



FAAILOA



"....enhancing partnerships to develop and sustain agriculture and fisheries...."

August, 2021

***Statement by the Prime Minister;
Hon. Fiame Naomi Mataaafa
For SIDS Solutions Forum 2021***



Heads of State and Government

Honourable Ministers

Ms. Xiangjun Yao, FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator for the Pacific,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I congratulate FAO for this Forum especially the SIDS Solution Platform launched this morning. I believe that our gathering this week and the SIDS specific solutions this event will promote and seek; can help deliver some of the promises for SIDS as articulated in the SAMOA Pathway. In particular, solutions

SEA CUCUMBER AT ILLEGAL FISH PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENT SEIZED

On the 21st of August 2021, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in collaboration with the Samoa Police Services responded, to calls and reports from the public of an alleged illegal operation of Sea cucumber commonly known in Samoan as *fugafuga* being processed at a residence in Vaitele Fou.

There were freshly processed sea cucumber found, with an estimated volume of 150 kg (wet weight) and 30 kg being boiled and processed were accordingly seized. Dried Sea Cucumber or Beche-de-mer as commonly known at the export market currently retails at an estimated price of USD \$20 - \$100 per kilogram depending on the species. An estimated value of these seized fishery products is to be around USD \$5,000. In addition, live sea cucumber were found at the operation and were immediately seized and released into a nearby sea area as they stand a good chance of survival.

It is an offence to operate an establishment for the process, trade and market of any fish without the required licence under the Fisheries Management Act 2016.

The investigation of this alleged illegal operation of sea cucumber has commenced. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Samoa Police Services continues to carry out joint operations in ensuring our fisheries resources are conserved and maintained.

Fishing Illegally is against Fisheries Act

Growing interest in koko farming amongst youth

Apia, Samoa – Koko

farming has seen a resurgence amongst local youths thanks to continuous, targeted trainings for young farmers in the industry.

Two workshops that were carried out last week proved valuable for current and aspiring youth koko farmers in Upolu.

One youth participant learned from this programme stated there is more to koko Samoa than the hot brew that we are used to. He learnt that koko Samoa is a highly valued product in the overseas market. It is used to make products such as chocolate, cocoa butter, Vaseline, etc. Samoa was once a highly sought-after market for premium koko and seeing the potential of Samoa's koko industry.

The Samoa Chamber of Commerce draws its pool of trainers for this Youth Koko Initiative from its wider network of commercial farmers and agriculture experts to deliver learning objectives emphasizing the changing environmental and economic conditions so that young people understand adaptive methods now used to sustain cocoa farms and the industry. This phase of trainings involved a theory and practical learning of the grafting process of koko, contract farming and cocoa processing. This also included site visits to the Samoa Trust Estates Corporation's Koko Nursery and WILEX Company

It focused on koko grafting, processing, and contract farming to build the capacity of young farmers in the industry.

The workshop is a continuation of the Youth Koko Initiative Training Workshops held in Savaii earlier this month. Samoa's youth unemployment rate is currently at 16.5%. The CPRDESS Project is one of many that hopes to change this, and the challenges presented by the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, by equipping young men and women with the skill and knowledge to create new business and employment opportunities in the agriculture and fisheries sector.

The Youth Koko Initiative is an ongoing programme



that aims to train existing youth farmers as well as engage new young farmers in the koko industry.

The trainings are funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Samoa Chamber of Commerce and Industry as part of the COVID-19 Preparedness and Recovery: Diversification of the Economic Sector in Samoa (CPRDESS) Project.

Vice President of the Samoa Koko Industry Association (SKIA), Alo Kolone Vaai, highlighted the importance of the Youth Koko Initiative for the industry. "It's critical for our youth to have access to these programmes as they will be the ones to take the industry forward in the future. As existing farmers and SKIA members, our duty is to impart our knowledge to ensure that the youth are doing it right and are aware of all the necessary requirements to take Samoa koko to overseas markets. I very much look forward to the growth of this programme." Alo also encouraged the participants of the workshop to join SKIA to strengthen partnerships in the industry. Samantha Rogers, Project Officer for the Chamber of Commerce under the Youth Koko Initiative said the programme hopes to revitalize and diversify the agriculture industry in Samoa, particularly for koko. "We hope that through this programme, more youth will be drawn to the agriculture industry and that farming be realized as a viable career pathway." Not only are they receiving much-needed training, they also got the chance to build partnerships and networks through information and resource sharing," said Verena Linneweber, Officer in Charge for UNDP.

