

IMPACT SURVEY OF COVID-19 & AGRICULTURE

building strong communities

compassion is medicine

embracing change

boosting nutrition

enhancing food security

solidarity is power

COVID 19 & AGRICULTURE

PACIFIC FARMERS HAVE THEIR SAY



ANALYSIS REPORT | 25TH MAY 2020

Pacific Island Farmer Organisations Network [PIFON]



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MAP OF PACIFIC





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the novel coronavirus/COVID-19 turned into a global pandemic, most countries took measures to prevent or slow the virus entering their territory and to reduce its spread. In addition to major loss of life and illness, the economic impacts have been enormous and estimated globally at a minimum of AUD\$6.5 trillion (FJD\$9.4 trillion). Almost all global industries have been negatively impacted, some to a greater extent than others.

In order to measure the COVID-19 impact on the Pacific Islands farming community, a survey was designed and distributed to Farmer Organisations (FOs), then to individual farmers to obtain their feedback on the impacts in their communities. The survey feedback, and additional research into COVID-19's impacts, are being used to help direct assistance and support to farmers, including through FOs, Government and/or through development partners.

The survey, entitled 'Pacific Farmers Have Their Say', was also distributed through the Pacific Farmers Organisations' (PIFON) Facebook page with responses completed on-line, and for those not on Facebook, they were able to complete a word document questionnaire. The month-long survey was launched in the last week of March.

Although the survey was open to all Pacific Islands farmers, key feedback received highlighted the current challenges in parts of the Pacific. Disruptions to supply chains are requiring farmers to adapt to the new market dynamics and allocate more resources to local food security. In addition, future responses focused on the provision of healthy food domestically, and working with Government on exploring ways to promote livelihoods within agriculture.

Whilst the current COVID-19 situation remains dire, there are major opportunities within the agricultural sector to boost the Pacific economy. The industry is directly responsible for food security, and with strategic direction it can provide additional opportunities for the generation of livelihoods. This will take a cohesive, collaborative approach from all industry sectors and players to develop a strategic recovery plan for the region, to be completed in stages as the immediate threats of COVID-19 subside.

The survey has informed recommendations to address key issues raised and these are summarized (in no priority order) as:

- Domestic Focus/Promote Local Buy, Eat, Grow
- Disruption of Value Chains
- Re-Orienting Value Chains
- Home Gardens
- Value Adding Initiatives
- Agritourism Opportunities
- Hotel Relationships
- Agricultural Finance
- Agriculture the preferred industry

RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey has raised key issues on how farmers, farmers organisations and the agriculture sector more broadly have been impacted by the current situation caused by COVID-19. Based on the various issues raised, PIFON has taken the liberty to group them and provide key recommendations that need priority action by PIFON, stakeholders and partners. We encourage ‘interventions’ or proposed programs to focus on these priority areas that we have summarized into ten focus areas with targeted actions.

DOMESTIC FOCUS/PROMOTE LOCAL – BUY, EAT, GROW

The lockdown of national borders and reduced flights has greatly impacted exports, so the need to refocus agricultural production on domestic markets is much greater than pre COVID-19. Pacific Island Governments and authorities need to ensure that their economies are geared to feed their own populations, and to provide local markets for farmers to sell their goods for domestic consumption. National food security and nutrition have become even more crucial for Pacific Island States due to the impacts of closed borders. Agricultural programs and interventions need to be tailored towards improving food security and nutrition for domestic consumption.

This is an opportune time for national Governments, FOs, partners and donors to roll out communications and campaign messages supporting farmers – Eat Local, Grow Local, Buy Local. Many people are now focused on home gardening, domestic markets, and time spent with family at home: these activities can be taught readily on-line while school children are at home (and continued after they return to school). Promotions that feature local recipes and Pacific cuisine will get maximum viewing time, thus whilst this topic is still hot off the press, it is good that it be taken up and be part of response activities.

DISRUPTION OF VALUE CHAINS

Many agricultural product value chains that worked well prior to COVID-19 have been disrupted due to lockdown situations when borders (cities and countries) were closed. The impact within days of lockdowns resulted in under-supply in some areas, as well as surplus produce in other areas. Farmers and traders had to look for innovative ways to get produce to markets, create new markets and/or give produce away for free rather than allowing it to go to waste. Research and studies into the impacts of this disruption and breakdown in the value chains is expected to yield valuable lessons. Interventions to strengthen working value chains and ensure the robustness of systems from farm to market will be the focus going forward, building on lessons learnt.

RE-ORIENTING VALUE CHAINS

The breakdown of established value chains, and the re-orienting of them to new markets for domestic purposes requires greater examination and attention. The emphasis on domestic markets for established chains will in some cases be a temporary fix, while in other cases new and more durable partnerships will be developed. The impact of closed borders is forcing Pacific Island countries and their agricultural sectors to look internally and domestically for responses on food security, nutrition and livelihoods. Project interventions need to invest in re-orienting and developing new, more flexible and diversified value chains to better cope with future pandemic and other economic, environmental and climate shocks.

HOME GARDENS

The uptake of home gardening and peri-urban hobby farms has never been greater. This is primarily because people have been confined in their homes, with more time for gardening, and they have reduced buying power as a family unit, which is a driver for productive home gardening. The shortage of seed, seedlings and other planting material is a challenge that farmers and farmers organisations are addressing to ensure steady supply for new market needs and to cater for the home garden needs that have been generated. Project initiatives that support home gardening will be popular and need to be supported. Home gardeners will also need information to support their gardens in terms of soil health, soil preparation, planting and integrated pest management. They will also need information on what crops are best to grow in a small area such as leafy vegetables and herbs, traditional medicinal plants, and multi-way grafted fruit and nut trees on dwarfed root stocks.

VALUE ADDING INITIATIVES

It is recommended that resources be channeled into value adding processors and agribusinesses, small and medium Enterprises (SMEs) to value add to and preserve surplus fresh produce arising from the closure of tourism outlets. Partner support in the enabling of this initiative will ensure that continued production for commodities by farmers will still find an alternative market. Support for new business ideas that may have struggled to get up and running due to a lack of supply could be trialed during the period of anticipated excess supply.

AGRITOURISM EXPERIENCES OPPORTUNITIES

With the downturn in tourism, many tourism wholesalers are still reeling from tourism coming to a standstill in Pacific Island countries. A consultancy project initiative is being explored in Fiji through the PARDI2 project to work with farms and farmers to help them become 'visitor-ready' during this period of downturn, and prepare them for when tourism reopens in Fiji.

Small group experiences are likely to be in greater demand in the future, celebrating authenticity and a return to cultural roots, and where experiences highlight how traditional practices are being maintained.

Agritourism interventions are encouraged as this period has shown the relevance of agriculture livelihoods post COVID-19 whilst the impact of tourism and its importance from closed borders can provide this niche market to grow because it provides the safety of social distancing, small gatherings and nature all into one activity that people are getting accustomed to, and which will still apply when borders open up.

HOTEL / FARMER RELATIONSHIPS

Many resort hotels are now closed, running with minimum staff, and/or using the opportunity to carry out delayed maintenance on their properties. With more time available, resort procurement officers and chefs that remain employed can be contacted by FOs in their vicinity to develop partnerships between farmers that are contracted to grow produce for the hotels. The current downturn in business provides opportunities for resort chefs to visit farms, meet with farmers and communicate their needs on the varieties of crops that they need for their restaurants. There is an opportunity for farmers and hotels to enter into contract farming agreements that will encourage farmers to plant longer-term crops, including fruit and nut trees, now in readiness for when tourism begins to recover.

Hotels could also work with farmers to make their farms ‘visitor-ready’ for possible farm tours by tourists in the future to see how food at the hotel is grown and prepared. This ‘farm to table’ approach has proven fruitful for farms which have promoted such activities. Partner support and resources for these initiatives to the FOs will assist the FO leaders to prepare their members in making their properties ‘farm ready’ to produce for hotels, or for farm visits.

