Minutes 2020/9

Tuesday 06 October 2020 at 02:00pm - 04:00pm PNG time | via Zoom

Chair

Chair: Mr. Brown Konabe, Director, Food Security Branch, DAL
Co-chair: Ms. Helmtrude Sikas-Iha, Food Security Cluster Coordinator, FAO

Participants

Refer to Annex 1.

Agenda

a. Matters arising from previous meeting minutes
b. Situational overview and update on COVID-19
c. Update on African Swine Fever and Fall Armyworm
d. Update on La Niña early warning / early action plan
e. Update on West Papua refugees
f. Short and progressive updates from partners
g. Any other business (AOB)

Matters arising from previous meeting minutes

1. The Food Security Cluster Technical Reference Working Group Meeting #3 is to be held this week. FAO to facilitate this meeting.

Situational overview and update on COVID-19

2. Ms. Sikas-Iha provided the following updates:
   a. As of 5th October 2020, PNG has a total of 541 confirmed COVID-19 cases and seven deaths. Over half of the cases are reported from the National Capital District, with 323 cases.
   b. From the period of 28th September to 4th October, there were four new cases reported from the National Capital District and two from Western Province.
c. The total number of provinces that have reported COVID-19 cases to date is thirteen. Contact tracing is ongoing for all the cases confirmed.
d. The revised 12 existing National Pandemic Measures were released for implementation starting on the 3rd of October. Most notable changes include: 1) Passenger flights operated by certain PNG-based carriers are now permitted from Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Solomon Islands without expressed permission by the controller; 2) Expansion of the seven-day abbreviated quarantine for passengers who have spent at least seven days in Australia (except for Victoria), New Zealand, and the Pacific Island countries; and 3) Elimination of categories of permitted travel purposes for domestic travel.

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**Update on African Swine Fever and Fall Armyworm**

**Fall Armyworm (FAW)**

3. Mr. Tenakanai provided the following updates for FAW:
   a. Currently, FAW is now present in a number of provinces on the mainland of PNG, from the Southern to the Highlands Region, and is spreading. In the Highlands Region, it is now in Jiwaka and Western Highlands provinces.
   b. NAQIA is now doing field surveys up to the upper Highlands Region, from Southern Highlands to Enga Province, to confirm the presence of FAW.
   c. A NAQIA team is also carrying out surveys in Milne Bay Province at the moment.
   d. NAQIA is supported by PHAMA Plus Program in carrying out the FAW field surveys.
   e. The National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI) is currently conducting research on developing biological controls for FAW based on the discovery of entomopathogens that were discovered on the pest in the field.
   f. The NAQIA team in the New Guinea Islands Region is now conducting surveys in East New Britain, with the support of the Australia Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, and will continue to New Ireland Province.
   g. The first meeting for the FAW taskforce has been conducted, however, the second meeting is yet to be done. Through the second meeting, an outcome would be to get information ready for the development of risk communication materials for corn farmers, including large-scale corn farmers/companies such as those growing corn in the Markham Valley and Ramu areas.
h. The best insecticide against FAW, the Karate insecticide, as reported by agriculture industries in Ramu, is now found to not be effective against the pest, thus, risk communication and proper management strategies for FAW is of paramount importance as this stage for corn farmers.

i. In relation to the National Taskforce for FAW, there is lack of support for FAW response from the National Government. Most support have been from development partners.

4. Mr. Kanua, stated that engaging industries who have stake in FAW is a strategy in moving forward in FAW response. It is also critical to have leadership and coordination in key government stakeholders when moving forward.

**African Swine Fever (ASF)**

5. Mr. Tenakanai provided the following updates on ASF:
   a. Containment work is ongoing in the strategic locations of the four ASF declared provinces in the Highlands Region: Enga, Hela, Southern Highlands and Western Highlands.
   b. Currently, there is no containment work in the Ambua area of Hela. This needs to begin.
   c. There are currently 12 ASF checkpoints in the Highlands Region: six in Enga, two in Southern Highlands, and four in the borders between Southern Highlands, Western Highlands and Enga Province. These checkpoints are very active, preventing the movement of pigs and pork products through the checkpoints.
   d. NAQIA can only control the movement of pigs via air and road transport. Movement of pigs via bush tracks still remains a concern and a challenge for containment.
   e. The National Taskforce on ASF is now in the six-month program (ASF Six-month Work Plan).
   f. The ASF risk communications material developed and supported by PHAMA Plus have now been sent to all provinces in PNG. NAQIA officers in each province are now disseminating the materials amongst partners in each province.

