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NEWSLETTER

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YOUNG FARMERS HAVE THEIR SAY
WORLD RURAL FORUM ELECTS BOARD
BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS



Papua New Guinea Youth in Agriculture Facilitator, Maria Linibi says plans are in place to increase food security and reduce poverty, an issue which was highlighted by young farmers in the forum

JIWAKA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA - Populations in developing countries are becoming increasingly youthful, where Papua New Guinea's population of 7.5 million are young and growing.

With an abundance of natural resources and geographic proximity to rapidly growing Asian markets, Agriculture accounts for approximately a third of the country's GDP. Despite recent strong economic growth, young people in particular face limited opportunities in rural areas with over 3 million people living below the national poverty line in mostly the rural areas.

Earlier this year in March, young farmers from around Papua New Guinea converged for the first ever Papua New Guinea Youth in Agriculture Forum in Kurmul, Jiwaka Province. Facilitator, Maria Linibi said the response was positive as plans to increase food security and reduce poverty were outlined by young farmers who attended the forum.

'It was a success story where our youths had their say and presented their work from the fields alongside women and youths from 8 Provinces from around Papua New Guinea. The field visits in particular were an eye opener for many farmers.'

She said the forum had attracted nation wide interest in which most had to be turned away.

'The logistics was a challenging issue and with farmers arriving in big numbers, we simply could not accommodate them all and they had to be turned away, but for those who attended the forum, they have taken this idea and started their own forums.'

The forum offered farmers the opportunity to display their products as well as field visits to capsicum farms, resource centres and citrus farms. A strong delegation of policy and decision makers, agriculture industry experts, academics, and a large number of young farmers attended the forum where plenary discussions and presentations on Strengthening Partnerships for a Stronger Agriculture Sector were presented over the 5 day programme.

Maria Linibi said there many lessons were learnt and looks forward to hosting events as such if funding is available, 'We hope to make it bigger and better next time, we can already see the impact its had on people as other provinces look to host similar events.'

Pacific Island Farmer's Organisation Network was represented Kyle Stice and Nature's Way Cooperative, Livai Tora who delivered a combined presentation covering the Farmer Organization Movement (Lessons from around the Pacific/ Organizing farmers to grow agriculture) as well as Understanding + Influencing Agriculture and Value Chain Approach to Agriculture.

NEWS

STRENGTHENING FARMERS' AND PRODUCERS' ORGANISATIONS

REGIONAL - Farmers from around the Pacific region and agricultural organizations met in a business development and empowerment discussion to maintain and grow the value chain for the agriculture sector.

The forum which was held in Nadi, Fiji (May), focused on the Cross Learning Workshop and the Pacific Mini-Optimising the Performance of Producers' Organisations (OPPO) Workshop, were both an extension of the project, 'Promoting Nutritious Food Systems in the Pacific Islands' and its component on 'Building capacity of Pacific producer groups and development of prototype for change and scaling', a programme hosted by the Wageningen University and Research/ Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) for six Pacific Island nations in the Netherlands (2018).

In his opening address, the Assistant Minister for Agriculture (Fiji) Viam Pillay said enhancing Pacific agribusiness and value chain performance was key to developing the sector. 'Engaging in dialogue and sharing experiences is encouraged on critical issues, a selected few will today make direct grounds of their organisation's business plans to financiers and development partners,' he said. He explained the regional countries that participated in the training programme would be highlighted in the Nadi discussions.

Seven Pacific mini OPPO alumni analysed seven priority value chains from their respective areas of work, profiled their farmer organisations and business relationships and developed inclusive business plans with the support and guidance of the WCDI OPPO team. Mini OPPO alumni and Certification Officer of Kokonut Pacific Ltd, Mary Jane Hou Kaikari believes the tools will strengthen working relationships between farmers in planning for the future and putting plans into action.

'My business case is based on producing virgin coconut oil for both the international and domestic markets. It focuses on the farmer organization in the areas of governance and management, I believe the tools we've learned will be of great benefit not just for the Solomon Islands but farmers across the Pacific region,' she said.

Building a sense of trust and strengthening the relationships among actors of the value chain was a key area for taro farmer and also Mini OPPO alumni, Junior Fata of Samoa.

'There is a lot of opportunity to provide trainings and encourage farmers to join the organization, not only for taro but you can do this with other commodities like bananas and coconut. This isn't new but as farmers our mindsets have to change and adapt with the times,' he said.

