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United Nations Food Systems Summit

New York

September 2021

Seychelles National Dialogue Report and Proposed Food System Transformation Strategy

**A Partnership between the United Nations Food Systems Summit,
the Food and Agriculture Organisation and
the Government of Seychelles**

September 2021

Project Consultant

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Photograph courtesy of Farmer Jean-Paul Geffroy

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1.0 Background

The Report is the distillation of eleven national dialogues that were held as part of a United Nations global initiative to raise awareness, commitment and actions to transform the global and domestic food systems. The purpose is to resolve hunger, reduce diet-related diseases and ultimately to heal the planet. In August 2021, a three day in person and virtual Presummit was held in Rome in preparation for the September 2021 Food Systems Summit convened by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres. The aims of the Summit are:

- To generate significant and measurable progress towards the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.
- To raise awareness and elevate public discussion about how reforming the global and domestic food systems can help us all to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by implementing reforms that are good for people and for the planet.
- To develop principles to guide governments and other stakeholders looking to leverage their food systems to support the SDGs.
- To creating a system of follow-up and review to ensure that the Summit's outcomes continue to drive new actions and progress.

The Report synthesises the outputs of the eleven national dialogues that were conducted with a broad selection of stakeholders. The participants debated on a number of issues regarding the current status of Seychelles' food and nutrition security and sovereignty and the transformation that should take place to address the perceived gaps identified with the current food system.

The Report articulates a clear vision that captures the spirit and strategic intent of the stakeholders to aspire for a transformation of the country's position in terms of its food self-sufficiency and food sovereignty goals. The vision is operationalized by seven underpinning stretched goals, driven by an ambitious intervention framework built on eight strategic pathways, crafted from the proposed solutions harvested during the dialogues and the supporting literature review.

The Report has been endorsed by the Ministry with portfolio responsibility for Agriculture and will be presented to the Seychelles Cabinet of Ministers and to the Honourable Members of the National Assembly of Seychelles for further discussion and alignment. It will subsequently serve as one of the entry points for a deep dive situation analysis as part of the strategic review process of the Agriculture Sector that is planned in 2022. This will provide catalytic input for the formation of the next edition of the Agriculture Sector Strategy and the National Development Strategy into a one plan.

2.0 An overview of Seychelles' Current Food System

Table 01: Domestic Food Demand

| Indicative Demand of Main Food Commodities by Category in (MT) | | | |
|--|--------|-------|------------------|
| | Yearly | Daily | Local Production |
| Carbs (rice, flour, potatoes, pasta, others, local) | 16,800 | 46 | 9% |
| Livestock (poultry, pork, beef, others) | 8,000 | 22 | 20% |
| Vegetables (local, carrot, onion, others) | 13,500 | 37 | 44% |
| Fruits (local, oranges, apples, others) | 9,400 | 25 | 53% |
| Fish (local, ungutted) | 10,500 | 29 | 100% |
| Source: CLISSA Market Study 2014 and NBS | | | |

Table 01 presents a snapshot of the country's indicative domestic demand for carbohydrates, meat, fish, vegetables and fruits on a yearly and daily basis. The data are based on the CLISSA Market Study of 2014 and from the National Bureau of Statistics. The percentage contribution of local production in comparison to total demand by category of food commodities is also indicated.

