



New training package targets the role of agriculture in reducing malnutrition in Timor-Leste

MEDIA RELEASE

Dili, 26 July 2018

Timor-Leste's Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) today launched its newly developed nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) training curriculum for MAF extension workers. The curriculum, which was developed in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Australian Government's TOMAK Program, and NGO HIAM Health is the first of its kind in Timor-Leste, and focuses on an often neglected connection between agriculture and nutrition.

MAF extension workers are based in every *suku* (village) in Timor-Leste, with a mandate to help farmer groups increase their production and improve their agricultural practices. Until now, they have not typically discussed the nutritional value of the crops and livestock with farmers, but this may be about to change. The new 3-day training package developed through MAF introduces extension workers to important information about nutrition, and shows how agricultural practice can respond to known nutrition deficiencies. Extension workers also learn how to facilitate farmers to think about family nutrition, and build confidence to discuss key topics with farmers, including how to balance the sale of agricultural produce with the need to maintain a diverse and healthy diet.

Almost 100 people were present for today's launch of the training curriculum, which took place during a retreat held by the National Council for Food Security, Sovereignty and Nutrition in Timor-Leste (KONSSANTIL).

"Nutrition-sensitive agriculture is not a complicated idea," explained MAF Secretary General Cesar José da Cruz during the launch in Dili. "We are simply trying to strengthen the contribution of agriculture to improve nutrition. We cannot focus only on increasing agricultural production – we must encourage farmers to grow a variety of nutritious crops and to find a balance between what they sell and what they eat."

Representing the Australian Government in Timor-Leste, Ambassador Peter Roberts praised the multi-sectoral collaboration underpinning the NSA curriculum. "I would like to offer my congratulations to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries who have led this collaboration with the Ministry of Health, TOMAK and HIAM Health to develop an NSA training package that promotes simple practices. By using the material in this package, we have the potential to greatly influence agricultural practices in order to improve nutrition in Timor-Leste."

The training package, which includes facilitator and participant manuals, worksheets and job aides, has already been trialed with 90 extension workers from Baucau, Bobonaro and Viqueque municipalities, prior to today's adoption of the training as a national curriculum.



“The NSA training package being launched today is a good example of coordination between two sectors in order to combat malnutrition,” said Director General Dr. Odete Viegas on behalf of the Ministry of Health. “Health personnel and agricultural extension workers both live and work at the community level. They should know each other well in order to better serve the people.”

To access the NSA training materials, please visit the TOMAK website: www.tomak.org/resources

About TOMAK

TOMAK (To'os ba Moris Di'ak, or Farming for Prosperity) is a 5-10 year agricultural livelihoods program supported by the Australian Government in Timor-Leste. TOMAK works with and through local and national partners in order to improve food security and household nutrition for farming families, and support the development of commercial agriculture in Timor-Leste.

In its first 5 year phase, TOMAK is working in 66 suku located in 3 municipalities – Bobonaro, Baucau and Viqueque.