

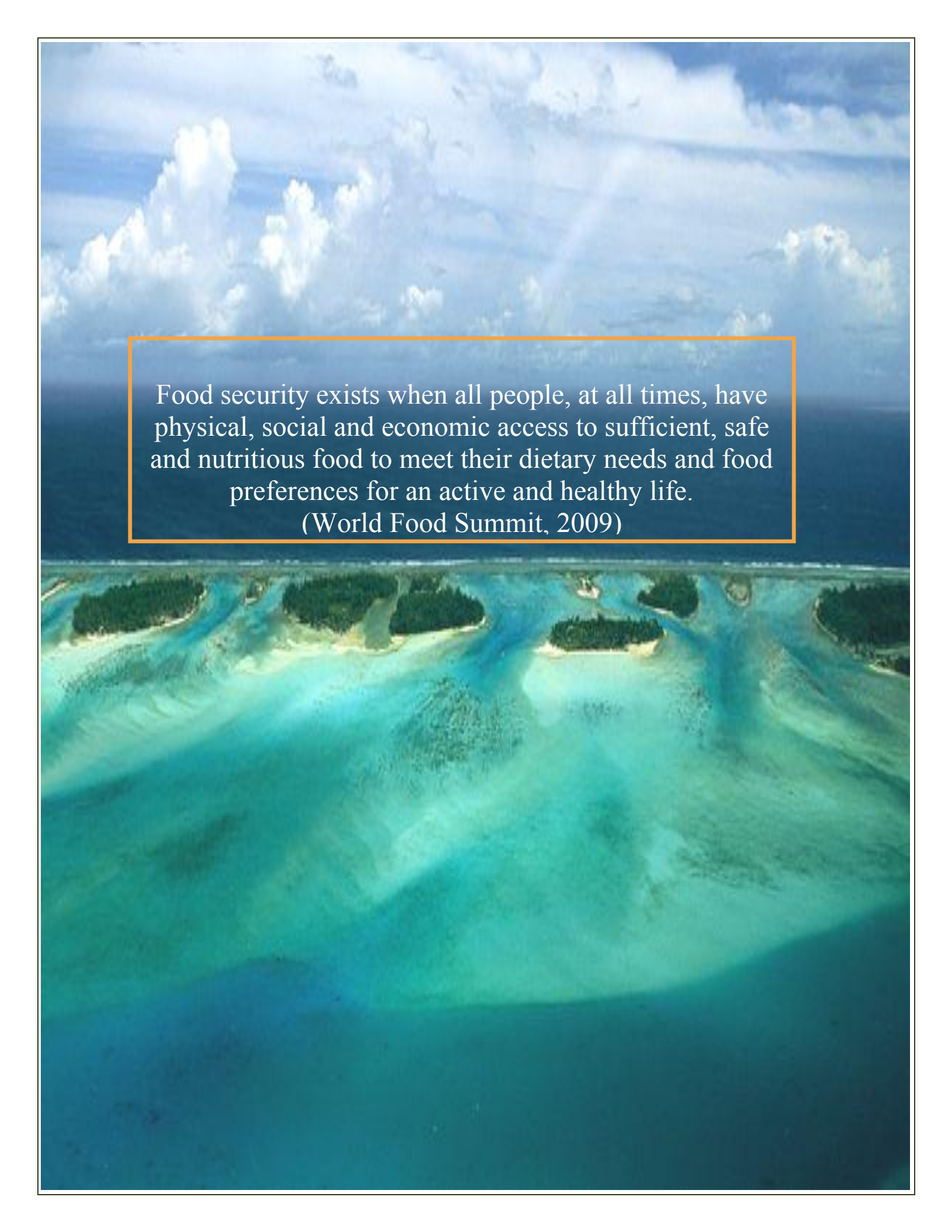


# Republic of the Marshall Islands Food Security Policy

October 2013



*For a Food Secure Marshall Islands*



Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.  
(World Food Summit, 2009)

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

COC	Chamber of Commerce
CMI	College of Marshall Islands
CPI	Consumer Price index
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
DO	Development Outcome
EPA	Environmental Planning Authority
EPPSO	Economic Policy Planning and Statistics Office
FSP	Food Security Policy
GAP	Good Agriculture Practices
GHGs	Green House Gases
GHP	Good Hygienic Practices
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point
LFA	Laura Farmers' Association
OCS	Office of the Chief Secretary
OEPPC	Office of Environmental Policy and Planning Coordination
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MIMRA	Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority
MISC	Marshall Islands Shipping Company
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOH	Ministry of Health
MRD	Ministry of Resources and Development
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
NTC	National Training Council
NGO	Non-Government Organization
RMI	Republic of Marshall Islands
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards
USP	University of the South Pacific
WHO	World Health Organization

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## Foreword

Food security underpins all other development, as without it food insecure people prioritize food and sustaining their own lives and those of their families over everything else. The rapid rise in food commodity prices in 2008 and the continued high food prices today has called into question our heavy reliance on the global food market. An estimated 80 to 90 percent of the food we eat is being imported and recognizing our persistent and large trade deficit (with an estimated 30 percent of imports being food) and limited capacity for foreign exchange earning this implies a high degree of vulnerability in our nation's food security. Given our limited capacity for international trade, balance of payments constraints, and recurrent emergencies, increasing and stabilizing domestic food production is considered to be essential for a resilient food secure Marshall Islands.

Furthermore, there is growing and compelling evidence that Marshallese of all incomes experience chronic health problems and sometimes premature death due to poor quality diet, less than optimal nutrition, and occasional exposure to unsafe food. Nutrition problems are often linked to the types of food eaten which is influenced not only by personal choices, but also by cost, ease of preparation, availability and accessibility. Imported foods that are of poor nutritional quality (high in calories and low in vitamins and minerals) are contributing to high rates of diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

Most of our traditional subsistence crops are high in complex carbohydrates with good nutritional value. These crops include coconut, pandanus, breadfruit, banana and taro. Increased production, processing and preservation of local nutritious foods and strengthened local markets are therefore important strategies to be pursued under this policy, together with effective education, communication and outreach programs. A thriving coconut industry also remains vital for rural livelihoods, the economy and food security in RMI, particularly in the outer-islands where few other economic opportunities avail.

Fish is a very important component of our diet and is vital to food security, particularly in the outer-islands where people are highly dependent on fish for daily nutrition. Sustainable management of the marine sector together with development of marine aquaculture remains vitally important both for domestic food security and for generating national income and foreign reserves. Sustainable fisheries management and security of village marine food resources are recognized as priority outcomes to ensure our long-term food security.

The stability of our food supply at the national level is dependent on the resilience of the food supply system (comprising domestic production and imports) to shocks – such as food price spikes, climatic disasters (droughts, cyclones, storm surges etc.), outbreaks of pest/ diseases, and also to longer-term trends – including downturns in the global economy, changing climatic conditions and labor migration from rural areas. Currently security of our food supply is heavily dependent on our ability to pay for food imports and on reliable shipping services both to the RMI and within our islands group. This policy therefore highlights the dual needs of increasing local food production and ensuring an efficient national food distribution system.

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Improvements in food and nutrition security will involve both economic adjustments and behavioral changes. Such long term processes will need a consolidated approach from a range of government institutions (agriculture, health, education, trade, transport, energy, internal affairs, finance, environment and disaster management) working together with local government, traditional leaders, Non Government Organizations(NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (including churches), the private sector (including popular media) and our development partners. The government recognizes that without proactive policy responses to the food security challenges we face our long-term development and progress towards achieving the MDGs will be undermined.

