

NEWSLETTER



M A R C H 2021



inside

CELEBRATING
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP
IN PACIFIC AGRICULTURE

ASSESSING
THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK
FOR FARMER ORGANISATIONS
IN THE PACIFIC

UNDERSTANDING
THE AGRICULTURAL
VALUE CHAIN

FO4ACP NEWS
OUR MEMBERS WORK
FROM AROUND THE PACIFIC

TECHNICAL SESSIONS
PRODUCING PINEAPPLES
GROWING ORCHIDS

& more!



COVER

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN PACIFIC AGRICULTURE

With Our Partners, PARDI 2

The integration of women in historically male-dominated fields in the Pacific in this new decade is being realised at all job levels, including senior management. For International Women's Day this year, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) is celebrating its first woman Manager, Lavinia Kaumaitotoya and the Pacific Community's Land Resources Division (LRD) its first woman Director, Karen Mapusua.

Lavinia had experience in many corporate leadership roles before becoming a farmer and joining PIFON. She came on board to support PIFON's project development as Program Manager, and has been instrumental in securing long term funding from donors and partners. Lavinia's is also committed to ensuring PIFON walks the talk not only in its project activities but also in its event management area ensuring that their internal procurement processes also prioritise sustainability and local food sourcing. Recently, she was promoted to the role of Manager.

Karen assumed the Director's role during a challenging time soon after the peak of the COVID-19 crisis in the region in 2020. Her extensive and varied career helped prepare her for taking the reins of one of SPC's largest divisions during an unprecedented disruption in its work programming and implementation. Karen previously served as Operations Manager for the Division. She began her career as a high school history and social studies teacher in Tonga and Australia and has focused on her passion — organic farming and food — during her more than 20 years of working in rural development in the Pacific Region. She co-founded the Pacific Organic & Ethical Trade Community (POETCom), serving as coordinator for five years.

We recently took Karen and Lavinia away from their busy schedules for a chat to find out from them the difference they feel having women in leadership roles within the agriculture sector makes.

Why do you think it's important to have women holding leadership roles within the agriculture sector in the Pacific?

Lavinia Kaumaitotoya (L): It's important because there aren't many of us. In agriculture, because our sector feeds the Pacific, our success in leadership can matter to how a family can feed its family nutritious meals as opposed to just having a meal. There's a big difference. As a mother I can see that, so I will work to make it happen. As someone who champions our role in this sector, I want to see programs in the sector have the gender lens that so women have a voice, are empowered and offered a decent and dignified living in our islands.

Karen Mapusua (K): So many reasons, but I think it can be summed up in representation matters, examples matter, role models matter! I was blown away by the response of young women in the agriculture field when I was appointed as Director of the Land Resources Division. Just simply by being appointed it opened up space for aspirations and ambition to grow for so many other women. I am very proud of the fact that for the first time in LRD's history, women have equal representation in senior management roles. That said, I think it's important to acknowledge that leadership isn't all about the job title — there have been women leading in agriculture in the Pacific in their families and communities, starting small enterprises and so on for many years and their contribution is just as important and needs more recognition.

Do you feel as though you bring different perspectives to the table? If so, what are those perspectives?

L: Of course we do as women! Naturally we are nurturers and empathetic, we bring these traits with us. We are natural listeners and when we make decisions, we cater for everyone, because again as mothers, we think of the whole family. Bringing these unique characteristics to the table allows balanced decision-making. More interesting is the fact that when we don't get our way, we will argue to make it happen, it's just the mother in us!

K: Yes definitely! I view things, including work, holistically, as a component of life. I think many women are the same. I approach work and management in a self-reflective way and value factors such as meaning, purpose, connection with colleagues and work-life integration as equally as important as “hard” technical competencies.

I’ve also been told numerous times over the years that I shouldn’t expose my feelings at work, because this represents weakness, especially coming from a woman. But I see emotion, passion and compassion as valuable assets, not things to be ignored or hidden. I also have had to step out of my comfort zone so often during my work life that I now encourage people to be bold, to try new things and not be scared of failure. This is a major contrast to the often very risk averse environment of the workplace.

You’ve both worked to champion the involvement of women in different spaces — the organics movement, farmer organisations, regional decision making. How important is it to you that the voices of grassroots women and communities are heard within the regional and international decision making processes?

L: I’d like to acknowledge and pay tribute to other women who also worked to make inroads to pave the way, championed and spoke up and out. They were the invisible ones, the real champions and I salute them. I am here today because they were there yesterday.

