

I thank you.



# **NATIONAL PATHWAY FRAMEWORK TO TRANSFORM FOOD SYSTEMS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

## **1. UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT**

The UN Food Systems Summit is an important global event that evolved from a logical, decisive and strategic foresight of the UN Secretary General who announced at the World Food Day in 2019 (16<sup>th</sup> October) that the Food Systems Summit will be held this year (2021).

Central to this call, the ‘Decade of Action for the SDGs’ was to start in 2021 which will strategically position and prepare UN Member States to transform their respective food systems, thus achieving the SDGs as creating sustainable food systems is at the very heart of the SDGs.

It is a laudable and timely event announced through the wisdom of the Secretary General, supported by all UN Agencies and multilateral organizations, including powerful world economies to keep the world awakened, targeted and focused towards a healthier, resilient, equitable and sustainable food systems, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing climate crises and the global population boom.

These vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses have further undermined the performance of economies and in effect, uncovered staggering levels of inequalities, including their capabilities to build social, economic and environmental resilience, which remains the central aspect of sustainable development.

PNG, like other UN Member States, is part of this movement and is committed to participate, collaborate and work in concert with international development partners, multilateral bodies, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples and other constituencies for a prosperous planet, better human health and wellbeing.

Equally, UN Member States are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a more sustainable, resilient and productive pathway.

To guide Member countries prepare for the Food Systems Summit, five (5) Action Tracks have been developed so that there is universality of engagement, communication and coherence across regional and global programs and events, with the progressive development of the National Pathways to transform their food systems.

These Action Tracks are guided by seven principles of engagement, all of which are underpinned by the Summit’s vision of an equitable and healthy future for all and contribute to the progressive realization of the right to food.

In addition to the five (5) Action Tracks, PNG has introduced at the national level a sixth Action Track as cross-cutting lever-of-change. This is targeted at women and youth, as key players to be involved in transforming our national food systems. This is intended to significantly increase the participation of women and young people in ensuring equitable livelihoods and the socio-economic development of the country through the National Pathway on Food Systems.

The convening of the Food Systems Summit will set the pace for countries to improve on their weaknesses and build on existing strengths and synergies, reinforce coalitions and expand partnerships to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

For PNG, the development of this National Pathway will lay a solid foundation for a renewed, regenerative and productive work to begin in reaching the different, yet interlinked targets ascribed in the SDGs by 2030 and beyond, including PNG's development aspirations.

Another deliverable outcome to be achieved through the Food Systems Summit process is the forming of 'coalitions' by relevant Ministers for food systems change. Annexed herewith is the draft 'Declaration of Commitment' for relevant Ministers to sign as a commitment to implement the priority actions and recommendations.

## 2. EXPECTATIONS FOR MEMBER COUNTRIES

The 192 UN member countries are expected to conduct their own national dialogues in preparation for the Food Systems Summit. The dialogues are supposed to bring in all stakeholders from across government sectors, development partners, civil society, academia and research organizations, private sector and industry partners, women and youth organizations, farmers, fishers, herders or pastoralists' groups, consumer groups and other key stakeholders who are part of the food systems<sup>1</sup>.

The convening of the dialogues underpins the primary activity where all key stakeholders are gathered to share their views and experiences to improve their food systems. The dialogues are a core element of the Summit process. They explore and identify opportunities, priorities and ambitious actions to be taken for a better future.

The dialogue brings together participants from all parts of the society to share evidence and experiences and draw in new ideas towards developing an inclusive, productive and sustainable food systems while also safeguarding the planet.

Every stakeholder must be engaged in the dialogue process because everyone is part of the food system and it is important to gather all their views so the actions are thoroughly owned and passionately driven by these important and relevantly different actors.

That is why it is called the 'Peoples Summit' or the 'Solutions Summit' where everyone is needed to collectively explore, identify, discuss and agree on the pathway plans, strategic actions and priorities, including game-changing solutions for a sustainable future.

These actors will specifically decide on what needs to be done or changed and how they can all work together to change their food systems. Essentially, this process and the post-Summit are intended to build a better world based on inclusive growth, environmental sustainability and social justice where no one is hungry, no one is poor and where no one is left behind.