This Food Security Policy (FSP) has been prepared through a consultative process involving a broad range of key stakeholders. It provides an overarching framework covering the multiple dimensions of food security. It has been purposefully developed to add value and create synergy to existing sectoral and other initiatives of government and partners. It recognizes the need for multi-public and private sector involvement, and that improving food security is a shared responsibility of all Marshallese. The policy and associated actions will remain dynamic to address contextual changes and changing conditions over time.

The Government is committed to immediate action to address food security issues nationally through a range of measures across all the key sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, trade, health, education and transport. This National Food Security Policy framework will serve to guide and coordinate coherent actions from all key stakeholders towards a more food secure Marshall Islands.

**Needs signature of appropriate government representative**

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## Definitions

**Agroforestry:** Agroforestry is the use of trees and shrubs in agricultural crop and/or animal production and land management systems.

**“Climate-Smart “Agriculture:** Agriculture that sustainably increases productivity, resilience (adaptation), reduces/removes GHGs (mitigation), and enhances achievement of national food security and development goals.

**Food Security:** Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

**Malnutrition:** Malnutrition is a broad term commonly used as an alternative to undernutrition but technically it also refers to overnutrition. Malnutrition can result from a lack of macronutrients (carbohydrates, protein and fat), micronutrients (vitamins and minerals), or both. People are also malnourished if they consume too many calories (overnutrition). **‘Hidden Hunger’**, or micronutrient malnutrition, is widespread in developing countries. It occurs when essential vitamins and/or minerals are not present in adequate amounts in the diet. The most common micronutrient deficiencies are iron (anaemia), vitamin A (xerophthalmia, night blindness), and iodine (goitre and cretinism).

**Social Safety Net:** Social safety nets are a form of social insurance comprising programs supported by the public sector or NGOs that provide transfers to prevent the vulnerable falling below a certain level of poverty. Social safety net programs include cash transfers, food distribution (including school meals programs), seeds and tools distribution, and conditional cash transfers. Safety nets are increasingly being linked to rights based approaches to food security, moving from charity to entitlements. Safety nets are likely to become increasingly important in the context of the risks faced due to climate change. Safety nets can be seen as a national investment in human capital (e.g. nutrition and education).

**Stunted:** A child that is too short for their age (stunting is an indicator of chronic exposure to nutrient deficiencies and infections).

**Underweight:** A child with low weight for their age ((underweight is a composite indicator of long-term and current under nutrition and stunting)

**Wasted:** A child with low weight for height (wasting is an indicator of acute under nutrition)



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## Food Security –where are we now?

To attain food security for all people at all times and to substitute imports to the best extent possible and to develop exports are priority objectives identified under Goal 2 - *Enhanced socio-economic self-reliance* - in the Vision 2018.

It is now widely accepted that four key dimensions of food security are: 1) *availability* (sufficient quantities of appropriate quality food, through domestic production or imports); 2) *access* (of individuals to adequate resources for acquiring appropriate foods for a healthy diet); 3) *utilization* (through adequate diet, clean water, sanitation and health care to reach a state of nutritional well-being); and 4) *stability* (the ability to maintain the above three factors during sudden shocks or cyclical events).

### *Four dimensions of food security*

1. **Availability:** *sufficient quantities of appropriate quality food, through domestic production or imports.*
2. **Access:** *of individuals to adequate resources for acquiring appropriate food for a healthy diet.*
3. **Use:** *through adequate diet, clean water, sanitation and health care to reach a state of national wellbeing.*
4. **Stability:** *the ability to maintain the above three factors during sudden shocks or cyclical events.*

Food security underpins all other development, however, making a solid statement on the current status of food security and vulnerability in the RMI is difficult as the necessary data on food imports, food production, household economic access and consumption patterns are not readily available. An anecdotal, but generally held view is that around 80-90 percent of food consumed is imported. But clearly this varies greatly from island to island with some communities consuming significantly more local produce than others<sup>1</sup>.

*Our food security ultimately means that food is produced nationally or it is sourced overseas*

Food security is frequently discussed in parallel with national ‘self-sufficiency’ – i.e. the extent to which we can meet our own food needs from home-grown production. But food security and food self-sufficiency are not synonymous – a country can be a substantial importer of food and enjoy a high level of food security provided it has more than sufficient foreign reserves to cover those imports and that the food imported is suitably nutritious and people can afford to buy it.

Nevertheless, recognizing the persistent and large trade deficit (with an estimated 30 percent of imports being food) and limited capacity for foreign exchange earning this implies a high degree of vulnerability in RMI’s food

<sup>1</sup> Results from the EPPSO 2006 Community Survey indicated that households in Ailuk, Arno, Jaluit and Wotje relied primarily (over 70%) on local protein sources and on local fruit/vegetables, whilst Majuro, Ebeye and Eniburr relied primarily (over 70%) on imported foods.



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## *High food and fuel costs pose a serious issue in RMI*

security. Indeed, this vulnerability was starkly evident in 2008 during the period of high food and fuel prices. At this time the level of fiscal stress necessitated declaration of a State of Economic Emergency. Inflation surged to 14.8 percent and the price of a 20lb bag of rice in the outer-islands increased to \$18-\$20. The cost of living in Majuro has increased greatly over recent years with the cost of consumer goods increasing 15 percent from 2009-to-2012. Increases in costs of food items (such as flour, canned meat, frozen meat, fresh produce and instant coffee), electricity, fuel, and transportation are the major contributors to this change. Overall, since 2003 food has increased in price by over 51 percent (EPPSO, CPI Report 2012). As dependency on imported food commodities such as rice, wheat flour and processed meats increases, vulnerability to escalation in world food prices also increases. Moreover changes in consumption patterns through increased dependency on imported food in substitution of the traditional diet raises the particularly worrisome issue of diet related illness.

High food and fuel costs pose a serious issue in RMI as pressure is put directly on household budgets. Poorer households with a larger share of food in their total expenditures suffer the most from high food prices, due to the erosion of purchasing power, which has a negative impact on food security, nutrition and access to school and health services. This is very significant in RMI as 20 percent of our population are estimated to live on less than \$1 a day and over 80 percent of our population live below the US poverty lines (Community Survey 2006). Furthermore, our widely dispersed islands and high transport costs increase even further the price of food for our outer island communities.

The rapid rise in food commodity prices in 2008 has called into question our heavy reliance on the global food market. It has raised important questions for us as a nation about how much food we need to produce ourselves and how resilient is the national food system (including trade food commodities). Given the limited capacity for international trade, balance of payments constraints, and recurrent emergencies, increasing and stabilizing domestic food production is considered to be essential for a resilient food secure Marshall Islands. This is particularly so as currently the bulk of our import bill is financed from US grants and other grants.

## *Urbanization puts significant pressure on food and water supply systems*

The census of the Marshall Islands conducted on 5 April 2011 enumerated a total population of 53,158, of whom 27,243 were males and 25,915 females. Whilst our overall population growth rate has declined during the period 1999-2011 to 0.4 percent per annum, urbanization due to migration from rural areas is exacerbating food supply and access issues. Population movement to the main urban centers of Majuro and Ebeye has resulted in intense population densities and overcrowding. The Marshall Islands is now one of the most urbanized countries in the Pacific with almost 74 percent of the population living either on Majuro or Ebeye. High population densities limit opportunity for local food production and put increasing pressure on water resources and food supply systems.

