

Newsletter

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Issue 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Regional Seed Scoping Study Report now available 2

PIFON plans 2015 Pacific Sustainable Soil Learning Exchange and Publication Competition 3

PIFON hosts Pacific Regional Workshop on "Indigenous Food Systems and Sustainable livelihoods" for IFAD 4

PIFON 2015 MTCP II Planning and Training Meeting completed

The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) hosted a three day planning and training meeting in January 2015 as part of the Medium Term Cooperation Programme with Farmers' Organisations in Asia and the Pacific - Phase II (MTCP II).

MTCP II is currently working in five Pacific Island countries (Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Tonga) with one farmer organisation in each country assigned as the National Implementing Agency (NIA). In 2015, Papua New Guinea will join the activities of MTCP II through the PNG Women in Agriculture Development Foundation (PNG WiADF) who also participated in the planning and training meeting.

The meeting focused on the achievements and constraints of MTCP II in 2014 plus also planning the FO activities for 2015. The monitoring and evaluation and financial management aspects of the project were also covered, under the facilitation of Ms. Lany Rebagay (MTCP II Regional Programme Coordinator) and Mr. Ed Angeles, IFADs Finance Consultant.



Participants to the PIFON 2015 planning & training meeting.

Mr. Kyle Stice, PIFON's Managing Director highlighted that the region would be focusing on major themes such as seeds, soils, farmer oriented value chain trainings and youth in agriculture this year.

The workshop was abuzz with the various NIA groups putting their heads together to identify priority activities for their FO members' 2015 work plan and also what they required in terms of technical assistance in alignment with the overall goals of MTCP II and regional thrusts.

Mr. Marciano Virola, the MTCP II K&M Officer conducted hands-on



Photo and video documentation workshop

training on the use of internet tools such as facebook, website and twitter plus an orientation workshop on knowledge sharing tools and techniques as part of the programme. The photo and video documentation workshop generated a lot of interest and excitement with participants having a feel of making videos using video editing software installed on tablets.

A board member for PIFON, Mr Clement Hadosaia mentioned that PIFON has had a successful year of operation in 2014 as more farmers are benefiting from the farmer to farmer exchanges promoted through the network and he envisages that this will be intensified in 2015.

Regional Seed Scoping Study Report now available

In the Pacific, seed quality and availability are major constraints for farmers growing for own consumption and for the market. The scale of this problem becomes even more evident following natural disasters when rehabilitation of farms is delayed for months because of poor seed availability and dependence on donor and government for assistance with seed distribution.

In response to these issues, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) contracted Mrs. Emma Stone of TerraCircle Australia to carry out a regional scoping study and project design related to improving vegetable production through improving access to high quality seed (hybrid and open pollinated) for farmers. Emma worked closely with PIFON members in each of the five countries: Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tonga, to gather some of the necessary primary data on seed needs and availability.

Constraints for Imported Seed



Seed varieties / sources

Seed storage

Geographical location

Continuity of supply

Turnover of seed

Repackaging of bulk seed

Quantities required for import

Biosecurity, quarantine issues

Certified organic and OP varieties



An excerpt from the Regional Seed Scoping Study Report presentation

Some Pacific island farmer organisations (FOs) are quite active in providing seed to their members. This experience provides an indication of the role FOs can play in improving access to high quality seed for farmers. The scoping study report is now complete and available for dissemination. It is a compilation of findings on information such as:

- ◆ Vegetable varieties that are currently available (open pollinated and hybrid)
- ◆ The systems that are in place for seed production and distribution (who is selling seeds).
- ◆ Some of the priority needs of farmers in relation to new varieties (what crops, what characteristics etc).
- ◆ The capacity in each country to introduce new seed material (quarantine etc.), make seed more readily available (farm stores, hardware stores, farmer organizations etc.), produce open pollinated seeds (private farmers, farmer organizations, research stations, universities etc).
- ◆ Lessons learnt from activities in the region related to seed introduction (Hop Tiy in Fiji, AVRDC in the region), seed multiplication (Kastom Gaden PMN in Solomon Islands and NWC 'Fiji Red' papaya in Fiji).

The full scoping report is available on the PIFON website at:

<http://www.pacificfarmers.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Seeds-for-Pacific-Farmers-Scoping-Study-Report.pdf>



Mrs Emma Stone of TerraCircle Australia presenting her findings to her Regional Seed Scoping Study

The scoping study report has provided information and recommendations that have allowed PIFON to design a large project in support of improving access to seed. A concept note for this project entitled "Securing Seed Supply in the Pacific Islands: Ensuring seed supply for resilient production in a changing climate" was submitted to the USAID Pacific-American Climate Fund Project however it was not successful in accessing funding. PIFON is currently looking for alternate funding.

