**Tonga’s roadmap for food systems transformation by 2030**

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**Theme: “Sustainable, Health, Safety and Equitable Food System for Tonga in 2030”**

**Overview**

Tonga is a scattered islands located at the South Pacific neighbouring to Niue, Fiji, Samoa and New Zealand with a population over 100,000 people who are distributed at the main islands of Tongatapu (69%) and ‘Eua (8%), Vava’u group (15%), Ha’apai group (6%), and the two Niuas (2%). The total land area is over 750 km2 and it has the 40th largest [Exclusive Economic Zone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exclusive_Economic_Zone) (EEZ) of about 700,000 km2 with extended continental shelf with potential extension of EEZ. Tonga is well known by the Pacific, the Ancient Polynesia.

Tonga’s Food System (FS) is leading by Agriculture and Livestock, Fishery and Food Importation Sectors and Food Services Providers (FSP) or Food Businesses (FB). All Households are involved on FS Activities of where 95% of the Households are involved on commercial activities.

There are more than 75% of the Tonga population live in rural areas, with agriculture and fisheries as their main source of livelihood. It is estimated that 25% of households in Tonga live below the Basic Needs poverty line, the majority of which reside in rural areas. Rural poverty is concentrated among smallholder farmers who practice mixed subsistence and cash-crop production. Less than 10% of Tongan farmers and fishermen are commercial producers and fishing who grow and fishing excess products for the formal market. The majority of Tonga's agriculture and fishery is still based on traditional and subsistence farming and fishing systems, some of which are under pressure from declining organic matter in the soils and declining crop diversity [[1]](#footnote-1) and depletion of marine resources at the coastal areas.

Tonga has one of the highest rates of subsistence food production amongst Pacific Island Countries, with less than 5%[[2]](#footnote-2) of people undernourished. This is largely based on traditional production of root crops, which provide food security, employment and income for many households. However, the country is facing a national crisis in terms of food consumption habits that contribute immensely to more than 70% annual rate mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Close to 46%[[3]](#footnote-3) of adults (18 years and over) are obese. For children under 5 years old, there is a prevalence of wasting at 5.2%, stunting at 8.1% and while 17.3% are considered overweight[[4]](#footnote-4). An estimated 67%[[5]](#footnote-5) of the total dietary energy consumed by a household is purchased food. Food consumed from own production make up 19%[[6]](#footnote-6). On average Tongans consume up to 65% of the World Health Organization recommended intake of fruits and vegetables per day i.e., 260 grams per capita per day compared to the recommended level of 400 grams per capita per day[[7]](#footnote-7).

Tonga is currently responding to these major shocks to its economy. 1) COVID-19: This Pandemic disease has severely impacted Tonga’s tourism, retail and construction sectors – affecting at least 30% of the economy. The worsen scenario affects Tonga from restricting and controlling the Boarder for food importation 2) Climate Change: Tonga was hit hard in April 2020 by Category 4 Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold, which affected approximately 27% of the population, and is estimated to have caused damages and losses of more than 12% of the country’s total Gross Domestic Product (GDP). TC Harold struck while the nation was still recovering from the impact of TC Gita in 2018, the largest natural disaster seen in Tonga since 1982, which caused damages and losses of 38% of GDP and affected over 80% of the population. Prior to these two Tropical Cyclones, the economic outlook was positive, with growth expected to reach 3-4% over 2020-2021 as TC Gita reconstruction activity picked up and the tourism and agriculture sectors continued to recover. However, the shocks have resulted in an expected economic contraction of 3.5% in 2020, and a projected 5.3% in 2021.[[8]](#footnote-8) With 80% of Tonga's population living on the coastlines, Tonga is currently ranked the world's third “most at risk” country to the effects of climate change.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Tonga’s rate of trade deficit from the last 10 years is anticipated to hit 1 billion pa’anga in 2030 on the current operation. Food importation contributes 20% to annual trade deficit and this is the major challenge for the FS transformation to reduce dramatically the dependence of Tonga on food importation by improving local food production productivities and developing aggressively the local food processing, value addition and primary industry.

This is a huge and emergency concern for Tonga from the high dependency of Tonga on food importation since the last few decades. In other words, Tonga’s FS will be upset if the global and regional trades are affected. The worsen scenario of pandemic Covit-19 will affect food supply in the lost run. This initiates the importance for Tonga to develop its local agro-food industry. This inward economic develop must enhance livelihood from employments creation and opportunity, expand gradually the size of domestic markets, declining gradually the dependency of food supply on food importation and strengthening the value of Tongan Pa’anga and Tongan Economy. On the other hand, Tonga needs to work in partnership with reputable fishing development partners to sustainably harvest her under-utilize oceanic fisheries resources such tuna to meet the excess local demand for healthy seafood products.