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) through their Technical Officer for the Pacific Islands Food Systems Project, Jana Dietershagen says knowledge, joint learning, collaboration, and partnerships are key to successful innovation in Pacific agri-food systems.

'Putting farmers and small to medium agri-enterprises at the forefront for building inclusive business models is line with the CTA/iFAD/PIFON commitments to building capacity of value chain actors in enhancing governance and improving trust particularly between producers and buyers and financiers, producers and government,' she said.

She explained the OPPO approach was aimed at strengthening the professionalism of farmers' and producers' organisations by equipping participants with the right tools and approaches to improve their professional performance and agribusiness relations.

'Seven Pacific OPPO alumnis have been trained and are familiar with the OPPO approach as well as new tools to further support value chain and agribusiness development at the national level,' she said.

The seven successfully co-facilitated their first training in the second week of the forum for 40 regional representatives of farmer and producer organisations across the Pacific. They are Joanna Bourke (Nishi Trading — Tonga), Junior Fata (Samoa Farmers Association — SFA — Samoa), Jiu Daunivalu (Fiji Crop & Livestock Council — Fiji), Karness Kusto (Marshall Islands Organic Farmers Association — Marshall Islands), Routan Tongaiaba (Ministry of Environment, Lands & Agriculture Development — Kiribati), Timote Waqainabete (Nature's Way Cooperative — Fiji) and Maryjane Hou Kaikari (Virgin Coconut Oil Producers Association — Solomon Islands).

The combined workshops were a joint initiative by the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA), International Fund for Agriculture Development (iFAD) and Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO) 'Innov4AgPacific' project with Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

WORLD RURAL FORUM ELECTS NEW BOARD



*PIFON is represented by Chairman Afamasaga Toleafoa
World Rural Forum says the new Board will also see a higher number of women representatives*

BILBAO, SPAIN - The World Rural Forum (WRF) has renewed its Board which they say brings together very important farmers' organizations including AFA, COPROFAM, PDRR, PROPAC and PIFON who represent more than 31 million farmers across 4 continents. In a statement, WRF says the new Board represents a significant qualitative leap for the WRF due to its broad representation; geographical size (4 continents) and its diverse and complementary structure.

The Board now currently comprise FCAE (Federation of Agri-Cooperatives of the basque region): Presidency, COPROFAM (Confederation of Organizations of Family Farmers from the Expanded Mercosur): Vice-Presidency, FCI (Cándido Iturriaga Foundation): Secretary, LK (Laboral Kutxa S.Coop): Treasury, AFA (Asian Farmers Association): Member, PDRR (Regional Rural Dialogue Program for Central América and Dominican Republic): Member, PIFON (Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network): Member, PROPAC (Regional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa): Member, CIRAD (International Research Centre for Agricultural Development): Member, SOS-FAIM: Member, HAZI: Member, Unesco-Etxea: Member, UAGA (Farmers Union of Álava): Member and UPA (Small Farmers Union of Spain): Member.

Joining them are other agricultural organisations such as UPA-Spain, UAGA and ENBA; a benchmark organisation in agricultural research such as CIRAD; entities such as Unesco-Etxea that work to promote the SDGs; entities that carry out an excellent job in Family Farming knowledge management (SOS-FAIM) and a savings and credit cooperative from the Mondragón Group, such as Laboral Kutxa. HAZI and the FCI complete this broad spectrum. The Federation of Agri-Cooperatives of the basque region (FCAE) was elected to the Presidency, with COPROFAM taking the Vice-Presidency.

The new Board will see a greater number of women than in the past where the former Board consisted of 10 people, only two were women, the new Board will be composed of 15 representative, of whom 5 are women. PIFON is represented by Chairman, Afamasaga Toleafoa. Work has already begun for the new Board to design the new WRF Strategic Plan, which will define the way forward for 2025.

FARMERS ORGANISATIONS FOR ACP PROGRAMME INCEPTION

ROME, ITALY - The completion of the Support to Farmers' Organization in Africa Programme (SFOAP) in December 2018, opened the way for discussions on the inception phase of the Farmers Organisation For ACP Programme.

