

PIFON

PACIFIC ISLAND FARMER'S ORGANISATION NETWORK



SPC-PIFON PARTNERSHIP SEMESTER REPORT #1 FOR 2015

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SPC
Secretariat
of the Pacific
Community

PAPP
Pacific Agriculture Policy Project

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PIFON in collaboration with the European Union (EU) funded, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) implemented, Pacific Agriculture Policy Programme (PAPP) established a two year partnership arrangement on October 24, 2014 aimed at strengthening the livelihoods of smallholder farmers through stronger market linkages, stronger information sharing and a supportive policy environment.

SPC LRD has technical expertise encompassing soil health, sustainable crop production, genetic research and value chain support for crops and livestock whilst PIFON offers a mechanism for reaching farmers at scale and providing an efficient medium for information sharing, learning, promoting sustainable agricultural practices and tools and strengthening policy advocacy and development. This partnership builds on these strengths that each partner provides to promote mutual benefits for farmers.

PIFON's Strategic Plan (2014 – 2016) converses with SPC-LRD's Strategic Plan (2013 – 2017) in a number of key areas and it was on this basis that both partners have agreed to collaborate on areas of mutual interest, achieve clear results that promote market livelihoods, information exchange and supportive policies for smallholder farmers.

Initial funding to support the Partnership work plan of activities over two years to the end of 2016 has been provided by SPC-LRD through the PAPP which is an intra-ACP partnership with the European Union.

Since the beginning of the partnership in October 2014, there have been a number of significant achievements directly supporting national farmers and farmer organisations around the region including:

- Implementation of farmer-orientated value chain trainings in three countries covering three distinct crops – Vanuatu (spices), Fiji (taro), Tonga (vanilla);
- A review of the Napil Rural Training center on the island of Tanna, Vanuatu;
- The preparation of a proposal to Zero-Rate VAT from agricultural inputs bought and sold by Tei Tei Taveuni (TTT) for Taro farming demonstrates how farmer organisations can be technically assisted to make a strong argument for policy changes that support small farmers;
- The organisation of a Regional Farmer Organisation Training on Technologies - Supporting Off-Season Vegetable Production that brought together key technical experts from various fields to deliver cutting edge training for farmers and farmer organisation officers;
- The production of a high quality publication and video that supports the messages and key training highlights for farmers and farmer organisations in support of off-season vegetable production;
- Support to PIFON's newest member PNG Women in Agriculture Development Foundation (WiADF) in the areas of strategic planning and governance, and;
- Providing representation at Fiji's National Seed Policy Consultation workshop on the role farmer organisations can play in improving access to high quality seed.
- Sharing expertise and experiences through PIFON representation to the following regional events:
 - 11th FAO Southwest Pacific Ministers of Agriculture meeting in PNG on theme: 'Climate-Smart Agriculture' to highlight the work of farmer organisations in the area of climate change adaptation.

- Pacific Community Agro tourism Week 2015 to highlight the work of farmer organisations in linking smallholder farmers to markets.

In addition to the activities directly supporting national farmers and farmer organisations, the partnership has enabled joint work with SPC through facilitating a number of important capacity building activities for PIFON as a regional organisation including:

- Funding for the recruitment of a dedicated finance and procurement manager
- Development of PIFON' finance and procurement policy
- Funding contribution to PIFON manager
- Development of staff through support for key trainings of PIFON staff (Finance, reporting, monitoring and evaluation)

This two year partnership is an innovative one being the first for PIFON and any development partner and for which we are grateful to the EU-PAPP for the initiative. It has also helped strengthen the core services that PIFON provides and provides leverage with other funding partners like IFAD.

With many successes already achieved under the partnership agreement there is a now a great opportunity for expanding activities. Two specific regional proposals have been submitted to SPC-PAPP by PIFON related to seeds and breadfruit. It is hoped that these proposals could be incorporated into the partnership agreement with a planned start up of activities in January 2016.

2. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES OVER REPORTING PERIOD

Table 1 below describes the activities conducted under each partnership component and then reports on the status and outputs.