The voices of these grassroot women and communities are so important! They are raising the Pacific’s next generation of leaders, agribusiness entrepreneurs, master farmers, agronomic technicians — our future. It is vital that they have their voice heard because many of the solutions are within us, with them, we don’t need others to tell us how to solve our Pacific problems, we need to look in our backyard to find the solutions. Women touch problems and issues daily, trust me — they have the answers. We just need to listen. We need to have Pacific solutions for our Pacific problems and have our Pacific context always, many times, we are thrust with foreign concepts that don’t take into account our peculiar context. Listening to our communities and women can help us do this.

K: The call “nothing about us without us” rings true here for rural and grassroots women! Women play a prominent role in agricultural production throughout the Pacific: in subsistence farming to feed their immediate families and in growing cash crops for income, also in running agricultural businesses. Women are an indispensable part of food production and consumption practices in the region.

Yet there have been very few women in leadership roles in the sector nationally or regionally — with some notable exceptions in the private sector and even fewer in the public sector. This means, for example, that agricultural policy is being set, training is being delivered, workplaces are being designed, predominantly by men. Women’s perspectives, needs and priorities will not necessarily be reflected and the status quo will remain. Until women are heard at all levels, we are only hearing half the story. Pacific women also have a unique voice in the international realm. We have solutions and responses and knowledge that the world can benefit from, and as part of the global community we must contribute.

As women, what are some of the challenges you have faced in your own career?

L: My career has spanned several industries. My first love was aviation, I started with banking straight out of school, agriculture is just the last 10 odd years. So, I’ve been around and got the exposure that I am thankful for as a leader and many firsts — as the first women duty manager at Nadi airport; then the first indigenous women, back in the then Air Pacific Operations, to step into management. It was tough mentally so I had to grow an attitude big time. It was very competitive so I took myself back to school for my degree and masters to be on a level playing field with my peers, having risen from a strong operations and logistics background with only hard knocks certification.

I moved to Fiji Ports as the first woman General Manager, then still in transportation to Airports Fiji Limited — all very male dominated areas of work and also in leadership roles, where I was the only woman many times. But, I had great male mentors who helped to shape my leadership style. If there is something that really irked me, it was the obvious disparity in salary.

Along the way, I made sure I never compromised my values and my family was the most important. I made time to always be there for my family’s special days despite being busy and I had to put in twice the effort of work to stay relevant. That’s just how it was. It bothered me, but it didn’t deter me, it stirred me more to work to prove people wrong. That’s all one can do, is work ‘as proof of concept’. Where my values were challenged, I said thank you very much, stood up and left. I was not beholden to the work, but to who and what I was. It was these challenges that moulded me. As I look back, I realise it made me the advocator I am today, who isn’t easily fazed. Mind you, agriculture has toned me down heaps! Working with grassroots women and their issues, brings in a contrasting set of behavioural factors on a completely different sphere altogether for me — quite humbling and subservient.

K: I always feel a bit uncomfortable when asked about my ‘career’.... it makes it sound like I might have actually planned something! But in reality, I have simply followed my heart and trusted that when a door opened and it felt right that I should go through it. I’ve also only done work that fulfills me and allows me to serve. That means I’ve often been a little out of my depth, had to learn very fast and have been kept humble through making mistakes. I’ve worked in everything from education, to theatre to peacekeeping before landing in organic agriculture and apart from having to get my head around vastly different technical areas, I think the biggest challenge has been to stay true to myself and my own work and management style in different situations when others’ expectations are quite different. Working in peacekeeping, for example, I had military personnel reporting to me....and giving orders was not something I was used to, but my team expected it. I needed to learn how to do that my way, in line with my values and operating style.

To be honest, as a woman coming into leadership, another challenge is that we come under much more scrutiny and criticism than a man would and much of it very personal — comments on marital status, dress, tone of voice, questions about how we might have gotten our role — it all wears you down. I guess over time I’ve developed a thick skin — but I shouldn’t have too. Women should not be held to a different set of standards. I’ve actually been asked in a phone interview if I was dressed decently! No one would ask a man that.

What advice do you have for women wanting to follow in your footsteps?

L: First — get educated. I took myself back to school. It was tough. I had a young family, a mortgage, a 24/7 job. I didn’t have the luxury of going straight after high school. I was told to work as times were tough. But, I went back and did it, and it is what I am quietly proud of today. But, I did it with the love and support of a wonderful husband and children. They forewent family functions, events, holidays because I was ‘schooling’, so their mum could graduate. And, when I did, it was a privileged and rewarding moment for us. If I can do it, others can too.

