

Season's Greetings

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2020 PACIFICFARMERS.COM

inside

PIFON IN TALKS
WITH MULTI PARTNERS FOR
COVID 19 PROJECT RESPONSE

DR.MCGREGOR CALLS
FOR A 'RESET' IN PUBLIC
SECTOR POLICY

AGRITOURISM
THE FUTURE OF TOURISM?

BREADFRUIT
AWARENESS WORKSHOP
BEGINS IN THE COOK ISLANDS

SOFTWARE
SHAPING AGRICULTURE
IN TONGA

**TRACTORS TO INCREASE
YIELDS FOR FARMERS**
IN TIMOR - LESTE

& more!





From Left: Kyle Stice, Manager of PIFON, Sakiusa Tubuna, Pacific Regional Coordinator of IFAD, Shadiyana Sadik, Programme Advisor of IFAD, Patrick Tuimalealiifano, Deputy Team Leader for Inclusive Growth of UNDP and Lavinia Kaumaitotoya, Senior Programme Manager of PIFON at today's inception meeting in Nadi

The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network are currently in talks with multi partners for the implementation of the Inclusive Economic Recovery Through Sustainable Enterprises In Informal Economics Project in Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga and Palau.

Valued at USD\$2.5M, the project is in response to COVID-19 and will be applied under 13 months.

"The actual incidence of COVID-19 infections in Pacific Island Countries has been minimal but the overall economic and social impact of the pandemic has been substantial," said Sakiusa Tubuna, Pacific Regional Coordinator of IFAD.

"It includes a significant effect on food security and nutrition — which has been largely driven by the demand side rather than the supply side."

Yesterday's project inception meeting identified targets and constraints from country representatives in government, business development service providers, creative industries associations and farmer associations.

"We'll be targeting people returning to their traditional land because there's a number of issues around it; Do they have the technical expertise? Are they doing it in a sustainable way? Is it cohesive with the community? There's a need to do it in a sustainable way and the farming boom has to be done sustainably," said Kyle Stice, Manager of PIFON.

"We see a targeting around selected value chains, the value chain means everybody — it's farmers, it's middleman and it's exporters, we're targeting all four. There is more focus on export commodities and we've identified a couple like ginger and turmeric."

"This is all about the informal sector and we'll be helping to raise them to the next level. If we want to create more livelihood opportunities, we have to link some of these farmers to some of these export value chains."

"The challenge is, how do you take a little bit of money and spread it across? We've discussed the need to be very targeted and you can't work in all districts. You need to work in just a few areas and do it, do it well."

Kyle Stice said the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network will also target urban and peri urban gardeners and small scale agro processors.

The project will be implemented between November 2020 — November 2021 and is funded under the Multi Partner Trust Fund; a partnership between International Labour, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, United Nations Development Programme, and co-financed by International Fund for Agricultural Development.

DR. ANDREW MCGREGOR CALLS FOR 'RESET' IN PUBLIC SECTOR POLICY Assessing the Impact of Covid-19 on Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition in Fiji

As efforts continue to rise in keeping agriculture safely running as an essential business, experts warn the very survival of the exports sector is now threatened.

"The industries most severely impacted by the pandemic are fresh produce export industries that depend on airfreight, products that can be sea freighted have not faced the same severe marketing issues, and products that depend on tourist buyers for their market."

Speaking at the FO4ACP Fiji Farmers Forum 2020: Seizing Opportunities in Nadi, Agriculturalist Economist, Dr. Andrew McGregor highlighted the severity of the impact on agriculture, food security and nutrition in Fiji.

"The main consequences for the domestic food markets has been the fall in demand resulting from job losses and declining income and the absence of tourists."

"The main consequences for marketing are the loss of hotel markets for traders who are now going out of business but we're also seeing the numbers of road side sellers increase including emergence of micro food processors."

Unlike many countries, Dr. Andrew McGregor said Fiji's ability to produce food and agricultural products have not been directly impacted.

"While there's been an increase in labor supply due to the reversal in rural urban migration and the stop of seasonal labor schemes, we are also experiencing a rise in theft, land disputes and the adoption of unsustainable farming practices."

He explained amongst some of the biggest impacts is the loss of income and the decreased ability to purchase nutritious food.

"Despite positive food security and nutrition developments — food gardens, cottage industry scale agro processing and the emergence of bartering of food and planting materials using mobile phones — over 50% of the population live in urban areas and most of them don't have the option of returning to rural areas."

"Inadequate quantities of locally produced food were being consumed due to poverty and preferences for imported food as they're often more convenient and cheaper. Imported food consumed generally has higher levels of sugar, salt and fats — a major cause of the high and high increasing rates of NCDs."

"The situation has now significantly deteriorated."

Dr. Andrew McGregor said a 'reset' of public sector policy is crucial to ensure the survival and expansion of horticultural exports.

"More public sector investment is needed in appropriate and sustainable agriculture, we need more public sector investment in appropriate industry-led research and extension."

"The development of appropriate policies to encourage increased consumption of local foods is important, as well as the development of appropriate measures to contain agricultural theft."

"There needs to be support for the development of value-added processing for locally grown food including support for community outreach network and initiatives."

Dr. Andrew McGregor said the 'reset' required coordinated action to ensure its success.

"The public sector policy 'reset' requires a withdrawal of Agro-Marketing from horticultural export value chains and Fiji Airways to play a lead role in facilitating horticultural exports development."

"It requires the adoption of the public private sector partnership proposals outlined in the 5-year development plan for Fiji's quarantine treated export commodities including a concerted effort to obtain market access for new products and markets."

The FO4ACP Fiji Farmers Forum 2020 : Seizing Opportunities was organised by Tei Tei Taveuni and funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).



Agritourism requires the promotion of local Pacific cuisine IMAGE: Lapita Cafe, Vanuatu

As the COVID-19 global pandemic continues to impact tourism dependent economies, many are returning to farming. Patricia Bibi, the Lead Researcher of PARDI 2's latest report — *Agritourism Experiences: A Situational Analysis* — says investing in the development of agritourism experiences has the potential for a broader positive societal impact beyond the increased income for any individual farmer or community.

“UNWTO has estimated a 45-70% decline in the international tourism economy in 2020, depending on the duration of the crisis and the speed with which travel and tourism rebounds. While there's an immediate need to assist tourism businesses, it's important to think beyond the current response to COVID-19.”

“The tourism recovery plans should recognize the importance of supporting agritourism development to building local markets and jobs. It means supporting rural smallholder farmers, rural women through harvesting of tropical fruits and nuts including handicrafts, expanding opportunities for Agri-processors, and strengthening links to retailers and exporters.”

Patricia Bibi said agritourism based on traditional, sustainable and regenerative agriculture can play a role in supporting the resilience of farming households.

“Unique agritourism experiences can be an attraction in their own right and can change the perceptions of tourists to encourage them to expect and seek out local food and to purchase value-added products made from local ingredients.” Farm to table experiences allow farmers to engage directly with visitors to showcase local produce, planting and harvesting techniques and can lead to more equitable distribution of tourism revenue.”

She said laying the foundation for a more balanced and regenerative industry can lead to a stronger rural economy and a more engaging national tourism offering.

“While the commitment to national tourism policies are normally very high, these policy commitments don't always translate to changes in the behavior of actors that small operators engage with on a day-to-day basis.”

“Building agritourism as a resilient tourism product requires policy and marketing approaches that support the promotion of traditional and local Pacific cuisine, and there are opportunities for the public and private sector to engage in dialogue.”

With a geographical focus on Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu, Patricia Bibi said there were commonalities between the countries.

“The most common weaknesses based on desk review and interviews, relate to the enabling environment for small entrepreneurs to business entry, including policy incoherence, taxes and financial reporting, access to financing, marketing and branding.”

NATURE'S WAY COOPERATIVE : FRESH FRUIT & VEGETABLE SECTOR UPDATE

FO4ACP Fiji Farmers Forum 2020: Seizing Opportunities

The combined effects of COVID-19 and TC Harold greatly affected Fiji's fresh fruit and vegetable exports following the suspension of all international flights in March.

"It has been substantial on Nature's Way Cooperative," said Rachael Varea of Nature's Way Cooperative (NWC). "The fresh fruit and vegetable sector received significant damage to farms in Sigatoka with total exports recorded at 1.751 Mt in April."

"This is in comparison to 40.884 Mt for the same period in 2019."

Rachael Varea was speaking at the recent FO4ACP Fiji Farmers Forum 2020: Seizing Opportunities at Nadi's South Sea Orchids.

"Even though air cargo flights were allowed to resume towards March end, air freight to New Zealand is limited to 4 flights per week and its' greatly affected the supply and demand of fresh produces into the New Zealand market." "Our total exports for the month of March recorded at 26.682 Mt."

NWC are currently assisting farmers in the Sigatoka Valley as part of key plans recovery efforts following TC Harold. "We were approached by the New Zealand government to assist affected farmers with crop rehabilitation in the Sigatoka Valley."