To sum up, this game solution of developing the transformation pathway for the FS in Tonga 2030 must enhance livelihood, Economic Development and Healthy Tonga.

These are the summary of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for information. They are linked to the five Areas of Critical Importance (5P’s): **1 People**: No Poverty (Goal 1), Zero Hunger (Goal 2), Good Health and Well-being (Goal 3), Quality Education (Goal 4), Gender Equality (Goal 5), Clean Water and Sanitation (Goal 6) **2 Planet**: Climate Action (Goal 13), Life below Water (Goal 14), Life on Land (Goal 15), **3 Prosperity**: Affordable Clean Energy (Goal 7), Decent Work and Economic Development (Goal 8), Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (Goal 9), Reduce Inequalities (Goal 10), Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11), Responsible consumption and production (Goal 12), **4 and 5 Peace and Partnerships**: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (Goal 16), Partnerships for the Goals (Goal 17).

These global challenges are problems of development where Tonga can only contribute through international aid and these challenges can only be resolved on collective action globally. This applies similarly to the accomplishment of the Tonga FS Pathways,2030 discussed below.

Diagram 1 summarizes the Tonga Pathway for FS Transformation, 2030. The consolidated key objectives were the results of analysing several FS dialogues in Tong.

Tonga is targeting to pull in all developments to the production sector and primary industry sector to accomplished the following major Targets: 1) to increase Food Production by 50% in 2030; 2) to decrease Food Importation by 30% in 2030, 3) to decrease the mortality rate from NCDs by 50%, 4) Contribute Significantly to Rio 2012 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are the main targets that invigorate the planning and emergency actions of the Ministry of Fishery, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests so as the Central Government. All Government Investments and Development Projects and line ministries’ routine activities must contribute significantly for the targets Vision.

***Diagram 1: Tonga FS Pathway, 2030***

Completion of FS Dialogue and Analysis

Target Vision

1. Target to Increase Food Production by 50% in 2030;
2. Target to decrease Food Importation by 30% in 2030
3. Target to decrease the mortality rate from NCDs by 50%
4. Contribute Significantly to Rio 2012 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Tonga shaping National Pathways towards Sustainable Food Systems 2030

Implementations of the consolidated Key Objectives from the National FSS Dialogues for: 1) Fishery Sector, 2) Agriculture and Livestock Sectors, 3) Food Businesses and Consumers in Reference to TONGA NATIONAL FOOD SYSTEM SUMMIT DIALOGUE REPORT, 2021

**Vision for sustainable food systems for Tonga by 2030**

*All Tongans must access to healthy diets and safe food to break the chain of malnutrition and high mortality rate from NCDs by 50% in 2030. The Food systems must nourish Tonga’s population, strengthen and increase local production by 50% in 2030, local primary industry and distribution to decrease food importation by 30% in 2030, contribute significantly to RIO 2012 SDGs (2, 12, 13 and 15), offer equitable livelihoods for rural communities and be resilient to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses, steward the environment, and help mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt by shifting the system towards green growth.*

This Targets vision will be achieved by 2030, by expanding access to health and nutrition services, providing social assistance and education, and ensuring food value chains are sustainable, support healthy diets and provide job opportunities for the poor and vulnerable. A major driver of advancing food systems in Tonga lies in the investments on local food production and primary industry on Fishery, Livestock and Agriculture Sectors. Four specific priorities have emerged from the national dialogues:

* Healthy diets for all: Tonga will work to ensure that healthy diets and safe foods are available and accessible to all. Achieving this objective requires actions to address all forms of malnutrition, including through the expansion of access to health and nutrition services, education and behavior change communication; diverse, inclusive and competitive food value chains; creating healthy food environments; clean water, sanitation and good hygiene; and the provision of social assistance.
* Employment enhancement and social transformation in Tonga’s food systems: Tong will enhance this inward development on primary industry to establish more employments and decrease the dependence of Tonga on food importation. Tonga will work towards the promotion of gender equality, decent employment, and the creation of job opportunities for community, youth and women in the food system. Tonga will continue to engage youth and schools, promote their understanding of food systems and the importance of healthy diets, equipping them to become agents of change.
* Resilient livelihoods and resilient food systems: Tonga aims to double its food production in 10 years’ time. Tonga will address chronic and compounding vulnerabilities to strengthen resilience of individuals, households, and communities to human and climate related shocks and stresses. In addition, it will improve the potential of food systems to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change, natural disasters or extreme events.
* Governance for a more inclusive food system: The relationships between government ministries and all partners must be strengthened at all times. Based on the successful facilitation of the national food systems dialogues, Tonga will continue to open the door for multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral dialogue, coordination, and collaboration to make planning and implementation processes more inclusive and participatory. These processes will be promoted at all Island Groups, include collaboration between academia, the private sector, civil society, development partners and government.