The inception phase essentially looks to design the Farmers Organisations for ACP Programme content including project document with activities, implementation, logframe for each implementor. PIFON have already begun to prepare its members to select activities that support economic oriented activities, enhance policy dialogue and building institutional capacities. The completion of the inception phase will see a validated project document detailing the activities per main partner including RFOs, PAFO, PIFON, Caribbean with identified synergies with AgriCord at national levels. IFAD has identified PIFON as the Pacific's implementing partner in ensuring overall coordination, monitoring, supervision and management of the programme.

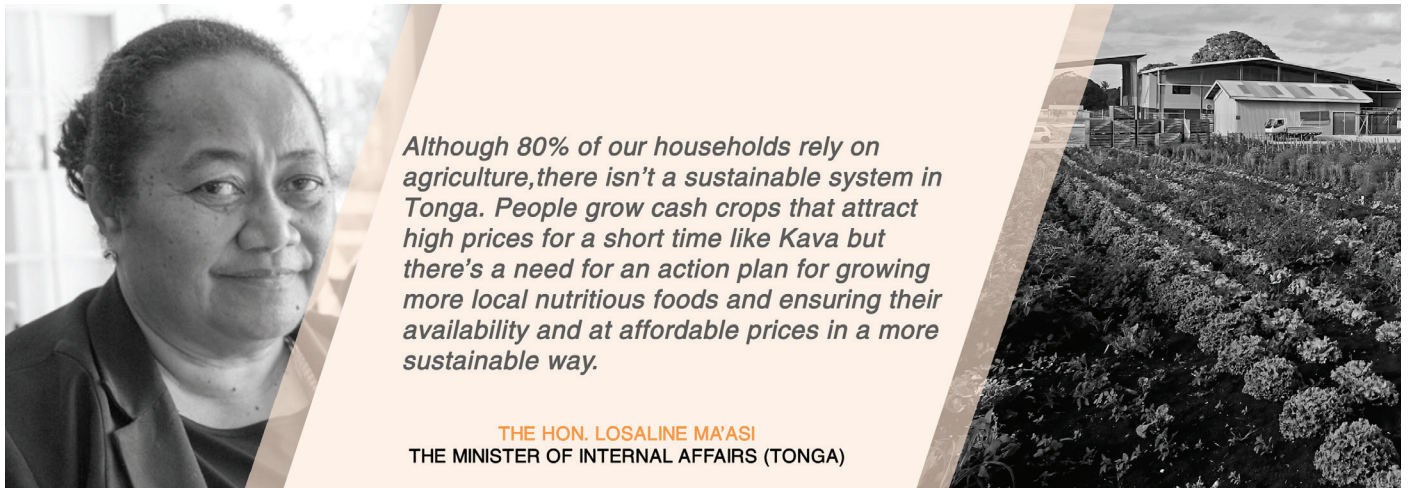
BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

NUKU'ALOFA, TONGA - Unstable weather patterns across the Pacific is seeing unstable supply and the rise of costs on local produce. Tongan noble Lord Vaea says its consequences are devastating as imported items including noodles and rice become less expensive alternatives.

'Tonga is amongst the top 10 countries in the world with the highest rates of NCDs including diabetes. In the Pacific, 4 out of 5 deaths occur due to NCDs, this is a big loss of resources - namely the most precious one, our human resources. Nutrition and health priorities should therefore be mainstreamed into decision making and economic development plans and programmes.'

Minoru Nishi Jnr, the Director of Nishi Trading reiterated the risks of NCDs have significantly reduced the life expectancy of Tongans to 64 years old.

'That's very young and it comes down to our lifestyle choices. Pacific-wide, over 60% of our food is imported and most of this food is not healthy for our people. If you wind the clock back 50, 60 years ago, we all relied on the natural resources that we had on our land. Tonga is number one in obesity in the male and number two for female. And it's the other way around for Samoa. I think at one stage Nauru was number one a couple of years ago. So it's a Pacific-wide problem, we rely on imports and yet we live in Paradise where we can grow our own food. There's an opportunity here for all of us to work together, understand the problems and raise solutions.'



Although 80% of our households rely on agriculture, there isn't a sustainable system in Tonga. People grow cash crops that attract high prices for a short time like Kava but there's a need for an action plan for growing more local nutritious foods and ensuring their availability and at affordable prices in a more sustainable way.

THE HON. LOSALINE MA'ASI
THE MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS (TONGA)

Paula Taumoepeau the President of the Tonga Chamber of Commerce + Industry says the collaboration between the government, farmers and private sector is an important one. 'It's not only very important to work together with all our different sectors but also to involve our communities who we sometimes forget are part of the process in achieving these goals.'