"We have started assisting 250 farmers, these farmers are members of Nature's Way Cooperative, as well as non-members."

Racheal Varea said eggplant disorders is a current issue developing in transition to the New Zealand.

"These symptoms are not apparent immediately post harvesting or post treatment and only appear on the eggplant a few days after arriving into New Zealand."

"Nature's Way Cooperative is currently seeking the financial support of government and bilateral partners to fund research into disorders affecting BQA commodities."

"This will ensure better quality of the fresh fruit and vegetable exports from Fiji."

The Fiji Farmers Forum 2020 : Seizing Opportunities was organised by Tei Tei Taveuni and funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

TE TANGO ENUA BEGINS BREADFRUIT AWARENESS IN THE COOK ISLANDS

Building Food Security In The Cook Islands

An awareness workshop conducted by Te Tango Enuia is leaving participants with an in-depth perspective on breadfruit.

The unique opportunity presented participants with knowledge on breadfruit establishment and care, breadfruit varieties, regenerative organic agroforestry with breadfruit, product options, and economic evaluation.

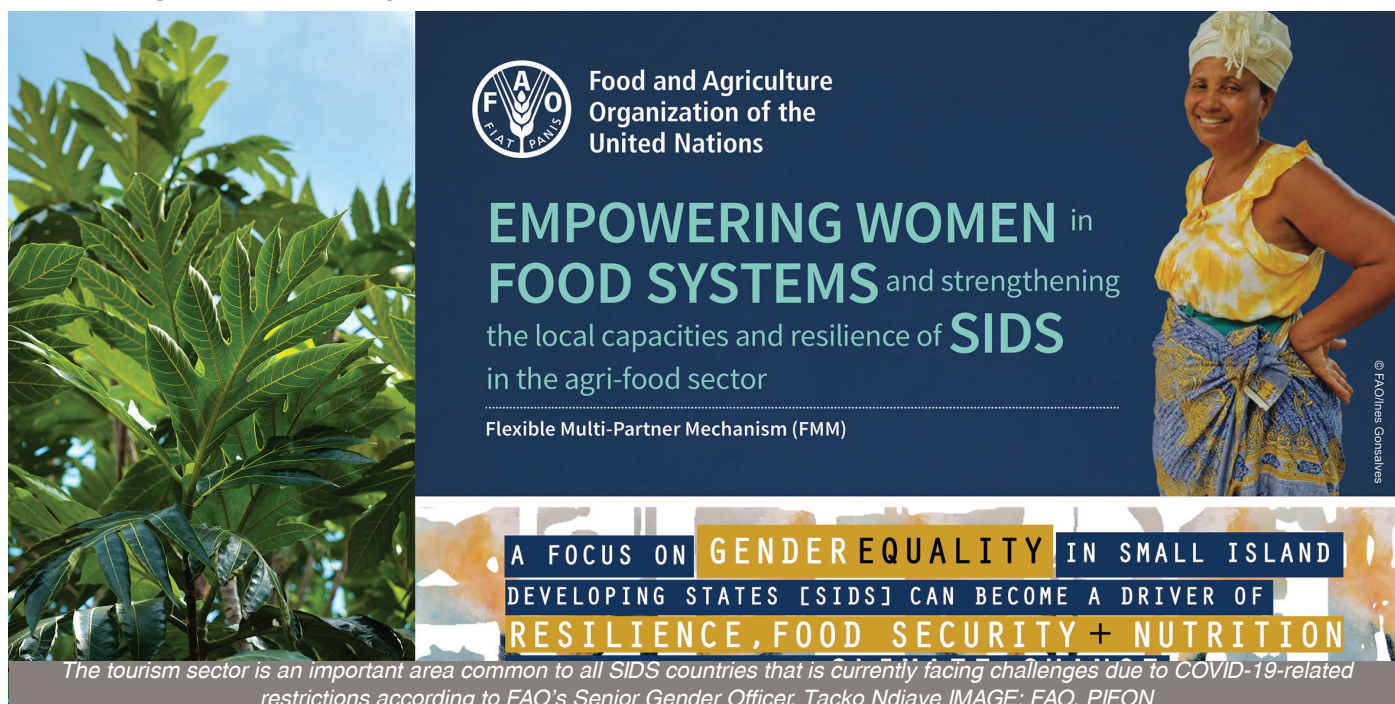
President, Daniel Mataroa says the Cook Islands is in critical need to build up its food security.

"Breadfruit is everywhere in the Cooks but we eat imported food, we spend over \$30m a year on imported food yet we have breadfruit right on our doorstep — \$30m a year of imported food is an opportunity for our people to replace it but it needs a lot of work and effort."

Forty-seven new farmers attended the workshop on the island of Mauke.

"The challenge is re-educating the people about kuru (breadfruit) and we intend to promote it in the Cooks." Te Tango Enuia have also placed an order for 2,000 tissue culture plants to be imported from the Secretariat of the Pacific based in Suva, Fiji.

The workshop was funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).



The FAO sub-programme — Empowering Women in Food Systems and Strengthening the Local Capacities and Resilience of SIDS in the Agri-Food Sector — is forming a series of webinars to address gender inequalities in food systems in small island development states.

Tacko Ndiaye, the Senior Gender Officer of FAO, says prevailing sociocultural norms commonly limit the ability of women to exercise power and autonomous decision-making.

“Women continue to be disadvantaged in their access to productive resources, innovative technologies, market information, financial services, education and training. Addressing gender inequalities in food systems means ensuring that women and men participate equally in and benefit equally from agricultural markets and rural economies to better sustain and improve their livelihoods, while preserving the natural resource and adapting to climate change.”

She said: “The tourism sector is one important area that is common to all SIDS countries and that is currently facing big challenges due to COVID-19-related restrictions. The subprogramme is addressing tourism through the analysis of the sector and assessing how women can adapt their agri-food businesses to ensure food security.”

Earlier today, PIFON's Senior Programme Manager, Lavinia Kaumaitotoya presented the impacts of COVID-19 on value chains and climate resilient agriculture in the Pacific.

“Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has not has any discernible direct impact on the capacity of Pacific island countries to produce food agricultural products. Despite a fall in overall income through the loss of jobs and the reduction in working hours, the overall domestic markets for food staples such as taro, cassava and sweet potato have not, as yet, significantly adversely impacted. These food staples are seen as necessities with a relatively low-income elasticity.”

Lavinia Kaumaitotoya said while the the impact of the pandemic on the market for horticultural products, spices and stimulants has varied, the cessation of all visitor arrivals has meant air freight capacity has drastically fallen with freight costs drastically risen.

“Depending on the product and location, the products most severely impacted are those linked to tourism such as pineapples in Fiji and spices in Vanuatu. It threatens the very survival of these important agricultural growth industries that make a substantial contribution to rural livelihoods and food security. Fiji, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, the Cook Islands and Palau are heavily dependent on tourism, the sector is the largest direct employer of labour with significant multiplier impact effects throughout the rest of the economy. While tourism is less important in Tonga, Samoa and the Solomon Islands, it's still of considerable significance being a major employer of labour.”

Lavinia Kaumaitotoya said visitor arrivals have ceased to all Pacific island countries is expected to take several years to recover to pre-pandemic levels. The close of the tourism sector she said has led to massive job losses through the linkage of tourism to the rest of the economy. The first webinar, Gender Equality and Value Chains in SIDS, took place in September.

NATURE'S WAY COOPERATIVE RESPONDS TO FOOD SECURITY & NUTRITION CRISIS Paying It Forward

The global pandemic is showing both direct and indirect impacts on food security and nutrition.

In Fiji, it's falling especially hard on many households who are struggling to feed their children due to loss of work and income; leaders and experts warn many households may downshift to 'inferior goods' such as more processed and less nutritious foods as a cost-saving measure.

"We carry out mandatory quarantine treatment on Fijian fruit and vegetables under the Bilateral Quarantine Agreement that's established with importing countries."

"We recently sat down with our exporters and had a conversation on how we can help those who have been badly affected by the coronavirus pandemic."

"In June, we were approached by a group of women who prepare cooked meals for children and particularly for those whose parents have been laid off from work in some of the schools in Nadi."

"It's an initiative that forms part of their community and charity work for their church."

With the support of its exporters, NWC actioned a plan immediately.

"Sometimes we get a great amount of eggplants that aren't rotten but show visible markings caused by cold weather which isn't fit for exports."

"So we sat down with our exporters and had a conversation on how we can help many of those who have been badly affected by the coronavirus pandemic," she said.

"With their permission, we redirected the rejected batch of eggplants towards home consumption which would have otherwise gone to waste."

"This doesn't happen every week because it depends on the supply and how much of it isn't fit for exports, we're however seeing the impacts of this goodwill in the way of providing lunch for children and families."

"Today we have Manasa Export, Mahen Export and Green Valley Export who have agreed to donate around 20 kilos of purple variety eggplants towards the initiative," she said.

"We're going through some challenging times and we help where we can."

