

THE IMPOSSIBLE CHOICE?

BALANCING POLICY PARADIGMS TO STRENGTHEN FOOD SYSTEMS IN THE PACIFIC

Background

Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) have committed to strengthening food systems to improve social, environmental and economic outcomes. To support PICTs efforts to strengthen food systems, there has been a major advancement in regional food system governance in the last decade, particularly related to environment, health and fisheries. However, the translation of regional food system policy guidance to the national level is often slow and difficult; therefore, regional and national food system governance needs improvement.

Research Aim

To identify the paradigms that shape food system governance in the Pacific Island region

Methods

- theory-informed, qualitative empirical study design
- qualitative interview data: 73 key informant interviews in the Pacific Island region between October 2021 and October 2022
- following the advice of the project Advisory Group of 12 policy actors from the region

FINDINGS

	Focus on economic outcomes (Agro-industrial food system paradigm)	Balanced focus on social, environmental, and economic outcomes (Agro-ecological food system paradigm)
Principles	Commercialising a few products (monocropping) for export, without much value adding	Holistic, systems thinking
	Economic focus & 'Wealth creates health' thinking	Food and nutrition security Environmental sustainability
	Deregulation and reliance on private actors	Resilience to climate change and external shocks Inclusiveness
	Individual responsibility	Sustainable livelihoods Pacific traditional practices
Weaknesses	Limited attention to environmental sustainability	Difficulty of multisectoral engagement
	Limited attention to food and nutrition security	Professionals have limited knowledge about agro-ecological approaches
	Financial sustainability and cost-benefits can be questionable	The realities of production capacity
	Enhances siloed operation of government sectors	
	Big food manufacturers	
Roots in historical legacies	Rooted in colonial and post-colonial agricultural development policies	Rooted in traditional, customary practices
Impact of disrupting events (COVID-19 pandemic)	Increased need for economic recovery raise short-term economic priorities	Food security pressures increased subsistence food production

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