To succeed, we must work together, across sectors and stakeholders at all levels, to create multiplier effects for poverty reduction, ending malnutrition and hunger and reducing NCDs, and protecting our environment. Most importantly, we will engage and include voices of the youth, consumers, women, ethnic minorities, and the most vulnerable to shape the food system of tomorrow, for a healthier population, planet, and equitable economy and prosperity.

**Priorities for Tonga- 2030 implementation**

1. **Healthy diets for all**

Tonga will work to ensure that healthy diets and safe foods are accessible to all, especially for household at rural areas and schools. Achieving this objective requires actions to address all forms of malnutrition and NCDs, including through the expansion of access to health and nutrition services, education and behavior change communication; diverse, inclusive and competitive food value chains; creating healthy food environments; clean water, sanitation and good hygiene; and the provision of social assistance. Tonga is home to diverse food systems and well-endowed with safe and nutritious food. However, poor and below average households cannot afford this safe and nutritious food. MAFF must work rm in arm with the Ministry of Health, Tonga Health and the Ministry of Education and Training on the issue. The game changers identified in the dialogues are fully aligned with the objectives of relevant sectoral strategies.

* 1. **Game changers:** (i) Healthy diets are to be made more available and accessible through diversification of agriculture, post-harvest management, food safety, value addition, wider commercialization, and infrastructure improvements in local markets. Furthermore, (ii) these foods will be made more accessible through the expansion of social assistance to vulnerable individuals and households at rural area by encouraging home gardening. This will be supported by (i) encouraging balance diets programs for all schools in Tonga and community (ii) all MAFF Stations at all Island Groups to work in partnership with NGOs and communities to produce vegetables and sell at reasonable prices all year around (iii) MAFF Stations at all Island Groups in partnership with NGOs, communities and individuals to support and facilitate the development of livestock and processing to supply meats (iv) home gardening and community group development must be encouraged to promote vegetables and livestock productions, (iv) ensuring access to clean water, sanitation and good hygiene practices will be of paramount importance across agriculture, education, and health services. Finally, (v) creating food environments where consumers can make healthy food choices through regulation of food marketing (including breast-milk substitutes), nutrition labelling, national dietary guidelines for adults, fiscal and pricing policies (e.g. taxation of unhealthy foods or subsidies of healthy foods), nutrition standards for schools, hospitals and public institutions, regulation of salt, sugar or trans-fatty acids in processed food products, establish consumer protection associations and support nutrition education in school curricula.
  2. **Milestone 2025:** This will reflect a broader food systems framework and key game changers to be budgeted and implemented. Tonga is targeting to complete and well implementation the Tonga Guidelines for Healthy Living (TGHL) for 70% of the population. Tong is looking to plan National Campaigns on NCDs to reduce high mortality rate of NCDs. The reviewing of legislatives and regulations related to Health is expected to complete by 2025.
  3. **Milestone 2030:** Mortality rate from NCD is targeting to decrease by 50% in 2030.

1. **Local Primary Industry and Employment enhancement and social transformation in Tonga’s food** **systems**

Tonga will focus on local primary industry inward development. Tonga will work towards the promotion of gender equality, decent employment, and the creation of job opportunities in food system on developing farm productivity and local primary industry. The food system of today will belong to Tonga’s youth tomorrow. Creation of decent employment and increased labor skills and productivity in the local food system are critically important. Tonga will continue to engage youth, to promote their understanding of food systems and the importance of healthy diets, equipping them to become agents of change. Consumers, women, and youth, community and churches leaders to shape the food system of today and of tomorrow and their voices are important in policy dialogue to achieve the 2030 vision.

* 1. **Game changers:** (i) to engage youth and key stakeholders like churches Leaders, Town Officers, Farmers, and Women in leadership roles and policy dialogue and decision-making, (ii) to promote local production and primary industry for local small and medium-sized enterprises, (iii) to strengthen vocational training programs, formal education, and youth associations to meet the demands of a transforming food system.
  2. **Milestone 2025:** Training and support provided to youth at all islands to engage in food systems and healthy diets at national levels. Tonga must develop its primary industry to absorb at least 30% of the unemployment by 2025. Tonga must focus on developing subsistence to progressive farmers and fishermen whom they should be developed to high commercial level. By 2025 food production must be increased by 20%. Line ministries must develop relevant interventions to meet future job opportunities within the food system, education and vocational training adapted, private sector engaged and small and medium-sized enterprises multiplied and linked with investors.To align with the Tonga SDGs, collect age and sex-disaggregated data for informed policy and decision-making.
  3. **Milestone 2030:** Tonga must decrease food importation by 30% in 2030.