VIRGIN COCONUT OIL PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR MORE VALUE ADDING Extending Production Season, Creating Brand Identity & Developing Brand Loyalty

Value-adding in agriculture is generating higher returns and in the Solomon Islands, farmers are being encouraged to explore potentially new high-value markets.

"It extends the production season, creates brand identity and develops brand loyalty," says Maryjane Hou Kaikari, the secretary of the Virgin Coconut Oil Producers Association (VCOPA).

"Our farmers are putting a great amount of effort into their crops and livestock, but they tend to get the least out of it when it comes to the market and so value addition can reverse that trend."

A series of trainings on Secondary Soap Making was directed by Kokonut Pacific and also covered value adding training on existing coconut oil for thirty-five of its members.

"The majority of our participants are youths who travelled from their various islands to attend these trainings in Honiara."

Maryjane Hou Kaikari said: "We want to see farmers carry out value adding to their coconut oil products which they on-sell to Kokonut Pacific."

The series of trainings included making quality soaps, infusing traditional ingredients for scent and medicine, and soap making for multi-purpose use.

The trainings was funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

NATURE'S WAY COOPERATIVE EXPANDS MARKET BASE

Reducing Post-Harvest Losses



NWC are expanding their line of products and investing in Design and Branding work handled by PIFON

Despite worldwide growth in fruit production, a significant amount of fruit is lost or wasted due to poor post-harvest management.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the total world fruit production in 2008 was 572.4 million tons, climbing to 609.2 million tones in 2010. Among these fruits, thirty percent of which were tropical fruits, with water melon occupied of 59.2%, mango and guavas of 20.5% and pineapple of 11.4%.

Nature's Way Cooperative have begun processing fruits into value-added products as part of key plans to assist members, reduce post-harvest losses and promote consumption of local fruits.

"We've been working to identify ways to address wastage and support our registered member farmers in Nadi, Sigatoka Valley and Ba with an alternative route for their commodities — especially if they are not directly involved in supply to the fresh produce market," said general manager, Donald Pickering.

"We're essentially expanding the market base for farmers and we've identified methods that best suit the existing facilities here at Nature's Way Cooperative."

"The process involved a lot of research and we've successfully developed a process of dehydrating the Fiji Red Papaya and Pineapple."

Nature's Way Cooperative's staff were also exposed to in-house training in dehydrating fruit.

The initiative was funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

TUTU RURAL TRAINING CENTRE : FARMERS FORUM

Transforming Family Farming Through Soil Health, Seeds Saving, Analyzing Value Chain and Local Vegetable, Spice and Crop Production

On Thursday 30 July, Tutu Rural Training Centre (TRTC) hosted its very first Farmers Forum: Transforming Family Farming Through Soil Health, Seeds Saving, Analyzing Value Chain and Local Vegetable, Spice and Crop Production.

PIFON board director and Human Resources Co-ordinator of TRTC, Serenia Madigibuli said the future for agriculture is bright.

"It is a great joy to witness TRTC take another step forward in making agriculture attractive, inspiring and sustainable in the training of young men, woman and married couples. Today we're looking forward to learning new and innovative

ways of using the soil and looking after it, making good use of vegetables and fruits in value-adding processes, while also analyzing the value chain.”

“Our mission here at Tutu is the care of the soil and our environment, and today’s forum is close to our hearts with contributions from experts who have generously worked their time to be with us today.”

The 1 Day Programme saw key presentations from Sant Kumar (Seedling in Vegetable and Crop Production), Rev Dr Donato Kivi sm (Soil Health: Vanua and Ecological Conversions), Dr. Rohit Lal (Seed Saving), Dr. Kandianan (Spices & Alternative Crop Development) and Kaitu Eresito (Value Chain).

Horticulture expert and founder of Bula Agro, Sant Kumar said vegetable farming is vital to food security and employment.

“We have a long and proud farming history, of the 196 countries in the world, the Fiji flag has the most references to farming than any other country. The food that we eat should contain a wide range of fruits and vegetables for our health while also being equipped to fight diseases like diabetes and heart disease.”

Sant Kumar said: “I have a vision that Fiji’s fresh produce industry will continue to grow as a major contributor to the income of our farmers and to the nation of Fiji. In order to realize this vision, we need to support our private nursery so that they can be better businesses and more adaptable to various natural disasters.”

He also shared technical knowledge on soil and seedling preparation with students of Tutu Rural Training Centre.

Forum facilitator and principal director of TRTC, Father Petero Matairatu said the rules of economy apply to farming as much as they do to any other business. In his welcoming remarks, Father Petero Matairatu said while farming is a risky business dependent on domestic prices and changes in foreign markets, the appreciation of the business concept and its principles is critical to its success.

“The theme of today’s forum, ‘Transforming Family Farming through soil health, seed saving, analyzing value chain and local vegetable, spice and crop production’ has been chosen to help farmers transform their lives from being a subsistence affluence into farming as a business or as a family business. Planning as a family or as an individual, and harnessing the business talents of each family member or individual can drive the development of farming businesses forward.”

With an endless potential for the global kava market, Father Petero Matairatu is encouraging farmers to consider investing in the market, “The recent yaqona price boom in 2017 and 2018 opens the doors for farmers to deliberately engage in activities that help them generate income, more so in these changing economic circumstances.”

In his presentation, Dr. Kandianan, the ITEC expert (Spices Production and Processing) at Nadi’s Vivekananda Technical Center said there is a strong domestic market for spices in Fiji and urged students to invest and develop spices as an alternative crop.

“Fiji exports on an average 2730.5 tonnes of spices to the value of FJD\$16.6m, while importing 1305.7 tonnes to the value of FJD\$5.8m. The imported spices are consumed internally both in households and hotels, part of it is converted into spice mixtures or value added and re-exported.”

Many spices including black pepper, vanilla, ginger, cardamom, nutmeg and clove he said was introduced to Fiji between the 1880s -1930s. He added few species of nutmeg and cinnamon are indigenous to Fiji.

A total of 98 participants attended the Tutu Rural Training Centre’s Farmers Forum that was funded through the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific- (FO4ACP) Programme; a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific Region (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

DEVELOPING COMMERCIAL BREADFRUIT ORCHARDS IN FIJI

Increasing Food & Nutrition Security, Viable livelihoods And Climate Adaptation In The Pacific



Nature's Way Cooperative's Kaitu Erasito inspects a breadfruit orchard in Nadi

After a lapse of 15 months, Nature's Way Cooperative says Pacific businesses need to grow to meet the demand following the reset action of breadfruits export to New Zealand in September.

"There's a large market that even collectively in the Pacific, we will not be able to meet the demand," said extension and research officer, Kaitu Erasito. "But to produce and provide consistently to this market, we must start somewhere and growing the plant is a very good start."

"In Fiji, it grows 'wild' in household backyard gardens and around villages which is not seen as a viable crop and so cannot make a major contribution to national food security because it doesn't offer sufficient supply of consistent quality."

Nature's Way Cooperative is working with export farmer members to develop commercial breadfruit orchards and as Kaitu Erasito explains, is more than meeting market targets.

"Developing breadfruit orchards can create a major impact because it has great potential to food and nutrition security, viable livelihoods and climate adaptation."

"Over the years we've seen the brutal effects of natural disasters in some areas of Fiji and where the only remaining crop left standing in some of these areas was breadfruit while others were completely destroyed."

"As a standalone crop growing in these systems, it's often ignored and left on its own to grow in height and breadth, which can be a challenge during harvest periods for commercial export purposes."

"It's why orchards are an essential requirement to support fresh exports and commercial processing, to have that consistent supply and grade applicable that's needed to go through the value chain process and ultimately the breadfruit market."

Kaitu Erasito said key lessons from the Nature's Way Cooperative orchard development model showed the need to evaluate breadfruit orchards on different agro-ecological conditions and the importance of intercropping.

INNOVATIVE AGROFORESTRY DESIGN TOOL™ ASSISTS GROWERS AND PLANNERS

Innovative Agroforestry Planning Tool Released By Hawaii Team

Two long-standing Hawaii-based agroforestry innovators, Permanent Agriculture Resources (PAR) and Forest Agriculture Research Center (FARM Center) announce the launch of a free online platform called the Agroforestry Design Tool.

This tool and associated webinars were developed in consultation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) under an ongoing Conservation Innovation Grant to assist planners and growers in developing agroforestry plans.

Integrating several types of plants together into a multi-layer system has been proven to give growers several advantages including greater productivity, resilience to weather extremes, and building soil.

However, planning a multi-layer forest can prove challenging because there are many options in plant spacing and species selection.

The project's co-founder Dr. Craig Elevitch of Holualoa, Hawaii Island notes, "The roots of the Agroforestry Design Tool lie in the indigenous agricultural systems of Hawaii and elsewhere throughout the Pacific Islands and tropical world. The tool assists people who are aware of the benefits of agroforestry and would like to customize an agroforest for their particular site and goals in an easy-to-follow framework."