Table 1: Summary of activities over reporting period

Project Component	Activity areas	Specific Activities	Status & outputs
Advocacy & Information Outreach	1.1. Preparation of policy briefs for farmer organisations	The preparation of a proposal to Zero-Rate VAT from agricultural inputs bought and sold by Tei Tei Taveuni (TTT) for Taro farming	Proposal complete and ready for submission to Ministry of Finance following final consultations with TTT and MoA
	1.4. Support to farmer organisations in the write up of key lessons learnt	A review of Napil Rural Training center of the island of Tanna in Vanuatu.	Review report complete Complete
		The production of a high quality publication and video that supports the messages and key training highlights for farmers and farmer organisations in support of off-season vegetable production	Publication and video have been highlighted at two major regional events

Project Component	Activity areas	Specific Activities	Status & outputs
	1.5. Provide representation for PIFON and its members and key regional forums to raise the profile of farmer organisations in the region.	PIFON representation to 11th FAO Southwest Pacific Ministers of Agriculture meeting in PNG on theme: 'Climate-Smart Agriculture' to highlight the work of farmer organisations in the area of climate change adaptation.	Complete - Key policy messages related to farmer organisations and climate change were made at this important forum.
		PIFON representation to the Pacific Community Agro tourism Week 2015 to highlight the work of farmer organisations in linking smallholder farmers to markets.	Complete - Key messages related to the role of farmer organisations linking smallholder farmers to markets was made.
		Providing representation at Fiji's National Seed Policy Consultation workshop on the role farmer organisations can play in improving access to high quality seed.	Complete. PIFON represented Fiji farmer organisations and provided regional context for the role of farmer organisations in relation to seed
Promote sustainable extension practices	2.1. Support for regional farmer to farmer exchanges (agro-forestry systems, organic/biological production, soil conservation, soil improvement)	Regional Farmer Organisation Training on Technologies - Supporting Off-Season Vegetable Production	Complete - 42 participants including youth (10 women and 32 men). Report submitted
		Tonga Vanilla Technical Exchange with Venuei Vanilla from Vanuatu to support Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation Tonga Trust (MORDI)	In progress – due to be complete on 17th July Outputs pending
Capacity Building	3.1. Support for regional technical exchanges on farmer organisation management, governance and administration	Collaboration with new PIFON member – PNG Women in Agriculture Development Foundation (WiADF) to collate information about the organisation and provide recommendations related to strategic planning and governance.	Complete - Report pending
		3.4. Implementation of farmer oriented value chain training	Taveuni VC training for Tutu Rural Training Centre (TRTC) and Tei Tei Taveuni (TTT)
		Vanuatu VC Training for the Vanuatu Spices Network	Complete - Report submitted
		Tonga Vanilla value chain training in collaboration with MORDI	In progress – due to be complete on 17th July Outputs pending
	3.5. Capacity building for PIFON Organisational Management and Information dissemination.	Funding contribution to PIFON manager	Ongoing- PIFON management is significantly strengthened resulting in more activities at the national and regional levels

Project Component	Activity areas	Specific Activities	Status & outputs
		Support for key trainings of PIFON staff (Finance, reporting, monitoring and evaluation)	Complete - PIFON staff skills have been upgraded and aligned to SPC/EU expectations
	3.6. Capacity building in the areas of Finance and Procurement for PIFON and its members.	Funding for the addition of a dedicated finance and procurement manager	Ongoing - PIFON is now capable of handling more resources to support more activities
		Support to the updating of PIFON finance and procurement policy	New policy strengthens PIFON and reflects expectations from SPC/EU under the partnership agreement.

3. NARRATIVE OF ACTIVITIES OVER REPORTING PERIOD

Component 1: Advocacy and Information Outreach

i. Preparation of policy briefs for farmer organisations

FIJI

PIFON supported the preparation of a proposal to Zero-Rate VAT from agricultural inputs bought and sold by Tei Tei Taveuni (TTT) for Taro farming. This proposal and the anticipated outcome demonstrates how farmer organisations can be technically assisted to make a strong argument for policy changes that support small farmers.

The proposal is now complete and ready for submission to Ministry of Finance following final consultations with TTT and MoA



TTT members at the launch of the farmers' resource center on Taveuni where TTT is making available sustainable fertilizers for taro farmers.

ii. Support to farmer organisations in the write up of key lessons learnt

VANUATU

With funding from the EU Funded SPC-PAPP project, PIFON facilitated an exchange between the member organisations - Tutu Rural Training Centre (TRTC) and Vanuatu's Farm Support Association (FSA). In 2011 the FSA Manager, Peter Kaoh, spent time at the TRTC where he identified the Tutu training "model" as applicable to Vanuatu's rural youth seeking remunerative self-employment utilising their own land resources. FSA, in collaboration with the community, have now established a pilot youth training program based on the Tutu "model" at the Napil Rural Training Center (NRTC) on Tanna. The motto of "The Vanuatu Young Farmers Development Course" is "Turning Farm into Business". The NRTC now has 20 young men and women selling crops grown on their own customary land. Under this initiative land was formally allocated to each young farmer, prior to their participation in the course, by signed agreement from their parents and the village chief. All the young farmers have opened saving accounts where the earnings from their farms are deposited and each participant has developed a 5-year plan. For Vanuatu, such land access arrangements represent a path breaking development for the involvement of

youth in agriculture, particularly young women.