ONLINE EDUCATION / SALES

With the uptake and sudden interest in backyard gardening/farming, the opportunity to provide more information online is imminent as the rush for any information, tips and tricks, is eagerly shared on social media platforms. The recent invitation by FRIEND in Fiji to provide online backyard training, the sharing of PIFON’s short 3 min video’s, the online solution by Chamber D’Agriculture of New Caledonia to buy and sell their members produce are a few overnight solutions that FO’s have turned to post COVID-19.

An opportunity exists for stakeholders and donors together with FO’s to partner for initiatives to produce training videos on backyard gardens, pest management, soil health, plant care, tips and tricks to gardening etc that can be shared on social media as the general public are hungry for such information. Online webinars, live streaming of garden chats, buy and sell forums, fb barter pages, zoom calls on farm topics can be organised to be aired that will help the flow of information from FO’s who readily have this technical expertise to be shared generally.

AGRICULTURAL FINANCE

All Pacific Island economies have slowed, and many farmers are experiencing difficulties keeping up with loan repayments. There is also reduced liquidity, so in cases where there has been an increase in market demand and sales, the provisions to draw down on loans to cater for increased production have either been restricted or stopped.

The lack of consistent policy with regard to the obligations of financial institutions to agriculture is restricting the growth of the sector at the very time when it is one of the sectors identified to keep Pacific economies moving forward. More flexible fiscal and banking policies need to be developed that will assist the agricultural sector to cater for food security and support rural livelihoods. Governments need to invest and focus more of its budgetary allocations to agriculture and grow this sector to make their countries self-sufficient and food secure especially during times of pandemics.

AGRICULTURE – THE PREFERRED INDUSTRY

Further research needs to be undertaken into what has been invested into agriculture throughout the region prior to COVID-19, as for tourism-dependent nations, agriculture has all too often played second fiddle. COVID-19 has proven that agriculture is crucial and needs to be further promoted. FOs are encouraged to use this opportunity to work with their respective Governments, and in policy spaces, for greater investment into agriculture, agroforestry and fisheries as major industries for the Pacific that deliver livelihood, social and cultural benefits. More investment in agriculture is needed by way of equipment, technical staff, improved study and R&D options, and scholarships in the agricultural field for value adding technicians, food scientists, agronomists, plant scientists, soil technicians, veterinarians and agroforestry scientists.

There is a need to motivate the younger generation to look at agriculture as the preferred industry in which to obtain a livelihood and thus develop the overall primary industries sector. A lesson from COVID-19's impact on societies and countries must be that agriculture (along with forestry and fisheries) are the mainstays of Pacific Island economies.

It should be noted that the responses were noted by member country, as those individuals/organisations who replied were primarily from leading FOs within the respective Pacific member countries affiliated to PI-FON. The largest number of responses were from Fiji-based FOs with responses also received from FOs in Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands (please see the Table in Results of the Survey section).



BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

A survey was devised to identify what COVID-19's current impacts were for farmers and farmer organisations, and what impacts they expected moving forward. This survey recognised that the impact of COVID-19 had not spared any country in the Pacific and beyond, and that impacts likely differed across the Pacific Islands region.

The survey also sought information on the strategies being implemented to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on the agriculture industry and wider food security situation, and how to best continue to alleviate the challenges brought about by this pandemic.

Those targeted to complete the survey were the FOs in each of PIFON's nine member countries, as they represent 68,000 Pacific farmers, as well as other Pacific farmer interested in completing the survey.

Individual countries also conducted their own internal assessments, and as such this survey is designed to provide additional information to complement national assessments. This rapid analysis sought to identify vulnerable communities, and provide information for policy and decision makers as guidance on how to support farmers in the Pacific region as part of their COVID-19 response activities. Additional research into COVID-19's impacts, sourced from different websites, other industry reports, additional follow through with institutions to validate queries raised and impromptu interviews with key stakeholders have also provided valuable insights: PIFON has also drawn on these sources and associated insights in the compilation of this Survey Report.

We are also thankful to our ACIAR PARDI2 (Pacific Agribusiness Research Development Initiative Phase Two) research partners who assisted PIFON in the editing of this Survey Report.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was designed with the help of PARDI2 and circulated using Google Forms. It was emailed to PIFON's FO members in late March, and uploaded to the PIFON Facebook page in early April to openly invite direct responses from farmers.

PIFON's member FOs in nine countries were invited to participate in the survey. Seventeen respondents representing eleven Farmer Organisations and five organisations completed the survey from six member countries, with a total membership reach of 13,231 farmers.

Participants were asked to share their views on these issues (see Appendix A for full survey questionnaire):

- current & anticipated future impacts of Covid-19 on their communities
- biggest threats
- strategies implemented to mitigate the threats
- possible networking partners for recovery work
- experience in mass communication campaigns, disaster responses, health education, cash transfers
- key messages to share

INTRODUCTION TO THE PACIFIC DURING COVID-19

At the time of the survey four of PIFON's nine member countries, or territories (viz. Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, and Timor Leste) have cases of COVID-19. However, the economic impact resulting from the pandemic is widely felt across the region.

For many of the member countries, tourism contributes significantly to GDP and with border closures, flights grounded, country and city lockdowns experienced in the Pacific nations, tourism has ground to a halt. This has seen the collapse of tourism-related businesses with employees on reduced hours and sent home. It has also meant that PIFON's members' markets for agricultural produce through hotels and resorts has ceased.

In the midst of this global health crisis, four member countries also experienced a disaster with Tropical Cyclone Harold affecting Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga from (April 1st-11th, 2020). Although, of the four cyclone hit countries, Fiji has COVID-19 patients, this cyclone compounded existing challenges for them all, causing widespread structural damage on homes, vegetation and further threatening the resilience of our Pacific islands. For Vanuatu, the impact has been threefold, as even prior to COVID-19, Vanuatu experienced disasters from volcanic ash falls and flash flooding, and continues to be isolated and locked down.

This section provides a glimpse of what each of PIFON's nine member countries is currently experiencing:

COOK ISLANDS

One of the few countries which has not recorded any COVID-19 cases, the Cook Islands has been affected in that their tourism industry has come to a virtual standstill with three of the largest resorts closed during the survey period. This has meant a reduction in sales as hotels and resorts purchased fruits and vegetables, which have been redirected to the local market, and with the border closures there is limited freight for exports. Lockdowns in-country have seen a change to the value chain with farmers now selling directly to the consumer. There has been an increase in the promotion of keyhole gardening through TV and video, and a shortage has arisen in planting material from the increase in demand. FOs are working on recovery plans, which include reaching out to partners in Government and development agencies to identify ways to support the response.

FIJI

There were 18 cases of COVID-19 with 15 recorded recoveries at the time of finalizing this report. With 93% of its tourism industry closed from late March, Fiji has seen changes in the value chain, with farmers shifting to sell produce to the consumers, and in some instances produce going to waste as in-country lockdowns have hindered delivery of supplies to market. There has been a huge reduction in sales locally as well as on the export front as border closures have seen a drop in flight schedules by 95%, which has been extended through to 31st July. Vegetable prices have increased where there is shortage and lockdowns but are not expected to last as close to 110,000 individuals have had their income affected either through job loss as a direct consequence of the tourism industry closure. Many tourist workers are turning to growing their own produce, and/or returning to their villagers. The Ministry of Agriculture introduced response packages encouraging the establishment of backyard gardens but has experienced a shortage of planting materials.

Farmers with land masses of $\frac{3}{4}$ acres or more are being encouraged to plant certain crops to ensure food security. Further dialogue between organisations, Government and the national airline has seen Fiji Airways operate freight routes to help exporters with a weekly flight to its major destinations of New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Fiji was also the third Pacific country located on Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold's track, and extensive vegetation damage was experienced by farmers in the Western and Southern parts of the country which has virtually wiped out fresh vegetables that were in the fields ready for harvesting.