The Agroforestry Design Tool guides the user in selecting from a range of planting patterns suitable for multistory agroforestry. The user can then select species from a list of more than 200 fruit, nut, timber, native, and culturally significant plants from throughout the Pacific Islands (Hawaii, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, American Samoa, and Marshall Islands). Because pruning is especially significant when growing fruit crops together harmoniously, the user can also specify if and how much their selected plants will be pruned. Finally, the tool provides visualizations and an animation of the growth of the user's agroforest, as well as a summary report in pdf format.

"Multistory agroforestry plantings continually change as they grow, so it takes time to learn how they work. We spent over 18 months distilling decades of knowledge into a form that is easy to follow and understand. It can be used to learn how agroforests change over time and to help build a successful implementation plan," states co-developer Neil Logan.

The tool also assists users in meeting standards for multistory agroforestry set by USDA NRCS and in meeting a standard for regenerative agroforestry. Both of these standards set a high bar for the number of species included in a planting, as well as the number of individual trees and shrubs planted. In choosing to meet these standards, the user can surpass a goal of sustainability to reach a regenerative system, one that improves growing conditions year after year.

In addition to the online tool launch, PAR and FARM Center will hold two free webinars to introduce the tool and its use. The webinars will present the advantages of multistory agroforestry and demonstrate the tool using specific examples. The webinars will be held on Wednesday, December 2 and Wednesday, January 13 at 1:00—3:00 pm Hawaii time.

To register, visit AgroforestryX.com and click on the "Support" tab for instructions. For more information on the Agroforestry Design Tool and to register for the free webinars, visit AgroforestryX.com.

NISHI TRADING CALL FOR STRONG PARTNERSHIPS IN BREADFRUIT PRODUCTION

Increasing Breadfruit Production In Tonga

Strong partnerships are critical for building breadfruit production in Tonga, says Minoru Nishi Jr, the managing director of Nishi Trading.

"Its economic development is still yet to be realised. There are various breadfruit varieties in Tonga and the best variety we found is Puo'u which can be found growing around villages and in backyards."

"The aim is to increase breadfruit production in Tonga for food security and income generation."

"In order to do this, we need strong partnerships between researchers, farmers, farmer organisations and marketers. We've seen some great results working with our partners at the Tokyo University of Agriculture on breadfruit processing and we'd like to see more of this."

"The challenge is to find the market opportunity that this crop offers so that it may assist the livelihood of Tongans."

LEADERS CALL FOR COORDINATED EFFORT TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Creating Gender Equality And Awareness On Violence Against Women And Girls



Chief Guest, New Zealand High Commissioner in Fiji, Johnathan Curr says the Fiji Women Crisis Centre play a crucial role towards changing the mind-set and behaviour of perpetrators

Violence against women and girls is globally recognized as a social, political, and public health problem, with 1 out of 3 women experiencing physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.

The Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development (FRIEND) in partnership with the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre today met with community leaders to plan and develop a network of Advocates for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in communities in the Western Division for the prevention and appropriate response for ending violence against women and girls.

In his opening remarks, New Zealand High Commissioner in Fiji, Johnathan Curr said despite global comprehensive measures, violence against women remains a concern that continues to escalate.

"There are at least 144 countries that have passed laws to protect this integral right against domestic violence and 154 have laws on sexual harassment, Fiji and New Zealand included."

"This past April, New Zealand with six others led a joint statement signed by 146 UN member states calling for action to address the rise of gender based and domestic violence under COVID 19."

"UNWomen recently released a report stating that around 87 000 women were intentionally killed in 2017 around the world. In Fiji, 8 women passed away last year as a result of violent acts."

While encouraging community leaders in attendance to use their positions to positively change lives and make a difference, Johnathan Curr said: "I'm not alone in my belief that the elimination of gender based violence can only happen with the coordinated efforts at all levels. We must all be on board that violence against women is simply not acceptable."

He said the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre play a crucial role towards changing the mind-set and behaviour of perpetrators, and the social structures that allow violence to exist and permeate homes, families and communities.

"It's now widely shared that over 60% of women in the Pacific islands have experienced violence in one form or another in their lifetime."

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre this year received 751 domestic violence cases, 67 rape cases, 9 attempted rape cases, 42 child sexual abuse cases, 39 child physical/verbal/emotional abuse cases and 12 sexual harassment cases.

"Women in Fiji have reported that most of this violence takes place in the home," said Shamima Ali, Coordinator of Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

"80% of women have witnesses some form of violence in the home; 66% of women have been physically abused by partners and nearly half repeatedly abused, while 26% of women have been beaten while pregnant."

“While women in Fiji are at risk of violence perpetrated by husbands or intimate partners at any age, national prevalence data shows that younger women in Fiji aged 18-29 are at a much higher current risk of experiencing partner violence than older women.”

Shamima Ali recommended gender equality and awareness on violence against women and girls be included in the education curriculum in schools and in teacher training programs.

“Tackling violence towards boys and girls at home, at school and in all our social institutions and organisations is also important — to prevent young men from learning and repeating these damaging behaviours, and to help young women to understand that they don’t have to put up with this type of behaviour.”

Senior Superintendent Sami Surend, Divisional Police Commander Western also joined the forum to address questions from the audience.

KASTOM GADEN ASSOCIATION ENGAGE WITH YOUTHS IN AGRICULTURE **Global Rapid Urbanisation Leading To Decline In Rural Population**

The United Nation’s World Health Organization predicts; “by 2030, 6 out of every 10 people will live in a city, and by 2050, this will increase to 7 out of 10 people.

It means more young people are moving to cities and towns to find work, leaving only a few behind to work in rural areas — a growing global concern as most young people — around 85% according to the United Nations — live in developing countries where agriculture is likely to provide the main source of income.

Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) is reigniting farming amongst its youths; nineteen farmer members of the Gurafesu Organic Agriculture Research Institute were provided technical training by Dr. Shane Tutua of Zai Na Tina Centre for Organic Systems on Compost Management.

“The training will enable the farmers to have a better and higher yield in their crop production,” said Pitakia Tikai of KGA. “We’re living in an era where rapid urbanization has led to a decline in rural populations and it’s encouraging to see that the group is mainly youth.”

“These youths farm vegetables and they are selling directly to the Honiara markets, the training will enhance their knowledge in organic systems to further provide a technical edge to their production.”

KGA work largely with organics and seed saving farmers under their network and have been in operation since 2000.

The technical training was funded by the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

NEWS

NEW CALEDONIA CHAMBER OF AGRICULTURE LINK FARMERS TO MARKET

Disrupted supply chains brought on by the global pandemic is strengthening the efforts of The New Caledonia Chamber of Agriculture to create effective linkages for farmers.

Earlier this year, a website was developed to link producers and buyers of fresh agricultural produce.

The New Caledonia Chamber of Agriculture and various stakeholders played a pivotal role in mobilizing farmers across the country, a move that’s expected to enhance the productivity and better earning returns for farmers.

Explaining the importance of creating market linkages, François Japiot, the Regional Manager Cooperation (Pacific) said, “Market linkages remain one of the crucial areas for farmer organisations and particularly smallholder farmers organisation to emerge as successful enterprises.”

The website has been developed with the objective of connecting farmers to other stakeholders such as buyers, retailers, exporters, processors and wholesalers.

“It will serve as a common platform for buyers and sellers to interact with farmers, which will help earn the right prices for their produce.”

The website development was funded by the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific- FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

SAMOA FARMERS FORUM TO ADDRESS KEY ISSUES AFFECTING FARMERS

The Samoa Farmers Association will convene the second Samoa Farmers Forum on Thursday 19 November.

Representatives across the agricultural sector will attend the forum that's expected to strengthen the networks of Samoan farmers and their organisations, and links to other farmers in the region and globally.

"This year participation will be by invitation only due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 State of Emergency regulations," said Luaiufi Aiono of Samoa Farmers Association.

"We will be acknowledging and celebrating the role of farmers in Samoa's economic, social and cultural life as well as exchanging information and learning from other farmers' successes, challenges and experiences."

Luaiufi Aiono said the farmers forum will also raise the profile and status of farmers and of farming as a profession and way of life.

"There will also be an opportunity to assess and reflect on developments in farming in Samoa since the inaugural farmers' forum in 2018."

The Samoa Farmers Forum is funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

FO4ACP FIJI FARMER ORGANISATIONS PLATFORM MEETING (FJFOPM)



The FO4ACP Fiji Farmer Organisations Platform Meeting was attended by PIFON's Fiji members

The FO4ACP Fiji Farmer Organisations Platform Meeting was held at Nadi's Novotel Hotel in September.

The one day meeting saw farmer organisations' updates from our Fiji members; Nature's Way Cooperative, Rise Beyond The Reef, South Sea Orchids, Bula Agro, Fiji Crop Livestock & Council, Fiji Beekeepers Association, Tutu Rural Training Centre, FRIEND and Tei Tei Taveuni.

FO4ACP updates and training provided by PIFON covered project implementation, finance, monitoring & evaluation and communications with the annual budget and work plan.