After two years of operation the FSA requested that PIFON support a review of the NRTC by a team familiar with the operations and principles of Tutu. A team comprising Father Petero Matairatu from Tutu and Andrew McGregor, the lead author of the FAO sponsored report “The Tutu Rural Training Centre: Lessons in Non-Formal Adult Education for Self Employment in Agriculture”, visited Tanna in November 2014. The team assessed how the “Tutu” Model has been applied in terms of providing self-employment in agriculture and the lessons learnt from this experience. They made recommendations on the successful start-up of the Napil pilot could be consolidated and made sustainable in the long term. SPC/PAPP staff also secured footage that



Fr Petero of Tutu Rural Training Center (Taveuni, Fiji) during a visit to Napil Rural Training center (Tanna, Vanuatu).



The “fruits” of the Napil Rural Training Center at the Lenakel Market.

will be utilised in produce videos on NRTC and appropriate rural training in the Pacific.

REGIONAL

PIFON contracted a local media company to participate and cover the Regional Farmer Organisation Training on Technologies Supporting Off-Season Vegetable Production. The media company produced a high quality printed publication and video that supports the messages and key training highlights for farmers and farmer organisations in support of off-season vegetable production. This publication and video have already been highlighted at two major regional events, providing significant awareness and visibility for the partnership. The video can be viewed on the web at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aRFyqg2aiA&feature=youtu.be>

iii. Provide representation for PIFON and its members and key regional forums to raise the profile of farmer organisations in the region

REGIONAL

Through support provided under the partnership agreement, PIFON was represented at the 11th FAO Southwest Pacific Ministers of Agriculture meeting in PNG on the theme: ‘Climate-Smart Agriculture’. PIFON was represented by its Chairman, Afamasaga Toleafoa. Through participation in the plenary and group discussions Mr. Toleafoa was able to highlight, at this policy level, the work of farmer organisations in the area of climate change adaptation.

PIFON was also represented at the Pacific Community Agro tourism Week 2015 to highlight the work of farmer organisations in linking smallholder farmers to markets.

PIFON provided representation at Fiji's National Seed Policy Consultation workshop on the role farmer organisations can play in improving access to high quality seed. PIFON represented Fiji farmer organisations and provided regional context for the role of farmer organisations in relation to seed.



PIFON is highlighted in PNG local media after presentations from PIFON Chairman and national implementing agency WiADF.



PIFON communications manager presents on the role of farmer organisations in improving access to seed at the Fiji National Seed Policy Formulation Workshop.

Component 2: Promote sustainable extension practices

i. Support for regional farmer to farmer exchanges (agro-forestry systems, organic/biological production, soil conservation, soil improvement)

REGIONAL

A regional farmer organisation training on technologies supporting off-season vegetable production and integrated crop management (ICM) was conducted and organized by the PAPP team in collaboration with PIFON over the period 01st – 05th June, 2015. This was attended by over 45 participants from within PIFONs regional network (Fiji, Solomon Is, Samoa, Tonga, PNG and Vanuatu) and facilitators comprising of staff and professionals from other collaborators from the PARDI project, the Sigatoka Research Station of Fiji's Ministry of Agriculture, the SPC Plant Health team and PCDF.



Farmer and farmer organisation representatives participate in a regional farmer organisation training on technologies supporting off-season vegetable production.

The overall objective of this workshop was to enhance the ability of farmers around the Pacific region to profitably engage in vegetable production for food security and to take advantage of market opportunities (including off-season).

TONGA

A Tonga Vanilla Technical Exchange with Venui Vanilla from Vanuatu to support Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation Tonga Trust (MORDI) is currently underway.

Component 3: Capacity Building

i. Support for regional technical exchanges on farmer organisation management, governance and administration

PIFON's newest member – PNG Women in Agriculture Development Foundation (WiADF) was technically assisted in the areas of strategic planning and governance. The support mission was carried out by PIFON Chairman immediately following the Southwest Pacific Ministers of Agriculture meeting. The mission also aimed to collate information about the organisation (structure, membership, governance, activities, future planning etc) and provide recommendations for areas of PIFON support.



ii. Implementation of farmer oriented value chain training

TONGA

A value chain training on vanilla is currently underway in Tonga in collaboration with the Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation Tonga Trust (MORDI). This activity is in conjunction with the vanilla technical exchange activity 2.1.

