

Newsletter

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>MTCP II Project reaches its half-way mark (2014-2018)</i>	2
<i>PIFON supports Strategic Planning for Virgin Coconut Oil Producers Association (VCOA) in the Solomon Islands</i>	2
<i>Building stronger partnerships between SPC, IFAD and Pacific farmer organisations</i>	3
<i>Milestones for PIFON engagement with IFAD and SPC</i>	3
<i>Nature's Way Cooperative secures \$450,000 for innovative disaster rehabilitation activities</i>	4
<i>Taveuni farmers benefit from Floriculture Training</i>	5
<i>Tongan Farmers walk the value chain of Fiji's Fresh Fruit Export Industry</i>	5

The Vanuatu Spices Network: Lessons from 20 years experience

A new publication available on the PIFON website highlights a number of key lessons that come from the twenty years of experience with the Vanuatu Spices Network. This publication was prepared for PIFON member Farm Support Association (FSA) under the MTCP II Programme.



This publication is a useful resource for other Pacific Islands involved in spice production and marketing as it highlights key success factors for an export spice industry as well as an interesting model linking small holder farmers in remote locations to agribusiness. The publication also explores the role of organic certification in the development of the Vanuatu Spices Network and how this has evolved over a period of twenty years.

PIFON would like to thank the Farm Support Association, Venui Vanilla and the other partners in the spices network for sharing their experience with other farmer organisations across the region and around the world. PIFON would also like to thank the lead author, Dr. Andrew McGregor for helping FSA to tell their story.

The publication is now available and can be downloaded at <http://www.pacificfarmers.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Spice-Handbook-5.pdf>

PIFON Member, Nature's Way Cooperative becomes a focus for Industrial Innovation in the Pacific Islands

A case study on Nature's Way Cooperative focusing on its innovative proficiency is part of the PACE-Net Plus (<https://pacenet.eu/>) project funded by the European Commission. It was written to further bi-regional science, technology and innovation (ST&I) cooperation between the South Pacific island nations and the European Union.

The case study will be presented at the PACE-NET Plus bi-regional platform which will be held in Nadi, Fiji on the 30th June and 1st July 2016 entitled: Moving towards a high-level policy dialogue in Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I); Pathways to innovation in Pacific region.

The publication can be downloaded at <http://www.pacificfarmers.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Case-Studies-on-Industrial-Innovation-in-the-Pacific-Islands.pdf>

MTCP II Project reaches its half-way mark (2014-2018)

Six Pacific Island Countries are working in collaboration with the IFAD/SDC funded Medium Term Cooperation Program Phase II (MTCP II). This MTCP II project is being coordinated in the Pacific by PIFON who serves as the Sub Regional Implementing Agency (SRIA). The MTCP II project has now reached its halfway mark and has undergone a Mid Term Review (MTR) on 21 – 31 May, 2016. The review was conducted by IFAD's Farmer Organisation Specialist, Ms Fanny Grandval to assess the performance of the project within the Pacific region since its commencement in 2014. The review took into account the project's accomplishments and shortcomings and most importantly, the opportunities for the second half of the project.

Ms Grandval was accompanied by PIFON Program Manager, Mrs Lavinia Kaumaitotoya who travelled to the Solomon Islands and then later to Taveuni, Fiji to evaluate two of PIFON's National Implementing Agencies (NIAs), namely, Kastom Gaden Association and Tei Tei Taveuni respectively.

The findings from this MTR were presented to the 2nd Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting for MTCP II which was held on June 6-8, 2016 at Vientiane province, Lao PDR. This meeting was attended by three Pacific representatives, including two from PIFON and from Samoa.

Major accomplishments, lessons learnt and recommendations based on the Mid-Term Review mission were items on the meeting agenda. Other needs as identified by each SRIA were also a part of the discussions.



PIFON supports Strategic Planning for Virgin Coconut Oil Producers Association (VCOPA) in the Solomon Islands

The Virgin Coconut Oil Producers Association (VCOPA) is working in partnership with PIFON to undertake a strategic planning exercise to formulate its 5 year Strategic plan. VCOPA had joined PIFON in 2015 and was endorsed by Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) as an observer.

VCOPA is working to align its Strategic Plan to the Solomon Islands Government agriculture development plans to ensure steady growth of the industry in the years to come.

VCOPA and its sister company Kokonut Pacifik have a membership of 1133 farmers from 8 provinces in the Solomon Islands covering over 300 islands, of which 220 are women. It brings in nuts from the main island of Guadalcanal and other islands into its site to produce virgin coconut oil (VCO). They are organically certified having received Organic Certification from the Australian body of Organics Certification. KP is currently working with POETCOM on its PGS system to organically certify its Direct Micro Expelling Technology (DME) operations.

Building stronger partnerships between SPC, IFAD and Pacific farmer organisations



PIFON Board and key partners from SPC and IFAD stand outside PIFON's new office in Legalega, Nadi.

