

President Ramos Horta Signs FAO Silos

More than 30 percent of maize grain produced in Timor-Leste is lost every year due to insects and other pests. This equates to about 44,000 tonnes of staple food becoming unavailable to the Timorese people, and is nearly equivalent to the amount of rice annually imported into the country.

Last month, President Jose Ramos Horta and the New Zealand Ambassador Tim McIvor, visited the FAO silo building project in action in Baucau district.

This project started in 2002, bringing an innovative technology from South America, to tackle this significant problem which results in reducing food available to the community, exacerbating the already precarious food security situation.

FAO estimates that at least 100,000 silos should be built in the country to meet farmers storage requirements. In seven years, approximately 10,000 silos were produced by FAO projects, 5,000 of which were built in 2009, thanks to the generous contribution of New Zealand AID (NZAID).

The silos vary in capacity from 150 kg to 1.5 tonnes, with the 500 kg silo being the one most requested by farmers. They cost about US\$100 in materials and the farmer pays US\$10 for the blacksmith's labour cost for silo building. Silos are being built in each of Timor-Leste's 13 districts, with two blacksmiths working full-time in each district building them.

FAO plan to scale up the operation to 20,000 silos produced within the next 12 months, with the objective to cover Timor-Leste's requirements in a period of five years. This will cost around US\$2.5 million per year, however, funds available to date will only build 1,000 and FAO is trying to secure further funding.

The Timorese Government has recognised this project as one of the main priorities to achieve food security and building Timor's future to become a self sufficient country in agriculture.



H.E. President of the Republic of Timor-Leste Dr Jose Ramos Horta signing the silos produced in Baucau by Manuel Gaspar blacksmith and trainer for the FAO project.

Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory to be Completed this Month

As we write the foundations are laid and the building for the new Animal Health Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is rapidly gaining shape in Dili. This US \$1.3 million, Bio-Safety Level 2 laboratory produced by the Korean Company Green Cross Engineering Maintenance, will significantly strengthen Timor-Leste ability to diagnose animal diseases in country and reduce its dependency on foreign testing laboratories. This is part of the FAO "Bio-Security Strengthening Project for East Timor" funded by AusAID.

A team of Korean lab construction experts have arrived in country to install the pre-fabricated lab and construction will be completed before Christmas. Veterinarians and technicians will undergo an eight week training course in Indonesia in January 2010 on diagnostic veterinary laboratory techniques.

This lab will be the first of its kind in Timor Leste and will serve the needs of the Directorate of Livestock and Veterinarian Services as well as the Directorate of Quarantine and Bio-Security.

The laboratory will be handed over to the Timor Leste Government in early 2010. Such infrastructure development will strengthen the animal disease surveillance systems and contribute to improving animal health services in Timor Leste.



Welcome to our first e-news....

Welcome to the first FAO Timor-Leste E-Newsletter. We aim to produce a regular bulletin to update and inform partners on important issues that FAO is working on in the country. As this is our first E-news, we are covering most of the projects we have worked on throughout 2009.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you a Happy Festive Season and all the best for 2010! May we all continue to contribute to improving the life and livelihoods of the people of Timor-Leste.

Fabrizio Cesaretti
FAO Programme Coordinator



Spanish Government Expands Support for FAO Project in Baucau

Phase II of FAO successful food security and livelihoods Project in the District of Baucau in Timor-Leste received continued funding from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) in November 2009. This will allow FAO to expand support to food security in Baucau until 2011.

The aim is to increase the variety, quality and quantity of food produced by the communities living around the Seiçal River basin in Baucau District. The Project builds on the farmers' capacity with the aim of promoting progressive transition from subsistence farming to a more market-oriented approach to production. The project focuses on integrating production of staple crops (cereals and tubers), legumes and vegetables and small livestock, by supplying farming inputs (seeds, tools and animals) along with training and new adapted technologies. At present over 2,000 families from 15 Sucos (villages) are benefiting in this Project.