Second — don’t compromise your values. Today our world is very different to the one I grew up in. We grew up in an opinionated world, where there was freedom of speech and choice, there was respect and people learned to agree to disagree. Today, you have to tow the line for authorities, people do not have opinions. If they do, they cannot speak up. They trade in their values for their job security and livelihood. My advice — you don’t have to. You can be your own person, speak up, speak out because if you’re true to yourself, something will turn out for you, it did for me.

K: My friends are always a bit worried about me giving advice to their young people because I’m not likely to say all the expected things such as “stay in school”, etc. I’m much more likely to say just be true to yourself — look for work that you love and do it your way, not someone else’s. Forge your own path! It will look different than mine, but it will be amazing.

Also, know that the work you love might change over the years and that is just fine. Find mentors and build a small community of people who will support you — and who will give you a bit of a nudge if required! Always take time to reflect on yourself, your values, priorities and needs and make sure your life is aligning and remember that what you do is not who you are. Lastly — don’t wait to be ready for the next step — be fearless. A quote I love from Rebecca Ray sums it up: “She was never quite ready. But she was brave. And the universe listens to brave”. I’ll testify to that!

e-BULLETIN

ASSESSING THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR FARMER ORGANISATIONS IN THE PACIFIC

The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network has commissioned work for the assessment of the legislative framework for farmer organisations in the Pacific; the work expands on the scoping study published in April (2019) regarding farmer organisations in 7 of its 9 member countries; Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Timor Leste.

“Agriculture is vitally important to the Pacific and over the years our need to promote more trade within the region and the world requires a coordination of various legislation,” says Lavinia Kaumaitotoya, Manager of the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network.

“From ongoing discussions between our members and consultants, the majority of laws with regards to cooperatives, companies, charitable trusts and incorporated societies in the Pacific are largely similar in nature but they can be intentionally amended to achieve greater conformity.”

“This work forms part of a program to support Farmer Organisations in the Pacific and will expand on the scoping study for each member country as well as the reporting requirements for those different registration options.”

The in-depth review of the registration options for farmer organisations are specific to each member country and include the reporting requirements for the different options available, the tax implications, the limitations on trade and income generation, the governance structure and protection against interference.

“It is envisioned that the output will be a user-friendly guide be distributed in the respective countries on how best to register a farmer organisation, the options available and which is more suitable to what organisation size in number of members, volume of produce, volume of trade, and tax and reporting issues.”

Lavinia Kaumaitotoya said the review will also identify key policy issues related to registration of farmer organisations in the Pacific together with a policy brief on the issues and solutions required.

The assessment and review 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).

FRIEND STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS FOR COVID-19 FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME

The Pacific Farmers Have Their Say Report (2020) has warned that without large-scale coordinated action, the disruption to food systems brought on by the global COVID-19 pandemic may pose serious health and nutrition implications.

Sashi Kiran, the Director of Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development (FRIEND) said the combined impacts of the global pandemic and natural disasters has forced more than 185,000 individuals and families to seek alternative means for survival, and has emphasized the importance of collaboration to assist targeted communities.

She said an initiative by Then India Sanmarga Ikya (TISI) Sangam, Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, Civil Society Organisations and Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development was set up in Nadi for humanitarian response and distributed food rations, seedlings, facilitating training and providing counselling and certain legal services to those impacted by both crises.

The impacts is also seeing the rising value of ICT4Ag innovations, and has strengthened existing partnerships between TraSeable Farms and FRIEND to monitor and evaluate FRIEND’s food security programme including tracking requests for food and medical assistance, seed distribution program, and home garden training initiatives.

The app captures real-time data on the impact of the pandemic on domestic food markets where sixty-eight participants were trained to use the app to gather price information for 20 common food items sold in municipal and informal markets and supermarkets in the Solomon Islands, Samoa and Fiji.

The activities are co-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).

UNDERSTANDING THE AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAIN

As the impacts of the global pandemic, climate change, migration and conflicts threaten progress towards the goals of ending poverty and malnutrition, experts continue to express the importance of innovation in modernizing and sustaining agri-food systems.

