

Newsletter

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PIFON makes contribution to Fiji's National Seed Policy Formulation

The potential role of farmer organisations in assisting farmers access to high quality seed was one of the key messages that came out of two PIFON linked presentations at the Fiji National Seed Policy Formulation Consultation Workshop held at the Novotel Hotel in Nadi on 16—18 July 2015.

Ana Tuivanuavou, PIFON Communications Manager gave a brief overview of the regional scoping study and project design entitled “Utilizing farmer organisations to improve the access to high quality seed for Pacific Island farmers” that was conducted and completed by TerraCircle Australia’s consultant, Emma Stone in October 2014.

The scoping study was in response to the issues faced in the Pacific region whereby 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 is required but often delayed for months due to poor seed availability. The regional scoping study covered Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The scoping study report can be obtained online from PIFON’s website www.pacificfarmers.com.



PIFON Manager who is also the Research and Extension Manager for PIFON member Nature’s Way Cooperative (NWC) gave a presentation on the Fiji Red Certified Seed Scheme which is a model public, private, partnership that has a farmer organisation (NWC) as the driving force.

It is envisioned that Fiji’s national seed policy will help address some of the major constraints affecting farmers access to high quality seed in Fiji and it is invaluable to have farmer organisations as part of the policy formulation process.

PIFON’s representative, Ana Tuivanuavou, reporting on the findings from the Regional Scoping Study report “Improving access to high quality seed for Pacific Island farmers through farmer organisations in Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu”

Regional Farmer Organisation Training on Technologies Supporting off-season Vegetable Production

PIFON in collaboration with the EU funded, SPC implemented Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP) conducted a training workshop on June 01—05, 2015 for about 45 participants on technologies supporting off-season vegetable production. The training was targeting PIFON member farmers or farmer organisations involved in off-season vegetable production. PIFON members were represented at the training from Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Solomon Is and PNG.

The overall objective of the training 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).

The 'off-season' in the South Pacific takes place in the rainy summer months (November to April) when production of certain vegetables is severely restricted by the high rainfall, temperature, humidity and a high incidence of pest and disease problems. Temperate vegetables such as tomatoes, English cabbage, French bean, lettuce, cauliflower and zucchini grow poorly during the summer months compared to the main growing season. As a result, there is a severe shortage in supply and prices are high during this period.

The five (5) day workshop covered important technologies such as protective cropping which was covered by Dr Elio Jovicich, the PARDI Protective cropping project leader from the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). Trainings on Integrated Crop Management (ICM) of Brassicas and vegetable seed production was also conducted by the SPC Plant Health Team and nurseryman, Sant Kumar. A site visit was carried out around the Ministry of Agriculture's Sigatoka Research Station and its protective cropping demo site with field visits around the Sigatoka Valley including a vegetable seedling nursery in Tavua that is also a PARDI-ACIAR protective cropping demo site.



A visit to Fiji's highlands vegetable production site in Nadarivatu was important in explaining the 'upland advantage' for off-season vegetable production.

The final day of the workshop was allocated for knowledge exchange between the participants and an evaluation of the training.

A publication and short video covering the training are now available on the PIFON website at the following links: <http://www.pacificfarmers.com/publications-2/=22http://www.pacificfarmers.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/3rd-draft-publication-Off-season-vegetable-production.pdf%22> and <https://youtu.be/3aRFyqg2aiA> respectively.

Participants at the opening of the Regional Farmer Organisation Training on Cropping Technologies at Fiji's Ministry of Agriculture's Sigatoka Research Station, June 01 2015.

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PIFON represented at 11th Meeting of Southwest Pacific Ministers of Agriculture



The Government of Papua New Guinea and FAO hosted the Eleventh Meeting of Southwest Pacific Ministers of Agriculture at Port Moresby, PNG from May 11 - May 14, 2015.

PIFON was represented at this meeting by Mr Afamasaga Toleafoa (PIFON Chairman). On the issue of climate change and agriculture, Mr. Toleafoa was able to highlight the current role that some farmer organisations in the region are playing in helping to address this issue. Funding for the participation of PIFON at this important policy event was provided through the EU funded, SPC implemented Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP).

During the course of the meeting the development of agriculture, forestry and fisheries within the FAO Pacific member states were discussed and recommendations presented by the Ministers and representatives in attendance. Several important decisions were made by the Ministers which will help guide activities in these sectors by FAO, the member countries, and other development partners. Some of the outcomes of the discussions were:

Climate Smart Agriculture

The Meeting noted that the strengthening of the production and processing of food crops will become crucial for adaptation efforts as the impacts from climate change on agriculture and food security continues to increase over time.

The comprehensive study by SPC in their recent publication “Vulnerability of Pacific Island Agriculture and Forestry to Climate Change” was duly acknowledged at the meeting.