The platform meeting was organised by Tei Tei Taveuni and was funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

FO4ACP FJFOPM : FARM FOR YOUR NEXT GENERATION

Deforestation remains a serious issue in Taveuni where unsustainable land use has seen a sharp decline in soil fertility and crop yields.

Alan Petersen, the chairman of Tei Tei Taveuni says it has forced farmers to farm more sustainably and has seen the formation of the farmer organisation — that was almost eleven years ago.

“Most of us in Taveuni plant dalo and it’s one of the leading causes of deforestation because farmers were cutting down trees to plant dalo.”

“We forget that the basics of our existence is the soil, once we lose it — we’ve got nothing. There has to be other ways of farming, rather than cutting down forests to find new soils.”

Alan Petersen made the comments at the Fiji Farmer Organisation Platform Meeting earlier today: “Over the years we’ve been working with the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network on this issue and we’ve found that it’s hard to get farmers to change their ways.”

“We have a program where we imported a very good soil fertilizer but farmers are still using chemical fertilizers — NPK which we can see ruins the soil.”

However challenging, Alan Petersen says farmers are also slowly realising the importance of protecting the soil.

“They’re starting to appreciate that they need to protect the soil and we’ve been proactive about it through our community programs of which 16 model farms were implemented without funding.”

“Today we embrace sustainable farming and our previous experience gives our members the confidence to advocate for sustainable agricultural practices and soils.”

“Last year in 2019, a project funded by FO4ACP saw the construction of 10 greenhouses around the island for farmers to produce trees.”

“When farmers start planting kava for instance, they plant in shady areas but as the plants grow big, they need more sunshine — what we’re promoting now is, when you plant kava, also plant your trees so that when you harvest the kava or whatever you’ve planted after 3 or 4 years, you have trees for your next generation.”

The platform meeting was organized by Tei Tei Taveuni and was funded by the the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

AG WORLD SOFTWARE SHAPING AGRICULTURE IN TONGA

AgWorld — a unique structured data system — is advancing the work of Nishi Trading and its growers in addition to face-to-face meetings and mentoring.

“AgWorld has been a massive game-changer, it’s increasing clarity on agronomic and financial planning across product, operational and financial requirements,” said Minoru Nishi Jr., managing director of Nishi Trading.

The platform provides Nishi’s growers with insights based on their historical farm records.

“It’s very helpful for us and it’s managing our activities both on and off the plantation,” said Kusuta Amone. “It’s tracking activities in my husband’s field and also outlining financial expenses, identifying best practices for managing the plantation and storing a history of activities addressing those fields.”

Kusuta Amone said: “It has improved our capability to closely monitor and manage our plantations, I love to call AgWorld after my husband — ‘Sosefo’s diary’.”

The platform training was funded by the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (FO4ACP) Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

TRACTORS TO INCREASE YIELDS & PROFITS FOR TIMOR-LESTE FARMERS



João Gomes receives a two-wheel tractor from ANAPROFIKO President, Ilidio Mendonca and staff IMAGE: ANAPROFIKO

Two-wheel tractors are expected to change the landscape for Timor-Leste farmers in more ways than one; the types of crops farmers grow, the cost to grow them, and the amount of income from crop sales and agricultural services.

João Gomes, a farmer and member of ANAPROFIKO previously used a traditional farming system with an ox and plow on his land, but now he is extending his agricultural products by using a tractor.

“We used our forefathers’ method of farming and we cultivated to feed our family first but after using this technology, we plan to use our barren land and increase our supply the local market.”

A two-wheel tractor can use a full range of implements such as cultivator, grain drill, reaper and trailer that help a farmer in all steps of the farming process. And a tractor is much cheaper to own and operate than an ox-drawn plow.

“These two-wheel tractors are replacing our traditional ox-drawn plow, increasing efficiency and mechanising our farm production,” João Gomes said.

He hopes to increase his family income by plowing other farmers’ land and purchasing his own two-wheel tractor to serve his village and extend his business.

While four-wheel tractors are more appropriate for large fields, two-wheel tractors are very effective in small plots and can be used for intercropping where spaces are narrow. The cost to own and operate a two-wheel tractor is much lower, with simpler repair and maintenance.

The tractor handover was done by ANAPROFIK President, Ilidio Mendonca and funded by the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

FILIFE FILIHIA LEADS TONGA’S SMART FARM ACRE INITIATIVE

Filipe Filihia has come a long way.

Farmer-to-farmer technical exchanges in breadfruit and papaya by the Medium Term Cooperation Project — Phase 2 (MTCP2) opened his mind to the full potential of farming and he hasn’t looked back.

“I first learnt how to grow papaya for export, and how to propagate breadfruit seedlings and prune breadfruit to picking height.”

The technical exchange also meant that Filipe Filihia could extend his knowledge on farming practices that have changed for the better.

“You learn a lot of things about farming and planting according to the season — here in Tonga, taro should be planted in November so that it gets plenty of water before the dry season sets in — this is the kind of knowledge that can help farmers farm better.”

Over the years, Filipe Filihia has combined sustainable agricultural practices including intercropping which has seen the inclusion of breadfruit, kumala, taro, kava, sandalwood and pineapple on his farm.

“It’s providing additional income for my family and meeting obligations at the church.”

His work has earned him a solid reputation amongst farmers and farmer organisations including Growers Federation of Tonga, who are working together on the Smart Farm Acre Initiative.

“I help train farmers and it’s very satisfying seeing others benefit as a result of this knowledge, it’s a very effective way of transferring skills and knowledge.”

The Smart Farm Acre Initiative is funded by the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (FO4ACP) Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

PNG WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE RECEIVE ICT TRAINING

With the increasing penetration of mobile phones in remote parts of Papua New Guinea, efforts are being made to maximize its use for farmers.

Maria Linibi, President of Papua New Guinea Women in Agriculture says information and communication technologies, especially mobile applications, are playing a key role in access to timely and accurate information.

“Creating an enabling environment for rural information and communication technologies with sound policies and strategies can help ensure affordable and quality access to the technologies, especially for farmers in rural areas.”

Her comments follow the successful Information Communication Technology Training (ICT) conducted at the Nari Centre in Lae.

“It was a good exposure for farmers, some use simple analog phones but this training has seen a high interest in making the conversion to smart phones.”

Maria Linibi said: “The farmers were from very remote highland areas where mobile communication is available, and they were very appreciative of the basic training.”

The training covered the use of mass media including basic computer literacy, social media, email, mobile banking as well as the basic use of Whatsapp and Viber.

The 2-Day Training on Capacity Building in ICT was funded by the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

BURNES AWARDED 50 YEARS COMMEMORATIVE INDEPENDENCE FIJI MEDAL

The Managing Director of South Sea Orchids, Mrs. Aileen Burness paid tribute to her late husband Mr. Donald Burness as she received her commemorative medal for Fiji’s 50th Anniversary of Independence.

She was recognized for her work in Floriculture in Fiji and the Pacific region.

With the support of her late husband, Mrs. Aileen Burness has worked with women of various communities and taught them the business of flowers spanning over thirty years.

She says it is good to see that people valued the work she has done for the community and nominated her.

Fiji’s President Major-General (Ret’d) Jioji Konrote commended the efforts of Fijians in helping move Fiji forward in the last 50 years.

“Our young and developing nation has evolved into an acceptable level of universal, political and economic maturity that we should all be proud about in today’s unpredictable and uncertain global environment that we live in.”

Former politicians and diplomats, businessmen, academics, and sporting figures were among some of the recipients of the 50th-anniversary independence medal investiture ceremony.

SAMOA FARMERS SHARE IDEAS AT FORUM



The 2ND Samoa National Farmers Forum 2020 saw a strong representation from across the agriculture industry despite the uncertainty of the suspected COVID-19 news IMAGE: Samoa Farmers Association

The convening of the 2nd National Farmers Forum at Tuanaimato last week was an opportunity for farmers to share ideas on how to overcome their various challenges.

Samoa Farmers Association chairman, Afamasaga Toleafoa, told the Samoa Observer in an interview that the hosting of such forums will enable the collation and sharing of ideas by the farmers.

"The objectives will be to first of all highlight the role of farmers in the economy and the cultural lives, economic and social life of Samoa," he said.

"Agriculture is very important for food security, for export generation, and even in the cultural life of Samoa and in the villages, this is what they do.

"Life revolves around the land and keeping the villages doing what they do and all the social cohesion and all that, supporting the Government and its programs for rural Samoa."

Afamasaga added that productive agriculture practised in the villages can lead to vibrant rural communities.

"So instead of young people running off to Apia looking for jobs, they can stay home and work on their laps and you end up with a very good community that teaches all its work forces and incomes."

A drive to the rural community outside of Apia will see the setting up of many small roadside markets which Afamasaga says can become an extra source of income for the family.

He added that food markets are expanding, though not a lot of produce gets sent to Apia for selling.

"People just sell it in front of their houses and I mean that's what we want to see an economically vibrant, rural Samoa.

"You don't want everybody running off to Apia looking for work for income generation."