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*Whilst outright hunger may not be prevalent, poor nutrition certainly is a major issue*

Whilst outright hunger may not be prevalent in the RMI, poor nutrition certainly is a major issue. The increase in incidence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and lifestyle diseases, many of which have dietary causes, is testament to this. Serious problems of nutritionally-related diseases are common, including vitamin A deficiency and anemia among children, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and certain cancers among adults. The significant economic costs of NCDs continue to be a major burden on the health budget. NCDs also have implications for productivity and income losses at national, household and company/firm level and to the overall development of our nation.

The RMI has a young population with a median age of 20.6 years and 40 percent of our population is under the age of 15 years (Population Census, 2011). The main risk factors for NCDs being laid down now in younger life, including smoking, poor nutrition, alcohol and physical inactivity, overweight and obesity is feeding a pipeline of NCDs which will mean overwhelming pressures for future health-care expenditures and also for the overall development of our nation. The 2002 STEPS NCD Risk Factor Survey showed that 64% of the population did not consume the World Health Organization (WHO)-recommended 5 serves of fruit and vegetables each day. The Community Survey conducted in 2006 showed that 35% of households did not have sufficient food for all their family members at all times. The 2007 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) reported that at least 10 percent of children (0-5 years) living in urban areas and 18.8 percent of children in rural areas were malnourished, indicated by low weight for age, thinness or wasting. Ministry of Health (MOH) data show that the proportion of low birth weight (LBW) babies born to all mothers has fluctuated between 12 and 23 percent. Not surprisingly there is a strong relationship between children's nutritional status and economic well-being of their

families, with the largest proportions of malnourished children (20 percent) found in households of the lowest wealth quintiles. The nutritional status of children remains a challenging issue particularly as inadequate early nutrition is well known to compromise children's cognitive development and long-term health.

*Good nutrition early in life is essential for our children's development*

Good nutrition early in life is essential for our children to attain their full developmental potential<sup>2</sup>. The importance of the nutritional status of women at the time of conception and during pregnancy, both for the health of the mother and for ensuring healthy fetal growth and development is acknowledged.

Nutrition problems are often linked to the types of food eaten which is influenced not only by personal choices, but also by cost, ease of preparation, availability and accessibility. Imported foods that are of poor nutritional quality (high in calories and low in vitamins and minerals) are contributing to high rates of diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer. Most of our traditional subsistence crops are high in complex carbohydrates with good nutritional value. These crops include coconut, pandanus, breadfruit, banana and taro. Increased production, processing and preservation of local nutritious foods and strengthened local markets are therefore important strategies

<sup>2</sup> **The first 1000 days** of life (from conception to 2 years) is seen as a critical period for good nutrition to ensure a child's full development potential.

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to be pursued under this policy, together with effective education, communication and outreach programs. Where appropriate, price policy and regulation of food markets may also be used to help shift the balance on food choice away from less healthy foods (and beverages) and towards more nutritious foods.

Infectious diarrheal and parasitic diseases, many of which can be attributed to the consumption of contaminated food and water, also remain a significant cause of illness in RMI. The 2006 Community Survey indicated that five percent of all persons surveyed had diarrhea in the week prior to the survey. Diarrhea was the cause of 6 percent of all deaths of children under five in 2010 (WHO). Based on a study done by EPPSO and the Ministry of Health (MOH) one in 15 people in Majuro suffer from gastroenteritis, while in Ebeye it is one in every 8 persons. EPPSO calculated that in 2004, the MOH spent over \$358,000 to address the needs of outpatients with gastroenteritis. Strengthen food control systems and educating the private sector food handlers and the general public on good food handling practices and food safety as well as adopting international standards such as Codex are recognized as essential elements in RMI's food security.

*A thriving coconut industry is vital for rural livelihoods, the economy and food security*

A thriving coconut industry remains vital for rural livelihoods, the economy and food security in RMI, particularly in the outer-islands where few other economic opportunities avail. But the sector needs to be modernized and revitalized with decentralization of oil expelling and a stronger focus on whole nut processing and value added products. Tobolar's Strategic Reform Plan 2012-2016 aims to address these issues and diversify coconut production away from low value copra, towards high value coconut products. To achieve this careful planning and deliberate measures to improve copra pricing, shipping, efficiency, quality and delivery are envisaged.

Fish is a very important component of our diet and is vital to food security, particularly in the outer-islands where people are highly dependent on fish for daily nutrition. In the atolls rearing livestock is difficult and is challenged by limited water supply and access to suitable animal feeds, thus making the sustainable supply of local fish as a source of quality protein even more important. Marine resources also have significant economic importance, partly through income derived from fishing licenses, and

*The security of village marine food resources is vital for food security.*

partly through the employment and income generation from the tuna processing operations, from fishing activities and from servicing fishing vessels. Over the last decade we have witnessed significant increases in fisheries contribution to GDP and in fisheries exports.

Sustainable management of the marine sector together with development of marine aquaculture remains vitally important both for domestic food security and for generating national income and foreign reserves. Sustainable fisheries management and security of village marine food resources are recognized as priority outcomes to ensure long-term food security in RMI.

The role of Iroij (chiefs), local governments and the active involvement of communities will be essential to realizing these outcomes.

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The stability of our food supply at the national level is dependent on the resilience of the food supply system (comprising domestic production and imports) to shocks – such as food price spikes, climatic disasters (droughts, cyclones, storm surges etc.), outbreaks of pest/ diseases, and also to longer-term trends – including downturns in the global economy, changing climatic conditions and labor migration from rural areas. Currently security of our food supply is heavily dependent on our ability to pay for food imports and on reliable shipping services both to the RMI and within our islands group. This policy therefore highlights the dual needs of increasing local food production and ensuring an efficient national food distribution system.

*The RMI is among the most environmentally vulnerable nations in the world*

RMI faces additional challenges to food security stemming from environmental degradation and the potential impact of climate change on our natural resources. On-going sea level rise is likely to cause significant problems through both contamination of ground water and erosion of land. The evidence from experience to date indicates that extreme events such as drought, extreme high tides, violent winds, and storm surges are the major risks to our of low-lying islands. Rising sea levels, changing weather patterns and changing migration routes of commercially

exploitable fish make it imperative that adaptation responses be mainstreamed into planning and preparedness processes. In general, the situation appears more serious in the northern atolls, due to their susceptibility to droughts and their lower agriculture potential, and in the most remote atolls, due to their weak linkage (transport) to Majuro or Ebeye. It is essential that we encourage environmentally responsible practices that conserve our natural resources, minimize the quantity of waste generated (including from food packaging), and maintain biodiversity to support ecological sustainability of our food system. Reducing the negative impacts of climate change and environmental degradation are therefore recognized as key priorities for enhancing food security in RMI.

