

## Drought Early Warning Early Action Workshop Conducted by FAO



FAO Assistant Representative to Fiji - Ms. Joann Young (Front: 1st From Left), Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation for the Pacific - Mr. Christoph Wagner and Deputy Secretary Operations, Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport, National Disaster Management, and Meteorological Services - Mr. George Tavo

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) organized the Drought Early Warning and Early Action Knowledge Sharing Workshop at the Holiday Inn, in Suva last week.

Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) involves identifying the signals, acting early, activating actions, and strengthening capacities of different stakeholders to reduce the impact of specific disaster events.

While officiating at the workshop the Deputy Secretary Operations for Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport, National Disaster Management, and Meteorological

Services Mr. George Tavo said we all witness the devastation caused by drought and its impact on the agriculture sector, the livelihood of farmers and everyday lives of our citizens.

“Our strategies towards mitigating the impacts of drought and indeed all hazards must be more proactive,” said Mr. Tavo.

“Unfortunately, our response to drought as stakeholders is either reactive or adhoc and as a result of this, quite too often they do strain our resources and institutions beyond capacities and this is something we must change.

Mr. Tavo said placing emphasis on

identifying triggers and indicators of hazards, and the formulation of appropriate mitigation, preparedness, and early action activities must be prioritized.

Meanwhile, FAO Assistant Representative to Fiji Ms. Joann Young said people who relied on agriculture for their livelihoods were often the worst affected when a crisis or a disaster struck, potentially putting their food and nutrition security at serious risk.

She said the Pro-Resilient Fiji (PRF) project impact was aimed at reducing structurally and sustainably food and nutrition insecurity derived from the

negative impact of climate change-induced drought disasters in Fiji.

“Its main outcome is to improve climate risk identification and management capacities at national, provincial and village levels; and Climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive agriculture techniques adopted by vulnerable smallholder farmers.”

She said the focus of the workshop is on drought, this is because drought is a recurrent phenomenon and the experience in Fiji is that it has occurred every 5 or 6 years over the last 30 years – 1987, 1992, 1997-1998, 2014-2015.

“This has cost the country 100s of millions of dollars in response and recovery. The costs to the country are further exacerbated when we account for economic losses,” said Ms. Young.

“To absorb the impact of drought, we need to act early to increase the resilience of the country and decrease the response, recovery and economic costs, thereby decreasing the amount and duration of humanitarian assistance provided.”

“Funded by the European Union, the FAO Pro-Resilient Fiji programme has worked closely with Fijian government institutions to institutionalize an EWEA system based on existing early warning systems and tailored it to the local context, a framework for the EWEA system has been developed which will enable Fiji National Disaster Management Office and other technical agencies such as Fiji Meteorological Services, Water Authority of Fiji and Ministry of Agriculture, to monitor drought risk and to act early to mitigate its effects on the agriculture sector and on livelihoods.”

It is implemented in the province of Ra, Nadroga, and Bua in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and national institutions.

### IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

1. Increase in average temperature affect plant development
2. Extreme weather conditions such as drought and heavy rainfall causing excessive soil erosion/flooding
3. Increase of pest and diseases
4. Changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide and ground level ozone concentration impact plant development and productivity
5. Loss of nutritional quality
6. Changes in sea level

In the Agriculture Sector, Drought (water scarcity) will cause stunted growth, yellowing of leaves, then wilting and eventually plant death.

Severe droughts occurred in 1987, 1992, 1997-98, and 2014-2015.

**Economic costs:** Several FJ\$ 100 millions of losses in affected sectors, several FJ\$ 100 millions in relief operations (emergency water supply, sectors recovery).

We must be prepared those costs could be avoided or reduced.



**What is Early Warning Early Action?**  
EWEA System translates warnings into anticipatory actions to reduce the impact of specific disaster events.

It focuses on consolidating available forecasting information and putting plans in place to make sure the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) act when a warning is at hand.

Acting early before a drought or any other disaster has actually happened or reached its peak is critical: it can save lives and protect livelihoods from the immediate shocks as well as protecting longer term development gains by increasing the resilience of local communities over time.

<b>NORMAL</b> Lower than 19% of triggering score
<b>WATCH/PREPARE</b> Between 20 to 39% of triggering score
<b>ALERT/EARLY ACTION</b> 40% to 57% of the triggering score
<b>CRISIS/Emergency</b> Timely Response > 57% of the triggering score

Level of Warning	Normal	Watch	Early Action	Crisis
Category	Mitigation (long term)	Drought Mitigation/ Impact Reduction		Impact Reduction
Implementation framework	Resilience building	Drought plan		Drought plan
Implement Time	Continuous	Before during after drought		During, after Drought