The trainings were delivered in collaboration with the Samoa Koko Industry Association and the Samoa Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

From Front page

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on fostering entrepreneurship and innovation; accessing appropriate, affordable and modern technologies and increasing connectivity and the use of information and communications technology for the benefit of our people.

Our unique circumstances as small islands developing states, coupled with the current COVID19 impacts and ongoing climate change threats, call for transformational SIDS-specific homegrown solutions. The COVID19 situation, forcing border lockdowns and State of Emergency restrictions further emphasize the importance of digitalization for SIDS, in order to build resilience and meet the sustainable development goals.

Samoa will continue to prioritize the need to invest in digital technologies and to promote a digital economy. This is key to stimulating business opportunities in e-commerce and e-services, as well as increasing productivity and growth in more traditional sectors such as agriculture and tourism. We underscore how investment in innovation and digitalization for Samoa, can enable more efficient delivery of health and education; improve connectivity between rural and urban communities; advance economic empowerment for women and youth; and assist with more efficient public service delivery.

To fully realize the benefits of a digital economy, Samoans must be able to connect with and trust the technology; an enabling business environment must be in place, and investment in education, skills, and digital literacy is paramount. The availability of fast, reliable and affordable internet services to government, the business community and the public is crucial.

Our vision for an inclusive financial system means focusing on promoting digital financial services and institutional innovations, such as branchless banking and mobile money to increase the access points, especially in rural areas. We have successfully linked mobile money wallet(s) to bank accounts and are seeing the rise in the use of such services.

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People can now pay water and electricity bills, check bank balance as well as shop online. This is an important breakthrough also for our women and youth.

With today's current COVID situation and restrictions, the ability to send and receive money to and from overseas on mobile phones has been critical for our people. Family overseas can buy food and groceries for families in Samoa, pay electricity bills or top up mobile phone credits. Facilitated capability to carry out these simple tasks not only impact on the everyday lives of our people, but also provides needed business for our private sector.

In the agriculture and health sectors, we are investing in digital solutions such as Apps for contact tracing or for information sharing between farmers. We recently launched our e-Health System to improve medical record keeping and strengthen health information and vital statistics. This is an important step in our response to COVID19 and building on the lessons learnt from the measles epidemic. More importantly, as we expect increasing health security threats, this e-Health System will be vital to protecting the health and wellbeing and enhance the resilience of our

population.

With the COVID19 pandemic lockdown, our Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa focused research on alternative options for high demand imported foods such as flour, using breadfruit. Traditional knowledge was applied to consider food security options and to support the Agriculture sector in exploring food preservation practices.

You will also hear some excellent examples of homegrown solutions from innovators in Samoa during Session three this afternoon, on the use of innovative ideas; and digital technologies in the food, agriculture and environment sector.

Such initiatives and solutions need to be enhanced and upscaled to garner wider benefits. It is obvious that there is untapped potential of digitalization and innovation in our SIDS countries. We should not lose sight of the fact that, while pursuing these home-grown solutions, we do not end up creating disparity between those who can and cannot access and afford these solutions. But, I am convinced, that embracing technology and knowledge sharing for our people, will be powerful drivers for change, innovation and welfare.

Soifua.

Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries

HEAD OFFICE: Level 4, TATTE Bldg, SOGI. APIA

Main Office Telephone:	(685) 22561/22562
Crops Division Office:	(Nuu) 20605/23416
Animal Production & Health Division	(Vaea) 21052//26529
Quarantine Division:	(Matautu) 20924
Fisheries Division:	(Apia) 20369/2000055
Savaii Office:	(Salelologa) 51222 / (Asau) 58030