



## PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

PIFS(20)FEMM.Info.5

### FORUM ECONOMIC OFFICIALS MEETING

4 – 5 August 2020

### FORUM ECONOMIC MINISTERS MEETING

11 – 12 August 2020  
Virtual

## INFORMATION PAPER NO. 5: NCDs ROADMAP

### Purpose and Summary of Issue

#### Purpose

To provide an update on the progress towards the implementation of the Pacific Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Roadmap, and the recommendations to scale up NCD action.

#### Summary

Some progress has been made in the implementation of the Roadmap, however, there are several NCD related policy and legislation gaps that require urgent government commitment and national action.

### A. Overview

To intensify multi-sectoral responses to the Pacific Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) crisis, the inaugural Joint-Forum Economic and Health Ministers Meeting held in the Solomon Islands in 2014 endorsed the Pacific NCD Roadmap. The Ministers committed to five key areas including: 1) strengthen tobacco control by an incremental increase in excise duties to 70% of the retail price of cigarettes; 2) increase in taxation of alcohol products; 3) improve policies on food and drink products directly linked to NCD; 4) enhance primary and secondary prevention of NCD; and 5) strengthen the evidence base for programme effectiveness. The Roadmap includes a menu of over 30 other multi-sectoral interventions suited to the Pacific region.

2. To assist Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) to monitor progress on implementing the Roadmap, the Pacific Monitoring Alliance for NCD Action (MANA) was established, and a mutual accountability mechanism using the MANA Dashboard was developed. This paper summarises the progress towards the implementation of the Roadmap monitored through MANA Dashboard, and the challenges and recommendations to scale up NCD action in the Pacific.

## **B. Discussion**

3. **Progress:** Some progress has been made in the implementation of the Roadmap at regional and national level. The following summarises the progress on the five key recommended areas and other recommended actions in the Roadmap.

***Recommendation 1: Strengthen tobacco control by an incremental increase in excise duties to 70% of the retail price of cigarettes.***

4. In 2019-2020, two additional PICTs (Solomon Islands and Tokelau) have implemented tobacco taxation measures, resulting in 19 PICTs<sup>1</sup> that have maintained and/or implemented tobacco taxation measures. To-date, five PICTs (French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Palau, Tonga and Wallis & Futuna) have reached recommended tobacco taxation target.

***Recommendation 2: Increase in taxation of alcohol products.***

5. In 2019-2020, 20 PICTs have maintained implementation of alcohol taxation measures but, in most cases, taxation is based on beverage type rather than on ethanol content.

***Recommendation 3: Improve policies on food and drink products directly linked to NCD, especially salt and sugary drinks.***

6. One additional country (Tuvalu) adopted a taxation measure to discourage unhealthy food/beverage choices, bringing the total to 14 PICTs, to date. In 2019-2020, one additional country (Tonga) put in place a policy to reduce population salt consumption resulting in 16 PICTs addressing salt consumption measures; and, four additional countries (American Samoa, Cook Islands, Samoa and Tuvalu) have in place policy measures to limit trans-fat in the food supply (from none to now 4 PICTs in total); two additional countries (Cook Islands and Samoa) have put in place policies to restrict marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children resulting in 4 PICTs now in total, with two more PICTs (Nauru and Tonga) putting in place policies to encourage provision and promotion of healthy food choices in schools, which now brings the total to 13 PICTs.

***Recommendation 4: Enhance primary and secondary prevention of NCD including scaling up of PEN.***

7. To date, most PICTs have national guidelines in place for the diagnosis and management of at least one of the four main NCDs and have essential NCD medicines included in the national list of essential medicines. In 2019-2020, three additional PICTs (Samoa, Tuvalu and Wallis & Futuna) have legislation to provide maternity leave and breastfeeding facilities, resulting in a total of 11 out of 21 PICTs. NCD prevention and control awareness campaigns are ongoing in several PICTs.