FIJI

Two value chain trainings were carried out in November on the island of Taveuni in Fiji focused on the Taro Value Chain. The trainings were implemented in partnership with PIFON members Tutu Rural Training Centre (TRTC) and Tei Tei Taveuni (TTT) using the 'Agricultural Value Chain Guide for the Pacific Islands'. Participants of the value chain trainings consisted of Taro stakeholders of TTT and the staff and participants of the Young Farmers Course of TRTC.

TTT has plans to complete a value chain analysis for the Taveuni Taro Chain which will help illuminate the roles of the various actors in the chain along with their respective margins. It is envisioned that this type of analysis will help improve the relationships of all the actors in the chain.

TRTC aims to translate and incorporate some of the value chain training materials into the regular curriculum of the Young Farmers Course.



Young farmers from TRTC engage in discussion on papaya value chain analysis



Taveuni Taro stakeholders present results of their group exercise looking at each 'actors' role in the Taro Value chain

VANUATU

PIFON with funding from the EU funded SPC-PAPP project assisted FSA and their Spices Network to pilot the utilisation of the “Agricultural Value Chain Guide for the Pacific Islands”. This Guide was published by the EU-ACP Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development CTA and printed by PAPP. The training involved FSA/Spices Network running a participatory on-farm value chain exercise on the island of Malo with organic pepper farmers and the processor/exporter.

The training focused on the quality requirements and costs of supply of this remunerative, but highly demanding, value added market. This training was exceptionally well received by the participating farmers, an immediate response being realised in terms of the quantity and quality of the pepper being supplied. FSA and Spices Network are now planning to conduct similar value chain trainings for vanilla farmers on Tanna early in the New Year.



Explaining the raw material quality requirements of the processor/exporter



Venui Vanilla's value added spice products from Vanuatu ready for export

iii. Capacity building for PIFON Organisational Management and Information dissemination.

Under the partnership agreement, SPC PAPP provides a funding contribution to the PIFON manager in relation to the delivery of the set activities. Through this support the PIFON management has been significantly strengthened resulting in more activities at the national and regional levels

There have been a number of key trainings for PIFON staff provided through the partnership agreement, specifically in the areas of: finance, reporting, monitoring and evaluation. Through this training PIFON staff skills have been upgraded and aligned to SPC/EU expectations.

iv. Capacity building in the areas of Finance and Procurement for PIFON and its members.

Under the partnership agreement, SPC PAPP provides a funding contribution for the addition of a dedicated finance and procurement manager. Through this support PIFON is now capable of handling more resources to support more activities. With the inclusion of PIFONs Finance and Procurements Manager, the roles and responsibilities of the existing staff had to be reshuffled. The Office and Communications Manager role previously included all the duties that the new Finance and Procurements Manager is now carrying out which is as follows:

Finance and Procurement Manager provides direct support to PIFON to ensure that all procurement and financial reporting requirements are carefully adhered to and in line with contractual arrangements. The PIFON Finance and Procurement Manager will also provide training and backstopping for PIFON national farmer organisations in the area of financial management and procurement. Responsible for preparing all payment request forms, payment vouchers, payroll, bank reconciliation etc.

The responsibility of the Office and Communications Manager has now been shifted toward a more administrative and communications role such as is follows:

Responsible for membership database and membership profiles, data entry to website, receiving and responding to member queries and preparing a quarterly newsletter. Support in travel, workshop logistics, report writing etc. Support in reviewing payment request forms, contracts etc. Signatory on cheque accounts.

Support to the updating of PIFON finance and procurement policy. In February 2015, PIFON board endorsed the updating of PIFONs Finance and Procurement Policy document outlining the internal control guidelines and procurement procedures that adhered to the general guidelines of most donors. This was possible with the assistance and guidance of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's (SPC's) former Finance Manager, Mrs Sushil Narayan who took on the short term consultancy contract of reviewing the finance and procurement policies and procedures that were already in place. The revised policy strengthens PIFON and reflects more clearly the processes need to satisfy the expectations from SPC/EU under the partnership agreement.