NEW CALEDONIA

With 18 cases of COVID-19 who have all recovered, New Caledonia has not experienced much of a change in their agricultural operations, however they are monitoring the situation closely. A recent economic survey covering 25 business sectors, including agriculture, saw a total of 1,200 companies respond, and it highlighted that the biggest issue experienced within the agricultural sector was in regard to disruptions to supply due to the in-country lockdown. Aside from a problem with transport access during lockdown, there is also a labour shortage. On-line buying and selling exchange platforms have been introduced to make it easier for local producers and buyers to network, and FOs have been liaising with the authorities to ensure that during the lockdown, that farmers are able to move around with their agricultural passes. With imports at 80%, farmers will be challenged when it comes to purchasing inputs such as fertilizers, however the demand for domestic produce will be boosted.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

There are 8 recovered cases of COVID-19 in Papua New Guinea, which has seen lockdowns in-country but not to the same extent as other Pacific Island countries. Domestic travel is permitted but borders have been closed. A State of Emergency was declared for two months which will run until June. The focus has been on food security for displaced workers, as well as supporting farmers with planting materials. Land has been allocated by the authorities to support food security. Work is being carried out to support the service capacities of the FOs, through the provision of seedlings and technological support.

SAMOA

Samoa has no recorded cases of COVID-19, however the Government declared a State of Emergency which resulted in lockdowns, and there are also border closures affecting this nation's export market. Samoa has experienced a substantial increase in unemployment, as well as crop wastage, as a result of the downturn within the tourism industry. A concern is the scarcity of land with citizens turning to the land for food security. There is a shortage of seedlings so national FOs are working to fill the gap. Efforts are being made to also improve communications through technology as movement is restricted and no public gatherings are allowed. Lobbying Government to allow flights in for imports and exports, have been successful but these freight flights are limited.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Solomon Islands have been fortunate not to have any COVID-19 cases reported, but they have not been spared from the economic downturn.

A State of Emergency was declared in preparation for COVID-19, but this has been extended due to the impact of TC Harold. These islands were the first on TC Harold's track, and the work has been exacerbated following the destruction from this system. Guadalcanal, which is the source of food for the capital Honiara, was devastated from floods caused by the cyclone. This is in addition to the unemployment experienced within the tourism industry from the economic downturn. There are concerns that with displaced workers moving into farming land to provide food security, there will be a scarcity of land. In the meantime, efforts have been directed to replanting and ensuring that there is sufficient planting material available.

TIMOR LESTE

With a current record of 24 cases of COVID-19, all recovered, Timor Leste has the highest number of recorded cases within the PIFON membership. With tourism at less than 1% of the GDP, unemployment has not increased as it has in other parts of the Pacific, but with oil as one of its main industries and the price crash, the economy is expected to deteriorate further. Agriculture has been a core focus since independence, so efforts continue to focus on food security, by way of preparing land for planting, as well as organising planting material for farmers.

TONGA

Another country without any recorded cases of COVID-19, but still feeling the brunt of the impact of the virus pandemic, whereby exports have been affected and the importation of items to help with construction has stalled projects within the agricultural industry. A State of Emergency has been declared and this has been extended due to the impact of TC Harold. The main damage to food crops and water supplies occurred in 'Eua and Tongatapu. With displaced workers returning to the land, scarcity of land will become an issue. Current efforts are focusing on re-strategising to focus on food security and livelihoods, and ensuring that there are supplies of planting material. Work with Government has included seeking the waiving of taxes for business, and also deferrals on loan repayments.

VANUATU

Vanuatu has no recorded cases of COVID-19, but four separate disasters have impacted the Vanuatu economy in recent times. Prior to COVID-19, there were volcanic ash and flash flooding events which impacted on agricultural produce, and whilst the country was under a State of Emergency to battle COVID-19, TC Harold struck as a Category 5 cyclone. This latter event has destroyed crops, infrastructure and livestock on northern islands (e.g. Santo, Malo and Malekula) and response measures have included re-distribution of agricultural crops and planting materials from islands in the south of the country such as Tanna. Vanuatu has a large rural and agricultural population so farmers are replanting in many regions of the country to ensure food security. Aid has been provided by the New Zealand and Australian Governments, but with Vanuatu only just starting to see full recovery from TC Pam (category 3) which hit in 2015, these latest disasters are further testing the resilience of its citizens.

(A more detailed situational analysis by country is provided in Appendix F).

RESULTS OF SURVEY

Of the 23 FOs in the nine PIFON member countries, replies were received from 11 FOs in Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

The total membership from these respondents is 13,231 farmers, which represents 19.4% of the total number of Pacific Island farmers membership reach.

In analysing the results, responses were recorded by country.

Country	Farmer Organisation (FO)	FO Acronym	Reach - Number of Farmers
Cook Islands	Te Tango Enuu	TTE	210
Fiji	Bula Agro	BA	5
	Fiji Beekeepers Association	FBA	350
	Floriculture Support Association	FSA	150
	Nature's Way Co-operative	NWC	331
	Tei Tei Taveuni	TTT	564
New Caledonia	Chambre d'Agriculture de Nouvelle Calédonie	CANC	2,935
Samoa	Women in Business Development Incorporated	WIBDI	1,656
Solomon Islands	Virgin Coconut Oil Producers Association	VCOPA	1,311
Tonga	Growers Federation	GROFED	1,539
	Nishi Trading	NISHI	4,180
TOTAL			13,231

(See Appendix B for the full survey results)

Current & anticipated Future impacts of COVID-19 on agriculture:

All countries highlighted that there was a current reduction in local sales of produce, and that there were problems experienced with the distribution channels. This was primarily due to the lockdowns imposed by Governments which made it difficult for farmers to cross internal borders, as well as abroad for exports. For some it was a result of the closure of many tourism businesses, so local produce which would have been purchased by the hotels, or used for exports, was surplus that had to be sold at the market.

A majority of the replies highlighted reduced support/visits from extension services such as training providers, again as a result of the lockdowns and safety guidelines issued to practice social distancing. With increases in unemployment, many sought support to begin home/backyard gardening which resulted in a shortage of seedlings/planting materials.

Farmers and nursery owners who had prepared seedlings saw an increase in their sales. Traders had surplus stocks as certain items were not a necessity resulting in reduced buying from farmers, and there was also stockpiling of good with longer shelf life by consumers prior to COVID-19 so this meant lower sales of fresh produce in the following weeks of this activity. This disruption in value chains was partly the reason for farmers having to take produce directly to market.

The additional time that people now have on their hands because of COVID-19 has seen many getting involved in home and backyard gardens, so much so that seeds, seedlings, planting materials, potting equipment, manure and soil are amongst the more popular trading commodities domestically as highlighted by the founder of 'Barter for a Better Fiji', Marlene Dutta on a recent BBC interview. The increase in home gardening has resulted in many partners and donors wishing to be a part of projects that encourage home and backyard gardening. However, we need to be mindful that this is mainly being practiced because of the COVID-19 situation where many people are currently staying at home. The return of people to work will see this trend decreasing and food in the markets will continue to be supplied by farmers who farm for their livelihood. Partners and donors are advised that longer term initiatives are best focused on farmers, expanding production and strengthening value chains, as they will be the backbone of rural economies.

Although cut flowers are perceived by some as non-essential, floriculture growers in Fiji have increased sales citing the calming effects of floral blooms on stressful situations. Deaths and funerals continue to occur, so flowers are still demanded for such occasions though the impact of social distancing has tampered the numbers that attend such gatherings. Local weddings generally see purchases of a significant number of flowers and this has also continued despite restrictions on social gathering numbers.

Future impacts that are anticipated include a possible price crash for agricultural produce as over supply from home gardening and produce which would have supplied the tourism sector come online. Likewise, social distancing restrictions will continue to see a reduction in the support/visits from extension services such as in Samoa where weekly organic basket collection from farmers has been halted as there has been no transport to help facilitate the movement of the produce.