According to the S.F.A. Chairman, those are all sorts of ideas which need to be encouraged to support farming.

He added that it is also important that there is a vibrant and living community in rural Samoa — not just those who rely on remittances from abroad and money from Apia.

"We can't invite all the farmers because of the pandemic restrictions. Farmers organisations working together and then the other key participants working together, they turned out pretty well with the donors, farmers can't do all these work all on their own without the Government's support."

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as well as donors like the United Nations F.A.O. support the Government's agricultural policy.

The Government sets the policy, which is usually in the form of a five-year agriculture development plan that takes five years to implement, and sets the guidelines on what needs to be done.

As part of the consultation process the Government will now be meeting with the farmers and donors to formulate the next plan going into the future.

“So the forum by the farmers, it gives an opportunity for them to discuss issues that are important to the Government and that’s what we did,” Afamasaga said.

“We have a whole lot of issues that the farmers would like to address and the Government to the donors and these are issues that the farmers cannot deal with as they’re too big.

“Things like providing water. Irrigation and then providing and fixing up access roads, plantation roads, without that, it’s very hard to develop farming in a commercial way if you cannot because there are no roads.

“But there are roads that vehicles need to use easily without damaging vehicles, so those are the things the Government needs to do, farmers can’t do that.

“So we use these events to discuss those issues like water as well. We need a lot of water and we’re fortunate if it’s raining.”

The Samoa Farmers Forum was funded by the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

FO4ACP FIJI FARMERS FORUM DIALOGUE ON OPPORTUNITIES

Farmer Organisations in Fiji have grown since the last Fiji Farmers Forum was held in 2017; dialogue with Government has seen changes in policy and farmer organisations have received more funding support for activities.

And while economists believe the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic will likely exceed those of the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, it is providing opportunities for agriculture as well as highlighting the importance of diversifying Pacific economies.

Fiji Farmers Forum 2020 : Seizing Opportunities got underway in September at South Sea Orchids in Nadi.

Organised by Tei Tei Taveuni, they’ve grabbed the bull by its horns in planning this important conference, the first Fiji Farmers Forum since COVID-19 emerged.

The Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy was the chief guest, and was joined by the New Zealand High Commission, H.E Jonathan Curr and approximately 100 participants representatives from farmer organisations around Fiji, donor and research organisations.

Participants heard on current impacts of the pandemic, how to adapt, and sector presentations of the agriculture industry.

“The forum provides a platform for farmers to have their say in the presence of fellow industry colleagues, Government and donors,” said Kyle Stice, General Manager of PIFON. “It’s an opportunity to collaborate and influence policy to improve Fiji’s current economic status.”

Kyle Stice acknowledged the efforts of Tei Tei Taveuni in organizing the first post COVID-19 industry event and is looking forward to learning the outcomes to be actioned moving forward.

The Fiji Farmers Forum 2020 : Seizing Opportunities was funded by the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

FO4ACP FIJI FARMERS FORUM 2020 : SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

The current coronavirus pandemic is having impacts on global food systems and economies.

Fiji's minister of agriculture, the Hon. Dr.Mahendra Reddy said the government is managing multiple demands — responding to the health crisis, managing the consequences of the shock to the economy and ensuring the smooth functioning of the food system.

“The pandemic is challenging the livelihoods of a significant extent of the population, whose income and employment are at risk due to losses in tourism and remittances, representing 34% and 5.1% of GDP respectively. Up to 115,000 people have lost their jobs or reduced their hours. On the other hand, the Reserve Bank of Fiji has predicted a 21.7% contraction to the economy in the coming year.”

Dr.Mahendra Reddy said: “Vulnerability to climate change and natural hazards such as TC Harold continue to aggravate the difficulties faced during this pandemic.”

Speaking at the opening of the Fiji Farmers Forum 2020 : Seizing Opportunities today, he explained serious challenges posed by the pandemic is an opportunity to accelerate transformations in the food and agriculture sector to build resilience.

“Agriculture has always been a very challenging activity for farmers in the remote areas of Fiji; whenever markets are identified, limited market access and high cost of logistics become a hurdle for farmers. Through our collaborations, contracted farmers will know exactly where their targeted produce are being sold and at what specific price.”

“The Ministry is focused in bringing the markets to farmer's doorsteps and will continue to work closely with Exporters and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that farming is treated as a business rather than a hobby or a retirement exercise.”

Dr.Mahendra Reddy said: “The Ministry has mounted a major program of seed and planting material distribution to urban and rural households and in a very short period of time, we note surge in supply of fresh produce.”

“Of course this surge in supply locally has also been contributed by the shutdown of the tourism sector.”

“At the commercial level, we have pushed ahead with a paradigm change of growing for the market incentivized by market signals rather than government subsidies.”

Activities undertaken by Fiji's Ministry of Agriculture including the construction of farm roads, irrigation and machinery support to farmers is part of the government's response plan to commercializing the country's agricultural sector.

“We're also providing provision of planting materials, expanding the nurseries in the four divisions including market provision and market development.”

The Fiji Farmers Forum 2020 : Seizing Opportunities was funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

DRAGON FRUIT A PROMISING REMUNERATIVE CROP



Members of Samoa Farmers Association (SFA) at a Dragon Fruit Training funded by the FO4ACP Programme IMAGE: SFA

Native to Mexico, Central America and South America, the pitaya also known as dragon fruit, is a perennial climbing cactus of the genus *Hylocereus*.

Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network Chairman and President of Samoa Farmers Association, Afamasaga Toleafoa said it is considered to be a promising remunerative crop.

“It’s distributed all over the world, in tropical and subtropical regions and grown commercially in Israel, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Australia, United States of America and Taiwan.”

“It has incredible nutritive properties and once planted, can grow for more than 15 years and one hectare could accommodate about 800 dragon fruit plants,” he said.

A refresher training covering propagation, pruning and maintenance was conducted by Ms. Faalelei Tunupopo, Senior Horticulturist at the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries (Crops Division), for growers of the Samoa Farmers Association.

The training was funded by the Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (FO4ACP) Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

KUMAR AWARDED 50 YEARS COMMEMORATIVE INDEPENDENCE FIJI MEDAL



Fiji’s President Major-General (Ret’d) Jioji Konrote has commended the effort of Mr. Sant Kumar for his work in agriculture IMAGE: Fijian Government

The Founder and Director of Bula Agro, Mr. Sant Kumar yesterday acknowledged the crucial role of agriculture in the economy as he received his commemorative medal for Fiji’s 50th Anniversary of Independence.

“In developing countries, agriculture provides the main source of food, income and employment for our rural populations.”

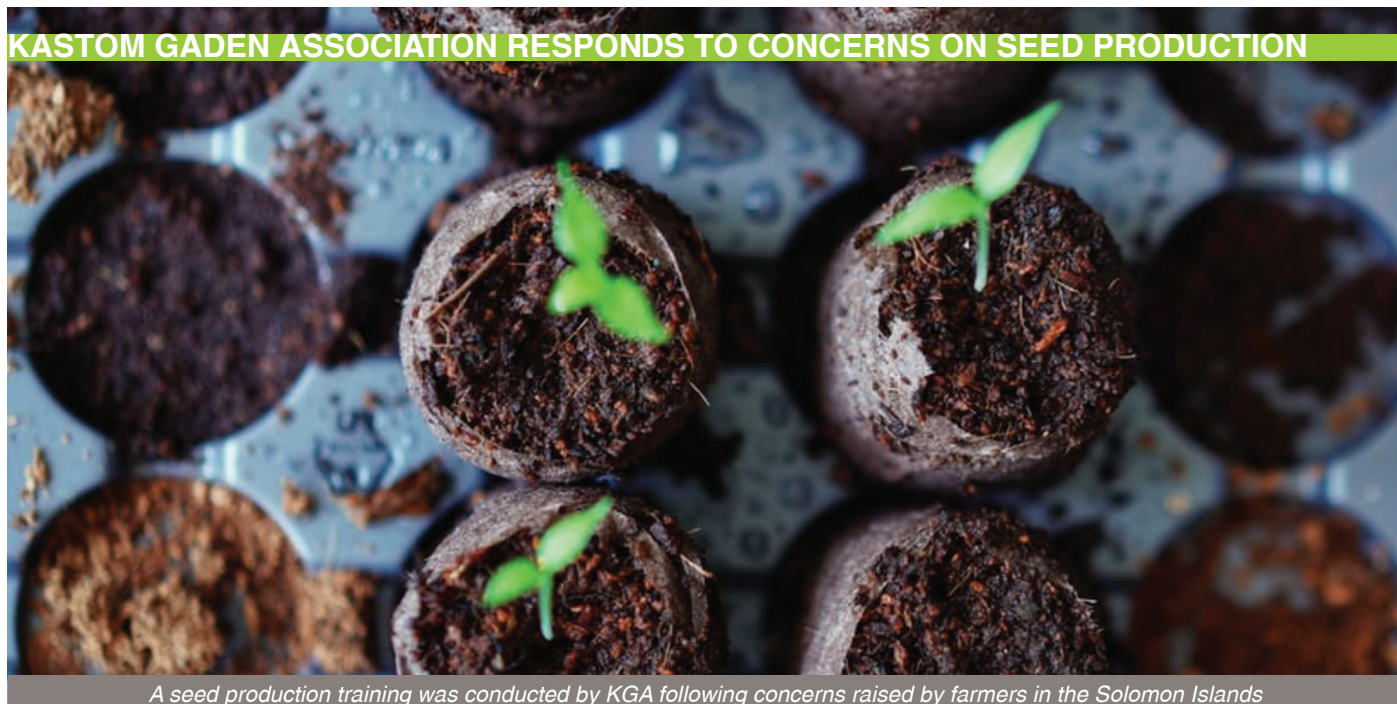
“This medal is an achievement for agriculture and while I’m happy with our progress, I think there’s a lot more work to be done in the areas of climate change, innovation, and food and nutrition security.”