PNG is part of this global movement and must be fully committed in contributing to reaching the anticipated outcomes of these global goals (SDGs) and the collective vision of prosperity for all mankind.

---

<sup>1</sup> Food systems is defined as all manner of activities that take place from the production of food, obtained from farms/gardens, waters and oceans (collectively called 'blue foods') and the processing of these foods, transporting these foods to markets for sale and finally consuming them or reused as by-products to produce new products. The process of utilizing the excess food to minimize food wastes or loss at the harvest, production, processing or consumption stage is a direct application of the concept of 'blue economy' which is currently the global development focus (refining green economy) and attempts to shift to responsible sustainable consumption and production, low carbon emissions, accelerated economic growth, enhanced social equity, including efforts to minimize environmental degradations. This is the core of the sustainable development agenda. Blue foods undeniably make up almost half of the foods produced and consumed globally, the other half is derived on land in gardens, farms and plantations.



### 3. DIALOGUES CONVENED

As required by the Secretariat of the UN Food Systems Summit, PNG has successfully convened two sub-national (regional) dialogues and a National Dialogue. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2021, the National Convener from the Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) was appointed under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Country Office, the UN Agency that was tasked by the UN Resident Coordinator in Papua New Guinea to coordinate and oversee convening of the dialogues and monitor progress entailing preparations for the September Summit.

The first sub-national dialogue was successfully organized and held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2021 at the Lae International Hotel (Lae) that converged key stakeholders from Morobe, Madang and the Highlands Provinces. The second regional dialogue held on the 15 July 2021 in Port Moresby at the Hilton Hotel. It brought together all Provincial DAL and Disaster Coordinators, Regional Directors, farmers and fishers, civil society representatives, private sector, youth and women groups from the New Guinea Islands and Southern regions, who were gathered to consult, discuss and exchange viewpoints, suggestions and key propositions that can be consolidated into developing this National Pathway. The dialogues are based on participants' unique experiences, studies and observations from their involvement and the work they undertake directly or indirectly in the food systems process.

The convening of the National Dialogue on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2021 in Port Moresby concluded PNG's official preparation to attending the Pre-Summit (in Rome) as well as the September Summit in New York (23<sup>rd</sup>), which will likely be convened in conjunction with the 76<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly.

### 4. ASSESSING OUR FOOD SYSTEMS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

PNG's agriculture sector is largely underdeveloped, although it has a sizable landmass in the region. More than 80% of the population in PNG live in rural areas and are largely dependent on subsistence agriculture which accounts for nearly 30% of GDP.

It is the rural-based smallholder farmers that mostly produce food crops for self-consumption, communal exchange (barter system) and at times used for commercial purposes.

The few plantations that are continued to be maintained throughout the country are able to produce commodities such as coffee, tea, rubber, oil palm, cocoa, vanilla and coconut.

The livestock sub-sector (which produces protein meat, dairy products and egg) is a growing industry in PNG which nonetheless needs increased investment and adequate management for large-scale productions for domestic consumption as well as for exports.

Coupled with the unequal distribution and unavailability of adequate protein meat in the Highlands/Mainland areas of PNG, unlike the coastal areas is a huge task for the government.

The fresh produce sub-sector had not performed well until recently. For example, the value of domestic fresh produce was PGK 2.5 billion in 2013 (FPDA Stats). The fresh produce that is produced in proportionately large quantities, could be potentially redistributed to other areas experiencing food deficit or for exports, thereby lessening the increasing costs or burden on imports.

Agriculture in PNG remains the most productive economic activity that continues to sustain people's livelihood and has enabled family stability and community survival for many years. Although it has potential to become the most economically viable sector, successive governments have not aggressively invested in growing the sector, unlike the fisheries sector.

The option of commercializing the agriculture sector had never been preferred by the government over the years. This is not supposed to be the case if the government is seriously considering transforming the food systems and sustaining livelihoods of the rural majority.

It is believed the introduction of the Decentralization Policy in the 1990s (which established the Provincial Governments), the creation of Commodity Boards (Institutions), the enactment of the Organic Law on Provincial and Local-Level Governments and recently, the creation of the District Development Authorities (DDA) are the underlying causes of the dysconnectivity that hampered the effective delivery of goods and services to the people, including more accountability and transparency of the public service machinery (NADP).