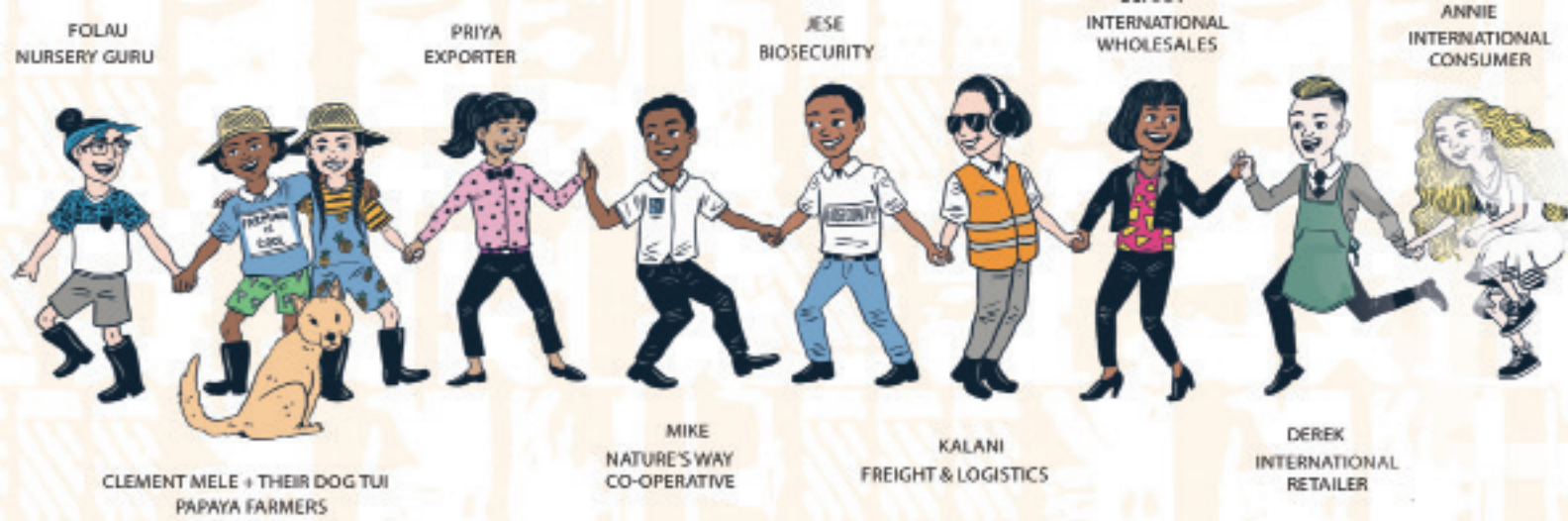
“From production to processing, financing and marketing, as well as in how producers organize themselves to address these challenges is critical, investments in innovations in agriculture will therefore help catalyze development” says Michael Hailu the former Director of CTA.

“The agricultural sector is rapidly evolving, creating many opportunities for producer organisation and agribusinesses, and a farmer-inclusive value chain development approach is a powerful formula for developing sustainable linkages in the Pacific.”

Why Value Chain Analysis & Awareness Is Important

Since 2006 several development partners have promoted value chain analysis in the Pacific region, in 2007 FAO hosted the first regional workshop on Value Chain Analysis, held in the Solomon Islands. It was followed by a paper entitled, Participatory Value Chain Analysis For Improved Farmer Incomes, Employment Opportunities and Food Security.

“The value chain approach is oriented toward the market and what consumers want,” says Kyle Stice, Special Advisor to PIFON. “By analyzing the value, information is obtained that should lead to better decision making by those involved including farmers and traders, and those wanting to support the value chain like policy makers and donors.”



“Too often we see individual actors along the value chain and policy makers who don’t appreciate the contribution each actor makes in getting the final product (value added) to the consumer.

Kyle Stice said: “Farmers and other actors along the chain often don’t realise how many people are involved, and what they do, in getting the final product to the consumer. It’s better to work together to increase the size of the pie rather than fighting to increase your share of a smaller pie.”

In 2012 the ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) commissioned studies in several countries on issues relating to green and inclusive chains that had been established by the private sector, including in the Pacific with funding from FAO. Local consultants through Koko Siga Pacific undertook a series of value chain assessments.

Since 2014 PIFON has been running value-chain training sessions with its farmer organisation members in the Pacific.

Impacts of Value Chain Analysis & Awareness

Interviews with participants and trainers involved in the various Value Chain training sessions reveal that 100% of the participants reported having a change in mindset related to the other actors in the value chain.

“The response has been overwhelmingly positive,” says Lavinia Kaumaitotoya, Manager of PIFON. “It was reportedly directly related to the exercise of systematically looking at the actor in terms of what the actor contributes to the final product, the cost of the actor’s contribution, the reward the actor receives and the actor’s risk.”

