

PACER+PLUS

OUTCOMES: SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

PACER Plus aims to increase the capacity of Pacific island members to survey, manage and treat biosecurity threats. PACER Plus balances the rights of member countries to adopt sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures (which are measures that promote and protect human, animal and plant health) against requirements not to restrict trade unreasonably between members.



Scope

Pacific island countries that are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) – such as Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu – have their existing rights and obligations under the WTO reaffirmed by PACER Plus. These nations are subject to the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO SPS Agreement). Any changes from international standards by these members are conditional on scientific import risk assessments being undertaken in accordance with WTO rules.

Non-WTO Members (such as Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Tuvalu), are required to 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 members can demonstrate to receiving members that appropriate levels of biosecurity protection have been achieved.

PACER Plus applies principles of special and differential treatment on SPS matters. It provides scope for the phased introduction of new SPS measures where the appropriate level of protection allows. This treatment can include longer timeframes for compliance for major exports from developing country members, as well as building Pacific island country capacity to implement commitments.



Food standards

Meeting international standards for fresh fish products, organic foods and food safety (testing, accreditation and certification of products, processes, facilities and personnel) is key 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 when 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.

Support from Australia and New Zealand under the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA) has aided market access 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, and increase business awareness of SPS principles and how to apply them in production and trade. All members have agreed to strengthen cooperation between authorities responsible for dealing with SPS issues. Members will consider detailed work plans which may include:

- + capacity building on 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 food safety.