1. **Resilient livelihoods and resilient food systems**

Tonga will address chronic and compounding vulnerabilities to strengthen resilience of individuals, households, and communities to chronic poverty as well as human and climate related shocks and stresses. In addition, it will improve the potential of food systems to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of strengthening systems (health, economic, agricultural, environmental and social) to withstand future shocks and stresses, human and climate induced and provides a unique opportunity for real structural change. Building forward better from COVID-19 is in accordance with the commitment by the Royal Government to building a greener economy. This roadmap promotes support to smallholder farmers and SMEs in food processing to strengthen rural livelihoods for enhanced resilience. It also advocates for green growth, to ensure protection of the environment and ecosystem services. Tonga will continue to build on its social assistance programmes and expand the shock-responsiveness of these programmes.

* 1. **Game changers:** (i) expand shock responsive social protection to include vulnerable families and strengthen resilience, (ii) enhance home gardening to promote vegetables and livestock production all year around, (iii) steer food systems transformation in the direction of green growth by, for example, green financing, agro-ecological transformations, resource efficiency, reducing waste, renewable energy uses, improving green infrastructure and (iv) develop relevant project proposals to support the issue,
  2. **Milestone 2025:** Information systems integrated (for improved targeting, improve shock-responsiveness, disaster risk reduction, convergence, and improved communication), green infrastructure funded and green financing expanded.
  3. **Milestone 2030:** Resilience of households and food systems to future climate and human induced shocks and stresses strengthened.

1. **Governance for a more inclusive food system**

Based on the successful facilitation of the national food systems dialogues, Tonga will continue to open the door for multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral dialogue, coordination, and collaboration to make planning and implementation processes more inclusive and participatory. The dialogues have opened important avenues for communication and highlighted several approaches to build forward better from COVID-19: adopting community-driven approaches, public private partnerships, consumer focus, and bridging humanitarian work with development and recovery.

* 1. **Game changers:** (i) functioning community working groups for coordinating food security and nutrition, (ii) community-led nutrition programming, (iii) close coordination and collaboration between government, civil society, development partners, private sector, consumers’ organizations, and farmers’ organizations, (iv) enforcement of existing food safety, quality, labeling regulations and standards, (v) establishing and engaging a private sector network for improving nutrition, (vi) tracking public investments on nutrition, and (vii) to support academic research programs for advanced technologies in food systems as well as to support research for evidence-based decision making.
  2. **Milestone 2025:** Establishing a coalition or working group for sustainable food systems in Tonga to track the progress of the roadmap. Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN) M&E tool implemented including tracking of nutrition investments. Integration of nutrition planning and investment by commune councils. Every province to have a food security and nutrition working group and sub-national coordination to be more food systems oriented. Networks of the SUN movement active (including Business, Academia and Research, UN, Donor and Civil Society Alliance). Unhealthy snacks in school environments limited, marketing of unhealthy foods to prevent a further increase in food related non-communicable diseases restricted, and marketing infringements on breastmilk substitutes avoided.
  3. **Milestone 2030:** Policy processes inclusive and responsive to the needs of consumers and vulnerable population groups.

**Changes in the coming two to three years to accelerate progress**

A number of outstanding topics require further exploration pre- and post-summit by technical working groups and other fora including on climate change, gender, waste, cities, digital technology and Tonga’s rich culinary history. Furthermore, as the national dialogues were convened online due to COVID-19 restrictions, a number of critical voices could not be sufficiently included. Post-summit, dialogues will continue from the national to the community level, particularly with farmers, ethnic minorities, women and youth, to help shape food systems to meet the needs of consumers and the most vulnerable.

The roadmap was developed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which helped to highlight critical areas that require accelerated action. The list of priorities is not exhaustive and should be reviewed during the recovery phase to adjust to future developments and limited fiscal space. Addressing compounding vulnerabilities during the recovery phase will require bridging humanitarian and development responses to build forward better.

The next three years offer a window of opportunity for structural transformation, to further operationalize the priority actions, and to mobilize resources. A number of sector-specific strategies come to an end in 2023/2024, offering an opportunity to align these frameworks in their next iteration with a broader food systems approach.

**Concluding statement**

Tonga is well positioned to achieve this vision for food systems transformation by 2030, anchored in a robust policy environment. In order to do so, we must work in an inclusive and participatory manner, across stakeholders, sectors, and at national level. The development partners and civil society stand ready to support government in the implementation of this roadmap. Tonga is set its food systems will serve as a critical foundation for the elimination of hunger, poverty reduction and sustainable development ensuring that no one is left behind.

1. Government of the Kingdom of Tonga 2015, Tonga Agriculture Sector Plan 2016-2020, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Forestry and Fisheries [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. FAO 2019, Tonga Food Security Profile, FAO Subregional Office of the Pacific, Apia, Samoa [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. World Bank 2020, Tonga: Supporting Recovery After Dual Shocks Development Policy Operation (P174683), November 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/momentum-for-change/activity-database/tonga-climate-change-trust-fund> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)