*Energy security together with reliable and affordable transport systems are crucial factors for food security*

The RMI remains extremely dependent on imported mineral oils (diesel, kerosene and gasoline), which accounts for 90% of national energy use whilst biomass provides most of the rest. RMI is one of the highest per capita oil users in the Pacific region at around 2,400 litres per capita per annum. Consequently, our imports are dominated by fuel and food, which together account for over 60 percent of total imports. In 2010 the cost of mineral product imports was almost US\$23 million, representing over 32 percent of total imports. Mineral based fuels remain essential for transportation (particularly shipping), and electricity generation. The 2006 Community Survey indicated that kerosene remained the most common energy source for cooking. Improving energy efficiency and shifting reliance away from oil towards practical and affordable renewable energy sources for both urban and rural communities have been recognized as priorities in our National Energy Policy 2009. In the context of food security, reducing fuel import bills reduces pressure on the external

balances and thus increases food import capability. At the household level, reducing energy costs would increase a family's capacity to buy nutritious food. Extending affordable energy supply to all

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communities will allow families to prepare and preserve (refrigerate) nutritious food. Providing innovative methods for cooking such as low smoke biofuel cooking stoves would reduce expenditure on kerosene. Minimizing the fuel costs of shipping should reduce overall food prices and facilitate competitive marketing of locally produced food. This policy therefore recognizes that energy security together with reliable and affordable transport systems are crucial factors for food security in RMI.

Food and nutrition security refers to a situation where all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Improvements in food and nutrition security will involve both economic adjustments and behavioral changes. Such long term processes will need a consolidated approach from a range of government institutions (agriculture, health, education, trade, transport, energy, internal affairs, finance, environment and disaster management) working together with local government, traditional leaders, Non Government Organizations(NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (including churches), the private sector (including popular media) and our development partners. The government recognizes that without proactive policy responses to the food security challenges we face our long-term development and progress towards achieving the MDGs will be undermined. Therefore this National Food Security Policy framework aims to guide and coordinate coherent actions from all key stakeholders towards a more food secure RMI.

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## Food Security Policy Framework

### Vision

All Marshallese people, at all times, will have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

**Policy Statement:** The Government acknowledges the integral role that nutrition plays in ensuring a healthy population and productive work force. Subject to availability of requisite resources, the Government will ensure that every Marshallese has both an adequate supply of safe and affordable healthy food, and an uninterrupted supply of clean and safe water in adequate quantities, at all times.

### Principles

This policy is framed in the context of:

- ❖ Basic human rights, child rights and women's rights, including the universal 'Right to Food'.
- ❖ Respecting and including the voices of the vulnerable (including women, youth and those with disabilities).
- ❖ Adopting a multi-stakeholder and multi-sector approach to tackling food security.
- ❖ Strengthening food security information in order to better target vulnerable groups.
- ❖ Respecting cultural and traditional values
- ❖ Respecting and promoting biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

The implementation of strategic actions under this policy will be guided by these principles.

### Goal

- To ensure access to nutritious, quality, safe and affordable food for all Marshallese people at all times

### Five Priority Strategic Action Areas

1. Stimulating sustainable local food<sup>3</sup> production and preparation and better linking producers to consumers.
2. Strengthening access to nutritious food for vulnerable households and individuals.
3. Educating the public about food security and nutrition and encouraging home gardening.
4. Facilitating efficient national food distribution channels.
5. Building safety, quality and resilience into food supply and production systems.

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<sup>3</sup> **Food** in this context includes that derived from plants, livestock, fish and other seafood in fresh or processed form.

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## Priority Areas, Development Outcomes (DO) and Strategic Actions

### 1. Local food production and linking producers to consumers

*DO1: Local food production increased and producers better linked to consumers*

**Strategy 1.1:** Support local food crop production through extending knowledge and skills in better husbandry practices and farming systems.

**Strategy 1.2:** Increase the focus of government extension support provided for growing traditional staple crops.

**Strategy 1.3:** Conserve traditional crop biodiversity, and cautiously introduce new crop varieties which can extend the tolerance range of crop growing conditions (e.g. to drought and salinity) and where possible extend fruiting seasons.

**Strategy 1.4:** Develop and sustainably manage coastal/inshore fisheries and aquaculture to support food security and livelihoods.

**Strategy 1.5:** Adopt a supply chain approach to facilitate and support the establishment of viable production and marketing chains from input supplies, through farm (and fisheries) production to end markets.

**Strategy 1.6:** Give high priority to development of robust domestic food supply chains.

Agricultural conditions are extremely difficult across most of our atoll islands. Soil conditions are generally poor and there is often scarce fresh water for both human and agricultural use. Periodic droughts impact negatively on crop and livestock production. But agro-ecological conditions including availability of arable land and adequate rainfall vary across our island groups, with some islands in the south (e.g. Arno, Ebon, and Jaluit) having more favorable growing environments than the atolls in the north. However, in the places where there is available arable land suitable for agriculture production there is frequently a shortage of skilled farmers and labor due to migration to the urban centers in Majuro and Ebeye. In the urban areas high population density means that there is very limited land available for agriculture.

The harsh growing conditions that prevail, means that the range of crops that can be raised without significant environmental amelioration is limited. Areas suitable for growing exotic vegetable/fruit crops need to be protected from salt-laden winds, as well as having soil enriched with compost and an adequate supply of irrigation water. Organic inputs and water together with technical knowledge are vital ingredients for successful cultivation. Nevertheless, successful cultivation of vegetable/fruit crops has been accomplished most notably in Laura and the Laura Farmers' Association (LFA) now has skilled farmers as members who are willing to share and extend their knowledge to others.

Alongside the exotic vegetables a range of traditional staple food crops, including coconut, pandanus, breadfruit, taro and banana are cultivated in our islands. Many of the traditional crop varieties have demonstrated tolerance to the difficult growing environments and thus remain crucial in the sustainable diets of our people. This is particularly so in many of the Outer-islands where access to imported food is more difficult because of transport issues and cost. Therefore greater focus needs to be given to raising the production and productivity of these staples (particularly in the outer-islands), through better husbandry practices and farming systems.



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**Strategy 1.7:** Improve market structures for transport and sale of fish, and fresh produce, and promote the introduction of market centers.

**Strategy 1.8:** Strengthen organizations of rural women producers/market vendors to be fully empowered in the context of institutions such as the marketplace.

**Strategy 1.9:** Ensure that all intervention programs are gender focused and gender responsive. Although extension services will be directed to all producers special attention will be given to women in recognition of their critical role in family household management and nutrition.

**Strategy 1.10:** Promote and facilitate the formation and strengthening of producer organizations (farmers and fishers).

**Strategy 1.11:** Introduce local purchasing policies regulating use of local food produce in all government catering purchases.

**Strategy 1.12:** Enhance capacities to use natural resources in a sustainable manner to support sustainable growth in the agriculture and fisheries sectors

Additionally, conserving and building up adequate quantities of our traditional crop varieties (e.g. pandanus, taro, breadfruit) is a priority, and where appropriate cautiously introducing additional biodiversity of these crops as well as other potential food staples such as sweet potato. Through such introductions the ecological tolerance range to drought and salinity as well as seasonal fruiting patterns may be extended. However, such programs of introduction need to be implemented as research activities, so that data can be collected on suitability and performance in different growing environments. The programs should be implemented methodically, building up stocks of healthy planting materials which have been screened under different growing environments before widespread distribution to growers.

Recognizing the limited land and fresh water available for crop and livestock production, sustainable marine aquaculture systems will also be promoted to boost local sources of protein rich food.

A demonstrated market demand and facilitated access to markets is necessary to stimulate small subsistence farmers into commercialization. For this to be realized in RMI improvement in market linkages are needed. In times of a strong and sustained market demand farmers will more actively seek and adopt productivity enhancing technology and management methods.

