What is the Forum Trade Ministers Meeting (FTMM)?

This is an annual gathering of the Trade Ministers of the Pacific Islands Forum. This year the meeting will be chaired by the Minister of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport, Fiji - Hon. Mr Faiyaz Koya.

In the year leading up to the Ministers meeting, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat works across the region with our Members, stakeholders and partners to implement previous decisions by Leaders and arrive at proposals for Leaders to consider and endorse.

Just prior to FTMM, Senior Trade Officials from all our 18 Member countries and territories meet to deliberate and finalise which issues will be put forward to the Ministers.

Why is FTMM important for the Pacific region?

This year the economic impact of COVID-19 is a key issue. The Forum Trade Ministers will consider proposals and ‘innovative initiatives’ to help regional economic recovery through trade initiatives.

As we face the challenge of building back better from the pandemic, working together as one Blue Pacific Continent is more important than ever. The outcomes of the FTMM are focused on improving the lives of Pacific people.

Who attends the Forum Trade Ministers meeting?

The meeting is attended by the Trade Ministers of the 18 countries and territories of the Pacific Islands Forum. The meeting is also observed by the development partners and stakeholders of the PIF. The CROP agencies are also in attendance which includes the USP, SPREP, PASO, SPC, SPTO, FFA, PPA.

What are the priority issues to be discussed at the FTMM?

- Regional and Global Trade Issues and COVID-19 pandemic implications on Pacific Trade
  The pandemic has destabilised regional trading systems. Tourism has faced a sharp decline and ensuring more equitable access to vaccines is critical. Ministers will consider regional initiatives to mitigate and support a resilient trade agenda.

- Development of a Regional Kava Strategy
  In 2020, Forum Trade Ministers decided to re-establish kava markets. A regional kava strategy could provide short, medium and long term regional actions and approaches. Major export markets include the beverage markets in the USA, New Zealand, New Caledonia, other Pacific Islands (such as Kiribati and Nauru), with opportunities in the EU, Australia, China and other Asian countries.

- Implementation of the Pacific Aid-for-Trade Strategy
  COVID-19 has driven changes in purchasing habits. Enhancing the ability of Pacific businesses to trade electronically has become even more important. Building Pacific e-commerce and Pacific quality infrastructure are two regional priorities under the Aid-for-Trade Strategy.

- Assessment of Current Regional Labour Mobility Arrangements
  Labour Mobility is an economic development programme which supports both sending and receiving states who benefit from the economic returns. Ministers will consider developing a broader and inclusive regional platform for decision making on labour mobility policy and implementation issues.

- Fisheries Subsidies Agreement
  The main focus of the FSA is subsidies to marine wild capture fisheries and excludes aquaculture and inland fishing. Three main disciplines are under negotiations, namely, prohibitions on subsidies to: a) Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU) fishing; b) Overfished stocks; and c) Overcapacity and Overfishing.