

NCBA Clusa launches \$15m food security project with Timor Leste

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US co-op apex (NCBA Clusa) has announced a US\$15m initiative to strengthen Timor Leste's food system.

The Advance Food System and Nutrition (Avansa SAN) project, funded by USAID, will work with 27 farmers' groups across 14 villages in the municipalities of Aileu, Ainaro, Dili and Ermera, to provide assistance to smallholder farmers and women, in particular pregnant women with children under five, to ensure greater access to nutritious food.

To do this, Avansa SAN will promote climate-smart agricultural practices, crop diversification, support for small and medium-sized agri-food enterprises, community-based campaigns on dietary diversity, and advocacy for healthy habits to improve overall nutritional wellbeing.

The project was launched at Timor Plaza in March, at an event attended by NCBA Clusa, Timor Leste president JosĂ© Ramos-Horta, minister of agriculture Marcos da Cruz and the United States chargé d'affaires Marc Weinstock.

Weinstock said at the event: "The Avansa SAN activity is especially timely as it builds on previous US government investments in the agriculture sector and takes it several steps further to underscore the urgency of combating malnutrition especially among women and children under five."

President Ramos-Horta also welcomed the project, stating that agriculture, food security and nutrition is his "number one concern", and that he was confident in partnering on another USAID project because "they always work together, especially on agricultural issues".