The urban centers in Majuro and Ebeye constitute substantial markets for fresh produce where the demand is generally greater than available supply. Laura village farmers currently market fresh produce in Majuro. But there is considerable opportunity to increase supplies from other strategically located islands which have good soils and rainfall, and where more intensive production should be encouraged. However, transport costs need to be 'softened' in order to ensure shipped produce is competitively priced on the urban markets. In this context, targeted 'smart' freight subsidies to local producers/traders may be considered. Also exploring opportunities to freight fresh agriculture produce together with fish transported by Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) could prove synergistic.

Better market houses and postharvest handling and storage facilities are essential requirements for boosting domestic trade in agriculture and fisheries products. When municipal marketplaces offer a good array and quality of produce they make a major contribution to small business development and food security. A policy priority therefore is to continue to improve domestic market infrastructure (including for fisheries products) as a means to stimulate local food production and improve rural incomes. Domestic marketing is largely the responsibility of women and they should be fully involved and leading initiatives in planning of market developments and market management.

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Water will increasingly be a constraint in agricultural production therefore improved rain-fed and irrigated water management must be practiced. Agricultural practices should promote adequate, healthy food while protecting and contributing to environmental sustainability. Government will promote farming systems and ecosystems perspectives which encourage environmentally friendly production systems, including integrated crop management, integrated pest management, traditional agroforestry, organic farming and aquaculture. Government will also promote efficient waste management systems for livestock.

MIMRA, along with other members of the Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC) have been working with outer island communities in the facilitation of their respective resource management plans and management ordinances through what is called the “Reimaanlok” process. This also involves capacity building for the communities and maintaining the partnership link with the communities. Among the outer island communities that have been through the process, food security and sustainable livelihoods have been highlighted, along with conservation and management of the resources. Through this linkage with the outer island communities issues and strategies identified in this National Food Security Policy should be integrated with the work already implemented on the ground."

**Rural development is essential to achieving food security. Smallholder agriculture can improve livelihoods, but only if it is productive, profitable, sustainable, resilient and well linked to markets.**

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## 2. Access to nutritious foods for vulnerable households and individuals

### *DO2: Strengthened access to nutritious food for vulnerable households and individuals*

**Strategy 2.1:** Seek technical support to map all communities and households that are particularly vulnerable to lack of food and water security and good nutrition and ensure that appropriate interventions are targeted to reach these groups.

**Strategy 2.2:** Seek technical assistance to institutionalize early warning sentinel monitoring systems to identify those vulnerable to food insecurity and nutritional deterioration, particularly in relation to food price crisis and natural disasters.

**Strategy 2.3:** In line with National Health Policy, promote exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months and continued breastfeeding together with appropriate introduction of nutrient-rich foods until 2 years of age and beyond.

**Strategy 2.4:** In line with National Health Policy, undertake micronutrient supplementation of pregnant women and children, where necessary.

**Strategy 2.5:** Ensure that the public, especially the marginalized and vulnerable are actively involved in decisions that affect food security

**Strategy 2.6:** In line with Public Law 1991-125 (with 2008 revision) maintain and enhance school feeding programs

Effective policies and strategies to enhance food security must take into account the needs of those who already lack food security and those vulnerable to a lack of food security. Healthy food, like healthcare and education, must be available to all regardless of income. People in our urban centers mainly obtain their food by purchasing it, but increasingly financial constraints and lack of employment opportunities are challenging family's capacity to purchase enough nutritious food. Due to low income, many people increasingly eat diets that rely on cheap imported foods based on refined rice, flour and foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt. To help pay for their basic needs and other obligations, many families are increasingly taking out loans. Also in our outer-islands, where food prices are higher, poorer families with limited capacity to grow their own food are struggling to provide sufficient nutritious food for their families. Because of physiological needs, pregnant women, infants, children and adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable.

Preventing malnutrition during pregnancy and the first two years of life is when most gains can be made in reducing morbidity and mortality and preventing the onset of NCDs later in life. For infants, food security is primarily about exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and the introduction of nutritious complementary foods after this. Micronutrient supplementation (i.e. iron and folic acid) of pregnant women, children and adolescent girls is important when there are low levels of food fortification and consumption of nutrient rich food. Our school feeding programs enshrined in Public Law 1991-125 (with 2008 revision) remain a high priority to ensure that our school children have access to nutritious food required for productive learning and healthy living.

**To build national food security we must focus on removing economic barriers to access to healthy food for all our citizens.** Sound economic management, balancing the need to expand the economy by stimulating business and the need to protect the vulnerable left out of economic development, is critical. In the outer-islands, strengthen rural economies with support for sustainable and innovative economic development initiatives remains a priority.

The government recognizes that targeted social safety nets can have a large role in mitigation of potentially negative effects of global changes and man-

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made and environmental shocks, in supporting livelihoods, food security, diet quality, and in achieving scale and high coverage of nutritionally at-risk households and individuals. In emergencies and post-disaster situations the government will undertake all measures available to protect the vulnerable from food and nutrition insecurity and to ensure access to adequate potable water supply.

The government recognizes the importance of the coconut industry for rural incomes and will closely monitor developments in the industry and ensure that subsidies are appropriately targeted to the rural poor and that developments are focused on modernization and value adding, quality improvements and appropriate decentralization to maximize incomes for rural producers.

## 3. Education on food security and nutrition and home gardening

*DO3: Better informed and knowledgeable public about food security and nutrition and increased home gardening*

**Strategy 3.1:** Promotion of breastmilk for infant food security and community based awareness and interventions will be accelerated.

**Strategy 3.2:** Investigate possible market/price and regulatory measures (e.g. preferential tariffs, 'sin food'-tax, content regulations, fortification etc) which promote healthy food choices.

**Strategy 3.3:** Consideration will particularly be given to increasing taxes on alcohol, "junk food" and soft drinks known to be high in sugars, saturated and trans-fats, and / or high salt content.

There is growing and compelling evidence that Marshallese of all incomes experience chronic health problems and sometimes premature death due to poor quality diet, less than optimal nutrition, and occasional exposure to unsafe food. This can start with inadequate prenatal nutrition and breastfeeding, premature weaning, and reliance on processed commercial infant and baby foods. Many of our children and adults do not eat the recommended amount of vegetables and fruit and there are disturbing trends in the prevalence of overweight and obese adults, adolescents and children. In fact, while many children do get enough to eat, others are fed junk food.

Due to their inability to purchase high quality nutritious food, our poorer families are the most vulnerable to chronic health problems. Food insecurity brings with it with chronic disease including type II diabetes and high blood pressure, and is associated with higher levels of depression, stress, anxiety, social isolation, eating disorders, impaired cognitive abilities, and increased use of clinical services.

Food insecurity also is linked to lower levels of positive parent-child interactions, poorer infant feeding practices, poorer psychological health among children, and depression and suicidal tendencies in adolescents. Students with decreased overall diet quality are more likely to perform poorly in school, and have more behavioral and emotional problems.

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**The prevalence of many life-style related diseases will diminish only when the population is educated and motivated to change behavior.**

**Strategy 3.4:** Nutrition will be featured strongly in school curricula starting at the earliest age and at every grade level. This should ensure that students graduate with an understanding of healthy food and how to access and prepare it.

**Strategy 3.5:** Participatory and community-based approaches will be adopted to promote local food production, healthy lifestyles and sustainable diets.

**Strategy 3.6:** In partnership with our NGOs workshops and demonstrations will be conducted on urban gardening and use, preparation and preservation of nutritious local foods.