---

<sup>1</sup> American Samoa, Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Niue, New Caledonia, Paula, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna

***Recommendations 5: Strengthen the evidence base for better investment planning and program effectiveness.***

8. The monitoring of adult and adolescent NCD risk factor prevalence data continues in 16 PICTs. Eighteen PICTs have functioning systems for generating cause-specific mortality data on routine basis. The most progress area has been in child growth monitoring where three additional PICTs (Tonga, Tuvalu and Wallis & Futuna) have now collected child growth data – thus bringing the total to 13 PICTs. Some PICTs have undertaken tax impact assessments on various products such as tobacco, alcohol, sugar-sweetened beverages and other discretionary foods, and fruits and vegetables. Many of these studies found that increasing taxes resulted in increased price of product at point-of-sale, increased government revenue, and decreased import quantities. Similarly, some studies estimated that decreased tax resulted in reduced prices of products and increased consumption.

***Other recommended actions***

***i. Leadership and governance***

9. In 2019-2020, five additional PICTs (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru and Tokelau) have established a multi-sectoral NCD taskforce to oversee the implementation of their national NCD plan, resulting in now a total of 10 of the 21 PICTs establishing such a mechanism. Three more PICTs (Nauru, Solomon Islands and Tokelau) have developed a national multi-sectoral NCD strategy, which brings the total to 16 PICTs now having a national multi-sectoral NCD strategy in place.

***ii. Preventive policy and legislation***

10. Overall, the level of tobacco and alcohol preventative policy/legislation implementation in PICTs have remained unchanged. Most have legislation to create smoke free public places (17 PICTs); health warnings on tobacco packaging (16); restrict advertising (17); and restrict sales and licensing (15). Most PICTs have licenses to restrict sales of alcohol (20) and regulate drink driving (18).

***iii. Other regional initiatives***

11. To address the growing burden of childhood obesity in the Pacific, the 2019 Pacific Health Ministers meeting committed to support ***Pacific Ending Childhood Obesity Priority (ECHO)*** priorities such as physical activity promotion, fiscal measures and restriction of marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, and countries are at different stages in the implementation of these priorities. Recognising the need to expand or strengthen NCD related laws in the Pacific, Pacific Health Ministers approved the development of the ***Pacific Legislative Framework for NCD*** - work is in progress with the intention for it to be considered and endorsed by Ministers in 2021. The proposed framework, once endorsed, will be regionally owned and intended to guide the strengthening of NCD related legislations in PICTs.

12. **Challenges:** Despite the progress made, substantial efforts are still required to further raise taxes on tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods and drinks in-line with global recommendations and reduce taxes on healthy alternatives such as fruits and vegetables. While strong policy and legislation are in place in some areas, there are several policy and legislation gaps that challenge addressing NCD. These include, for example, preventing tobacco industry interference, limiting trans-fats in the food supply, restricting marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, restricting marketing of breast milk substitutes, and enforcing policies and legislations. In addition, there is a need to strengthen leadership, governance and financing to address NCD; engage more non-health sectors to address NCD in a sustained ‘whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach’ at the national level; and, proactively planning for assessing taxation impacts on consumption and increasing the availability of needed data.

### C. Next Steps

13. The assessment to-date shows that some progress has been made in the implementation of the Pacific NCD Roadmap. However, there are several gaps that governments need to accelerate if national actions are to effectively address NCDs and if such actions are to effectively halt or reverse the crisis, in order to promote the wellbeing of all Pacific peoples and to fully embrace the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’.

14. In conclusion,

- i. progress has been made for the implementation of the Pacific NCD Roadmap, but there is a need for a whole-of-government approach to tackling NCD at national level.
- ii. further NCD related taxation, policy and legislation actions are needed to change risk behaviours and effectively address NCD. In particular, to support actions on controlling marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, restricting trans-fat in the food supply, prohibiting tobacco industry interference, and further raising taxes on unhealthy products in-line with global recommendations.
- iii. additional resources, particularly increased financial allocation, are required, as well as exploring options to establish sustainable funding mechanisms to tackle NCD at the national level.