He said the Government of Tonga have developed strategies to penalize imports on unhealthy food, 'It's common here in the Pacific, we need to create incentives on local products that are affordable for our communities.'

SHARING SUPERIOR CROP VARIETIES

HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS - The world population is growing by approximately 74 million people per year, and it's just one of many factors influencing the environment. As the population continues to grow, the limits of our natural resources such as water, fertile land, forests and fisheries are becoming more obvious.

Pitakia Tikai the Coordinator of Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) recently reported the Searem Niu Plant Long Gaden project (2006), identified the need to diversify the country's crop varieties. With the support of AusAID, the project was established as a way of combating the strain of the country's growing population (currently estimated at two percent each year) was having on people's livelihoods.

'Farmers and families in rural areas have faced many difficulties related to food production brought upon by natural disasters, pests, and diseases. Population growth has also put a greater strain on the availability of the land and causing harm to people's ability to sustain themselves.'

As a result, resilient diverse farming systems were prioritized by KGA for food and livelihood security reasons. The project sought to introduce African yam, cassava, and sweet potato varieties from overseas which established a process of crop diversification and also improved the country's self-sustainability.



Improving food and nutrition security for those on smaller incomes

'KGA provided training in various basic farming methods and livelihood improvement initiatives, including nutrition awareness and disease management, and finance. This was done to improve food and nutrition security for those on smaller incomes'.

The impact of the programme saw a rise in the number of Solomon Islands Planting Material Network members (PMN). To date, there are now 5 000 members of this network, which was established by KGA to give people in remote areas more access to superior varieties of sweet potato and yam including greater access to technical information about how to grow foods closer to their homes.

The project did however fall behind schedule and therefore the plan for the Searem Niu plan was not fully carried out; some collections from communities across the Solomon Islands were not completed.

Pitakia Tikai says although the project ended, PMN members still continue to exchange the planting materials chosen by the project with local farmers which have also seen a rise in the self-sustainability of the farmers and PMN members. This continued sharing of superior crop varieties he says, ensures farmers have access to high-potential crops.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE FORUM

ROME, ITALY - The Pacific's recommendation now make up the general document of the IFAD Indigenous Programme.

PIFON Programme Manager, Lavinia Kaumaitotoya says the recommendations centered on the promotion of traditional and nutritious crops, fruits, and vegetables in helping reduce the statistics of non-communicable diseases.

'It's a big win for all of us around the region having the Pacific recommendation adopted by IFAD.'

The recommendation also included the establishment of partnerships between farmer organizations, indigenous communities, and cooperatives in an effort to build regional, national and local capacity for sustainability.

The focus of the fourth global meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD was on promoting indigenous peoples' knowledge and innovations for climate resilience and sustainable development.

IMPROVING SOIL FERTILITY

TAVEUNI, FIJI - Home to Tutu Rural Training Centre (TRTC), the centre is a learning space for youths and young farming families. It is known as the 'Garden Island of Fiji' because of its fertile soil and where about 80% of the island's 19 000 population are farmers.

With exports mainly in kava and taro, the centre launched a project to improve soil degradation. Youths were trained to use nitrogen-fixing crops while also learning about the environmental issues caused by both chemicals and climate change.

Project Coordinator, Serenia Madigibuli said farmers were beginning to understand the implications of the depleted state of their soil and began taking ownership of the programmes and their land. As a direct result of the educational training, farmers in collaboration with TRTC have planted mucuna beans (a nitrogen-fixing crop) across the island and have banned the use of chemicals.

'A young man named Mika is one of our success stories. He has a two-hectare farm and for 4 years he used the methods he was taught to enrich his soil. He now earns triple prior to beginning his training and by 2018, Mika was earning FJ\$1 800 a month from his taro crops and F\$23 000 from his kava crops'.

The obstacles in implementing soil enhancement programmes on Taveuni include the community's resistance to change as farmers had become reliant on using chemicals as a fertilizer and to control pests.

'We had activities implemented as a way of overcoming these obstacles and made field trips to farms who had successfully implemented the training on soil health and soil biology for farmers. The outcome was positive and a clear result of the participatory training sessions'.

Serenia Madigibuli also added the unexpected outcomes were that youths began teaching their peers, 'A ripple effect has started and those who were unable to attend the training sessions are now learning from others'.