“A significant impact of this type of training is that it helps participants think more critically about the business of agriculture and ask themselves the right questions.”

Lavinia Kaumaitotoya said: “In some cases the farmers had felt they were the most important person in the chain and that everything should revolve around their needs. After participating, they had realized that actually the customer is the most important person and everyone else is working together to give the customers what they want.”

An important impact reported by several of the farmer organisations is that they have translated and incorporated value chain training materials into their own programmes.

“The training was very beneficial to the growers and now they understand how things start and where they end and also the costing from the nursery up to the market,” says Sinai Tuitahi, the Chief Executive Officer of Growers Federation of Tonga.

“This work helped guide our activities and in setting prices when we had just established the industry, the growers also had a better understanding about how we got to this price, what are our costs and what everyone along the chain receives.”

Tei Tei Taveuni Chairman, Alan Petersen said the Value Chain Training Sessions resolved issues of mistrust between farmers and the middleman.



“Most of us did not really have any idea of the intermediaries along the chain, we understood that the dalo went to the middleman, the middleman sold to an exporter and the exporter exported it. That was our basic knowledge.”

“There’s a lot of mistrust between farmers and the middleman, so this VC training was really useful as it gave the farmers an idea, well it gave us all an idea of all the different links in the chain before it reached the market and what our market was. Most of us had no idea where our dalo was going or who bought our dalo.”

Alan Petersen said: “We invited all our champion farmers — farmers that are lead farmers in our farm groups — to attend the training and it was very good, very basic and to the point, it was appreciated by the farmers to see the value chain, our part in it as farmers and how important each link in the chain is.”

A common and important impact across several of the value chain training sessions has been the improvement in relationships and collaborations.

“Prior to the trainings, we were just doing our work and like everybody was doing theirs and we thought that is his job, and this is my job,” says Praneel Mudaliar, the Managing Director of export business, Sunrise Produce.

“But now the VC training strengthened our relationships, now everyone’s taking responsibility for what they are supposed to do.”

To date Nature’s Way Cooperative has incorporated elements of the Value Chain Guide into a new publication entitled, Fiji Export Procedures For Selected Crops — Guidelines For ‘Team Fiji’ To Bring Back The Gold, widely used by Nature’s Way Cooperative, Ministry of Agriculture and Biosecurity Authority of Fiji as a training resource.

Tutu Rural Training Centre has translated and incorporated elements of the value chain training material into the curriculum of the Young Farmers Course.

MORDI Tonga Trust and the Nishi Foundation, which were collaborators under the PIFON supported Value Chain training, have incorporated elements of the training materials into the syllabus and training manual of their Farmer Field Schools.



NEWS

GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND UNSEASONAL WEATHER DELAYS HIVE PLANS FOR TE TANGO ENUA

Rarotonga, Cook Islands — Hives planned for 2020 by Te Tango Enuia has been moved to 2021 following delays brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and unseasonal weather — factors Heather Webber of Te Tango Enuia says are beyond their control.

“There have been importing holdups with the beekeeping suits because of the limited arrival of ships to Rarotonga. In September last year, an order for 29 beekeeping suits was placed with Ceracell in Auckland through the Ministry of Agriculture Cook Island.”

“It keeps beekeepers safe while harvesting wild bees to fill hives, and so after being informed that these suits would arrive in 4 weeks from receiving the order, it was disappointing to receive only 6 of the 29 Ceracell beekeeping suits in November.”

“Along with not having enough suits, we were experiencing very unseasonal constant wet weather in Rarotonga. To harvest bees three days straight of fine weather was required to enable harvesting to continue.”

“This has had an impact on limiting what could be done to harvest bees and as a consequence of this delay, the harvesting target of having 10 hives fully functional, was not met.”

Despite the setback, Heather Webber said bee harvesting has begun for the Solomona, Safotu and Teremoana families.

“We’re moving to have 20 hives fully operational by June 2021; bee harvesting needs to progress at pace so that all the hives have bees in them.”

“We’ve also calendared for February 2021 a practical workshop for the Te Tango Enuia 17 beekeepers who completed their theory in August last year.”

An order for beehives, smokers, scrapers, gloves and an electric honey extractor has been placed to help Te Tango Enuia members process their honey.

The beekeeping programme 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).

WIBDI STRENGTHENS LINKS TO MARKETS FOR FARMERS

Apia, Samoa — Women in Business Development Inc have partnered with Sky Eye to create the MAUA App aimed at strengthening the link between farmers and the urban population to source and supply high quality local produce.

