

PACER PLUS

PACIFIC AGREEMENT ON CLOSER ECONOMIC RELATIONS PLUS



Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

PACER Plus aims to increase Pacific island country capacity to survey, manage and treat biosecurity issues, leading to increased trade opportunities. PACER Plus balances the right of countries to adopt sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures that promote and protect human animal and plant life and health and the requirement that these measures should not restrict trade unreasonably between Parties.

Scope

For Pacific island countries that are Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) – Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu – PACER Plus reaffirms existing rights and obligations under the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO SPS Agreement). Departures from international standards by these Parties are conditional on scientific import risk assessments being undertaken in accordance with WTO rules.

For non-WTO Members (such as Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Tuvalu), PACER Plus requires that they prepare, adopt or apply SPS measures based on the WTO SPS Agreement to the extent of their capacity or as otherwise stipulated in the Agreement.

To facilitate trade, PACER Plus establishes the principle of equivalence between SPS measures where exporting Parties can demonstrate to importing Parties that appropriate levels of biosecurity protection have been achieved.

PACER Plus applies principles of special and differential treatment on SPS matters by providing scope for the phased introduction of new SPS measures where the appropriate level of protection allows. This treatment can include longer time-frames for compliance for major exports of developing country Parties to maintain export opportunities, as well as by building Pacific island country capacity to implement commitments.

Food standards

Meeting international standards in areas like fresh fish products, organic foods and food safety (testing, accreditation and certification of products, processes, facilities and personnel) is one of the keys to the Pacific island countries realising the productive potential of their land and sea-based food resources.

Pacific island countries face a number of challenges to exporting agricultural products to Australia and New Zealand. Science-based biosecurity requirements and demanding consumer markets mean that agricultural exports need to be pest-free, price-competitive, high quality, attractively packaged and reliably supplied. Despite these challenges, there is good potential for growth in relation to a number of commodities, including taro, breadfruit, limes, zucchini, copra, chillies, eggplant, papaya, cocoa, beef, sawn timber and ornamental foliage.



Food standards (continued)

Support by Australia and New Zealand under the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA) has opened, maintained or improved Australian and New Zealand market access in relation to beef, taro, watermelon, cooked breadfruit, copra and timber. Planned support under PACER Plus will help Pacific island countries to realise market opportunities, particularly by addressing regulatory and quality issues.

Capacity building and cooperation

Pacific island countries place a high priority on targeted SPS capacity building through PACER Plus, both to have more assured access to Australian and New Zealand food and fibre markets and to improve health outcomes domestically for people, plants and animals.

Australia and New Zealand have committed to help build the capacity of Pacific island country agencies responsible for implementing SPS policies and procedures, as well as to assist in building business awareness of SPS principles in PACER Plus and how to apply them in production and trade. All Parties have agreed to strengthen cooperation between authorities responsible for dealing with SPS issues. While Parties will determine detailed work plans once PACER Plus enters-into-force, work may include:

- capacity building on developing and enforcing export certification systems
- technical assistance to improve industry compliance with export certification systems, and
- assistance in establishing or strengthening capacity to manage SPS risks, including on food safety.