As more industries reduce employment hours, if not lay-off staff, and more seek solutions through growing their own produce, further shortages of seedlings/planting materials are anticipated. The on-going problems with distribution channels are likely to continue so farmers will have to continue to be flexible and take produce to the market directly if traders are no longer able to purchase from the farm gate. In addition, transport problems and constraints with the continued lockdowns, subsequent food shortages from not being able to get certain products to market with some going to waste, the fear of farmers and their employees going to work, changing market dynamics and quarantine issues for farm produce are expected.

Biggest threats from COVID-19 on agriculture

Respondents identified numerous threats which have been divided into four sections, namely Health, Social, Environmental and Economic.

The biggest threat from a health perspective is the spread of the virus, particularly amongst the vulnerable senior ages and those with co-morbidities such as diabetes and cancer. Medical facilities simply do not have the resource capacity to accommodate an influx of COVID-19 cases, therefore any increases could see patients having to remain at home so the likelihood of the disease spreading is high.

When looking at social issues, there is an increase in theft expected with many now unemployed and food security will be the focus for many families. Also, social distancing will mean less interaction, so for communities that have limited or no access to IT and other means of communication, this can result in poor communication between communities. Another threat will be the expected increase in domestic violence as many are in lockdown, and there is increased stress from greater unemployment and reduced food security.

The extent of the impact differs from country to country given the nature of their business environment and support from Government. For the majority, where tourism contributes a significant amount to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the blow has been more severe. Border closures have created a multiplier effect of no tourists, no flights, less tourism products and services required so reduction in hours or loss of employment altogether, hence the reduction in buying power.

Some countries like New Caledonia and the Cook Islands rely heavily on imports, so flight cancellations have led to a reduction in imports that will affect inputs for agriculture, and consequently further loss of income. Tonga has seen a halt to the construction of a new building facility due to materials not being flown through on time. This is similar for countries which have significant agricultural exports for their produce, as the inability to export due to the cancellation of flights has seen the possibility of business closures. Shortage of labour is also a big threat as a result of the lockdown, fear of contracting COVID-19 and many returning to their provinces as a result of unemployment. With insufficient crop storage and preservation in many countries, the ability to reduce post-harvest losses is lessened resulting in financial losses.

Environmental threats such as disasters like cyclones or extensive drought will leave farmers in further precarious financial positions. For example, reduced finances to invest in irrigation systems, in times of drought, will affect production and the ability to earn revenue. Land scarcity could arise as many return to their traditional lands seeking food security from subsistence farming, and if not managed well, this could lead to arguments over land ownership and use. Additionally, with more returning to the land, there is an increased risk of deforestation.

Strategies implemented to mitigate the threats

Mitigation activities to combat the impact of COVID-19 are divided into three key strategic areas:

- **INDIVIDUAL:** Farmers helping themselves;
- **INTERNAL:** Farmer networks and organizations providing support; and
- **EXTERNAL:** Assistance from respective Governments and developmental partners

Within farms/organisations, many are emphasising effective forms of communication particularly through social media and exploring digital, online platforms, including virtual training materials to assist employees. Increasing the supply of seedlings and planting material is an important focus, particularly to meet the growing demand from those who are now unemployed, on reduced hours and/or are looking to establish backyard gardens.

FOs are strengthening their networks through increased engagement on social media and radio, particularly in rural communities where the internet is difficult to access, such as the Solomon Islands. There is much focus on identifying the most vulnerable members and re-strategising to address food security and improved livelihoods. FOs have produced effective solutions specific to their response to COVID-19 (see Key Messages Figures 1.1-1.5). In the Cook Islands, local produce originally targeted for the tourism market is sold domestically to especially vulnerable community members such as young families. FOs are also reaching out to Government and development agencies for funding support, seeking support for the urgent need of freight flights to assist with exports and imports. Additional support and greater investment is needed in agriculture for improved food security and livelihoods, in addition to intermediary relief efforts, such as waiving of taxes, subsidies on planting material and loan repayments.

To date, some Governments have already provided assistance such as specific freight flights particularly for national airlines.

Possible networking partners for recovery work

FOs within PICs are currently working together, alongside their funding partners including PI-FON, Ministries of Agriculture, Chambers of Commerce and Commercial Banks to further provide relevant assistance to their members. In Papua New Guinea, Government has designated land to an FO to help displaced workers.

Experiences in mass communication campaigns, disaster responses, health education, cash transfers

Five of the six FO countries have experience in relief support, particularly mass communication, participating in emergency/disaster response, humanitarian response and hygiene/health messaging (Cook Islands, New Caledonia, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji) Although deficient in this area, Solomon Islands has an extensive reach in rural communities, thus providing much needed local knowledge through the FO to successfully access and engage with them.

Agricultural Finance

Managing cash flow and accessing finance for farmers continues to be challenging and the impact of COVID-19 has only increased the difficulty for farmers to obtain bank loans. In some instances, farmers have had to personally negotiate delayed payments and finances to banks and financial institutions. All Pacific Island economies have slowed, and many farmers are experiencing difficulties keeping up with loan repayments. There is also reduced liquidity, so in cases where there has been an increase in market demand and sales, the provisions to draw down on loans to cater for increased production have either been restricted or stopped.

Farmers recorded higher sales right after COVID-19, attributed largely to the hoarding/stockpiling due to the uncertainty in the beginning. There were also the lockdowns of certain areas which created surplus in one area and none in other areas where farmers were not able to make deliveries. However, with cash still flush in the communities at the time, people used the opportunity to stockpile on products which saw quick gains for farmers, but these have now tapered off.

Only farmers in Fiji have reported their loans approved prior to COVID-19 are now frozen. Subject to this being verified, it appears to be a temporary policy: follow up with banks to validate these comments did not reach us when this report was finalised. Farmers are arguing that they have the time and the need is to now to grow their farms. Follow up checks and emails were sent to find out if there is a fiscal policy by the Reserve Bank of Fiji on this matter as commercial banks are also not lending, with the assumption that all is not normal, and instead the option to wait for a return to normal business to resume lending. These loans that Fiji farmers commented on are not commodity specific, but general agriculture development loans to develop unutilised land (and prior to COVID-19 pandemic).

Within the region, Governments have generally tasked banks and financiers to restructure loans to assist the agricultural sector. However only in Fiji were banks encouraged to do this: thus the onus and responsibility was on individual farmers to work out their requirements on a one to one basis. This has been an additional burden on top of coping with COVID-19 and recovering from TC Harold. Interesting to note, that despite produce prices now falling, such as for kava, farmers are opting to harvest and sell to ensure repayments to loans are met, rather than keeping their crops in the field for when prices may increase again in lieu of reorganising repayment structures.

The lack of consistent policy with regard to the obligations of financial institutions is restricting the growth of agriculture at the very time when it is one of sectors identified to keep Pacific economies moving forward. More flexible fiscal and banking policies need to be developed that will assist the agricultural sector to cater for food security and support rural livelihoods.

Agritourism Experiences Opportunities

With the downturn in tourism, many tourism wholesalers are still reeling from tourism coming to a standstill in Pacific Island countries. This provides an opportunity to lay the groundwork for farms and farmers who are interested in opening up their farms for Agritourism experience. Small group experiences are likely to be in greater demand in the future, these family-friendly niche experiences have struggled to get the attention of mainstream tourism stakeholders in the past and the current crisis could provide the space to develop this niche market for the Pacific.

The marketing opportunity for the essence of ‘Pacific Tourism’ is here, proposals for a promotional roadshow highlighting a safe, exciting travel option, depicting accommodation and ‘farm to table’ concepts from the respective parts of the Pacific provide ‘the light at the end of the tunnel’ for possible Pacific tourism and Agritourism opportunities.

Celebrating authenticity and a return to cultural roots, where experiences highlight how traditional practices are resuming. Bartering, a centuries old method of trade, has recommenced but through the current medium of social media. Another centuries old trading mechanism has begun, but on a smaller scale, which is the subletting of land allotments to displaced workers where the terms of the lease are an allocation of the crops planted going to the landowner.