Adimaimalaga Tafuna’i, the Executive Director of Women In Business Development Inc says while these are challenging and uncertain times, they are continuing to respond pro-actively to the COVID-19 crisis.



“The closure of borders has weakened the tourism sector that normally supports a positive flow on effect through local business and community, stable purchasing power will take a long time to fully recover.”

“We’re identifying alternative market access points to stimulate much needed income for farmers through our improved capacity to deliver technical and economic services and connect members to markets.”

Despite the challenges, Adimaimalaga Tafuna’i said the role of agriculture has become more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The stable availability of fresh local affordable produce and demand for commodities continues to maintain a consistent export market in the region.”

“Agriculture has continued to operate during strict “lockdown” conditions and it has elevated the profile of agriculture and food security; bringing it to the forefront of peoples’ minds; from both a reassuring urban food access and economic perspective.”

Adimaimalaga Tafuna’i said the MAUA App is an innovative method in which goods and service transactions occur.

“It has enabled goods to be pre-ordered and paid for through M-Tala electronic payment service.”

She said training for members and staff was undertaken to ensure people better understood the concept of Mobile money and were given support to register for this transaction service.

The MAUA App 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).

DELAYED SHIPPING SCHEDULES A CHALLENGE FOR NISHI TRADING

Nuku’alofa, Tonga — Nishi Trading is facing its biggest challenge yet with delayed shipping schedules brought on by the global pandemic as the watermelon export pathway reopens.

“COVID-19 continues to be a challenge in how we conduct agri-business,” says Minoru Nishi Jnr, the Managing Director of Nishi Trading. “The shipping delay and changes are our biggest challenge, accessibility of technical equipment and border restrictions impeding the flow of supplies.”

“It recently impacted the watermelon export pathway temporarily being shut-down; in mid-October last year watermelon exports came to a halt as fruit fly was identified in 1 shipment from Tonga.”

Minoru Nishi Jnr said watermelons became abundant in supply as a result, that also saw export quality fruit selling at its lowest price.

“The local market was flooded as farmers tried to sell their exports in the local market; it has since become identified that there were system errors in the Tongan MAFFF border procedures.”

Minoru Nishi Jnr said a meeting was held for farmers to develop relationships with Tonga’s Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Forests and Fisheries (MAFFF).



“Our discussions highlighted the importance of working together to support farmers and re-opening the watermelon export pathway.”

“The challenge for us is operating and marketing exports in a COVID environment and looking at the ways we can mitigate the risks in 2021.”

The Company’s System Approach for the Export Pathway and Meeting 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).

TRTC ADDRESS FOOD & SECURITY CONCERNS WITH PLANS TO SUSTAIN OVERSEAS MARKETS

Taveuni Island, Fiji — Students of Tutu Rural Training Centre (TRTC) have planted 17,800 Tausala variety taro tops as part of key plans to boost food and nutrition security and sustain markets overseas.

“The main purpose of the activity is to give our young farmers the ability to sustain themselves in the future by establishing their own seed source,” says Father Petero Matairatu, the Principal Director of TRTC. “We’re helping our young farmers with planting material that they can establish their short term crops.”

“The Tausala variety has always been the major variety of dalo that’s sold in New Zealand and Australia, and mainly consumed by Pacific Islanders.”

Father Petero said Tutu Rural Training Centre through its projects aims to make agriculture more attractive, inspiring and sustainable in the training of its students.

“The taro planting material will help young farmers sustain their livelihood and help sustain the overseas market.”

“Farming is a risky business that’s dependent on domestic prices and changes in foreign markets, so the appreciation of the business concept is critical to its success.”

Father Petero said the Tutu Rural Training Centre will be sharing newly acquired techniques with students in the coming months that will help attract the market.

“The financial accountability from farmers themselves will help farmers diversify into different farming activities that will help generate more income during different economic circumstances.”

The planting materials 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).



CANC AGROFORESTRY & SCHOOL PROJECT TO PROMOTE MULTIFUNCTIONAL APPROACH

Noumea, New Caledonia — The Chambre d'Agriculture de Nouvelle-Calédonie is working with stakeholders in agroforestry and schools to improve and strengthen food and nutritional security.

Regional Cooperation Manager, François Japiot says underinvestment and market constraints are challenges for agroforestry in supporting food and nutritional security.