A strategic priority of this policy is to provide our people with information, and empower them with skills to make informed decisions about food. The food security causality pathway needs to be well understood, healthy options need to be promoted and appropriate policies and regulations need to be in place to make healthy choices easy choices.

Schools that integrate health and nutrition into their classrooms and communities can become centers of excellence and hubs of knowledge and practice beyond the school-aged child. Gardens in schools can spread to communities and increase awareness of the importance of good nutrition and dietary diversity. Integrating health and nutrition education into lessons, meals, and gardening activities promotes healthy habits such as dietary diversity, food and water safety, food processing, nutrient preservation, sanitation, and hygiene. All of our students should graduate with an understanding of healthy food and how to access it and prepare it.

In partnership with our civil society and NGOs government will facilitate and promote sustained community campaigns that promote healthy food choices. Technical assistance will be sought to formulate appropriate guidelines and tools for education, awareness and promotion of good nutrition, and the use and preparation of local foods. Attention will also be paid to appropriate storage and preservation of food and to minimizing food wastage.

Whilst space in our urban areas is constrained, all possible opportunities should be seized for home gardening. Using grow-boxes, small beds, planting an extra breadfruit tree or pandanus can make a difference!

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## 4. Efficient national food distribution channels

### DO4: *More efficient national food distribution channels*

**Strategy 4.1:** Explore ways to reduce the costs for transportation, processing and storage of food, giving priority to renewable energy sources where possible (wind, biofuel and solar).

**Strategy 4.2:** Increase access to (renewable) energy to rural and remote communities to assist in food preparation, storage and preservation.

**Strategy 4.3:** Explore the feasibility of targeted 'smart' freight subsidies for local producers/traders in fresh produce.

**Improved domestic shipping services are fundamental to improving food security in RMI.** The Vision 18 identifies transport services to the outer-islands as essential and thus commits government to implementing programs for the provision of efficient and affordable sea and air transport services to the outer-islands with reliable flight and shipping schedules.

With the country's current heavy reliance on imported food reliable and affordable shipping between the islands is critical for food distribution. Equally, trade in fish and local food products to urban centers is dependent on reliable and affordable shipping services. The main opportunities for income earning in the outer-islands continue to be local crafts and copra. Indeed, activity in the copra trade is a major factor in determining shipping schedules. Transport systems that are not reliable, affordable, or able to ensure safe storage of food in transit, including to outlying islands, are barriers to the safe consumption of both local and imported foods. Cost-effective transportation and trip frequency, underpin social and economic development and food security for our outer-island communities. Lack of infrastructure that would support production and local trade of traditional foods and fish are barriers to wider consumption of local foods.

## 5. Safety, quality and resilience in food supply and production

### DO5: *Enhanced safety, quality and resilience in food supply and production systems*

**Strategy 5.1:** Define an appropriate Food Safety and SPS architecture which clarifies roles and responsibilities.

**Strategy 5.2:** Review legal and regulatory framework for food. Legislation should be harmonized and strengthened to influence a clear policy framework and determine the principal enforcement agency.

**C**ontrolling the safety of imported food is a significant challenge for the RMI. Inadequate standards and lack of capacity to enforce food safety laws and regulations can result in the importation of low quality food (old, damaged and contaminated products and products with low vitamins and minerals and high in fat, sugar and/or salt) that pose serious health risks to consumers. Consumers may be exposed to food that is sold after its specified use-by date and/or has undergone temperature abuse before or during distribution in the RMI. Poor labeling can undermine people's proactive food choices and can have potentially serious health risks in the case of food allergies etc. Poor food handling practices in the national food service industry can further increase risks of food contamination and transmission of food-borne diseases.



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**Strategy 5.3:** Strengthen the capacity to monitor the Food Act (provide appropriate trained human resources and equipment to monitor implementation of regulations).

**Strategy 5.4:** Recognize the importance of food safety and support the private sector to obtain international standards such as HACCP and comply with good hygienic practices (GHP) and good agricultural practices (GAP).

**Strategy 5.5:** In line with the National Water and Sanitation Policy, enable all citizens to access clean and adequate water supplies.

**Strategy 5.6:** Support community based integrated management of coastal and inshore marine resources, both empowering and assisting communities to develop and enforce appropriate conservation measures.

**Strategy 5.7:** Ensure a well functioning biosecurity service to ensure adequate protection of plant and animal health status from introduced exotic pests and diseases.

**Strategy 5.8:** Orient policy focus from “crisis management or response” to “risk reduction and resilience-building”

Conversely, with fish comprising the bulk of exports from the RMI, the failure to meet strict food safety and quality regulatory requirements of export markets could be an impediment to fully exploiting the country’s potential as a fish exporter. Action needs to be taken to improve the nutritional quality of imports and to upgrade the food safety system so it provides effective protection.

There is need for clarity over the role of different agencies involved in food control and implementation of the Food Act. The food control systems must be developed and enhanced to assure the quality and safety of food available to consumers. Private food businesses and farmers need assistance in complying with mandatory requirements and voluntary measures. There is a need rethink the food safety regulatory agenda and adopt appropriate regulations to ensure protection from food borne illness, exposure to environmental contaminants and the additions of other substances to food.

Support is required to build capacity and enhance commitment of food safety authorities in collaboration with the private sector to increase private sector capacity to comply with good agricultural practices (GAP), good hygienic practices (GHP) and hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) requirements. The value of accession to Codex Alimentarius and formation of a national codex committee is recognized as important in helping develop standards and in coordinating concerns related to food regulation. A national codex committee provides a formal platform for dialogue between government and private sector stakeholders.

Because agriculture affects, and is in turn affected by the natural environment, policy measures must ensure that soil, water, air and biodiversity of the environment are protected for agriculture and that agricultural practices contribute to the ongoing health of the environment. In this context, managing pig waste in an environmentally sound way will be important. Also, the conservation, protection and restoration of fish populations and the ecosystems that sustain them must be viewed as central to maintaining the food security and livelihoods in RMI. Enhancing capacities’ to use natural resources in a sustainable manner is a government priority in support of food security.

RMI food systems are extremely vulnerable to the adverse impacts of disasters and climate change. Key natural hazards that have potential to negatively impact on RMI include: tropical storms and typhoons, storm surges, and drought. All of these hazards are expected to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change.

Systems for improved monitoring of risks are being put in place and disaster preparedness and management plans should indicate how food and agricultural systems will be effectively managed and protected in times of disasters and



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**Strategy 5.9:** In line with Climate Change Policy, undertake enhanced planning and interventions to address climate vulnerabilities in food security and nutrition.

**Strategy 5.10:** Promote climate 'smart' farming systems and evaluate new crop cultivars to identify those which are more tolerant of drought and saline soil and water conditions.

crisis. This policy framework will be aligned to the National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2008-2018.

Resilience implies the ability to prevent disasters and crisis as well as to anticipate, absorb, accommodate or recover from them in a timely, efficient and sustainable manner. This means helping all our communities to protect, restore and improve their livelihood systems in the face of threats that impact agriculture, nutrition, food security food safety and availability of clean potable water.

Resilience and adaptive capacity will be the ultimate measure by which our farming/fishing and food security will be judged. Not just resilience to short-term shocks, but a more enduring resilience in the face of the new fundamentals associated with globalised trade, high energy costs, labor migration and climate change.