A large part of being ready is ensuring that ‘Safety is Paramount’ for all concerned, whether a local or a visitor to Pacific shores. It is important for short and long-term plans that locals maintain good hygiene practices so as to promote a safe environment for all concerned. A national effort in each Pacific country should be encouraged in educating for better hygiene practices and its importance for locals and attracting visitors alike, as well as a cleaner environment for all. This is a worthwhile campaign for tourism reliant Pacific economies, and ideally it would be produced by the respective Pacific nations in their respective languages.

Long-term health initiatives can include utilising defence forces, namely Military, Navy as well as domestic units like the Police, for First Responder training to combat pandemics. COVID-19 is a unique occurrence, but given the resurgence of pandemics throughout history, it is advisable that a more strategic preparatory approach with lessons learnt to help future recovery efforts. Aside from focusing on health to maintain a robust population who are productive and do not pressure developing medical infrastructures, it will be a reassurance for tourists to our shores that the Pacific Islands have the capability and capacity to accommodate the safety and medical needs of all.

KEY MESSAGES TO SHARE

Respondents were asked to provide their key messages to fellow farmers, their respective Governments and to the general public. Core messages common to all the three groups were:

- To work together
- Promote the importance of local trade, reducing imports and improving food security
- Promote local and healthy eating
- Actively and visibly support locally grown produce for local consumption

Highlighted below are some of the messages shared by some FOs from around the region, which were also expanded and circulated widely through E-Bulletins (see Appendix C)



Figure 1.1



Figure 1.2



Figure 1.3



Figure 1.4

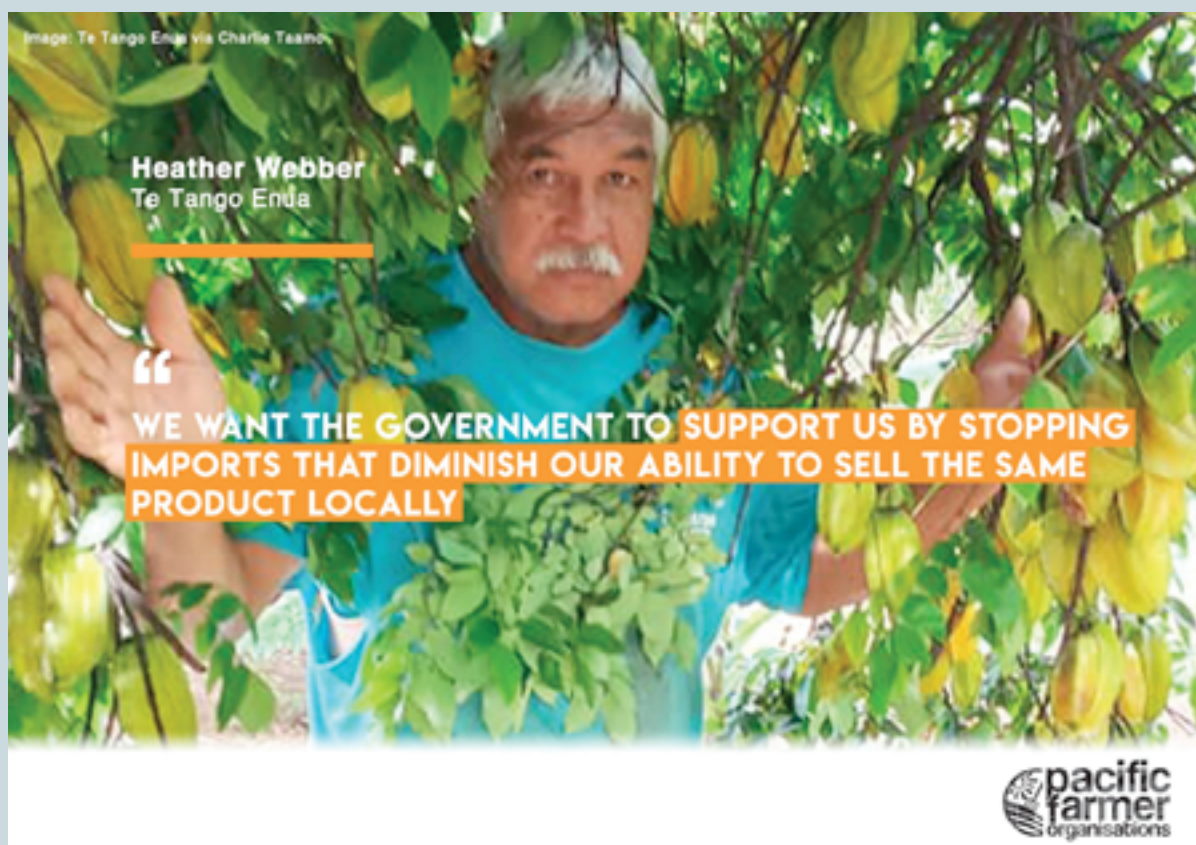


Figure 1.5



CONCLUSION

The respondents confirm, along with the additional research carried out, that there has been a significant impact of COVID-19 on agriculture to date, and with the uncertainty surrounding the continual presence of the pandemic in the region, there will undoubtedly be further impacts.

Economically, this may be one of the most significant periods in the Pacific's more recent history, where agriculture and consequently local food security and livelihoods have taken prominence. Agriculture is a key to sustainable food security. Securing agriculture means securing food security and is especially critical for long-term economic sustainability, particularly for Pacific Island countries that heavily rely on one major source of national revenue such as tourism. The agriculture sector is now key to boosting livelihoods in both rural and urban communities. The enforcement of trade restrictions, lockdowns, social distancing, reduced income and unemployment has forced individuals and families to seek alternative means for survival. Therefore, the promotion of locally-grown, fresh produce for economic and health benefits will be crucial to keep Pacific economies afloat.

As stories are shared across the region, the demand for seedlings and planting material has soared leading to insufficient supply. The grounding of flights has also meant a slower process of obtaining certain farm input materials as sea freight is now the mode of transport for supplies. Barter systems have been set up in some member countries and their communities, and the popularity of exchanging items for seedlings and plants has grown, as has the volume of requests with FOs, Governments and development partners rushing to bridge the gap.

Value chains that saw the process of farmers working with wholesalers and retailers have been reduced to direct market sales by farmers themselves. Countries which rely heavily on imports are now focused on domestic food-supply chains.

For countries who are heavily reliant on tourism, the demand for vegetables and fruits originally targeted for tourists has drastically reduced, leaving excess supply and wasted crops. This however does create opportunity for the development of value-added products.

With more Pacific Islanders taking up backyard gardening, this may see an effect on the current marketplace, as more people grow their own crops.

In some of the survey responses received, some countries highlighted a need for a co-ordination unit to ascertain what is required within the community, and how these requirements can be met. New Caledonia started a buying/selling exchange platform at the national level for farmers. From Fiji, there has been a call for a national agricultural unit, comprised of individuals from both the public and private sector. Their primary role would be to ascertain the needs of the nation in regard to food security, and by the same token determine what the farmers have currently available and could plant, thus covering both short and long-term plans. There is the Fiji Crop and Livestock Council, which represents agriculture's private sector, as well as small holder farmers, and with additional capacity building, the Council could be better prepared for this suggested role of national co-ordination unit. Whatever the outcomes, the steps taken need to be sustainable.

Fiji has also seen a large return to the barter system – the cashless exchange of goods and services. Concerned with the effects of COVID-19, this initiative began from a Facebook page created by friends, and it saw exponential growth of interest within just two days of the creation of the page. Worth mentioning is the rate of exchanges that has taken place for seedlings and planting material in exchange for luxury goods which have become a non-priority commodity. It is also interesting to note how the bartering idea has been adopted by other Pacific countries, including New Zealand. With many people working from home, or are on reduced hours due to lockdowns or closure of business, available time has resulted in home/backyard gardening, or simply returning to the land to sustain livelihoods and food security within the home.

From a health perspective, the spread of the disease continues to be a concern globally and a risk to Pacific Island nations. At the national level, Pacific medical services do not have the capability and capacity to care for numerous patients during a pandemic, making it fortunate that only four PIFON member countries have recorded cases.