“Thanks to numerous consultations with stakeholders, we were able to elaborate a agroforestry project for New Caledonia, that is, co-funded by PROTÉGÉ, EDF11 Regional OCT's and not only on the East coast more specially funded through FO4ACP.”

“The link between agroforestry and school canteen supply of this project is designed to provide coherence and complementary to one goal, from farm to plate.”

François Japiot said the project is focused on strengthening production and improving access to markets.

“The FO4ACP component of the project is completing and rebalancing demonstrative and experimental agroforestry plots giving a comprehensive coverage in the country, including smallholder farmers in tribes.”

“Agriculture College and MFR-Poindimié are also involved in agroforestry plot network, these demonstrative plots will enable young students and farmers to acquire necessary knowledge in agroforestry, comprising diversified food and cash crop.”

Five farmers have been identified to develop the agroforestry demonstrative plot in the North Province of New Caledonia.

The activity 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).

GROFED STEPS UP INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Nuku'alofa, Tonga — In an effort to serve members effectively in a rapidly changing environment, the Growers Federation of Tonga are stepping up on institutional capacity building.

“We're furthering our ability to improve our current work while also remaining relevant,” says Sinai Tuitahi, the CEO of Growers Federation of Tonga. “We're strengthening members representation in farmer organisation governance bodies through the AGM for Tongatapu 7 districts and council meeting as well as developing the appropriate farmer organisation management tools.”

Sinai Tuitahi said the exercise is seeing a marked improvement in its operations.

“An information exchange workshop with Nishi Trading and Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation has seen an improved coordination of monitoring and evaluation data reporting. The financial accountability and financial system has also greatly improved.”



Sinai Tuitahi said the Growers Federation of Tonga office is now managed by an office manager on a daily basis who also manages the PIFON funded projects including monitoring and acquittal.

The capacity building exercise 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).

FBA RESUME MENTOR PROGRAMME TO ADDRESS HIGH FAILURE RATES

Ba, Fiji — The Fiji Beekeepers Association are resuming their Mentor Programme to address the high failure rate of beekeepers in Fiji.

“There’s a long-term need for training to address the high failure rate of new beekeepers,” says President, Nilesh Kumar. “When you ask how they became a beekeeper, most successful beekeepers will mention their mentor, usually a relative, neighbor or friend, who taught them essential skills while they worked together with the bees.”

First launched in 2016, the Fiji Beekeepers Association’s Mentor Programme is designed to foster similar mentoring.

“Our first mentoring programme in 2016, we learned more about the critical factors for successful mentoring, these included close geographical proximity between mentor and trainee, an existing relationship between mentor and trainee, and frequent monitoring of mentoring performance.”

These factors, Nilesh Kumar said will be included in the design and participation selection for the 2021 Mentor Programme while also aiming to encourage more women participation.

“This year we’re making an extra effort to mentor women beekeepers and we’re targeting 50% women trainee participation.”

The mentoring is expected to be completed by 2021 end and survey results available in early 2022.

The Mentor Programme 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).

KGA TO CONTINUE ICT TRAININGS FOR YOUNG FARMERS

Honiara, Solomon Islands — Kastom Gaden Association has revealed most young farmers in parts of the Solomon Islands are not familiar with digital information and videos in the areas of ICT and Agriculture.

The revelation comes at the conclusion of the ICT trainings attended by young farmers.

“The results from the 2 ICT trainings conducted in Guadalcanal and Malaita have shown that there is a high percentage which do not use ICT when it comes to Agriculture,” says Pitakia Tikai of Kastom Gaden Association.

“They didn’t know how to do simple things like using google search to look for videos and accessing digital information on agriculture.”



Pitakia Tikai said Kastom Gaden Association will increase the number of participants in the next ICT workshops and continue to organise them for farmers in other provinces of the Solomon Islands.

“There are a lot of digital illiterate farmers in our rural areas, 100% of the participants gave a high rating of 5/5 to the usefulness of the workshop.”

“ICT and farming must be promoted to youths in other provinces to attract them towards farming, it would also increase the productivity of farmers.”

Participants in Malaita training included youth farmers, Malaita provincial Extension Officers from the Ministry of Agriculture, Auki Market Vendors Association and a representative of Malaita Youth Council.

In Guadalcanal participants included members from Divit Rural Training Centre, Bethsheba Disability Training, Barana Nature Park, Honiara Lauru Youth, Suva Rural Training Centre, Maraghoto Farm, Popoloi Farm, Zai Na Tina Organic Farm and Guadalcanal Province Extension Service.