It is also partly attributed to the lack of coordination by a Central Coordinating Agency (which is supposed to be the Dept. of Agriculture and Livestock) to administer and oversee all the functions and performance of Agriculture Agencies such as the Commodity Boards, Coffee Industry Corporation, Fresh Produce Development Agency, Livestock Development Corporation, National Agriculture Research Institute, National Agriculture Quarantine Inspection Authority and others.

There is no consistency in the supply of fresh produce as the supply chain factors had, in recent years, never been attended to, leaving a vacuum for more investment to fully grow the sector.

Road links to the markets are not in usable states (disconnecting rural areas to town markets) coupled with the increasing costs of freight for air and sea transport; farmers do not receive the relevant technical and financial support (e.g., through capacity building, microcredit financing or mechanization support); post-harvest or supply chain cold storage facilities continue to remain a huge problem and the private sector partners have not been able to forge greater partnerships with local farmers and the government to increase fresh produce production, including livestock (cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, chicken).

Access to land and developing the customary lands for farming purposes had never been easy because traditional landowners do not allow their land to be leased to private companies to do farming for commercial purposes. Educating the customary landowners to form Incorporated Land Groups (ILGs), for instance, and lease their land to potential investors for agricultural investments can be a long-term gain for the landowners.

The prospect of increased employment and business opportunities in these communities, coupled with improved road conditions, electricity, water supply or other utility services are spin-off benefits that will be produced by such projects. Enabling 'land mobilization' laws to develop customary lands are not practically clear to the local communities and indigenous peoples and require proper awareness to be carried out, with consistency of support needed to maximize investments on land (esp. for commercial farming purposes).

Ninety-seven (97) percent of land in PNG is still customarily owned and is undeniably enough to produce food in large quantities that can feed the entire Asia-Pacific region. Moreso, PNG needs more investment in developing the domestic supply and value chains of fresh produce and livestock, with the aim of producing and making available nutritious and healthy foods to the wider population.

At the same time, PNG is not ready to export its high-value products (with exception to some fisheries products such as tuna) due largely to issues relating to biosecurity, no clear regulatory framework for imports/exports, international food safety standards (such as Codex), etc. The government's commitment to introducing the Biosecurity Policy/Bill through NAQIA, for instance, is notably a step in the right direction.

Furthermore, nutritional problems such as underweight, stunting, wasting, vitamin A deficiency, iodine deficiency disorders and anemia continue to impede the socio-economic development of PNG. In addition, the emergence of overweight and obesity, and other lifestyle diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer threaten to derail the overall socio-economic development of PNG society (National Nutrition Policy).

It is now imperative for PNG to improve the nutrition status, especially for the vulnerable groups, which is a prerequisite for a healthy and productive nation.

## 5. STRATEGIC PRIORITY ACTIONS

### *5.1. Empowerment of women and youth*

Women and youth have immense abilities (e.g. entrepreneurial skills, willingness and drive) which can be harnessed in food systems transformation and increased socio-economic development in the country.

### *5.2. Collaboration with the Education Sector*

Mainstream agriculture in the National Education Curriculum with a greater focus on food safety, nutrition and healthy diets for children, entrepreneurship, climate-smart agriculture practices, and environmental sustainability will be the priority of the government.

### *5.3. Innovation, Technology and Scientific Research*

Key enablers to transforming our food systems are innovation, technology and scientific research which PNG will greatly invest in the Decade of Action period (2021 – 2030) and beyond.

### *5.4. Address vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses without degrading the natural environment*

Protecting biodiversity, regenerating natural ecosystems and enhancing agroecological systems of the environment, while improving the availability of early-warning (preparedness) and disaster response systems will underpin key priorities of the government while addressing climate variability and extremes, geothermal activities, pandemics and other evolving emergencies and unknown shocks.

### *5.5. Multi-stakeholder Partnerships*

PNG recognizes the need for a wide range of stakeholder engagement and partnerships to address complex issues of food security, hunger and malnutrition in all its forms.

### *5.6. Agriculture Downstream Processing*

The long-term plan of the government will be to advance into downstream processing of the agriculture and livestock products.