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## Implementation

This Food Security Policy (FSP) provides an overarching framework covering the multiple dimensions of food security. It has been purposefully developed to add value and create synergy to existing sector and other initiatives of government and partners. It recognizes the need for multi-public and private sector involvement, and that improving food security is a shared responsibility of all Marshallese. The policy and associated actions will remain dynamic to address contextual changes and changing conditions over time. Facilitating participation from the public and concerned stakeholders in the development and frequent re-evaluation of food security programs, will allow them to be improved and increase accountability.

There are many key stakeholders for implementing the food security policy, which include:

- ✓ Nitijela
- ✓ Local Government
- ✓ Council of Iroij
- ✓ Office of the Chief Secretary (OCS)
- ✓ Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics (EPPSO)
- ✓ Ministry of Finance (MOF)
- ✓ Internal Affairs (MIA)
- ✓ Ministry of Resources and Development (MRD - Agriculture, Energy and Trade)
- ✓ Ministry of Health (MOH)
- ✓ Ministry of Education[MOH -including National Training Council (NTC)]
- ✓ Environment [including Office of Environmental Policy and Planning Coordination (OEPPC) and Environmental Protection Authority(EPA)]
- ✓ Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA)
- ✓ Marshall Islands Shipping Company (MISC)
- ✓ Utilities (Power, Water, Transport, Communications)
- ✓ Disaster and Emergency Management
- ✓ College of Marshall Islands (CMI)
- ✓ University of South Pacific (USP)
- ✓ Tobolar
- ✓ Private sector and including Chamber of Commerce(COC) and Farmer and Fisher Organizations
- ✓ Civil Society Organizations (including Church-based Organizations)
- ✓ RMI Regional, Bilateral and Multilateral Development Partners.

Clearly the implementation of integrated actions will need to be a central focus along with consistency between food security, agriculture, fisheries, health and climate change policy. This Food Security Policy should help to align food security and nutrition relevant programs within a common results framework. But anticipating the significant challenges to mobilize national resources and coordinate actions from multiple players, reactivating the Food Security Committee is envisaged.

Women are recognized for having a primary role in providing food, water, sanitation, and health care in their communities. Although women have a key role in agricultural activities, they have limited access to and control of resources. Empowerment of women is essential to raise levels of food and nutrition security and improve production and distribution of food and agricultural products.

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Establishing informal food industry, private sector advisory groups to facilitate discussions among government agencies, the private sector and consumers will also be important. The COC should have an important role to play in this regard.

Implementation of the policy strategic actions can be broken down into a number of mutually supporting priority programs designed to deliver the five food security development outcomes. Each program should be translated into a fully costed operational plan for implementation during the period 2013-2018. Implementation of the plans will incorporate joint planning and participation (facilitated by the Food Security Committee) to ensure that multiple views, needs and concerns in resolving priority food security issues at different levels are taken into account and negotiated. Some actions necessary to achieve the five development outcomes will already be integral to other sector and action programs e.g. agriculture, fisheries, health, education, transport, energy, climate change and disaster risk management. Care will be taken that food security programs are coordinated with these and not duplications. It will also be necessary to adjust strategies according to island context and needs.

To ensure proper alignment of results down the planning levels, the development of the implementation plans shall pick up the planning process from the intervention strategy level under each of the 5 development outcome result areas, as outlined in the Policy Framework Matrix (Annex 1), and unpack each intervention strategy into its necessary broad-based activities. Activity delivery timeframe, responsibility for carrying out each activity, the intended users of the activity results, and the expected outputs following the attainment of the activity will follow. The cost of implementing the strategy will be shared among national and local governments, development partners and the private sector.

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## Monitoring and Evaluation

An effective and affordable monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system will be essential to ensure that policy directions are achieving desired policy outcomes and impact. This will require initially that there is sufficient baseline data in place, and subsequently, systematic data collection on relevant indicators. Good monitoring will allow appropriate adjustments to the policy framework as implementation unfolds. Effectively demonstrating the quality and impact of resources should help facilitate increased commitments to strengthening food security.

Currently there are severe data limitations for monitoring policy outcomes and a first priority will therefore be to establish a minimum set of core indicators that need to be measured. It will then be important to ensure the relevant data is collected in any future agriculture and community surveys, HIES, Demographic Health Surveys, nutritional surveys, and Population Census.

At the development outcome identifies broad indicators that strategy output level will need to be established at a reflect individual island

Gender, age and geographical facilitate monitoring of impacts on

*When choosing indicators, the starting point should be the question “Is this proposed indicator measurable?”*

level the M&E Matrix below should be tracked. At the indicators, data and targets more disaggregated level to priorities.

disaggregation will help to vulnerable communities and groups.

The Food Security Committee under the leadership of the Ministry of Resources and Development Department and in close cooperation with MOH and EPPSO will be responsible for establishing the M&E framework and preparing regular policy implementation reports. The policy will be subject to a mid-term evaluation no later than three years after its endorsement by Congress.

Good reporting on results will provide policy managers and stakeholders the opportunity to reflect on what has and what has not worked and feed these lessons into future planning. The Policy will be updated after the completion of the evaluation or sooner if necessary.

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## Summary M&E Matrix of Food Security Policy Outcomes and Indicators

Development Outcome	Indicators
1. <i>Local food production increased and producers better linked to consumers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increased proportion of household food expenditure on locally produced food compared to imported food.</li> <li>➤ Proportion of imported food consumed in diets reduced by 20% by 2018.</li> <li>➤ Total amount and types of food imported</li> <li>➤ Ratio of food imports to total imports decreased from 30% to 15% by 2018.</li> </ul>
2. <i>Strengthened access to nutritious foods for vulnerable households and individuals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number households and individuals reporting lack of sufficient food decreased by 50% by 2018</li> <li>➤ Prevalence of underweight children under five years decreased.</li> <li>➤ Prevalence of wasting is decreased</li> <li>➤ Nutritional health indicators (e.g. Vitamin A deficiency and anemia) improved.</li> </ul>
3. <i>A better informed and knowledgeable public about food security and nutrition and increased home gardening</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Food security and nutrition included in school curriculum at all levels.</li> <li>➤ Increased number of households practicing home gardening in both urban and rural areas.</li> <li>➤ Amounts (number of servings) of fruit and vegetables in diets</li> </ul>
4. <i>More efficient food distribution channels</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Domestic market volumes of locally produced food increased and prices maintained below headline inflation levels.</li> <li>➤ Domestic shipping freight rates for food stable or decreasing.</li> <li>➤ Predictable and reliable shipping services to outer islands.</li> <li>➤ Differential between food prices in outer islands and urban centers reduced.</li> </ul>
5. <i>Enhanced safety, quality and resilience in food supply and production.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Food service industry successfully meeting established food quality and safety standards.</li> <li>➤ Prevalence of food related diseases/food contamination reduced.</li> <li>➤ RMI will become a member of Codex Alimentarius by end 2014</li> <li>➤ Reduction in disaster-related damages and losses in food and agriculture sectors.</li> <li>➤ Incidence of foreign pest, disease and invasive species incursions reduced.</li> <li>➤ Recognized climate change mitigation and adaptation practices being implemented.</li> </ul>

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## Annex 1: Summary Food Security Policy Framework