Figure 01: Local production and food importation mix

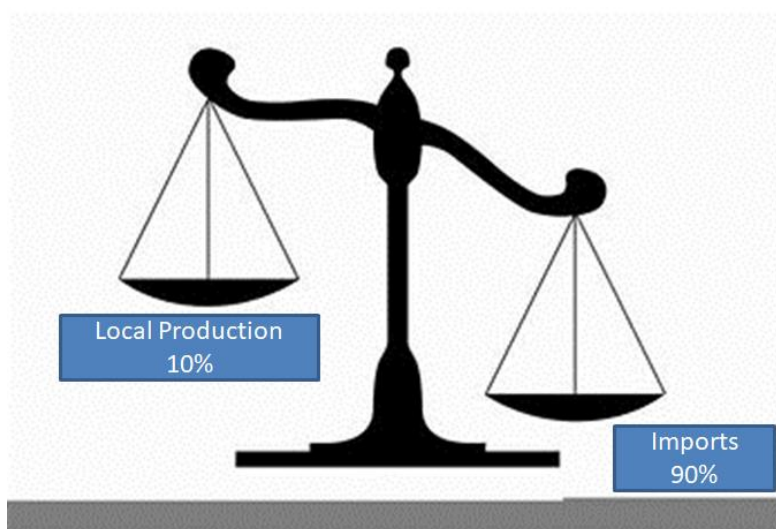
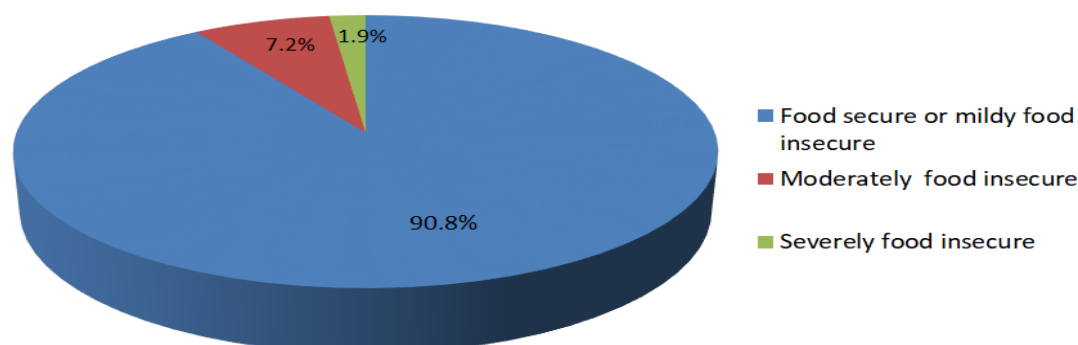


Figure 01 shows the current status of Seychelles' food system which is built predominantly on imported food commodities with an approximate weight of 90% of the total food basket. Local production is estimated to account for a modest contribution of 10%. The data are from the normative literature.

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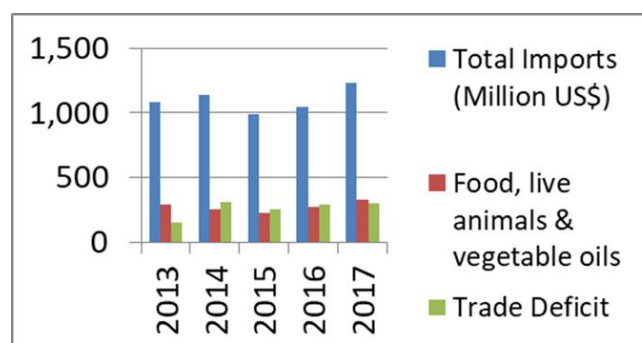
Figure 02: Results of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale Survey (2017)



Source: NBS FIES 2017

Figure 02 is the survey findings of the Food Insecurity Experience that was conducted in 2017. It reveals that the vast majority of households (90.8%) did not experience any major food insecurity problems and that 7.2% experienced moderate food insecurity and 1.9% faced severe food insecurity challenges.

Figure 03: Seychelles total importation and food importation bills



Source: CBS AR 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| Total Imports (Million US\$) | 1,083 | 1,143 | 987 | 1,042 | 1,231 |
| Food, live animals & vegetable oils | 295 | 257 | 224 | 277 | 324 |
| Trade Deficit | 156 | 308 | 256 | 287 | 297 |

Source: NSB ANA 2016

Figure 03 shows that Seychelles' total importation bill increased from USD 1,083 million in 2013 to USD 1,231 million in 2017 representing a 13.6% increase over that period.

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The food importation invoice grew from USD 295 million to USD 324 million representing a 9.8% increase over the 2013 – 2017 window. It is also noted that the country spent an average of 25% of its total importation bill on food.

3.0 Objective and Method

The core objective of the dialogues was to harvest the collective opinions, ideas, perceptions and reasoning of a diverse cohort of stakeholders about the current status of the country's food system, as well as the perceived transformation that must happen to build a more robust and resilient food system. The ultimate motive is to narrow the gap between the quantity of food commodities that Seychelles imports and the volume of food that is produced locally.

