

## **1. BACKGROUND**

The Pacific Islands Forum Geneva Office ([PIF Geneva](#)) comprises two sections: Trade Negotiations and Aid-for-Trade (Aft). The Trade Negotiations section provides policy and technical advice on multilateral trade issues to Forum Island Countries (FICs) which are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and coordinates their participation in multilateral negotiations. The Aft Section promotes the establishment of regional initiatives in the priority areas of the [Pacific Aft Strategy](#) and assists FICs, individually and collectively, to make better use of Aft opportunities.

Some non-trade work commenced in 2019 and is limited to support advocacy on selected regional priorities such as climate change, oceans, and COVID-19.

In addition, PIF Geneva hosts Pacific Trade Invest (PTI) Europe. PTI Europe focuses on the development and promotion of Pacific Island exports across international markets in Europe and the United Kingdom.

## **2. REPRESENTATION**

Ambassador Mere Falemaka represented the Pacific as ACP Focal Point on Fisheries Subsidies and provided an update on Fisheries Subsidies at the ACP Coordination Meeting on 19 July. She also delivered a [presentation](#) on the Regional Perspective of Trade, Climate Change and Sustainability nexus at the Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD) held on 19-20 July. Ambassador Falemaka also participated as a panellist at two sessions during the WTO Aid for Trade Global review (AFTGR) in July 2022, which focussed on 1) [Tackling Plastics Pollution in Aid for Trade](#) and 2) [Creating synergies between Aid for Trade & Climate Finance for inclusive and sustainable development](#). Ambassador Falemaka also presented at the Hybrid MSG-PIFS Symposium on Trade and Gender held on 18 August in Vanuatu to set the scene on the trade and gender issues at the multilateral level. Dr Giacomelli presented Pacific perspectives on e-commerce at the 5 July Tuvalu E-commerce Committee [meeting](#), the 26 July Universal Postal Union (UPU) [event](#) of the #VOICEMAIL EXCHANGE series; the 27 July [ADB event](#) of the AFTGR 2022, and; the 26 August [Internet Governance Forum](#) for Small Islands Development States (SIDS).

Implementation of the Pacific Aid-for-Trade Strategy was highly visible at the [WTO AFTG22](#), thanks to the [event](#) jointly organised by the Secretariat and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

## **3. WTO NEGOTIATIONS**

Following the conclusion of the WTO Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12) in June, the Heads of Delegations met for an informal meeting 7 July to consider the Matrix prepared by the Secretariat outlining the mandated actions from MC12 outcomes that are to be implemented. The Matrix was noted by Members as an informal document that could assist with the post-MC12 implementation work. Members further discussed way forward for MC12 implementation work during the General Council meeting held on 25-26 July, and agreed that the work would kickstart in September, after the summer break.

On [Fisheries Subsidies](#), there were no meetings of the Negotiating Group on this issue during this period. At the General Council meeting held on 25-26 July 2022, the Director General (DG) and Chair of the Negotiating Group (Colombia) commended Members for their commitment at MC12 to achieve an outcome and encouraged them to take necessary steps towards the ratification of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement (FSA). For the Agreement to enter into force, ratification by two-thirds of the 164 Members is required. Noting the outstanding issues yet to be delivered, including Overcapacity and Overfishing (OCOF) and Special and Differential Treatment (SDT), Members recalled paragraph 4 of the Ministerial Decision which mandates a 'second wave' of negotiations which many Members including the Pacific Group believe should be achieved by MC13.

## UPDATE 4/2022 (JULY-AUGUST 2022)

On [Agriculture](#), the Committee on Agriculture – Special Session (COA-SS) only met once, on 21 July, in which they reflected on the positive outcomes adopted at MC12 including the Declaration on Food Insecurity and the Decision to exempt the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) Food Purchases from export prohibitions or restrictions. Members expressed the need to deliver outcomes on Agriculture negotiations at MC13. The Chair (Costa Rica) stressed that more work is required under each of the negotiation pillars of Agriculture and that a retreat-type format for discussions may bring about new and innovative ideas to resolve contentious issues being negotiated. Members also expressed that the current global context with multiple crises affecting all Members would need to be taken account of in future negotiations. As this was the last meeting of the Chair, Members would also have to consider and appoint a new COA-SS Chair.

On the TRIPS Waiver, the TRIPS Council met on 6 July to launch discussions on the way forward regarding the mandate to consider extending the Waiver to cover COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics. This extension of the waiver is to be decided within six months of the adoption of the Decision, therefore by 17 December. Some Members expressed their readiness to start discussions on the extension including on scope etc., while others informed that they would need more time to undertake domestic consultations with relevant stakeholders. Some Members indicated that the discussions should be evidence-based and that information should be collected on whether there is a constraint on the production and supply of diagnostics and therapeutics. Discussions on this decision are expected to continue in the TRIPS Council in September.