6. Mr. Kanua provided the following updates on ASF:
   a. ASF is contained in the western part of the Highlands Region, however, its spread is already near the border the western part towards the eastern part of the Region. The disease is expected to spread into the eastern and central parts of the Highlands.
   b. Moving forward it is important to look at on-farm pig husbandry and biosecurity.
   c. The Market Development Facility (MDF), after consultations and discussions with NAQIA, PHAMA Plus, and FAO, is now in the process of implementing a program for on-farm biosecurity and producing clean (ASF
free) pigs using affordable feed, and making these clean pigs (piglets) available to smallholder farmers. This program will start with large-scale piggeries in the Highlands Region, then will move down to small-scale and satellite piggeries, with the aim of making clean pigs available for farmers when their pigs get infected by ASF.

d. This program is currently at its project planning stage.

7. Mr. Kanua request Mr. Tenakanai to invite MDF to be part of the National Taskforce on ASF:
   a. Mr. Tenakanai stated that he will state this request to the National Taskforce Chairman.

**Update on La Niña early warning / early action plan**

8. Ms. Sikas-Iha informed the cluster that there is a 70 percent probability for La Niña during the upcoming wet season from December 2020 to the first quarter of 2021.

9. FAO is now calling on Food Security Cluster member organizations to provide inputs to update the La Niña Contingency plan. Inputs are to be submitted to the her by 12 noon, 8th of October 2020.

10. Dr. Bourke provided in email the following information regarding a possible La Niña event in PNG:
   a. Sweet potato is the most important staple food in PNG and provides about 65 percent of the food energy from all locally grown staple foods (root crops, bananas, sago etc). It is the most important staple crop in the Highlands region and in Bougainville and is very important in many other lowland locations.
   b. Sweet potato yield in the PNG highlands is reduced by three climatic extremes: very low soil moisture (drought), very low temperatures (frost) and prolonged excessive soil moisture (associated with particularly high rainfall over a period of some weeks and even months).
   c. Production is also influenced by changes in the long-term planting rate, with a cycle known as the 'Hog cycle' or 'cobweb theorem' for monetized agricultural economies.
   d. Such cycles have occurred in the PNG highlands, at least until the 1980s and possible now.
   e. Sweet potato is particularly vulnerable to excessive soil moisture and this reduces tuber yield. The impact of excessive soil moisture on tuber yield is commonly not appreciated. This is because the damage occurs in the first 6-10 weeks of the crop life when roots lose their potential to bulk up later and form tubers (the 'tuber initiation phase'). But the reduced tuber yield does not become apparent until the women harvest...
the crop many months later. So, the low yield is not attributed to the excessive wet period.

f. In the Highlands Region, the excessive wet periods commonly occur early in the calendar year (Jan to March), but the reduced yield is not obvious until later in the calendar year (from about July onwards).

g. Excessive soil moisture reduces sweet potato tuber yield in many locations in PNG, but the problem is worse in the highlands. This is firstly because of the heavy clay soils in many highland locations. And secondly because there are few alternative food sources aside from sweet potato, unlike in most lowland locations where villagers can harvest other staples (banana, taro, yam, cassava, sago, Chinese taro, breadfruit).

h. There is no simple solution to the issue of excessive soil moisture. The problem arises on heavy clay soils and is less common on well drained soils that have a high ash content, such as Hydrandepts.

i. The best advice to give to village women is not to plant sweet potato when the soil is particularly wet. If the rainfall is particularly high, it may be useful to plant the vines in higher than normal mounds to facilitate drainage of excessive soil moisture.

11. Ms. Sikas-Iha informed the cluster on the upcoming combined UN and PNG Government Iowara mission on the 26th to 30th of October 2020:
   a. Agencies who will be taking part in the mission include UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, IOM, FAO, Department of Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs (DPLLGA), and the Papua New Guinea Immigration and Citizenship Authority (ICA).
   b. The aim of the mission will be to: 1. Identify gaps in terms of access to services and food/non-food items in respect of the West Papuans in Iowara through monitoring and consultations with the West Papuans, Government and stakeholders; 2. Develop short-long term strategies to address the gaps identified (e.g. integration challenges, protection concerns) through advocacy, partnerships with key stakeholders and project implementation; and 3. Assess reception conditions at Iowara for potential future arrivals and identify development related initiatives to a humanitarian response.
   c. Ms. Sikas-Iha requested information on any seed multiplication sites in Iowara and Western province from cluster members, for FAO to supply seeds for Iowara.
12. The current 145 refugees that recently moved to Iowara are relying on food ration supply for food consumption. The DPLLGA have been providing food supply to the refugees.

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**Short and progressive updates from partners**

13. Mr. Marshall from provided the following updates from DFAT:
   a. The Markets Economic Recovery and Inclusion (MERI) Program was launched yesterday, 5th October 2020, in Lae by the PNG Prime Minister and Australian High Commissioner.
   b. The initial focus of the program has been on Port Moresby, Mt. Hagen, Lae, Daru, Wewak and Vanimo main markets, due to their particular vulnerability to COVID-19.
   c. The MERI project implementation teams have been established by UN Women to work with market authorities to help oversee the implementation of the program. The teams consist of stakeholders, including women’s vendor associations, the Department of Community and Religion, and others.