Given the Pacific's vulnerability to importing the virus from international visitors, it is highly likely that borders will remain closed till at least the end of the year. How well farmers are able to sustain a longer lockdown will differ, amongst themselves as well as between countries. For those who face a bleaker future, effects on mental health is a concern, not just within the farming community, but within the nation. The same applies to domestic violence in that increasing economic pressures on families and communities have already started to sadly reflect in the growing statistics.

Efforts could be directed to affected employees being offered educational opportunities within agriculture by way of on-line tutorials, short videos by PIFON's FO members, farm visits within safety guidelines, and basically a greater investment in agriculture from a personnel aspect as there is a shift towards diversifying industry.

With the availability of a COVID-19 vaccine when it is developed, the long-term effects on employment will affect timely harvests. Ideally, personal protective equipment (PPE) should be provided to farm working crews, physical distancing guidelines adhered to, and if there continues to be a shortage, employing redundant employees from other industries to bridge the labour gap are all effective solutions for agriculture.

There also needs to be a greater investment in IT, with more people holding on-line meetings using various apps, such as Zoom and Google Suite. Communication suppliers around the Pacific have pointed out the increase in online hours as a result of COVID-19, and many software suppliers of specific services now offer free services which survey respondents are utilising. The encouragement of short educational videos by PIFON's FO members to share technical information to backyard gardeners is a very urgent need as the general public are searching for tips and tricks of gardening that farmers may easily share.

From an environmental perspective, COVID-19 has amplified what documentaries have failed to do in raising greater awareness of climate change in the global population. Examples of the environment restoring itself throughout the world has many thinking of how this will affect the Pacific. For some nations many people originally employed in the tourism industry are now heading back to their homes to farm their lands, and for some nations, this will cause land scarcity, overplanting of lands and potentially deforestation. Therefore, Governments need to be pro-active in how they provide planning support within these communities. It highlights the need for the previously mentioned national coordination unit, educational mobile units for training support in these communities and implementing reforestation plans.

COVID-19 has provided a great opportunity for the agriculture industry. Countries which had digressed their focus from this important sector of the economy are being forced to return and invest in this industry. Key messages resulting from this situation have indicated that working together is crucial to emerge from this in a better state (see Appendix C for examples of responding to COVID-19), with the importance of strengthening communication networks paramount to this. Food security and sustainability will help in creating a more self-sufficient environment through the promotion of purchasing local farm produce to reduce the reliance on imports.

Ideally, a similar survey will be repeated in the next 6-9 months given the evolving scenarios in the continued response to COVID-19.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PIFON acknowledges and thanks:

- all participants for their responses to the survey, and their confidence in agreeing to PIFON using their feedback to help develop agriculture in response to COVID-19
- all FO members who provided, and continue to provide, feedback on their respective situations in-country
- PARDI2 for their overall contribution to the survey in helping to prepare the Google form, and providing feedback on the draft report
- All resource networks (to name a few) – Radio New Zealand, Fiji Times, Facebook, New Zealand Herald, Sydney Morning Herald, SPTO, www.worldometer.com, Fiji Times, United Nations, World Travel and Tourism Council

Covid 19 and Agriculture - Pacific Farmers Have Their Say

During these challenging times, we would like to better understand how we can support farmers and other stakeholders in the agriculture sector to manage the situation. Please provide as much detail as you can. All ideas are welcome - there are no bad or wrong ideas in these unprecedented times!

PIFON, PARDI2 are working to re-program short term activities to address the situation and your ideas will contribute to this process.

Details of respondent

Name:

Email:

Organisation:

Country:

Designation:

Impacts of Covid 19 on agricultural sector

What are the **current** impacts on the agricultural sector in your country/area as a result of Covid 19 to date?

Please write your general responses here.

Please tick any of those that apply and provide additional detail if possible.

1. Reduced local / national sales

2. Loss / reduction of export markets

3. Shortage of seedlings / planting materials

4. Traders no longer buying from farmers

5. Problems with distribution channels

6. Reduced support/visits from extension services

7. Farmers taking produce directly to the market due to distribution problems

8. Increased sales

9. Increased demand for seedling
 10. Increased number of farmers returning to communities to farm
 11. Other - please provide any other feedback
-

What are some impacts you are **expecting** on the agricultural sector in your country/area as a result of Covid 19?

Please write your general responses here.

Additionally, please tick any of those that apply and provide additional detail if possible.

1. Reduced sales
2. Shortage of seedlings / planting materials
3. Traders no longer buying from farmers
4. Problems with distribution channels
5. Farmers taking produce directly to the market due to distribution problems
6. Transport problems and constraints
7. Reduced support/visits from extension services
8. Increased sales
9. Over-supply of existing markets
10. Food shortages
11. Changing market dynamics
12. Quarantine and other barriers that may create further problems for farmers to sell their produce
13. Farmers/farm employees afraid to go to work

What do you see as the biggest threats facing farmers and the agricultural sector as a whole in your country/area as a result of Covid 19?

Please write your general responses here and you also may consider the headings below

Human health

Economic

Social

Environmental

Strategies to mitigate the impacts of Covid 19 on agricultural sector

What are some strategies you or your organisation are putting in place to mitigate the threats of Covid 19 on the agricultural sector?

Please write your general responses here.

Please tick any of those that apply and provide additional detail if possible.

1. Identifying our most vulnerable members
2. Strengthening our networks and outreach
3. Increasing supply of seedling / planting material
4. Increasing communication and awareness with members
5. Increasing use of social media to connect with members / markets / traders etc
6. Developing electronic and virtual training materials
7. Putting together specific project proposals to respond to COVID-19
8. Reaching out to partners in government, development agencies to identify ways to support the response
9. Re-strategizing to focus more on livelihoods/food security
10. Other

What strategies do you recommend government and development partners put in place to mitigate any further threats of Covid 19 on the agricultural sector?

Please write your general responses here.

Please tick any of those that apply and provide additional detail if possible.

1. Increase supply of seedling / planting material through research stations and agricultural offices
2. Increasing communication and awareness materials and used of social media by extension officers to connect with farmers
3. Refinancing and deferral of agricultural loans
4. Deferral of taxes and lease payments
5. Increase availability of grants and loans to support farming initiatives
6. Focus projects now on livelihoods and food security
7. Other

Are there other organisations that you are able to network/connect with who may be part of a wider relief process in your country where they can have a role to play and be a part of coordination mechanisms.

Please write your general responses here.

Does your organisation have any experience in the following areas (please tick any relevant

and if yes provide a brief explanation below)

1. Mass communication campaigns (eg radio) and behaviour change campaigns
2. Participating in emergency/disaster response / relief efforts
3. Experience with humanitarian response of any type including methods for targeting most vulnerable
4. Hygiene and health education and messaging
5. Cash transfers or other types of direct household relief

Key messages

What are some key messages you would like to share with farmers and farmers organisations regarding Covid 19 and agriculture?

Please write your response here.

What are some key messages you would like to share with government and development partners regarding Covid 19 and agriculture?

Please write your response here.

What are some key messages you would like to share with the general public about Farmers Organisations responses and actions regarding Covid 19

Please write your response here.

Permission to use information

By participating in this questionnaire you are granting permission to PIFON to use this information for the purpose of information sharing.