A total of eleven dialogues involving eleven groups of stakeholders were organised from the 04th August 2021 – 03rd September 2021. The groups were constituted from representatives of local food producers, food processors, youth, Member of the National Assembly, representatives from two other islands (La Digue and Praslin), policy influencers, chefs and householders. The theme was *“The imperative of food and nutrition security and sovereignty – Activating the bold steps”*. A total of one hundred and ten participants took part in the dialogues.

The topics that were discussed were specific to each group but were conceptualised within the umbrella of the theme. The option of *“in person dialogue”* in the form of focus group discussion was selected as the most appropriate method for the exercise. The in person consultations were approved and authorised by the Ministry of Health and were conducted in conformity with the public health guidelines and protocol. The average duration per dialogue was 3 hours and was conducted in alignment with the UNFSS recommended practices.

4.0 Outputs of Dialogues

The key outputs of the dialogues are presented below and they have been organised to form the foundation of the food transformation strategy:

- The dialogues have provided a vision born from within; with intent to challenge the status quo. In addition, seven underpinning goals have been drafted to paint a clear picture of what success should look like.
- The top opportunities and risks that could help and hurt the transformation of the food system have also been identified to guide the formation of the strategy.

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- A total of ninety-six project ideas have been captured and proposed as enablers to reshape the current food system to a more performing landscape in terms of local production capacity and capability and dietary rebalancing. Each project idea, has been calibrated with the corresponding problem that it is intended to fix, the applicable United National Food Systems Action Track (UNFSAT), and the responsible implementing agency. The projects ideas have been populated in a separate document.
- The ninety-six project ideas have been processed and distilled into eight emerging strategic pathways (priority areas of focus) that would form the strands of the proposed food system transformation roadmap. The emerging strategy is outlined below.

5.0 The Emerging Food System Transformation Strategy

Vision

“Transform our local food and nutrition production landscape to a more self-sufficient system.”

The vision captures the collective spirit, inner call and passion of the participants to truly bring to life the imperative of food sovereignty in terms of local food economies, cultural and innovation appropriateness, and sustainable food availability. The spirit of the intent is eloquently expressed by one participant; *“we cannot continue to build a food system that is anchored on the ability of others to provide for us”*.

The underpinning Goals

The underpinning goals operationalize the vision and provide the focal points for resources and effort allocation. The targets are reflective of the aspiration of the participants who took part in the dialogues and are not based on any modelling instruments. The goals are:

1. Increase the volume of local production in relation to total consumption of livestock to 80%, local fruits & vegetables to 90% and carbohydrates to over 50% (based on the list of priority crops and livestock of 2018).
2. Achieve sustainability of currently over-exploited demersal fish species (red snapper, groupers) and improve the consumption of under-utilized fisheries resources.
3. Strengthen the ability of our local food producers to adapt to climate change.
4. Build the national capacity and capability to improve the country’s strategic food reserve for a minimum period of six months.

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5. Grow the sector GDP contribution by a minimum of 5% compound annual growth rate based on the sector GDP baseline figure of 2019 at constant prices.
6. Reduce the prevalence of diet related diseases.
7. Exceed the applicable targets of Sustainable Development Goal 2.

The main opportunities

The Report outlines the top five opportunities that were flagged during the dialogues in response for a more opportunity centric attitude as a key driver to transform the current food system. The key opportunities are:

1. Less than 2% of the landmass is under cultivation and there is still land available for increased crops and livestock economic activities.
2. The demand for local farm commodities is in growth mode.
3. The market potential of the local food sectors in terms of value, growth rate, and margin is highly attractive with an estimated market value in excess of SCR1 billion, annual growth rate of more than 5% and an average EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) of 60% of turnover.
4. There is high level of international commitment to reshape food systems and resources and technical knowhow are available and could be easily sourced.
5. There is an emerging appetite, energy and engagement at local level to fix the gaps identified with the current food system.

The top barriers identified

A wide spectrum of threats and risks that could derail the transformation process of the current food system were called out during the dialogues. The key ones are listed below:

1. A deeply rooted legacy to build food and nutrition security on the backbone of importation for its convenience and lower price points.
2. The local supply and value chain is not efficient enough and is accompanied by low productivity and competitive bases.
3. Local householders, younger consumers and other food influencers do not have adequate knowledge of the value of local farm commodities and local cuisine.
4. There is inadequate technological knowhow to deal with the emerging production challenges and to transform primary commodities to value added secondary commodities.