Phase II of the Project will continue and expand ongoing food security, livelihoods and human nutrition activities, with a special emphasis on children and women, the most vulnerable groups in the community. The project will promote best practice such as using animal manure for fertilizer as well as using farm by-products as an alternative source of animal feed.

School gardens will be established in each of the communities with the aim of improving nutrition for the students during school time by promoting the consumption of vegetables in the daily diet and to teach children how to produce vegetables at home. These activities will be implemented in synergy with the recently approved joint UN Food Security and Nutrition Programme funded by the Spain-sponsored Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Achievement Fund. Thanks to these additional contributions, Spain has become the main donor of FAO activities in Timor Leste.



Second Technical Workshop on Migratory Locust Issues

In 2007, the border regions between West Timor and Timor-Leste faced a serious migratory locust (*Locusta migratoria* sp) outbreak. Aerial surveys of the affected areas were carried out in both countries by FAO, to confirm the extent and location of the locust outbreak. A massive locust plague was identified, requiring immediate control operations. This was located on both sides of the border, resulted in an immense loss of crops (maize and rice) that severely affected people's livelihoods and caused food shortages. With the financial support from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and AusAID, FAO, in close collaboration with the Plant Protection Division in MAF, implemented locust control operations in five western districts of the country, which were successfully completed in October 2007.

As soon as the locust outbreak was controlled, FAO refocused its activities towards capacity building in the high-risk areas around the border, including monitoring to enable early detection of potential outbreaks. Moreover, as locusts and other pests do not respect borders, facilitating cross-border cooperation with Indonesia on this vital issue became an integral component for this project.

The Second Technical Workshop on Migratory Locust between Indonesia and Timor-Leste Governments was held on 24-25 November 2009 in Kupang, capital of West Timor Indonesia. This workshop was attended by participants from Indonesian and Timor-Leste as well as FAO staff from country offices and Headquarters.

The presentations made by the two countries were clear and detailed and there was a good and fruitful participation by all attendees during the discussions that followed. The two countries have made substantial progress and both countries expressed their strong willingness to continue working together in the area of plant pest and disease protection beyond project completion. The most positive output was the approval of concrete plans for sharing information on a regular basis on Migratory Locust situation occurring in the border areas.



A potential plague was early detected this year around the border of Timor Leste and West Timor. Due to the capacity built by the project and the vigilance of MAF staff, farmers and the community; the signs were recognised, timely and appropriate action was taken and a disaster was averted.

Revitalising Agriculture in Timor Leste

The Ministry for Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) invited FAO's assistance for the preparation of a strategy to revitalise the agriculture sector in Timor Leste. A FAO multi-disciplinary team arrived in Dili on 15 November for three weeks to prepare a medium-term programme aiming at increasing food production and contributing to achieve the food security goals of the country.

The team was made up of experts in various disciplines including agricultural policy, agriculture and farming systems, post-harvest, agro-processing and marketing, and watershed management and irrigation. The team visited five districts, Baucau, Manatuto, Aileu, Ainaro and Bobonaro, which covered the main farming systems of Timor-Leste.



Four priorities were identified for the FAO five-year strategy for "promoting growth and sustained food security in Timor Leste".

1. Stakeholder co-ordination, information gathering and policy development.
2. Rehabilitation and strengthening of agricultural support services (including agriculture education, adaptive research and extension, and animal health services).
3. Rehabilitation of farm capacity, recovery of rural household economy and promotion of sustainable livelihoods (including the transfer of improved technologies).
4. Demonstration of integrated and collaborative watershed management approaches to sustainable development and rehabilitation and strengthening of farmer-managed irrigation schemes.

The programme was presented and discussed with MAF on 5 December, will be finalized in the coming weeks and launched early next year. This will represent the basis for future FAO early recovery and medium-term agricultural development activities in Timor Leste.

If you would like to be added or removed from this E-News please send an email to nichola.hungerford@fao.org

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