Mr. Sant Kumar was recognized for his work in Agriculture in Fiji for the Government, Nature’s Way Co-operative and Bula Agro.

He was supported by his wife, Mrs. Lila Wati Kumar at Government House.

Fiji’s President Major-General (Ret’d) Jioji Konrote commended the efforts of Fijians in helping move Fiji forward in the last 50 years.

Former politicians and diplomats, businessmen, academics, and sporting figures were among some of the recipients of the 50th-anniversary independence medal investiture ceremony.



Seeds play an integral part of agriculture, however it's often overlooked for its' crucial roles in agricultural production and crop improvement.

A seed production training was conducted by Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) following concerns raised by farmers at the Solomon Islands Platform Meeting.

"There was general discussion amongst our members, where they felt that there was a lack of seed supply and it was costly to purchase seeds," said Pitakia Tikai of KGA.

"The training covered preparation of nursery soil, sowing and transplanting of seeds, wet and dry seed processing, drying seeds, plant selection for seed production and extraction of seeds."

Twenty-one farmer organisation leaders from the Popoloi community in the Takaboru district attended the seed saving and production training hosted by KGA.

Pitakia Tikai said: "The training was also a capacity building exercise for new farmers who have not been trained in seed savings, most of whom are youths and women."

"We provide these trainings so communities may be able to save and plant their own seeds, so that their production costs are minimal, and for some, they can sell the seeds back to us as a form of livelihood if they don't use it for their own food security."

The training was funded by the the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

MENTOR PROGRAM AIMS TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

The Fiji Beekeepers Association 2021 Mentor Program is part of key plans to increase economic participation of women in agriculture and strengthen beekeeping skills.

"Mentors will be working side-by-side with their trainee(s) and teach them essential beekeeping skill," said Fiji Beekeepers Association's John Caldeira.

"We're also looking for beginning beekeepers who are interested in receiving beekeeping mentoring, the ideal mentor has six or more years of beekeeping experience."

"Trainees would normally already have their own beehives and less than six years of beekeeping experience."

John Caldeira said prospective mentors are encouraged to also nominate inexperienced beekeepers in their area as their trainee(s).

The Fiji Beekeepers Association 2021 Mentor Program is funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

How The Program Works

Mentors and trainees sign a mentoring agreement with FBA for the knowledge transfer of specific basic beekeeping skills to be taught during 6 or more apiary mentoring visits in 2021. Skills include hive inspections, management for honey production, harvesting, basic bee breeding, and disease and parasite control.

Mentors are not paid. However, FBA will provide mentors and trainees with some unassembled hive parts for teaching/learning hive assembly and colony splitting, other training materials, and coaching and monitoring of the program.

FBA's Mentor program was established in 2016 and has been internationally recognized as a successful model for improving beekeeper success.

Fijian beekeepers interested in being a mentor or a trainee should request a simple one-page application form by FB private message, or reply to this announcement, or email to John Caldeira at email john@outdoorplace.org.

Applications must be submitted by Sunday, December 13.

Technical support and monitoring of the program will be assisted by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

GENDER INCLUSION & PACIFIC VALUES AFFIRMED IN POETCOM'S STRATEGY LAUNCH

A ground-breaking gender inclusive people-centred approach marks a new organic agriculture strategy for the Pacific.

Managed by the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) of the Pacific Community, the five-year strategy is placing greater emphasis on Pacific values, traditions and cultures through better understanding of Pacific approaches to decision making.

In his key address Mr Kevin Petrini, Deputy Resident for UNDP said that "POETCom's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan represents the key contributor to sustaining the Pacific cultures and communities, improving farmer livelihoods, people's health and the environment in the Pacific. This supports UNDP's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan in key impact areas providing expanded livelihood opportunities for Pacific producers."

The POETCom launch was attended by representatives from the Australian High Commission, UNDP, UNWomen, Fiji's Agriculture and Trade ministries; and POETCom members and Participatory Guarantee System groups, including Loving Islands, Fung's Farm, Fiji Organic Queens Association, Cicia Organic Monitoring Agency and Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development (FRIEND).

"What is exciting about this new strategy is the inclusion of gender and acknowledging the significant role women play in agriculture in the Pacific, said Ms. Sashi Kiran, Director of the FRIEND. "As a representative from the POETCom membership, we welcome this inclusion, and look forward to being able to measure gender impact in the Pacific moving forward."

The Strategic Plan will run from 2021 through to 2025 and will also focus on resilience and growth in organic agriculture, a sector hit hard by the pandemic.

POETCom is a project of the Pacific Community's (SPC) Land Resources Division.

KASTOM GADEN ASSOCIATION ROLLS OUT CAPACITY BUILDING EXERCISE



Diseases are present in most farms, but with simple measures and practices one can reduce them significantly IMAGE:Soil&More

Controlling pests and diseases can get maximum crop production and prevent loss.

Kastom Gaden Association conducted two trainings in Pests & Diseases Management in response to various concerns raised by farmers at the Solomon Islands Platform Meeting last year.

Pest & Disease Consultant, Lawrence Atu addressed various issues including soil and plant nutrition, understanding common pests and diseases of agriculture crops, and the application of management practices in controlling pests and diseases.

Farmers were also trained to operate a knapsack sprayer where it is expected that participants will return to their communities and share their knowledge with their family farming groups.

Two trainings were conducted in Popoloi and Arulighho in Guadalcanal, where 42 farmer organisation leaders attended the training. Twenty-seven youths made up more than half of the participants at the training.

The capacity building exercise was funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific — FO4ACP Programme, a joint partnership between the European Union, Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

BLOG

Can School Gardens Help Alleviate The Economic Impact Of COVID-19 In The Pacific?

By Lisa Cornish, Devex

While Papua New Guinea has had just over 500 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 7 deaths, the economic impact on the country through weakened demand and unfavorable trade terms has been substantial.

The launch of a new garden program for secondary schools in the city of Lae earlier this month is part of an approach to change this, reducing outside dependence on the external supply of food and building community hubs that can help the health and economic recovery from the pandemic.

The Lae secondary schools garden program is being supported by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Charles Darwin University and implemented in partnership with the Lae City Hand Up Program and the Lae Chamber of Commerce. Community workers are being coordinated through these local partners, creating both health and economic benefits from a small community project.

"The intention is for the gardens and fishponds to produce enough to supply at least one nutritious meal per day for each student at the school," Tania Paul, horticulture and aquaculture team leader at Charles Darwin University, told Devex. "But if the schools can ramp up their production, they can supply more to the school kitchens and sell the surplus into the local markets."

The gardens are producing locally available and familiar fruits and vegetables, beginning with sweet potato, taro, tomato, guava, and orange bananas. Fishponds will be stocked with tilapia, which are able to survive in low-oxygen environments.

The team supporting the program has also worked out how many chickens the schools need to sell into the local market to cover the purchase of the next young chicks, fish feed, fertilizer, and seeds to make the garden a self-sustaining system. One of the longer-term aims is for students to manage the garden, chickens, and fish so they can build their business skills and learn about profit margins, marketing, and managing budgets and finances.

The initiative has brought together a range of sectors, Paul said, including local businesses and industry providing in-kind donations and support.

“The schools were all on board as soon as they heard, and there are many more outside of the local area that want to join in,” she said. “It’s been an overwhelmingly positive and supportive response.”

Drawing attention to a forgotten element in the COVID-19 response

The Lae project aims to bring attention to the wider benefits of such gardens in the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, they have been a missing element in the response. In impacting the global trade of goods and services, COVID-19 has created a food security risk for island communities in particular that are reliant on international trade partners to deliver food. In response, community gardens have been an important area of investment.

“There is an incredible amount of discussion at the moment around home gardens, including in Asia and the Pacific,” Danny Hunter, a senior scientist at Bioversity International, told Devex. “In Sri Lanka, the government has announced that home gardens are the priority moving forward, so all projects being implemented have had to be realigned with that. School gardens have, in comparison, not had the same profile.”

During the pandemic, the closure of schools has created a challenge in promoting school gardens, which may have created this gap. But traditionally, Hunter said, discussion surrounding school gardens has focused on the health impact for children – including improved behavior and eating habits. Evidence supporting this impact can be weak.