POLICY GOAL	
<p>➤ To make nutritious, quality, safe food accessible and affordable for all Marshallese citizens at all times</p>	
DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES	STRATEGIC ACTIONS
<p>1. <i>Local food production increased and producers better linked to consumers</i></p>	<p><b>Strategy 1.1:</b> Support local food crop production through extending knowledge and skills in better husbandry practices and farming systems.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2:</b> Increase the focus of government extension support provided for growing traditional staple crops.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.3:</b> Conserve traditional crop biodiversity, and cautiously introduce new crop varieties which can extend the tolerance range of crop growing conditions (e.g. to drought and salinity) and where possible extend fruiting seasons.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.4:</b> Develop and sustainably manage coastal/inshore fisheries and aquaculture to support food security and livelihoods.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.5:</b> Adopt a supply chain approach to facilitate and support the establishment of viable production and marketing chains from input supplies, through farm (and fisheries) production to end markets.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.6:</b> Give high priority to development of robust domestic food supply chains.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.7:</b> Improve market structures for transport and sale of fish, and fresh produce, and promote the introduction of market centers.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.8:</b> Strengthen organizations of rural women producers/market vendors to be fully empowered in the context of institutions such as the marketplace.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.9:</b> Ensure that all intervention programs are gender focused and gender responsive. Although extension services will be directed to all producers special attention will be given to women in recognition of their critical role in family household management and nutrition.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.10:</b> Promote and facilitate the formation and strengthening of producer organizations (farmers and fishers).</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.11:</b> Introduce local purchasing policies regulating use of local food produce in all government catering purchases.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.12:</b> Enhance capacities to use natural resources in a sustainable manner to support sustainable growth in the agriculture and fisheries sectors</p>

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<p>2. <i>Strengthened access to nutritious foods for vulnerable households and individuals</i></p>	<p><b>Strategy 2.1:</b> Seek technical support to map all communities and households that are particularly vulnerable to lack of food and water security and good nutrition and ensure that appropriate interventions are targeted to reach these groups.</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.2:</b> Seek technical assistance to institutionalize early warning sentinel monitoring systems to identify those vulnerable to food insecurity and nutritional deterioration, particularly in relation to food price crisis and natural disasters.</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.3:</b> In line with National Health Policy, promote exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months and continued breastfeeding together with appropriate introduction of nutrient-rich foods until 2 years of age and beyond.</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.4:</b> In line with National Health Policy, undertake micronutrient supplementation of pregnant women and children, where necessary.</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.5:</b> Ensure that the public, especially the marginalized and vulnerable are actively involved in decisions that affect food security</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.6:</b> In line with Public Law 1991-125 (with 2008 revision) maintain and enhance school feeding programs.</p>
<p>3. <i>A better informed and knowledgeable public about food security and nutrition and increased home gardening</i></p>	<p><b>Strategy 3.1:</b> Promotion of breast-milk for infant food security and community based awareness and interventions will be accelerated.</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.2:</b> Investigate possible market/price and regulatory measures (e.g. preferential tariffs, 'sin food'-tax, content regulations, fortification etc) which promote healthy food choices.</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.3:</b> Consideration will particularly be given to increasing taxes on alcohol, "junk food" and soft drinks known to be high in sugars, saturated and trans-fats, and / or high salt content.</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.4:</b> Nutrition will be featured strongly in school curricula starting at the earliest age and at every grade level. This should ensure that students graduate with an understanding of healthy food and how to access and prepare it.</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.5:</b> Participatory and community-based approaches will be adopted to promote local food production, healthy lifestyles and sustainable diets.</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.6:</b> In partnership with our NGOs workshops and demonstrations will be conducted on urban gardening and use, preparation and preservation of nutritious local foods.</p>



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<p>4. <i>More efficient food distribution channels</i></p>	<p><b>Strategy 4.1:</b> Explore ways to reduce the costs for transportation, processing and storage of food, giving priority to renewable energy sources where possible (wind, biofuel and solar).</p> <p><b>Strategy 4.2:</b> Increase access to (renewable) energy to rural and remote communities to assist in food preparation, storage and preservation.</p> <p><b>Strategy 4.3:</b> Explore the feasibility of targeted 'smart' freight subsidies for local producers/traders in fresh produce.</p>
<p>5. <i>Enhanced safety, quality and resilience in food supply and production</i></p>	<p><b>Strategy 5.1:</b> Define an appropriate Food Safety and SPS architecture which clarifies roles and responsibilities.</p> <p><b>Strategy 5.2:</b> Review legal and regulatory framework for food. Legislation should be harmonized and strengthened to influence a clear policy framework and determine the principal enforcement agency.</p> <p><b>Strategy 5.3:</b> Strengthen the capacity to monitor the Food Act (provide appropriate trained human resources and equipment to monitor implementation of regulations).</p> <p><b>Strategy 5.4:</b> Recognize the importance of food safety and support the private sector to obtain international standards such as HACCP and comply with good hygienic practices (GHP) and good agricultural practices (GAP).</p> <p><b>Strategy 5.5:</b> In line with the National Water and Sanitation Policy, enable all citizens to access clean and adequate water supplies.</p> <p><b>Strategy 5.6:</b> Support community based management of inshore marine resources, both empowering and assisting communities to develop and enforce appropriate conservation measures.</p> <p><b>Strategy 5.7:</b> Ensure a well functioning biosecurity service to ensure adequate protection of plant and animal health status from introduced exotic pests and diseases.</p> <p><b>Strategy 5.8:</b> Orient policy focus from "crisis management or response" to "risk reduction and resilience-building"</p> <p><b>Strategy 5.9:</b> In line with Climate Change Policy, undertake enhanced planning and interventions to address climate vulnerabilities in food security and nutrition.</p> <p><b>Strategy 5.10:</b> Promote climate 'smart' farming systems and evaluate new crop cultivars to identify those which are more tolerant of drought and saline soil and water conditions.</p>

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## Annex 2: Documents Relevant to Food Security

**Environmental Planning Authority**, Marshall Islands Report on the Implementation of the UNCCD, September 2002.

**Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office (EPPSO)** 2006. Community Survey Report.

**Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management**, Draft Results Matrix.

**Marshall Islands Invasive Species Taskforce** 2007. Strategic Action Plan 2007 – 2010.

**Office for Environmental Policy and Planning Coordination** 2000, RIO+10 RMI National Report to the World Sustainable Development Summit.

**RMI** Climate Change Roadmap 2010.

**RMI Ministry of Education** 2006, Strategic Plan 2007 – 2011.

**RMI Ministry of Health**, Draft Decrement and Medium Term Strategy FY 2011- FY2014.

**RMI Ministry of Resources and Development** Strategy and Action Plan 2005-2010.

**RMI Ministry of Resources and Development** Trade Policy for the Republic of the Marshall Islands May 2012.

**RMI** National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2008-2018.

**RMI** National Climate Change Policy Framework January 2011.

**RMI** National Energy Policy and Energy Action Plan, September 2009.

**RMI** National Training Council Strategic Plan 2013-2015.

**RMI** National Water and Sanitation Policy (draft 1/19/2013).

**RMI** Rapid Drought Assessment Report, Team 3, Mejit and Utrik Atollis, Northern Islands, Marshall Islands, May 2013.

**RMI** Strategic Development Plan Framework (2003-2018).

**RMI** Technical-Vocational Education and Training Strategic Plan 2012-2014.

**The National Biodiversity Team of the Republic of the Marshall Islands** 2000, the Marshall Islands – Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea. The National Biodiversity Report of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

**Tobolar Copra Processing Authority** Strategic Reform Plan, October 2012- September 2016.

**World Bank** 2005, Opportunities to Improve Social Services in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.