4. SYNERGIES BETWEEN PIFON, PAPP, MTCP II & OTHER PROGRAMMES

PIFON and SPC-LRD Strategic Plans converge in certain key areas and for which the partners have decided to collaborate on and building on each of their strengths in their bid to promote mutual benefits for farmers. The partnership aims to promote market livelihoods, information exchange and supportive policies for smallholder farmers.

Amongst many things, the PIFON-PAPP partnership has enabled the streamlining of planning and reporting through which any collaborative activity with SPC-LRD can be channelled. With the two year funding it helps secure resource planning and scheduling for both parties.

This partnership brings in a technical and strategic focus as it lines up with PIFON's strategic goals and objectives. On this note, the partnership and SPC ad partners will hold its first joint high level strategic meetings in September/October following the PIFON Board Meeting. This will be PIFON's first strategic engagement with SPC and key partners such as CTA, EU and others.

PIFON is also currently engaged in a partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) under the Medium Term Cooperation Programme for Farmer Organisations in Asia and the Pacific – Phase II (MTCP II). Under MTCP II, PIFON is working in six member countries to implement a range of activities.

PIFON, PAPP and MTCP II have found many synergies in their work programmes that have improved immensely the delivery of each programme. Co-funding of various regional activities has been a very successful synergy. Also the ability to access a wider range of technical experts

from the SPC PAPP network and through the MTCP II network in Asia and the Pacific has been beneficial to all collaborators.

5. LESSONS LEARNT TO DATE

5.1. The effectiveness of farmer-orientated value chain training and the role of farmer organisations in delivering this training

The reports from successful value chain trainings held in Fiji and Vanuatu as highlighted in the report illustrate the important role a farmer organisation can play in facilitating this type of training. The farmer organisation is often best placed to deliver this type of training because they are neither the buyer or the seller of the product and therefore their position is neutral.

Follow up consultations from the Spices VC training on Malo raised the follow impacts:

- Immediate benefits in terms of supply and product quantity which is a reflection of: 1) the appropriateness and quality of the VC Guide; and, 2) the active involvement of the key agribusiness entity in the training.
- The Vanuatu Spices Value Chain has made considerable progress in developing high value niche product markets. Targeted value chain training at the farmer level using the VC Guide has been proven as an effective way to unlock this supply.

The Taro VC training on Taveuni highlighted that the farmers gained a better understanding of how the value chain worked and what was required to improve the chain for the benefit of all the actors. The linking of commercial viability to environment sustainability was particularly well received by the participants.

5.2. The value of providing targeted technical assistance to national farmer organisations supporting proposals to governments

Farmer organisations often have important issues or proposals to raise with government however they may lack the ability to prepare the sound arguments required to convince policy makers. Through targeted technical assistance such as what was provided to Teitei Taveuni for their proposal to government for Zero-Rate VAT from agricultural inputs bought and sold by Tei Tei Taveuni (TTT) for Taro farming, a farmer organisation is able to submit to government well constructed arguments with the required supporting data.

6. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Opportunities

i. SPC-PIFON partnership expansion with a focus on seeds and breadfruit

PIFON has identified two critically important projects relating to seed and breadfruit. Concept notes have been prepared by PIFON and submitted to the SPC-PAPP management. Both projects are aligned with PIFON and SPC priority areas and have been extensively designed and reviewed. Both projects have a wide regional spread with highly competent national partners identified. It is envisioned that PAPP could assist national countries to develop priorities/strategies in support of seeds and breadfruit while PIFON worked with private sector and farmer organisations on implementation of targeted activities.

Constraints

ii. Availability of computer equipment and finance software for PIFON staff

The newly recruited Procurement and Finance Manager is currently using his personal laptop machine to conduct his daily duties because there is no allocation to purchase him a desktop computer. Furthermore there is no dedicated backup server to store vital PIFON information including financial records.

The communications manager does not have a laptop which prevents on site reporting at important events and limits the amount of work that can be completed during duty travel.

Resources are not available to purchase the finance software required to transition the PIFON accounting system to MYOB.

Recommendations for taking advantage of opportunities and mitigating constraints

i. PIFON Board and SPC management to meet and negotiate submitted proposals

It is proposed that the PIFON board will meet with SPC management and key PAPP steering committee members to discuss the proposed regional focus on seeds and breadfruit. Following this meeting and an alignment of priority activities at the national level, that implementation of the projects through PIFON could begin in January 2016.

ii. SPC PAPP to fund computer equipment and finance software as part of capacity building component

Funds for the purchase of the necessary computer equipment and finance software have been included in the revised work plan and budget for purchasing in the second half of 2015.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Training reports
See attached PDF files