14. DFAT is progressing with the Morobe School Gardens Project:
   a. The Morobe School Gardens Project targets 6 high schools and 23 primary schools.
   b. DFAT is well underway with phase 1 of the project in terms building the schools and now working with the second high school in Lae.
   c. A number of primary schools in Lae now have their farms completed.
   d. DFAT is starting to have discussions in Lae with stakeholders, around nutrition and school feeding which is a complex challenge.

15. DFAT is in discussions with stakeholders on developing the next phase of planning for food security, livelihoods and border security programs/activities in South Fly District, Western Province

16. Ms. Leka-Maliaki from the provided the following updates the Australian High Commission (AHC):
   a. AHC is really interested to know about the next steps from FAW, and will be bringing onboard MDF in the ASF space.
   b. AHC is providing support to the biosecurity bill. This is currently in progress and done in partnership with the International Financial Corporation. Also, AHC has provided support to a biosecurity MOU that was signed last week between NAQIA and PHAMA Plus.

17. Ms. Muller made known to the cluster that Protection Cluster is putting on an online learning series on protection and emergency, and would like to extend the invitation to agencies in the Food Security, WASH and Nutrition Clusters. The first training will be on the 23rd of October, on protection mainstreaming.
18. Ms. Sikas provided the following updates from FAO:
   a. FAO had been requested by the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) through the Department of Primary Industry & Marine Resources to support the formulation of the Bougainville Food Security Policy (BFSP).
   b. Initial discussions on the Policy with the ABG Department of Primary Industries and Marine Resources were carried out on the 29th of September in Buka.
   c. FAO implemented the final COVID-19 Rapid Impact Assessment in Kavieng, Manus Province and also in Bougainville.
   d. While in Buka, FAO also signed an agreement with the Bougainville Youth in Agriculture Association to engage the Association in carrying out the COVID-19 Medium Term Impact Assessment in Bougainville.
   e. Also, FAO went to Buin District to assess the impacts of COVID-19 international border restrictions on the traditional border crossers between Solomon Islands and Bougainville.
   f. It was identified that the border restrictions affected mostly the Solomon Islanders from the Shortland Island and other islands near Buin, who heavily rely on trading their fish in Buin to purchase food for consumption, such as vegetables and store food goods, given that their islands are mostly atolls and do not have the agriculture potential to produce sufficient food crops for household consumption. They mostly grow swamp taro.
   g. The coastal villages along Kangu beaches were also affected as they rely on the Shortland Islanders for fish and sea food.
   h. The UN including FAO has just opened an office in Mendi, Southern Highlands.

19. Dr. Schmidt provided the following updates form IFPRI:
   a. IFPRI is working on putting in place a food price monitoring team.
   b. IFPRI is working with the National Statistical Office and FPDA on putting together their data into a long-term time series database to assess and compare price fluctuations and trends at different times and periods. Following the setup of this database will be the analysis of this food price data.
   c. IFPRI is thinking on collecting food price data in Daru, Western Province, to expend the database to include that area. IFPRI will meet with IFAD to discuss on this.
   d. IFPRI is hoping to have the first food price monitoring bulletin out by December 2020.

AOB
20. No AOB from cluster members

**Action Items**

1. FAO to circulate the 2019 PNG Multi-Hazard Contingency Plan to cluster members, and send out the monitoring tools to cluster members for them to provided their inputs to update the 2020 La Niña Contingency Plan and monitoring tools. Deadline for inputs is 12:00 PM, 8th of October 2020.
2. Mr. Marshal to send out DFAT information brochure on the MERI Program.
3. FAO to circulate UN Women Protection Training invite to cluster members
4. NAQIA to allow MDF to join ASF National Taskforce as requested by Mr. Kanua. Mr. Tenakanai will inform the National Taskforce Chairman, Dr. Ilagi Puana, of this.
5. FAO to facilitate the third Food Security Cluster Technical Reference Working Group Meeting.
6. Mr. Tenakanai to provide an update on the next steps and strategy moving forward with the FAW response.

**NEXT MEETING**
Tuesday 03 November 2020 | 2 pm PNG time via Zoom

**ANNEX 1 – ATTENDANCE LIST**

Attendees:
1. Emily Schmidt – IFPRI
2. James Marshall – DFAT Australia
3. Brown Konabe – Chair-DAL
4. Helmtrude Sikas-Iha – CO-chair-FAO
5. Ian Laki – FAO
6. Michelle Muller – UN Women
7. David Tenakanai – NAQIA
8. Matthew Kanua – MDF
10. Allan Oliver – World Bank
11. Douglas Apeng – SUN
13. Melanie Raire – DMT
14. Tomoko Sato – IOM