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5. Difficulty to access development grants and low cost financing instruments.
6. A more challenging trading environment due to free and fair trade agreements and limited scope for economies of scale.

The Strategic Pathways

The eight strategic pathways are the main priority areas that provide the framework for the proposed projects ideas. They provide the architecture to address both the supply and demand issues and other strategic interventions. The pathways provide the long term focus and consistency components of the strategy. Each pathway (priority area) will include a number of projects and programmes captured during the dialogues that have been triangulated, as well as other relevant initiatives and imperatives that may emerge over time to adapt to a complex and dynamic operating environment and food production landscape. The strategic choices are:

- 1.0 Improve the governance and regulatory framework to protect core policy decisions and to improve the ease of doing business.
- 2.0 Transform the food value chain to build a more productive and competitive local food production system
- 3.0 Embed sustainability and climate smart international standards and recommended practices (ISARP) in the local ways of working.
- 4.0 Re-calibrate the investment models to facilitate access to finance in terms of domestic direct investment, catalytic funds, foreign development grants and low cost financing instruments for investors and producers.
- 5.0 Strengthen the capacity & capabilities of support institutions to deliver better services.
- 6.0 Invest in local talent development and management to support the transformation process.
- 7.0 Drive food product innovation and diversification using local ingredients and market penetration and development to rebalance dietary preferences in favour of local farm commodities.
- 8.0 Activate healthy living educational programmes to reverse the obesity trend and other diet related diseases.

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6.0 The next steps

The five key steps outlined below provide the roadmap how the proposals that have been captured in the Report will be integrated in the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Strategy and National Development Strategy as an actionable one plan.

i.) Multi-stakeholder exploratory situation analysis conducted

The Report is the output of an exploratory situation analysis exercise of the current food system based on multi-stakeholder inputs captured during the dialogues. The barriers identified and the potential solutions proposed are based on the collective knowledge and insight of the pool of individuals that were involved in the exercise. It serves as one of the inputs for the formation of the next edition of the country's food transformation strategy.

ii.) Presentation of the United Nations Food Systems Dialogue Report to the Cabinet of Ministers and National Assembly of Seychelles.

The Report will be presented to the Cabinet of Ministers on the 22nd September 2021 and to the National Assembly of Seychelles on the 11th October 2021. The main purpose of the presentation is to inform the Cabinet of Ministers and the National Assembly of outputs of the Dialogues and to generate alignment and buy-in of the Executive and Legislative with the broad proposal and intent resulting from the dialogues; to transform the current food system.

iii.) Deep dive situation analysis to validate and calibrate the dialogue outputs

The dialogues have provided a rich portfolio of perceived gaps and potential solutions as one of the entry points to transform the current food system along the trajectory of the captured vision. There is also a need to conduct a more detailed situation analysis to triangulate and provide additional evidence to validate the issues raised and reported, and to calibrate and integrate the ninety-six proposed project ideas into an actionable one plan.

iv.) Formulation of the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Strategy and the National Development Strategy

The food transformation strategy that has been proposed in the Report, together with and the more in- depth situation analysis that will be conducted as part of the strategic review of the Agriculture Sector that is planned in 2022 will form the bases to draft the next cycle of the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Strategy, in synch with the next edition of the National Development Strategy. The activation of the projects and programmes that will underpin the food system transformation will follow the existing system and processes of capital budgeting, project and programme preparation, approval, implementation, control and evaluation.

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v.) Activating the High Level Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty Committee and the germination of Regional Coalition Platforms.

The high level committee is composed of key representatives of actors and projects and programmes implementing agencies involved in the food system. The committee was very active during the early period of the Covid 19 pandemic. Its role is to coordinate project preparation, investment strategy, project implementation coordination, control and the general oversight of the transformation process as well as to ensure adequate traction and accountability of the change process.

It is also expected that regional and global coalition platforms may be established to provide opportunities for synergy, learnings and economies of scope, scalability, resource mobilisation and facilitation to drive the execution of regional and global projects and programmes related to food systems transformation.

Things grow when conditions are right



Photograph courtesy of Farmer Jacques Matombe

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6.0 Annex 01: Top-line Proposal for Seychelles Food System Transformation Strategy

