

Intensified Efforts to Ensure Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States

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NEW YORK (IDN) – Wrapping up the ministerial segment of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on July 19, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) President Inga Rhonda King said the session had contributed significantly to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But she urged governments to "reinvent themselves" and be more agile in finding "ways to engage the poorest and most vulnerable in the decisions that impact on their lives".

One of the basic needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly in SIDS, is food security and nutrition. This drew the focus of a high-level side event on July 15 – jointly organised by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of Palau to the UN in New York. It was titled Accelerating Progress on the SDGs through the Implementation of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva pointed out that according to the 2019 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, the prevalence of hunger or undernourishment is also higher in SIDS than globally – 17.5 percent compared to 10.7 percent. This underscores the immense challenge of achieving the Sustainable Development Goal of Zero Hunger by 2030.

Dr. Patrick I. Gomes, Secretary General of the ACP Group of States explained the Brussels-based Secretariat's substantial engagement with the FAO in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway – a natural arena of engagement by the ACP Group on Agenda 2030 given the number of SIDS that account for a significant proportion of the membership.

Thirty-one of the 79 members of the ACP are drawn from the Caribbean and Pacific regions. In addition, six Island States of Africa bring the Group into the extensive space of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

According to Dr. Gomes, the ACP has an approach that is comprehensive and coherent linking SDG 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being), and 5 (gender equality) to SDG14 for conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources, which is a contribution to the Blue Economy. These activities are coherent with the overwhelming goal of SDG 13 on climate action.

The ACP Secretary General explained that in this comprehensive approach of the ACP linkages between food and nutrition, and oceans, seas and marine resources have enormous potential for economic, social and cultural development, while taking into account the environmental aspects to ensure development that is equitable and sustainable.

"Our efforts to contribute to 'accelerating progress on SIDS through the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Food Security and Nutrition' have taken place at three levels – global, multilateral and trans-regional through the implementation of programmes co-managed with the European Development Fund (EDF) and primarily in collaboration with the FAO," said Dr.

Gomes.

Amplifying ACP-FAO cooperation and strategic policy dialogue, he referred to some significant FAO-ACP activities undertaken with ACP countries, including SIDS, at the multilateral level. The ACP Forum on Small Island Developing States, for example, is implementing since 2015 a 'Support Programme for ACP SIDS and Coastal Countries' that addresses three areas.

These are: Capacity-building; Support to local efforts to assess, conserve, protect, manage and sustainably use marine and terrestrial biodiversity; and develop and strengthen partnerships for environmental sustainability. The Programme will be implemented using ACP regional organizations including the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in the Pacific region.

In the Caribbean region, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) will work closely with institutions such as universities, marine research institutes, NGOs, national institutions, local communities and other regional organizations.

In the South-East African region, the University of Mauritius, and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) will be responsible for implementing the Programme.

Besides, developing and strengthening partnerships for environmental sustainability requires a coordination function through the establishment of a Brussels-based Programme Management Unit (PMU).

Another avenue for SIDS action consists of the ACP Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) Programme, an ACP initiative funded by the European Union to the tune of 25 million euros. The FAO and UN Environment Programme are the global implementing partners.

The programme brings together three regional hubs: The Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM, Caribbean Hub), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP, Pacific Hub), and the African Union Commission (AUC, Africa Hub). The overall objective is to enhance the capacity of ACP countries to implement the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, with the sound management of chemicals, and disposal of waste and obsolete pesticides.

The first phase of this programme focused on the elimination of obsolete pesticides, pesticides management and sustainable pest management, while targeting the implementation of MEAs related to Chemicals and Waste. The second phase continued to build upon the first addressing the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD).

During the second phase, FAO provided ACP countries with policy and technical guidance on mainstreaming biodiversity into agriculture. The programme also conducted a comparative analysis and revision of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and agricultural policies to identify gaps for agro-biodiversity mainstreaming.

For the upcoming third phase, the FAO component of the programme will focus on enhancing the mainstreaming of biodiversity and the sound management of chemicals in agriculture at global, regional and national levels. This will be achieved by creating a more enabling policy environment, strengthening capacities for policy implementation and facilitating changes in agricultural practices.

In a paper which formed the basis of his remarks at the high-level side event, Dr. Gomes also drew attention to the Action against Desertification (AAD) which included two ACP SIDS Fiji and Haiti worth 20 million euros of a total 40 millions.

Since July 2014, the AAD project – an ACP initiative implemented by FAO and partners with funding from the 10th EDF – has been focusing efforts towards restoration of drylands and degraded lands in eight countries, namely Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Fiji, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Haiti and the Gambia – thus demonstrating South-South Cooperation in practice.

The project supports the implementation of the 'Great Green Wall Initiative'. Local communities are at the heart of the restoration activities, ensuring that the restored lands serve their needs in fodder and other products and services.

Effort is also put into building capacities of technicians and tree seed centres to mobilize quality seeds from native plant species, contributing to building resilience to climate change.

There is also the 45 million euro ACP Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme, which is a seven-year ACP initiative funded through the European Development Fund and implemented by a consortium of partners led by FAO.

The programme aims to reduce unsustainable hunting practices, minimize wildmeat consumption to sustainable levels, protect endangered wildlife species and conserve biodiversity. In addition, it addresses the food security and nutrition concerns of rural and indigenous communities. This ACP multi-country initiative has among the Pilot projects three ACP SIDS – Madagascar, Guyana and Papua New Guinea.

Another key programme in the pipeline is the 40 million euros FISH4 ACP Programme, also called Blue Growth, which is an ACP initiative funded through the 11th EDF and implemented by FAO. It will play a crucial role in supporting the sustainable development of fisheries value chains and aquaculture in selected ACP countries, including the SIDS. It is expected to be launched at the ACP Ministerial Fisheries Meeting, scheduled to take place on September 12-13 in Apia, Samoa.

Furthermore, the ACP will continue to mobilise additional resources to more than 100 million euros financing for SIDS and other ACP member states in collaboration with the FAO and other multilateral institutions to address food and security nutrition as part of SDG2, assured Dr. Gomes.

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Photo: Women at the main fruit, flower and vegetable market in Vanuatu's capital, Port Villa. ©FAO/Zarfia Amoa

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