Nine more villages on Taveuni have received soil fertility training in August 2018 since the project was launched in 2015.



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VETIVER GRASS

PORT VILA, VANUATU - The Vetiver Grass Training Manual by Farm Support Association is a great introductory for field workers as well as farmers facing challenges in controlling soil erosion.

Associate Director, Peter Kaoh says while it has been specifically written for Vanuatu, it has many application to many other location in the tropical Pacific which face similar erosion problems to control and which are likely to increase along with climate change.

'It's used in close to 100 tropical and sub-tropical countries for a range purposes, such as soil and water conservation, stabilizing slopes, rehabilitating land, and water quality improvement,' he said.

In the introductory manual, he explains vetiver is a unique tropical grass which can be grown across a wide range of climatic and soil conditions that also provides a simple, practical, low cost, low maintenance and very effective means of soil and water conservation, sediment control and land stabilization.

'As climate change increases the severity of both heavy rain and drought, looking after the soil and the nearby rivers and coastal areas will become increasingly important for livelihoods and food security,' he said.

Visit our website to preview the manual: pacificfarmers.com or connect directly with Farm Support Association in Vanuatu for details: sapv@vanuatu.com.vu

OPTIMIZING THE PERFORMANCE OF PRODUCERS' ORGANISATIONS - ALUMNI

APIA, SAMOA - 'When planting, you plant for yourself. You plant for the market, you plant for the exporters, you plant for the thieves, you plant for the wild pigs. And when you get hit by one of them you feel nothing but more strength to carry on. That's my module'

Meet Junior Fata, a mechanic engineer and a fitter by profession who describes the move to agriculture as, 'a whole transition of the body and mind'.

In May, Junior achieved Co-Facilitator status for Value Chain Training at the regional Cross Learning Workshop and the Pacific Mini-Optimising the Performance of Producers' Organisations (OPPO) Workshop, an extension of the project, Promoting Nutritious Food Systems in the Pacific Islands and its component on 'Building capacity of Pacific producer groups and development of prototype for change and scalling' a programme hosted by the Wageningen University and Research/Centre for Development Innovation (WCID) for six Pacific Island nations in the Netherlands (2018).



Junior Fata says the trainings provided by PIFON and CTA has taken farming to a whole new level

'My harvest is a result of incorporating the OPPO tools to my farming; our taro is highly sought after and in great demand at the local markets.'

Junior adds he has received requests from other farmers for taro stems for reproduction, 'The trainings provided by PIFON and CTA has taken farming to a whole new level and I am so grateful for it.'

The family man and father of two acknowledges his wife and parents for their support when he made the decision to return to Samoa just under two years ago to take up farming which he says he watched his father doing for 20 plus years.

'I am who I am today because of them and I thank God every day for them; I hope to be a better farmer tomorrow and all the days of my life. If you asked me if I've enjoyed the transition, I can confidently say that I have no regrets and I look forward to more opportunities God has in store for me.'

SEEDS FOR LIFE



The Seeds For Life Programme promotes the development of commercial seed trade in Timor Leste

BAUCAU MUNICIPALITY, TIMOR LESTE - ANAPROFIKO took to the fields to monitor the work of their members under the Seeds For Life Programme.

Organisation secretary, Joanico Ximenes reported they were in the area for the month of April as observers, 'From what we've seen, there's been huge progress with their seeds production work including rice, sweet potato and maize. It's also making a positive difference in their lives and the surrounding communities.'

The Seeds For Life Programme was established in 2015 to represent the interests of the commercial seed producers and to promote the development of commercial seed trade.

RESTORATION OF FORESTS AND OTHER ECOSYSTEMS

REGIONAL - 'Forests as well as all other ecosystems all over the world are under threat and we are losing biodiversity at alarming rates.'

Ms. Sandeep K. Singh, the Director Environment of the Ministry of Waterways and Environment (Fiji) officially opened the sub-regional exchange for the Pacific on the restoration of forests and other ecosystems within a landscape approach.

While speaking at the sub regional exchange, Ms. Sandeep K. Singh said the over exploitation of natural resources throughout the centuries have widely disrupted the equilibrium within ecological systems. The four day meeting aims to examine the targets, plans and objectives of participating Pacific Island nations, exchange experiences of restoration planning and implementation with key experts while also considering the economic dimension of restoration.