Technical Support. At the beginning of July, the Office welcomed Mr Jonah Taravaki from the Vanuatu Customs Office to undertake the six-month Regional Co-ordinator Internship at the PIFS Mission. This is a capacity building programme offered by the WTO for Pacific Trade Officials to deepen their understanding of the WTO work. During this period, PIF Geneva issued 9 circulars including on the MC12 Outcomes and reporting on key meetings (Trade Negotiations Committee / Heads of Delegations, General Council, and regular bodies); as well as email briefs on various issues and ACP positions. The Office also organised a meeting with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on 4 July 2022 and supported the Pacific Working Group on West Papua during this meeting. In addition, the Office organised a Pacific Ambassadors Meeting on 21 July to provide a brief on the MC12 Outcomes and discuss other issues of interest to the Pacific in Geneva that are covered at the World Health Organization (WHO), Human Rights Council (HRC), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, West Papua issue etc. PIF Geneva assisted by the Pacific Group consultancy team also provided a Briefing on the MC12 Outcomes to the Pacific Trade and Fisheries Officials on 3 August. PIF Geneva also prepared four Pacific Group statements for the WTO Heads of Delegations meeting on 7 July; the 63rd WIPO General Assembly on 14-22 July; the ACP Coordination Meeting on 19 July; and the WTO General Council on 25-26 July.

#### 4. AID-FOR-TRADE

##### 4.1 Projects

###### 4.1.1 Implemented

Visibility of the [Pacific E-commerce Initiative](#) was at its highest with the [launching](#) of the [Pacific E-commerce Portal](#) on the 24 August. The blended event hosted the unveiling of a series of new products including e-commerce [toolkits](#) for the private sector, a database of regional e-commerce [programs](#), an e-commerce [statistics database](#), and an online [training course](#) on e-commerce rules. The event was concluded by a [graduation ceremony](#) of the 74 officials who had successfully completed the training course.

Preparations commenced for the development of the Tuvalu E-commerce Strategy. The Secretariat also agreed to develop two e-commerce toolkits for Tuvalu after finalisation of its national Strategy.

UPDATE 4/2022 (JULY-AUGUST 2022)

Work on the [Pacific Trade Facilitation Initiative](#) also progressed, including finalisation of national consultations on the draft regional strategy. The consultations report and responses to the online surveys supporting the drafting of the strategy are available [here](#).

PIF Geneva continued to manage the consultancy team supporting the [Pacific Group](#) on World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations. There was fairly limited activity in the WTO in July-August, following the conclusion of the Twelfth Ministerial Conference in June. The project team reviewed developments in meetings on Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD), the JSI on Electronic Commerce and the Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture. A General Council meeting took place at the end of July which reviewed a report by the Chair of the Trade Negotiations Committee and followed up to the June Ministerial Decision on the TRIPS Agreement. The Legal Expert prepared an analysis for the PIFS on the newly concluded Fisheries Subsidies Agreement. Various calls took place with PIFS Geneva to discuss what might be needed in terms of assistance from September to December.

*4.1.2 Completed/Secured*

None

*4.1.3 Ongoing*

Consultations progressed with the Government of Australia for the funding of the Geneva Office post-2023, with the Government of Canada for support to the WTO Fisheries Subsidy Agreement (FSA) implantation, and with the Trade Advocacy Fund 2 (TAF2) manager for support to trade negotiations post MC12.

**4.2. Apply! Demand-driven Aid-for-Trade facilities accepting applications**

(1) [Standards Trade and Development Facility](#) (2) [Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation](#) (3) [Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility](#)

**5. PTI EUROPE**

Container freight rates increased dramatically in the year up to August 2022. Whilst of course this is a challenge affecting exporters worldwide, it is particularly relevant to consider that these favours importing from closer countries for comparable products. For Pacific products in Europe this is, for example, affecting Virgin Coconut oil where the price gap difference between Pacific and competitor product from Asia, has widened. Countries in Europe are also facing growing unease, as they prepare to enter winter in the Northern Hemisphere. Due to the war in Ukraine businesses are also feeling the heat from increasing operating costs with electricity prices having already climbed 10 per cent since the summer. As business operating costs increases combined with the cost-of-living crisis squeezing consumers and shrinking disposable incomes, discretionary spend is expected to be affected.

Notwithstanding this environment, PTI Europe continues to identify sales opportunities for Pacific Islands products. During July, PTI Europe attended [Speciality Fine Food](#) trade show in London on invitation from ITC to represent Fijian ginger and PNG coffee. The show was attended by food buyers from retail, hospitality, foodservice, manufacturing, import & export, and wholesale sectors. Some excellent leads were uncovered there for Fijian Ginger with one UK major cheese company [Snowdonia](#) currently carrying out a factory trial with the view to make a ginger cheese product. They are a sizeable company well represented in major grocery chains around Europe.

Two of our Fijian ginger ranges – Fid-ji Ginger and Redshoots - were submitted for a prestigious UK competition associated with the show called [Great Taste Awards](#) with both products taking out “stars” (awards). The products are selected based on blind testing (unable to be influenced by packaging). It was excellent recognition for the quality of Fijian ginger and turmeric and drew more buyers to the stand. The award is able to be used by the businesses for 3 years in their own marketing.

**UPDATE 4/2022 (JULY-AUGUST 2022)**

Whilst exhibiting at trade shows provide a great opportunity to prospect new leads, business development work for PTI Europe is nonetheless ongoing. In FICs we continue to raise awareness about opportunities for the export of sustainable products to Europe and provide matchmaking with market players. Despite July/ August not being the most active time in Europe for businesses, PTI Europe was able to assist Pacific Islands business in just over AUD 1 million in export sales over this period.