APPENDIX B: FULL SURVEY RESULTS

IMPACTS OF COVID19 on AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

KEY: C=Current F=Future

IMPACTS OF COVID19	COUNTRY											
	COOK ISLANDS		FIJI		NEW CALEDONIA		SAMOA		SOLOMON ISLANDS		TONGA	
	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F
Reduced local/national sales												
Loss/Reduction of export markets												
Shortage of seedlings/planting materials												
Traders no longer buying from farmers												
Problems with distribution channels												
Reduced support/visits from extension services												
Farmers taking produce directly to the market due to distribution problems												
Increased sales												
Increased demand for seedling												
Increased number of farmers returning to communities to farm												
Labour shortage												
Delay in funding support												
Limited production												
No shortage of agri-produce												
Good communication												
No shortage of inputs												
Fear of contracting Covid19 as age susceptible												
Lack of finance/support by Government												
Additional workload with staff shortage												
Transport problems & constraints												
Over-supply of existing markets												
Food shortages												
Changing market dynamics												
Quarantine & other barriers that may create further problems for farmers to sell their produce												
Farmers/farm employees afraid to go to work												
Input shortage												
Increase in crime (Theft)												
Less focus on commercial farming												
Food security												
Slow growth												

Increase in backyard gardens												
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The above table is a consolidation of responses to Questions 6-11

THREATS	COUNTRY					
	COOK ISLANDS	FIJI	NEW CALEDONIA	SAMOA	SOLOMON ISLANDS	TONGA
HEALTH						
Fear & vulnerability to Covid19						
Less focus on nutritional aspect of farming						
ECONOMIC						
Export:						
- Businesses close						
- Unemployment						
- Lost markets						
- High cost of freight						
Insufficient local demand/overflow of produce						
Displacement of business as people grow their own, so less purchased from the market						
Loss of markets/income						
Loss of inputs (imports)						
Shortage of labour						
Price set by middleman						
Mistrust by banks						
Decrease in transportation						
Slow economic growth						
Crop wastage						
Existing financial constraints hinder recovery plans						
SOCIAL						
Increase in crime (theft)						
Poor communication						
Time management with abuse of social media						
Domestic violence						
ENVIRONMENTAL						
Scarcity of land						
Deforestation						
Drought – already lost income from COVID-19, so no way to afford irrigation						
Cyclone – wipe out replanting efforts to sustain COVID-19						

The above table is tabulated for responses to Question 12.

STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE THREATS	COUNTRY					
	COOK ISLANDS	FIJI	NEW CALEDONIA	SAMOA	SOLOMON ISLANDS	TONGA
ORGANISATIONAL						
Reduced hours						
Halting new projects						
Increasing use of social media to connect with stakeholders/develop electronic & virtual training materials						
Pre-purchase in bulk						
Continuing with projects to provide income revenue						
Encourage direct deposit payments						
Increasing supply of seedling/planting material						
Home deliveries of produce						
Maintain pricing						
Move produce as quickly as possible						
Value add products						
Improvising on planting materials as shortage of imported material						
FARMER NETWORK						
Strengthening networks & reach/Increasing communication & awareness with members						
Identifying most vulnerable members						
Re-strategizing to focus more on livelihoods/ food security						
Sustainable agricultural management						
Maintain production						
Encourage farmers to practice quality health routines						
Native language translation of COVID-19						
Putting together specific proposals to respond to COVID-19						
Establish platform for information, exchange of goods						
Reaching out to GOVERNMENT/DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS						
Continue with freight flights						
Continue lobbying efforts for agriculture/ food security						
Lobbying for financial assistance through grants, waiving of loan repayments, taxes, price						

Embrace video-conferencing, IT						
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The above table is a consolidation of responses from Questions 13 – 17.

NETWORK PARTNERS FOR WIDER RELIEF EFFORTS	COUNTRY					
	COOK ISLANDS	FIJI	NEW CALEDONIA	SAMOA	SOLOMON ISLANDS	TONGA
FOs						
MOA						
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE						
CARITAS NZ						
IT Specialists						
BANKS						
PIFON						
Pharma Plus						
PARDI						

The above table is tabulated for responses to Question 18.

EXPERIENCE FOR RELIEF SUPPORT	COUNTRY					
	COOK ISLANDS	FIJI	NEW CALEDONIA	SAMOA	SOLOMON ISLANDS	TONGA
Mass communication campaign						
Participating in emergency/disaster response						
Humanitarian response of any type						
Hygiene, health education, messaging						
Cash transfers or other types of direct household relief						
Co-ordination in rural areas						
Fundraising efforts						
Improvising to help smallholders						

The above table is a consolidation of responses from Questions 19 – 20.

KEY MESSAGES FOR SHARING	COUNTRY					
	COOK ISLANDS	FIJI	NEW CALEDONIA	SAMOA	SOLOMON ISLANDS	TONGA
FARMER NETWORK						
Promote local						
Decrease imports						
Change eating habits						
Let's come out of this better than when we went into it						

Flowers an important supplement for income						
Floriculture allows for social distancing						
Follow health guidelines						
Avoid social gatherings						
Work together sharing resources and experiences						
Return to organics						
Act local, think global						
Stay strong						
Plant moderately						
Maintain production to markets						
Start home deliveries						
Pick/Pack fruit & vegetables with gloves on						
Encourage barter						
Food security						
Focus on non-export farmers to be self-reliant						
GOVERNMENT/DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES						
Grow more food locally						
Invest in agriculture						
Adapt & design markets to minimise health risks						
FOs to handle ground responses as networks already in place						
Change eating habits						
Encourage organic farming						
Encourage local produce						
Invest in food security						
Decrease imports						
Share information						
Provide relevant stimulus package						
Encourage youth farmers						
United we will rise						
Sustainability						
National co-ordination unit needed from public & private to handle logistics in agriculture moving forward						
GENERAL PUBLIC						
Grow food & flowers						
Work together						
Support local						
Support organic						
Food security						
Grow local						
Stay strong						

Farmers will get food to your table						
Support available, just contact us						
Hand wash outside your house						
Liaise with MOA to locate local markets						
Forward Ever, Backward Never						
Use whatever land to plant – food, flowers						
This is a blessing as provides an opportunity to look at becoming self sufficient						

The above table is a consolidation of responses from Questions 21-23.

APPENDIX C: EXAMPLES OF RESPONDING TO COVID-19

The e-Bulletins below were developed from feedback received, and provide an in-depth view of what is happening on the ground in PIFON's respective member countries, and there is also a Blog item which looks to promoting 'Eat Local Grow Local Promote Local' as per one of the recommendations from the survey:



Pacific Farmers Have Their Say: Boost Food Sovereignty

<https://pacificfarmers.com/pacific-farmers-have-their-say-boost-food-sovereignty/>



Food Security A Growing Concern In Solomon Islands Following TC Harold

<https://pacificfarmers.com/food-security-a-growing-concern-in-solomon-islands-following-tc-harold/>



Pacific Farmers Have Their Say: Disrupted Supply Chain Operations A Challenge

<https://pacificfarmers.com/pacific-farmers-have-their-saydisrupted-supply-chain-operations-a-challenge/>



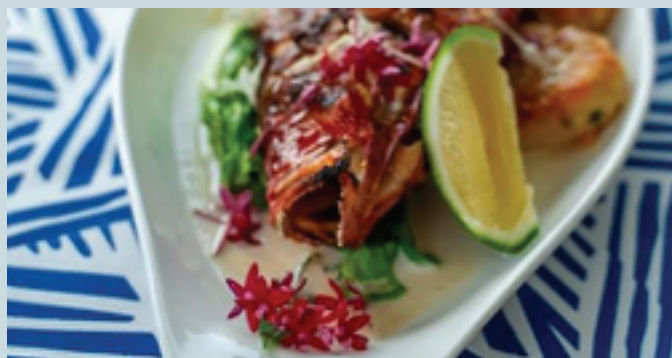
Pacific Farmers Have Their Say: Strengthen Communication Networks

<https://pacificfarmers.com/pacific-farmers-have-their-say-strengthen-communication-networks/>



Pacific Farmers Have Their Say: Import Substitution

<https://pacificfarmers.com/pacific-farmers-have-their-say-import-substitution-2/>



BLOG: Farm To Table: Thinking Critically About The Food We Eat

<https://pacificfarmers.com/farm-to-table-thinking-critically-about-the-food-we-eat/>

APPENDIX D: SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR FOS & FARMERS

SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT!¹

The safety and security of all involved in the FO4ACP Program must be ensured throughout, and all are requested to adhere to the following phases & respective steps, please:

