



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Activity Title:	Upgrade Biosecurity System for Cook Islands Biosecurity Service
Estimated Duration:	3 months
Estimated Budget:	60,000 AUD
Location:	Remote with travel to Cook Islands
Estimated Start Date:	October 2026
Reporting to:	Trade in Goods Adviser, PPIU

I. BACKGROUND

The Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus is a landmark regional trade, development, and economic cooperation agreement designed to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and raise living standards across the Pacific. The Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Component of PACER Plus protects member territories by applying specific safety controls. These controls fall into three primary categories:

- Sanitary Measures (Human & Animal Health):** Covers food safety standards, regulations on food additives, maximum allowable limits for pesticide residues, and veterinary drugs. It also covers biosecurity protocols designed to prevent the introduction of animal-borne diseases or pathogens.
- Phytosanitary Measures (Plant Health):** Covers quarantine and inspection procedures for agricultural trade, specifically aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of invasive plant pests, noxious weeds, or plant diseases.
- Risk Management & Verification:** Covers scientific import risk assessments, laboratory testing, product treatment protocols (such as fumigation or heat treatment), and processing certifications like HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) for food processors.

The third output of the Development Economic Cooperation (DEC) Work Programme on SPS focuses on Guidance, tools, and data are improved to support and monitor the implementation of PACER Plus obligations. It covers the systems, operational tools, shared equipment, guidance, and data required to support implementation and monitoring of PACER Plus obligations. This includes government systems and resources to improve trade processes and market access, as well as targeted support to the private sector where there are broader system or industry-wide benefits.

This project seeks to enhance the Cook Islands' biosecurity database by upgrading the outdated system to handle growing data volumes, enable real-time reporting, and integrate with national, regional, and international biosecurity systems. Key outputs include an upgraded database, hardware procurement, staff capacity building, and improved compliance with international SPS standards. The project directly supports PACER Plus SPS obligations and aligns with MELA Framework.

Given the increasing number of new businesses participating in international trade and the growing importance of regional trade agreements, there is an urgent need to upgrade Biosecurity systems to ensure that data are effectively utilised and compliance SPS obligations are met.



PACER Plus

IMPLEMENTATION UNIT

This project directly responds to these challenges and aligns with Cook Islands' commitment to implementing PACER Plus SPS obligations while supporting national economic development priorities.

This activity aligns with the SPS Chapter — Article 7 (Transparency), Article 9 (Technical Assistance and Cooperation) and Article 10 (Enquiry Points and Competent Authorities). Aligned to SPS Implementation Tracker obligations on information systems and technical capacity for SPS administration.

The Cook Islands Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) Biosecurity Division will contribute in-kind support, including staff time, office space, and coordination resources for project implementation.

The Cook Islands faces increasing threats from invasive species, pests, and diseases that endanger their agriculture and biodiversity. The Biosecurity Division's existing database, developed in 2015, is no longer fit for purpose in the context of changing trade and biosecurity requirements across the full continuum from pre-border to post-border.

Key gaps identified include:

- (i) inability to handle growing volumes of biosecurity data;
- (ii) lack of real-time reporting functionality;
- (iii) absence of integration with national, regional, and international biosecurity systems;
- (iv) non-compliance with current international biosecurity standards.

These gaps directly hinder SPS obligations under PACER Plus, particularly obligations around information systems, transparency, and technical cooperation. Accordingly, a consultant is required to upgrade Cook Islands' Biosecurity system.

II. OBJECTIVE & SCOPE

This project aims to enhance the Cook Islands biosecurity database to improve SPS data management, compliance, and capacity. Specifically, the project will:

- **Objective 1:** Determine the Scope, Review and Upgrade the existing biosecurity database to improve data management, analysis, and reporting capabilities aligned with international standards.
- **Objective 2:** Integrate the enhanced database with other national and regional systems for seamless data exchange and collaboration.
- **Objective 3:** Provide training and capacity building for biosecurity staff to effectively use and maintain the upgraded database.
- **Objective 4:** Ensure the database meets international biosecurity standards and supports compliance with relevant agreements.
- **Objective 5:** Procure and deploy necessary hardware to support the enhanced database and ensure its optimal performance.



These objectives align directly with PACER Plus MELA Framework short-term outcomes STO2—STO4 under the Trade in Goods (SPS) component. Under the implementation tracker- there is need for improvement in output 3.3 guidance, tools and data improved.

III. DELIVERABLES

The Consultant will deliver the following outputs:

1. **Inception Report and Workplan:** Outlining the methodology, work plan, consultation schedule and implementation timeline.
2. **Upgrade Biosecurity System** (Hardware procurement and install database development)
3. **Training** Biosecurity staff on the system.
4. **Final Report**

All outputs shall be provided in relevant Microsoft Office formats or in the format agreed with the PPIU.

IV. TIME AND PAYMENT SCHEDULES

The Activity shall be expected to be completed within three months (3) according to the indicated timeframes below. Exact commencement and completion dates may be adjusted in consultation with the PPIU and the Cook Island Ministry of Agriculture Biosecurity Divisions.

Nr.	Deliverables	Indicative Time Frame (delivered by)	Payment Schedule
1.	Inception Report and Workplan	End of October 2026	20%
2.	Upgrade Biosecurity System	End of November 2026	40%
3.	Training	Early December 2026	30%
3.	Final Reporting	End of January 2027	10%

Note: Travel expenses for the Consultant(s) are included in the Consultancy Fees. Costs for stakeholder consultations must have prior approval from the PPIU and must follow the PPIU Procurement Policy.

V. REPORTING:

- The Activity will be supervised by the Trade in Goods Adviser and will hold responsibility for guiding progress and technical advice on delivering the activity.
- The Consultant is required to report to the Trade in Goods Adviser who will ensure that the deliverables are submitted according to the indicated timeframes and quality standards.
- Regular discussions with the PPIU and MoA Biosecurity will also be carried out during the consultancy period to monitor progress and constraints, support required and proposed solutions.



VI. QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED OF CONSULTANT(S)

Preference will be given to Pacific-based consultants who possess the following qualifications, skills and experience, and personal specifications:

1. Qualifications:

- a. A bachelor's degree in computer science, Information Technology, Software Engineering, or a related field.

2. Skills & Experience:

- a. Minimum 6 years of experience in system analysis, design, development, and implementation of information systems.
- b. Proven experience in designing and implementing systems for domains such as government agencies, public health, or border control.
- c. Experience with database design, software development methodologies, and system integration.
- d. Familiarity with authentication and security measures for system protection.
- e. Experience in developing and delivering technical training programs.
- f. Desirable: Experience with quarantine systems or similar regulatory/compliance systems.

3. Personal attributes:

- a. Demonstrating experience in delivering comparable activities in the Pacific context.
- b. Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills.
- c. Strong technical writing and communication skills.
- d. Ability to work independently and in a team.
- e. Proficiency in relevant software and development tools.
- f. Proficient in English languages.
- g. Excellent command of English (oral and written)
- h. Ability to work independently and as part of a team under tight deadlines.