## 6. ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMS

This National Pathway Framework is consistent with the broader development goals of PNG such as the Vision 2050, PNG Development Strategic Plan (PNG DSP) 2010 – 2030, Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development; the Medium-Term Development Plan III 2018 – 2022, Agriculture Medium Term Development Plan 2020 – 2022, PNG National Health Plan 2011 – 2020, PNG Child Health Policy and Plan 2009 – 2020, National Agriculture Development Plan; public policies such as the National Trade Policy 2017 – 2032, National Nutrition Policy 2016 – 2026 and other relevant policies, programmes and strategies.

## 7. COALITION PARTNERS

The Coalition Partners include the Department of Agriculture and Livestock, National Fisheries Authority, Department of Education, National Department of Health, Dept of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, PNG National Forest Authority, Climate Change & Development Authority, Conservation and Environment Protection Authority, Dept. of National Planning & Monitoring, National Institute of Standards and Industrial Technology, National Agriculture Quarantine Inspection Authority (NAQIA), Fresh Produce Development Agency, National Agriculture Research Institute, Department of Prime Minister & National Executive Council, Department of Transport, Department of Finance, Treasury, Department of Community Development and Religion, National Youth Authority, National Development Bank, Bank of Papua New Guinea (Central Bank), FAO, WFP, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, DFAT/ACIAR, USAID, European Union, IFAD, ADB, IFC and the World Bank.

## 8. FINANCING OPTIONS

Based on these national strategic priorities, PNG will source domestic and international financing and identify credible investors to support national programs, broadly with the aim of addressing the setbacks and challenges identified in this document.

We will continue to work with our traditional development partners such as the appropriate UN Agencies, European Union, IFAD, ADB, DFAT/ACIAR (through the PNGAusPartnership), USAID and the World Bank to address food insecurity, hunger, poverty alleviation, health, education and nutrition, including targeting the double-burden of diseases.

## 9. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Push for the government to approve and gazette the Food Security Policy and implement without delay, including reviewing other relevant policies (e.g. National Nutrition Policy) to ensure their intended results are achieved.
- ii. Reintegrate traditional knowledge with science and policy (mixes) to enhance and strengthen the processes and linkages between production, processing and consumption so nutritious and healthy foods are readily available, accessed and afforded by everyone.
- iii. UNICEF, WHO and other development partners to work closely with the National Department of Health and other sectors to develop intervention programs that can specifically address underweight, obesity (overweight), stunting, wasting, Vitamin A deficiency, iodine deficiency disorders and anemia in PNG.
- iv. Increase tariffs on unhealthy imported foods or totally ban them and encourage food fortifications (i.e. through introduction of a separate law) and increase awareness for people to revert to local healthy foods.
- v. Establish an independent 'Consumer Protection' body in PNG, governed by its own laws and regulations.
- vi. PNG to adopt the Committee of World Food Security (CFS) Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition 2021 without delay

## 10. THE FUTURE OF FOOD SYSTEMS IN PNG

Fisheries and agriculture (including livestock) remain the primary source of production systems that impacts on the socio-economic development and sustainable livelihoods of the rural population and peri-urban communities in PNG. Unlike fisheries, agriculture is not fully developed and needs timely intervention to increase national productions in both cash crops and food crops and less dependent on imports, thus improving our local food systems.

For now, all constituents must work together to build the adaptive capacity of agriculture and fisheries resources in times of shocks and stresses including developing disaster response strategies, enhance local supply chains and greater market accessibility. PNG needs to have an inclusive, sustainable, healthy and resilient food systems and an informed population.

### **DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT**

Food Systems transformation is a key enabler that will enhance our efforts towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the domestic plans, programs and strategies. It is our desire to reach a healthy, resilient, equitable and sustainable future, where no one is left behind. We therefore remain committed to achieving the following outcomes:-

1. Form a National Food Coalition, consistent with regional and global commitments
2. Establish a Food Fortification Council, to be operated under its own laws
3. Establish a National Food Security and Nutrition Council, to be regulated under its own laws
4. Develop a 'National Implementation Strategy' to improve our performance on the respective targets and indicators of the SDGs (for the remaining nine years).
5. Constantly review the relevant laws, policies, programs and strategies of the government with a view to transform our agri-food systems (e.g. customary land mobilization laws)
6. Forge relevant partnerships and coalitions to implement the priority action areas and recommendations contained in the National Pathway Framework to transform food systems in Papua New Guinea