PHASE 1	Applies to all countries where movement still allows for working in the office, however public gatherings, such as meetings are limited to a certain number of people.
Step 1	All who walk in from outside the building, from the farm MUST wash their hands for 20 seconds
Step 2	All who walk in from outside the office, in addition to Step 1 MUST wipe their phones and laptops with disinfectant wipes; for farming tools, these must be washed thoroughly with soap & water especially handles and stored neatly away
Step 3	Social distancing must be practised at all times in the office, out in the farm when meeting people, the common courtesy of handshakes must cease, instead, fist pumps and arm shakes are the order of the day. The use of disposable gloves and masks is highly recommended
Step 4	All physical and face to face meetings with clients, farmers to be conducted via on-line, virtual meetings using Google Hangouts, Zoom, Skype or WhatsApp whenever possible
Step 5	All conferences and business travel are cancelled until further notice
All other Government mandatory guidelines to also be adhered too	
PHASE 2	Applies when there is a confirmed report from a trusted news agency of a Covid19 case in the country. Should your country recognise your organisation as an essential service whereby you may continue to work within the office, out in the farm, the procedures in Phase 1 will apply, as well as the following.
Step 1	All must maintain a physical distance of 2 metres within the office, outside, and on the farm
Step 2	Meetings, whether online or face to face, will be conducted along the same parameters as Phase 1, Step 3 and 4
Step 3	Avoid sharing physical items, mobile chargers, phones, pens, bags, containers, unless it is wiped down with disinfectant wipes or an alcohol-based solution. The wearing of gloves and masks is mandatory when working within the precincts of affected cases.
Should you choose to work remotely from home, or solely at your farm, then you may do so ensuring that the necessary communication lines are open for enquiries and support to members.	
PHASE 3	Applies for the worst-case scenario, whereby utilities, such as water, power, the internet and mobile services fail for an extended period of time. This will involve staying at home in complete isolation with your family.
We understand that different governing authorities have introduced their own safety & security guidelines, which include restrictions, and PIFON encourages all FOs to align the guidelines provided above to what the authorities have advised.	
THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION	

¹ Adapted from The Greenhouse Studio Fiji: The Greenhouse Covid-19 Response

APPENDIX E: RISK MATRIX

Risk	Effect	Level of Risk	Mitigation
Unemployment	Increase in crime/agricultural theft	High	Farmers awareness on Agricultural Threat as a real threat post COVID-19
	Return of workers to villages	High	Increase of community farms / agricultural work for food security
	Reduction of income	High	Less purchasing power in the market, farmers may have to reduce rates to markets
	Increase in Home gardens	High	Decrease in farm sales at markets
Continued border closure	Halt to Tourism Industry market	High	Re-orient sales to domestic market
		High	Find alternative vendors in the domestic market for bulk produce processing
No flights due to country lockdowns	Reduced Exports	High	Lobby Government for airlines to continue to fly freight
Reduced frequency of flights	No Imports	High	Prioritize and promote 'Buy Local' for domestic grown foods
Direct sales from farmer to consumer	Income lost by middlemen	High	Encourage satellite markets, home deliveries, social media direct marketing
Increase in infection	Shortage of labor, unable to harvest produce in the field	High	Provide PPE to FOs, option to cut losses on non-harvested fields, or lobby to obtain labor from Government sources to harvest excess produce for Hospitals, service institutions etc.
Lockdown/Curfew	Shortage of labor	High	Lobby Government for agriculture to be recognized as an essential service during covid19, work remotely, use IT solutions for communications
	Decrease in products available	High	Lobby Government to promote agriculture produce to purchased, delivered to markets, and reorientation of VC's be supported
	Wastage from rotting fresh produce	High	Development of local processing, cottage industry, preservation: storage, canning, juicing of agricultural products

APPENDIX F: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

INFORMATION AS AT 08TH MAR 2020

	COUNTRY	POPULATION	% RURAL POPULATION	# MEMBER F0N	# COVID CASES	# COVID DEATHS	# COVID RECOVERY	LOCATION OF TESTING	SITUATION IN COUNTRY					
									LOCKDOWN	PUBLIC GATHERINGS	CURFEW	FLIGHTS	TOURISM TO GDP	NATURAL DISASTERS
1	COOK ISLANDS	17,561	25%	1	0			Abroad	Restrictions eased; schools reopened; domestic travel permitted	Open, social distancing	Only on alcohol sales, from 9am to 6pm	Limited as only for supplies	70.0%	
2	FII	895,057	41%	9	18		14	Local	Domestic flights and shipping opened up	Limited to 20 pax, social distancing	10pm to 5am	Only freight flights for exports/imports	38.9%	Hit by TC Harold 8th April - 1 loss of life; extensive damage to crops & vegetation to Western, Southern & Central shores
3	NEW CALEDONIA	284,908	28%	1	18		18	Local	Restrictions eased; businesses reopen except for cinemas, nightclubs, bars. Church and sports still on hold	Limited to 50 pax, social distancing		Operating domestically, but international borders closed	9.0%	
4	PAPUA NEW GUINEA	8,909,675	87%	1	8		8	Abroad	State of Emergency for 2 months till 6th June	No restrictions, social distancing		Operating domestically, but international borders closed	1.6%	
5	SAMOA	198,181	82%	2	0			Abroad	State of Emergency	None allowed		Operating domestically, but international borders closed	25.0%	
6	SOLOMON ISLANDS	683,117	77%	4	0			Abroad	State of Emergency prior to Covid19, extended with impact of TC Harold	None allowed, social distancing		Limited as only for supplies	12.5%	Hit by TC Harold 6th April - 27 lives lost; extensive damage from flooding to crops & vegetation
7	TIMOR LESTE	1,312,910	68%	1	24		20	Abroad		Social distancing		International borders closed	Less than 1%	
8	TONGA	105,435	74%	3	0			Abroad	State of Emergency prior to Covid19, extended with impact of TC Harold	None allowed, social distancing	8pm to 5am	Limited as only for supplies	28.0%	Hit by TC Harold 9th April - no loss of life; extensive damage to crops & vegetation to Western and Central shores
9	VANUATU	305,641	76%	1	0			Abroad	State of Emergency prior to Covid19, extended with impact of TC Harold	Limited to 5 pax, social distancing		Limited as only for supplies	40.0%	Hit by TC Harold 7th April - 2 lives lost; extensive damage throughout to crops & vegetation

Sources: F0Ns, www.spc.int, www.iata.org, www.worldometers.info, www.thediplomat.com, www.theguardian.com, www.rnz.co.nz, worlddata.info, www.worldscientific.com, www.knoema.com, www.indexmundi.com, Fiji Times, Facebook

ABOUT FO4ACP

The Farmers Organisation for Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific Programme (FO4ACP) is for Farmers Organisations (FOS) that are based in these regions of the world. The overall goal and objectives of the Programme is to increase income and to improve livelihood, food and nutrition security and safety of organized smallholder and family farmers in the target areas of the ACP countries.

Its expected outcomes or specific objectives are:

Strategic Objective 1: FOS and farmer-led enterprises improve technical and economic services to their members along the value chains.

Strategic Objective 2: FOS influence policies and business environments for the transformation of family farming and the development of sustainable, adaptive economic initiatives and farmer-led enterprises.

Strategic Objective 3: FOS are accountable organizations able to effectively perform their institutional functions.

The expected outputs include: (a) Improved capacity of FOS to deliver technical and economic services and connect their members to markets; (b) Improved access of FOS to financial services; (c) Improved business environment and smallholder competitiveness; (d) Strengthened institutional capacities and professionalism of FOS; and (e) Enhanced knowledge and dissemination among peers for replication and scaling-up.

ABOUT PIFON

The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) is intended to serve as an umbrella organisation for national Farmer Organisations (FOs) in the Pacific, to coordinate capacity building, share success stories and the lessons learnt, support regional exchanges of expertise between FOs and their associated private sector and donor agency partners. PIFONs mission is to make Pacific FOs more vibrant, viable and sustainable organisations: www.pacificfarmers.com

Disclaimer

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