'Earth's ecosystems are degrading as a result of damage, unsustainable development and a failure to invest and reinvest in their productivity, health and sustainability,' she said. Eight Pacific Island nations including Tonga, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea, the Cook Islands and Fiji will review the status of degraded forests and other ecosystems with a view of prioritising areas for ecosystem restoration.

She explained ecosystems and their biodiversity underpin economic growth, sustainable development and human wellbeing. However, the loss of biodiversity continued to cause serious reductions in ecosystem goods and services, and negatively impacting economic prosperity and environmental sustainability.

'It is becoming increasingly important that we immediately restore our ecosystems so that they are able to provide the goods and services to sustain life on earth.'

The sub regional exchange was presented by the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network and is a joint initiative by the Convention on Biological Diversity, FERi, the Food and Agriculture of the United Nations and the Pacific Community at Nadi's Novotel Hotel, Fiji.



PARDI2
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Pacific Agribusiness Research in Development Initiative

AGRI-TOURISM EXPERIENCES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Food has always been an important element of experiencing a destination, tours and activities such as farm to table dining, local cooking classes, market tours and street food tours.

Recognizing the increasing demand for these types of experiences, a 2-day Talanoa dialogue was held at the Tokatoka Resort in Nadi (27/28 February 2019) by the Pacific Agribusiness Research in Development Initiative (PARDI2) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

The dialogue focused on identifying opportunities and developing agritourism products to increase the value of tourism to local economies. PIFON's Lavinia Kaumaitoia said while farms in the Pacific have various strengths that lend themselves to agritourism experiences, Pacific destinations are not yet well known for culinary journeys or agritourism, 'There's an opportunity for farms to promote their communities and cultures, traditions of storytelling and diverse range of crops and traditional agroforests to build agritourism experiences for travellers'.

Existing and new operators in the tourism industry shared their experiences and ideas including Lara Bourke who represented her parents, the directors of Nukubati Private Island (Fiji). She shared with participants at the Talanoa Dialogue that they believed in encouraging their staff to embrace their upbringing, 'It's about preserving their knowledge of survival and we encourage it because it's an asset – not a monetary asset but an intellectual asset. It's information that's informative and unknown to some, and so therefore extremely interesting'.

The Talanoa Dialogue also addressed the needs and key market research questions of agritourism operators that partners should address over the coming two years. In her presentation, Research Fellow for Pacific Agribusiness Research in Development Initiative (PARDI2), Marita Manley highlighted agritourism experiences including farm tours in Fiji, Vanuatu and Tonga were an undeveloped market, and that there were also not a lot of statistics.

'Sometimes it's grouped within nature and eco tours, sometimes it's not specifically listed as a separate category so it's difficult to get access to this information but agritourism experiences are aligned to growth sectors in the market so there are opportunities for farmers to diversify their revenue through tourism. Market research is highlighting unique experiences, local experiences, cultural immersion and historical experiences as key growth areas – and quality agritourism experiences tick a lot of these boxes'.

Also at the 2-day Talanoa Dialogue was Chef Lance Seeto who encouraged participants to embrace their environment, culture and cuisine while developing a story around their agritourism product, 'We're otherwise another Pacific Island nation – another island with white sandy beaches'.

The dialogue in partnership with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and Pacific Islands Development Forum brought together a delegation of policy and decision makers, tourism industry experts, academics, and agribusinesses.

IFC's work in Fiji is guided by the Fiji Partnership. Australia and IFC are working together through the partnership to promote sustainable economic development, reduce poverty and stimulate private sector investment in Fiji.

INTERN

Earlier this year we welcomed our first intern Manoj Kumar M K.

The 23 year-old is a student at the University of Adelaide in Australia pursuing his masters programme in Global Food and Agribusiness.

Manoj believes agribusiness plays an indispensable role in the world economy as a key source of food supplies, 'The risks in Pacific Agribusinesses play a pivotal role in the success of any business and also in the development of rural economies. In order to make Pacific agribusiness more successful the mitigating of risks is crucial.'

He also actively participated in the CTA/PIFON Forum: Optimizing the Performance of Producers' Organisations.



Our first international intern at PARDI2, Manoj Kumar M K

'It was a great practical experience where I also met with many farmer organisations from around the Pacific region, it was good to make the connections and share ideas. I was also out in the fields with the boys from Nature's Way Cooperative which has been a great way to connect with the farmers between theory and practical. I loved it.'

Manoj was based with our project partner PIFON - Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network in Legalega, Nadi.