A joint meeting between the PIFON board and key development partners, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) was held at the PIFON office in Nadi on June 02, 2016. PIFON Manager, Kyle Stice, made a presentation on activities completed thus far in partnership with SPC and IFAD including joint activities. The 2016 work plans for both PIFON run programmes, PAPP and MTCP II were highlighted and discussed.

Preliminary findings from the strategic review carried out on PIFON were also a part of the limelight of the stakeholder meeting including an update on the IFAD MTCP II Mid-Term Review.

In general, PIFON is working to get more farmer organisations directly involved in agricultural development projects in the region. In order to achieve this, PIFON is working to highlight the good work that farmer organisations are already doing in relation to research and extension in the region. PIFON has recently released two policy briefs on this subject which are available on the web at <http://www.pacificfarmers.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Agricultural-Research-and-Farmer-Organisations-in-the-Pacific-1.pdf>

Milestones for PIFON engagement with IFAD and SPC

- *15th April 2013—IFAD supports PIFON inception meeting*
- *14th October 2013—PIFON signs agreement to implement IFAD-SDC funded MTCP II*
- *24th October 2014—PIFON signs partnership agreement with EU funded SPC-PAPP*
- *26th-27th November 2014—PIFON hosts IFAD Pacific Regional Workshop on “Indigenous food systems and sustainable livelihoods”*
- *21-23rd October 2015—PIFON hosts IFAD Pacific Programme Review*

Nature's Way Cooperative secures \$450,000 for innovative disaster rehabilitation activities

Nature's Way Cooperative (NWC) has dealt with numerous natural disasters over its 20 year lifespan and in the process many important lessons have been learned about helping farmers and exporters to rehabilitate and return to business. NWC is now putting these lessons into action through an ambitious and innovative rehabilitation program following TC Winston and the April 2016 floods which brought Fiji's export industry to almost a stand still.

In a milestone partnership agreement, NZ Aid has provided FJD 450,000 to NWC members in support of two key activities:

- Export stimulus scheme
- Export seedling and agro-input incentive scheme

These activities are considered innovative for a number of reasons including the fact it provides direct assistance to exporters to help them continue their business despite the increased costs after a natural disaster. The rehabilitation activities are also working to leverage and strengthen the relationship between farmers and exporters involved in the industry. Previously NWC or Government would assist farmers directly after a natural disaster and the exporter would take a back seat until production resumed, however NWC is promoting a model where the exporter plays a much more active role in assisting its farmer suppliers to rehabilitate after the natural disaster. It is hoped that through this approach not only will farmers and exporters be able to resume business quickly but they will also have a stronger business foundation having worked through this rehabilitation process together.



Nature's Way Cooperative CEO Michael Brown welcomes NZ Minister of Trade, Todd McClay and and First Secretary Development—Fiji, Brandon Sherry.



NZ Minister of Trade, Todd McClay and First Secretary Development—Fiji, Brandon Sherry discusses Nature's Way's Research and Extension programme which is leading the rehabilitation activities following TC Winston.



Nature's Way Cooperative Research and Extension Officer surveys affected nursery operators in Ba. Nursery operators are critical to the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector and many lessons are now available about how these nurseries can mitigate against natural disasters such as cyclones.

Taveuni farmers benefit from Floriculture Training

Fiji farmer organisations Tei Tei Taveuni and Tutu Rural Training Centre hosted a series of floriculture training sessions for their members in May 2016 with support from PIFON's MTCP II programme. The trainings were conducted by Donald and Aileen Burness of the South Sea Orchids Floriculture Group and utilised the CTA funded *Fiji Floriculture Handbook*.

Topics covered at the training workshop included the three levels of floriculture: backyard floriculture, semi-commercial floriculture (both open and shade-house) and landscape gardening. The general care of orchids and the planting, growing practices and harvesting of dendrobium cut flower orchids were also part of the curriculum and to top it off a session on how to successfully run a floriculture business was also included.

Floriculture is seen as an important diversification activity for interested farmers who can link up with both the tourist and non-tourist domestic markets.

Tongan Farmers walk the value chain of Fiji's Fresh Fruit Export Industry

The Growers Federation of Tonga in partnership with PIFON facilitated a farmer technical exchange on breadfruit and papaya to Fiji from the 17th to the 21st of May, 2016. The seven member group consisted of farmers and two exporters who are all currently engaged in commercial production of papaya and breadfruit and geared towards exports to New Zealand.

The objective of the technical exchange was to expose the growers from Tonga to Fiji's current best practices with regards to the papaya and breadfruit export industry. The CTA funded and SPC-PAPP printed *Pacific Value Chain Guide* was the tool used to articulate all the actors in the chain and all costs involved from the suppliers to the point of export and beyond.

The program included visits to all of the 'actors' in the value chain including: commercial nurseries, commercial farms, exporter pack-houses and Fiji High Temperature Forced Air treatment chamber and packing facility.

It is envisioned following this technical exchange, the participants would be in a better position to fully exploit the papaya and breadfruit industries in Tonga.



Anil Kumar of Mahen's Export explains the use of the harvesting pole for papaya during a visit to the companies farm and export packhouse. Mahen's Exports is a member of the Nature's Way Cooperative.