A number of FOs have already taken up recommendations from the report including the following:

- NWC has improved its papaya seed packaging and is now using moisture impermeable foil packets.
- Kastom Gaden Association has upgraded its seed production guidelines.
- Tei Tei Taveuni is currently developing a protocol to improve seed

viability of the cover crop Mucuna.

PIFON plans 2015 Pacific Sustainable Soil Learning Exchange and Publication Competition

2015
International
Year of Soils



In support of the United Nations International Year of Soils 2015 and in collaboration with farmer organisations, Tei Tei Taveuni (TTT) and Tutu Rural Training Center (Tutu), PIFON will be hosting a 2015 Soil Forum on the island of Taveuni, Fiji later this year to promote the theme of “Healthy Soils for a Healthy Life”.

The proposed forum seeks to bring together PIFON members including some soil experts from within the region, to discuss soil issues. PIFON strongly believes that educating the members of its network on the importance of healthy soils and how to implement

sustainable soil and land management to ensure a healthy and productive food system and improve rural livelihoods would be the way to go forward.

The 68th UN General Assembly declared 2015 the International Year of Soils with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations nominated to implement this.

As part of its promotional efforts in line with the theme, PIFON's manager, Kyle Stice, chose Taveuni to be the perfect location to host the Soil Forum given their history with unsustainable farming practices which have led to:

- Undersized crops and loss of income for the farmers on the island
- The island having the highest rate of deforestation in Fiji
- Serious soil degradation in areas where taro is grown

It is generally understood that to implement sustainable practices is no small task and will take years of education, finding local affordable solutions and perhaps most importantly facilitate a change of the current mindset.

PIFON members, TTT and Tutu, in their own efforts to alleviate their soil issues have, through donor funds from other programmes, conducted soil schools for their farmers to educate them in biological approaches to farming. They have also, through the expertise of an Australian agronomist worked with 40 farm groups to further their knowledge and practice of sustainable farming.



Soil testing on a taro farm on Taveuni



Soil Schools training in a classroom setting on Taveuni

TTT is Fiji's National Implementing Agency (NIA) for the Medium Term Cooperation Programme with Farmers' Organisations in Asia and the Pacific - Phase II (MTCP II).

PIFON endeavours to build on lessons learnt from Taveuni's previous soil school workshops through the proposed Soil Forum scheduled for August/September 2015.

PIFON is also planning a publication competition as part of the soil learning exchange. The publication competition aims to draw out existing materials developed around soils and also inspire new works related to raising the profile of sustainable soil practices. A segment of the judging for the competition will take place at the learning exchange.

PIFON hosts Pacific Regional Workshop on “Indigenous food systems and sustainable livelihoods”

PIFON in collaboration with the Tebtebba Foundation in Philippines co-organized and hosted a regional workshop for IFAD at the South Sea Orchids conference venue, in Nadi, Fiji on 26-27 November 2014. The workshop was attended by 20 participants including two representatives of IFAD.

This Pacific regional workshop was in preparation of the 2nd Indigenous Peoples Forum at IFAD that will take place in February 2015 at the IFAD Headquarters in Rome. Regional workshops were also organized and held in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The first global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum at IFAD took place in Rome in February 2013. The Forum is a concrete way for IFAD to institutionalize consultation and dialogue with indigenous peoples’ representatives worldwide.

The theme of the regional workshop was **“Indigenous food systems and sustainable livelihoods”**, a subject that has increasingly been recognised as a core concern for the achievement of sustainable development.

Representatives of the Indigenous Peoples' organisation, IFAD and a number of regional and local organisations gathered to exchange knowledge and experiences on good practices related to the theme of the workshop. The discussion identified possible strategies for IFAD on how to support Indigenous food systems and sustainable livelihoods in the Pacific region.



Participants from the region as far as the Federated States of Micronesia attended the IP Forum in Nadi, Fiji

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

2015 Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF) Call for Proposals

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is inviting indigenous peoples’ organizations and communities, and organizations that work with them, to apply for grants that fund projects and partnerships to promote the development of indigenous peoples and their unique cultural identity.

Grants ranging from US\$20,000 to US\$50,000 will be awarded to applicants from IFAD’s developing Member States through the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF).

You can find more information on application requirements and an application form at <http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/grants/index.htm>

**Closing Date:
6 March 2015**