Pacific Agriculture Week

The concept of a Pacific Week of Agriculture (PWA) was endorsed with FAO and SPC working with CTA and other stakeholders to organize the event and present an update at the Heads of Agriculture and Forestry (HoAFS) meeting in September 2015. The concept is based on a similar event that takes place in the Caribbean called the Caribbean Week of Agriculture.

South-South Cooperation

South-South Cooperation is the mutual exchange and sharing of development solutions knowledge, experiences and good practices, policies, technology and know-how between and among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains. It was agreed that this was important for the region and identified a preference for facilitating further exchanges specifically between SWP members. An assessment of needs and capacity to provide technical assistance was also agreed to be a benefit.

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Mrs Maria Linibi of PNG WiADF pictured here on an article in the PNG National newspaper promoting PIFON at the 11th Southwest Pacific Ministers of Agriculture held in Port Moresby on May 11—14, 2015

The twelfth meeting of the FAO Southwest Pacific Ministers of Agriculture will be held in Vanuatu in conjunction with the Pacific Week of Agriculture.

Tonga benefits from Papaya farmer-farmer technical exchange

A series of trainings on papaya production, costs and returns and value chain aspects was conducted in Tonga by commercial papaya farmer and FO leader Livai Tora from Fiji. The trainings were organized and hosted by the Growers Federation of Tonga (GroFed) with funding through the PIFON MTCP 2 programme. Other Tongan national farmer organisations that participated in the training included Hahake Farmer's Association, Nishi Growers, MORDI and Women in Horticulture Groups.

The five day training commencing April 08, 2015 was split into three sessions with the first session of participants being 22 growers from Hahake at Mala'evakapuna over the first two days, the second comprising of 20 Hihifo growers over the third day at the Nishi Farm in 'Utulau, and the final session consisting of 26 growers from 'Eua island from 13th – 14th April.

The papaya production training was aimed at assisting the growers planning to grow and export papaya in turn contributing to PIFON's objective of providing national FOs with key contacts, information and the technical expertise required to enable their members to better participate in commercial agriculture and at the same time increasing the productivity and environmental sustainability of their members' farming operations.

The farmer to farmer learning exchange concept allows Pacific Islanders to learn from the experiences of their neighbors and at the same time expand the network.

Tonga has recently re-certified its quarantine treatment facility and aims to begin exporting papaya into the New Zealand market.



'Eua growers and extension staff from Ministry of Agriculture participate in a hands on demonstration of papaya seedling production.



Farmers translate their newly attained knowledge into action using the 3 spot planting technique to help achieve 100% hermaphrodite fruit in the field.

Farmers being trained on low tech soil sterilisation methods for papaya seedling production using a 44 gallon drum.



Opportunities for Farmer Organisation participation in 'Coconut Industry Development for the Pacific'



Coconuts have a unique potential to sustain healthy rural livelihoods throughout the Pacific islands and can provide a key driver for employment, incomes and growth in the region.

A regional consultation entitled "*Coconut Industry Development for the Pacific*" was facilitated by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's (SPC) EU funded Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP) at the Novotel Nadi on 30th March – 1st April, 2015 to review a prepared concept paper on the current status of the coconut sector in the Pacific and to begin groundwork for a new Pacific Regional Coconut Strategy.

The European Union (EU) is allocating a donor sum of 3.5 million Euros through its 10th European Development Fund to assist the growth of the coconut industry in the Pacific through an Action called the "*Coconut Industry Development for the Pacific*" (CIDP).

The CIDP's main focus is strengthening the competitiveness of small producers engaged in coconut value chains throughout the Pacific region, through strengthened national and regional integration of related markets and intensification of production, diversification of coconut processing and marketing.

Moses Pelomo of Kastom Gaden Association in Solomon Islands represented PIFON making a presentation on the potentials and opportunities for participation in the coconut industry development by farmer organisations (FOs) taking into consideration PIFON's overall objectives and how they would contribute in helping address the issues currently hindering the coconut sector from achieving its full potential.

Farmer organisations interested in this project can submit their Expressions of Interest (EOI) to their Ministry of Agriculture (National Focal Point) upon formation of a working committee with a copy to the *SPC LRD helpdesk* lrldhelpdesk@spc.int and PIFON info@pacificfarmers.com. Members are kindly requested to consider their respective activities under the MTCP2 Project Design Document Four component areas identifying which ones best fit prior to discussions with their national focal points.



The SPC-PAPP funded Coconut Industry Development for the Pacific (CIDP) workshop at the Novotel, Nadi.

Scoping study tour of Spices of Fiji - A success

A PIFON MTCP2 funded scoping study tour of the Spices of Fiji in Wainadoi (on the island of Viti Levu) was conducted on 30th March 2015 by four farmers from Tei Tei Taveuni (TTT) and three from Tutu Rural Training Centre (TRTC). The scoping study was led by TTT Chairman, Alan Peterson with the aim of investigating the possibility of farming spices on Taveuni as a means of complimenting their present commercial crops of taro (dalo) and yaqona (kava).

