

36th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (8-11 March 2022)

Item 11: Prioritization of country and regional needs, 10 March 2022

APRC Country Statement: Australia

Su McCluskey, Special Representative for Australian Agriculture

Good afternoon Director-General, distinguished delegates and friends.

As the Special Representative for Australian Agriculture, it is my pleasure to present the Australian country statement at the 36th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.

Thank you to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting this important regional conference.

I'm excited to be in my new role where I will work hard to promote the importance of science and risk-based decision-making within the global trading system. This matters because science and risk-based rules underpinning food and agriculture trade that the FAO helps to shape are so important for global food security. I'm looking forward to building collaborative partnerships and information-sharing with our partners across the Asia Pacific.

Over the last two years we have all felt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic – and been disheartened as it has exacerbated hunger and malnutrition in many parts of the world.

Working together, governments and the FAO are pursuing recovery including through national reforms to increase and diversify local production of nutritious food and facilitating trade, that is supported by science and risk-based standards.

The FAO is an important partner for our region in this regard.

It's standard-setting work on plant health and food safety is critical for food security, increasing economic growth and lifting people out of poverty,

Especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

As a member of the South-West Pacific, Australia will continue to work closely with our Pacific counterparts, the FAO and other regional and multilateral organisations to enhance agricultural growth through better market access and biosecurity outcomes.

This includes through the *Pacific Biosecurity Partnerships Program* and other collaborative development and engagement initiatives.

The *Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services* meeting in August 2021, highlighted the significant challenges of animal and plant pests and diseases in Pacific agriculture and the impacts of climate change.

The Asia Pacific region is on the front line of climate change and building resilience to the impact of climate change is a key priority for our partners and for Australia. It is critical for agriculture production and food security.

It will be crucial to utilise the comparative advantage of the FAO's significant technical and normative expertise and harness the benefits of improved data collection and innovation to overcome many of the unique challenges that nations in our region face.

Australia looks forward to discussing these and other issues with our Pacific partners during the third Pacific Week of Agriculture to be held in September 2022, hosted by the Government of Fiji.

Australia is committed to science and risk-based decision making within the multilateral trading system.

We should utilise a One Health approach, collaborate and learn from each other, while solutions must be flexible, informed by science and appropriate to national contexts, needs and priorities.

Australia believes that the FAO should be at the forefront of good governance aligned with the principles of accountability, inclusivity and transparency.

This approach will maintain the integrity of the multilateral rules-based order within the UN system.

Australia also emphasises the utmost importance of robust science-based decision making and ensuring individual national views do not adversely affect the core tenet of the FAO's normative policy and standard setting work.

We remain committed to further strengthening our collaboration with the FAO and our partners in the region and in line with the 2030 agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, delivering on the FAO mandate: *better production, better nutrition, better environment and better life*.