A review of the Vegetables Go to School program, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation between 2013 and 2017, found that in Burkina Faso – a recipient country – impacts were limited. But the “enthusiasm” for school gardens in high-income countries had encouraged NGOs and donors to seek to replicate that success in low- and middle-income countries.

Combined with the perception that they can create a burden for schools, Hunter said these gardens have become a “policy blind spot.”

Changing the narrative can make school gardens part of the wider community response to food and economic sustainability. But the gardens can also bring social impacts.

“In a post-COVID world, I think having school gardens can even be therapeutic,” Hunter said. “It will help deal with mental health or anxiety issues that could emerge. And this may be a critical part of recovery for children especially.”

In PNG, plans for Lae and beyond

Hunter’s passion for school gardens had resulted in collaborations with a range of agricultural and environmental institutions to produce “Agrobiodiversity, School Gardens and Healthy Diets,” published earlier this year, to draw attention to school gardens and their value – and share best practices in implementing a school garden for wider community benefits. With the Lae secondary schools garden program, PNG hopes to be among the countries adding value in this space.

“We are hoping to scale out the pilot to other areas once we have a working model and have ironed out any of the issues,” Paul said.

In the longer term, this program aims to help revitalize agricultural education in high schools across provinces, improving its image and attractiveness as a career option. It also seeks to expand into primary schools – with the distribution of seeds and planting materials into the community during times of crisis as a key objective. In the very long term, Paul is hoping to see students graduate, set up their own small businesses, and, through this process, contribute to growing local food production and the agricultural sector in PNG.

“But the main aim is to increase the availability of nutritious food in the diet of the school students and provide an incentive for kids to return to school,” Paul said.

The Impacts Of The COVID-19 Virus On Fiji Agricultural Value Chains



Simon Cole is calling on regional governments for quick action on the restoration of Tourism and Export Market linkages IMAGE: TravelOnline

By Simon Cole, Chairman of Fiji Crop & Livestock Council

Covid 19 was an unforeseen threat to Fiji Agriculture.

It is unlikely the Covid threat will be replicated for many years, but Fiji is in a region prone to natural disasters and there is an opportunity to learn from the impacts and responses to the Virus which can provide guidance when future disasters threaten the local agriculture sector.

In July 2020, the Fiji Crop and Livestock Council, with the backing of PIFON, interviewed the heads of the Council's (commodity based) Associations to learn how their different values chains had been impacted both in the short and long term.

The hiatus caused by the Covid virus has had a direct and indirect impacts on Fiji Agriculture. These impacts include market and price disruptions, breakdown in market logistics, impact on crop husbandry, industry scale and an increase in agricultural theft. TC Harold impacted the country at the same time as the virus.

Fortunately, most impacts are temporary and have already worked their way out of the agricultural systems (Dairy, Cocoa, Bananas, Vegetables, Mushrooms). Other value chains are returning to normal slowly (Coconut, Yaqona, Dalo and Cassava). Some impacts are positive. The Ginger industry has boomed during the Covid period as social media touts ginger as a preventative for the virus. Other cash crop value chains are seeing an increased scale of planting as a remedy to unemployment in other sectors of Fiji's economy. (Ginger, Dalo, Cassava, Vegetables Yaqona).

Because of the virus, there has been a movement towards more subsistence agriculture, using agriculture as a social support mechanism with new and unskilled farmers. While necessary as social support mechanism, this trend risks oversupplying limited markets, a fall in production efficiencies and even threatens commercial production by inculcating and spreading disease through poorly managed crops. (Ginger, Honey, Vegetables, Yaqona)

Until regional Governments can restore tourism and export market linkages, there remain some long-term impacts that continue to negatively impact the sector (Spices, Pigs, Beef, All Exports). We expected there will be further impacts on local markets by years end. There is a need for the industry to match the increased planting, achieved post lockdown, with increased markets. Failure to achieve this will result in over supplied markets, falling farm gate prices and a loss of enthusiasm in new farmers. The industry should invest now in developing more markets for local production.

It is important that the industry supports the restoration of pre Covid logistical networks. The emergency systems put in place during the lockdown were essential at the time but are a distortion of market networks.

Youths Have To Transform The Agriculture Sector In The Pacific Islands

By Heiko Bammann, Agriculturalist Economist, Agrifood Economics Division, FAO Headquarters, Rome

PIFON has been on a great voyage since its beginning in 2008. With European Union and ACP funding, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has supported farmer organisation and its networks in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific to form into professional entities, with strong governance structures and sustainable business models.

While organisations in the other two regions have struggled to maintain the momentum created, the developments in the Pacific have been outstanding. From an initial founding group of just a handful of interested national organisations, the network has grown four times in size across the vast Pacific Island region — with scope for more!

PIFON's technical, business and management support is provided through i.e. high quality experts advice and farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchanges. We can follow and learn from each other on the excellent PIFON web page and through media like this Blog, you are just reading.

This article highlights a pressing issue around the world: the role of youth in agriculture. It points out to resources also available to the Pacific to learn from and take advantage of the information available through the internet and on social media.

FAO has an important role to play as knowledge broker and in sharing experiences, from implementing programs to empower youth taking part in policy decision making processes and playing an active role in the transformation of the agriculture sector. This transformation process offers huge opportunities for the youth.

Agriculture in the Pacific is more than the occupation of the great majority of people; it is their satisfaction, the means by which what survives of tradition is largely expressed and maintained, and the channel of individual creativity and enterprise within traditionally close confines of the extended family and community. (Barry Weightman, 1989).

Traditional farming and food systems in the Pacific have shown great resilience to natural disasters such as cyclones, floods, droughts, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tsunamis, as well as to economic shocks, like the food price increase at the time PIFON was formed. However, the COVID-19 crisis is a new dimension of “shock” and shows us the limitations of modern Food Systems. Today's Food Systems in the Pacific islands are highly influenced by global food trade (through food imports and exports) and other sectors. They depend highly on mobility, trade and accessibility to inputs and resources from elsewhere.

Fortunate are the Pacific island countries with still strong traditional farming structures, where youth have learnt from their families how to grow and process food. This has been and still is often seen as a burden and disincentive to take on a “career in agriculture”. It has driven many rural youth away to the cities and towards so called “white collar jobs”. However, agriculture has remained part of the culture in many island countries and that has been the basis to ensure family food security, and steady food supplies to villages and the country as a whole at the time COVID-19 hit. In small atoll islands or islands where agriculture structures have declined, the crisis has hit hardest!

PIFON is also working with youth and women groups to improve productivity of farm enterprises, local processing and domestic marketing. The transformation will take place, today's educated youth have a unique opportunity to combine traditional practices with modern skills, play an important part in this transition and build up new livelihoods for many.

Even more so than in the traditional days, the transformation of food system need educated youth, apt to use modern communication tools, navigate the “digital divide”, deal with the business partners and prepare financing proposal for investing in farm enterprises and other agribusinesses. That alone however, is not enough, Governments have to understand the needs of young entrepreneurs in agriculture, also known as “agripreneurs” and adjust rules and regulations to enable youth to get access to finance, to land and information, in order to ensure sound planning translates into business earnings and much needed employment.

The call is to reduce barriers and think of smart policies and incentives that can provide the basis for youth to establish businesses. COVID-19 has shown changes in production and marketing structures: digital sourcing with limited contacts between farmer and first buyer when exchanging produce, quick installation of infrastructure at consolidation points, mobile vendors delivering produce to the end consumer to name just a few. Examples are plenty, and youth have (why have?) and will play a role in contributing to Pacific islands prosperity based on opportunities existing in the agriculture sector.

FAO global knowledge networks provide ready access to information for organisations and governments, but also individual youth to learn about supporting policies, technologies and on how to do business. Examples of such information hubs and web sites of interest for youth include: *Sustainable Food Value Chains Knowledge Platform*, *Youth Employment*; *Young Professionals for Agriculture Development* (YPARD); *FAO Youth and United Nations Global Alliance* (YUNGA); *Supporting Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems* (RAI), *Digital Agriculture*.

Youth is one of PIFON's six work areas. To the to young women and men: make your voices heard and take advantage of the services provided by PIFON, SPC, national bodies and private sector organisations and get support to transform your farming and agribusiness ideas into reality. Learn your trade and engage with market players to tap into the emerging opportunities the growing agri-food markets offer.

Hyperlinks explained:

Sustainable Food Value Chains Knowledge Platform: <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-food-value-chains/home/en/>;

Youth Employment: <http://www.fao.org/rural-employment/work-areas/youth-employment/en/>

FAO Youth and United Nations Global Alliance (YUNG): <http://www.fao.org/yunga/resources/en/>

Young Professionals for Agriculture Development (YPARD): <https://ypard.net/>

Supporting Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI): <http://www.fao.org/in-action/responsible-agricultural-investments/our-work/empowering-youth/en/>

Digital Agriculture: <http://www.fao.org/digital-agriculture/en/>