TTT and TRTC are located on Fiji's third largest island, Taveuni, producing 60 – 70% of Fiji's taro for export and is the National Implementing Agency for the MTCP 2 programme in Fiji. Spices of Fiji is a commercial organic spice plantation and agro-tourism site located 20 minutes from Fiji's capital city, Suva.

Following the exchange visit and discussions between TTT and Spices of Fiji owners, it was agreed to establish pilot spice sites on Taveuni for Cardamom, Vanilla, Nutmeg and Pepper. TTT will be facilitating these trial sites with its members and Spices of Fiji. The 5 trial sites will be at Delaivuna , Tutu and Naselesele.

An LOA between the two parties will be drawn up to seal this agreement.

PIFON is proud to support and facilitate linkages between growers and growers groups which often results in new opportunities for farmers to expand production and improve profitability. Successful scoping visits and learning exchanges would not be possible without the willingness of island farmers to share their knowledge and experiences with fellow farmers.



The TTT and TRTC team that undertook the scoping study tour of the Spices of Fiji at Wainadoi pose with owners George and Veronica Hazelman sitting on far right.

PIFON provides technical assistance to FSA/SAPV in reaction to TC Pam devastation

Vanuatu was hit by Tropical Cyclone Pam on March 13, 2015 measured to be of Category 5 intensity (wind gusts reaching 340 km/hr). TC Pam was a widely spread severe tropical cyclone that severely affected the provinces of Shefa, Malampa and Tafea, and causing devastation on the islands of Efate, Erromango, Shepherds and Tanna. While Vanuatu lies in one of the most cyclone prone parts of the south-west Pacific, it has not experienced such a cyclone of such magnitude since Cyclone Uma in 1987.

In response to Farm Support Association (FSA)'s request for technical support assistance following the cyclone, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) engaged one of its consultants in early April, who has had a vast and long experience with Vanuatu agriculture and the Farm Support Association (FSA) / Syndicat Agricole & Pastoral de Vanuatu (SAPV) to:

- Assist them in writing a report on the impact of the TC Pam on their program and making recommendations for any necessary changes and additions.
- Assist in the preparation of rehabilitation proposals to be implemented through the FSA network and in consultation with partner agencies such as Oxfam.
- Prepare an appropriate report for the PIFON network that focuses on lessons learnt.

All of the above criteria and objectives have been met, documented and compiled into a report which is now available for dissemination.



In addition to the technical assistance provided, PIFON also facilitated the procurement and delivery of vegetable seeds and appropriate packing materials for the repacking of the seed into lots suitable for small farmers. The seeds were sourced from the Fiji seed supply company and also PIFON's preferred seed supplier, Hop Tiy Ltd, with which SAPV has an established business relationship. The packaging material (re-sealable, airtight and moisture free) was sourced at a cost from fellow PIFON member Nature's Way Cooperative (Fiji) Ltd. The repacked seeds are now in high demand by farmers who are willing to pay hence another equivalent sized order of seeds has now been placed with Hop Tiy and which also includes the certified Fiji Red Papaya seed from Nature's Way Cooperative.



FSA is a member of PIFON and is the National Implementation Agency for the IFAD and SDC funded MTCP II Project which is commonly referred to as the Asia-Pacific Farmers' Forum.

Devastation to homes and farms in Vanuatu caused by Tropical Cyclone Pam

Pacific Soil Learning Exchange

‘Sharing lessons in sustainable soil management from the Pacific Region’

September 23rd—25th 2015

Taveuni, Fiji

The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) in partnership with the European Union funded Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP), will be organizing a regional **‘Pacific Soil Learning Exchange’**.

The event will be hosted by Tei Tei Taveuni and Tutu Rural Training Center and held on the island of Taveuni, Fiji.

The event scheduled for September 23—25 2015 will bring together farmer organisation representatives, soil experts, input suppliers and other relevant stakeholders for a three-day, hands-on learning event.

This event is in support of the United Nations International Year of Soils 2015 promoting “Healthy Soils for a Healthy Life”.



Media Competition

A publication competition under the theme ‘Healthy Soils for a Healthy Life’ will run from August 1st – September 23rd 2015. Farmer organisations, researchers, journalists and other interested participants are invited to submit a media piece that serves to spread the word about sustainable soil management.

The media piece can be in the form of print (booklet, poster, handout etc.) or video.

A segment of the judging for this competition will take place at the learning exchange. Several prizes are on offer with the grand prize being a round trip airfare for two to see firsthand one of the successful sustainable soil case studies represented. For more information see www.pacificfarmers.com