Pitakia Tikai said the training was conducted to understand the use of ICT in farming organisation, promoting the use of online information for farming, promoting the use of social media to advertise and share information, promote online marketing on Facebook Pages and help youths record data of farming produce on their mobile phones.

The ICT 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).

ANAPROFIKO LAUNCH PRODUCT STORE AND WEBSITE AT FARMERS FORUM

Dili, Timor-Leste — ANAPROFIKO have launched their product store and website at the second Farmers Forum from Arbiru Beach Hotel.

“We’re growing,” says Joanico Ximenes, the General Secretary of ANAPROFIKO. “Our website marks one of the most exciting milestones of our business, it will form the foundation of our marketing and serve as a hub to represent our brand to our audience.”

“We’re also very excited about our product store, the business will support our various activities.”

Joanico Ximenes said the forum was a continuous dialogue of strengthening their core mission in seed sovereignty and sustainable food security.

“It’s an on-going bottom-up process of consultation and dialogue between organisations of smallholder farmers and rural producers. Our aim is to strengthen effective partnerships and collaboration between Governments, TOMAK Agency and PIFON.”

Attended by 54 participants, Joanico Ximenes said ANAPROFIKO continues to work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to develop food security during the global pandemic.

The 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).



FRIEND TAKES LEAD ROLE IN STRENGTHENING ORGANIC MOVEMENT IN FIJI

Suva, Fiji — The Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development are leading discussions with various industry stakeholders in the promotion of organic agriculture in Fiji.

The organic stakeholder forum titled “Organic Pathways for a Sustainable Fiji — Clean Food is a Basic Human Right” brought together 50 organic stakeholders from around the country including farmers, organic groups, specialist, researchers, government department representatives and academics to collaborate on building the organic movement in Fiji.

“We’ve been actively involved in sharing and promoting organic agriculture and through this project organized an organic stakeholder forum to strengthen the organic movement,” says Sashi Kiran, the Founder and Director of FRIEND.

“We’re committed to strengthening the organic movement; we’re looking at the global state of organics and its potential in Fiji, and we want to make it work.”

“Understanding the organic systems, its certification processes and the interest and needs of participants towards organics is important to strengthening the movement.”

The organic stakeholder 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).

TE TANGO ENUA RELEASE TECHNICAL GUIDE

Rarotonga, Cook Islands — A technical guide demonstrating the construction of keyhole and home gardens has been released by Te Tango Enuā, following a high interest shown by girls and women.

“The guide complements the workshops,” says Heather Webber of Te Tango Enuā. “We’re showing women how to build home gardens which are organic in composition, self-composting, have healthy soil and also how to prepare food in different ways that gives families healthy choices at the table.”

Te Tango Enuā’s demonstration keyhole garden in Tupapa has been a success.

“Many families are visiting Kopu and Marsh Anguna’s home, interested to see what their garden could look like if they joined our home gardens group.”

“We helped members get their land ploughed and ready for planting at the start of this project and we’ve continued to assist 5 more members by ploughing their quarter acre sections.”

Heather Webber said the cancellation of the Farmers Forum last year due to COVID-19 restrictions allowed Te Tango Enuā to assist a further 30 families to develop their home gardens.

The technical guide and 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).



FSA -VANUATU & TANNA COFFEE BEE CONDUCT BASIC TRAINING FOR WOMEN

Tanna Island, Vanuatu — Basic beekeeping training by the Farm Support Association and Tanna Coffee Bee has begun for women group representatives in Loukatai.

Peter Koah, the Associate Director of Farm Support Association said the purpose of the training is to show and demonstrate basic beekeeping husbandry to farmers.

“Thirty participants learned about how to become a good beekeeper, the different species of bee in Vanuatu, grafting and notching, honey season in Vanuatu, bee relationship with plants and different types of feeds that bee can eat.”

“We’ve purchased beekeeping material for farmer organisations and we have plans to conduct training and provide queens to interested members, when the queens are ready for these groups, the equipment will be provided with trainings.”

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), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

CLOSED BORDERS DELAY BREADFRUIT PROJECT

Rarotonga, Cook Islands — Measures taken by governments to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in 2020 has forced Te Tango Enea to delay the Breadfruit Project.

“The borders of Cook Islands and Fiji remained closed so we were unable to import the kuru (breadfruit) seedlings this year,” says Heather Webber of Te Tango Enea.

“However, we’ve forged ahead with the kuru feasibility study and it’s progressing nicely.”

Te Tango Enea has allocated a total of NZD\$21,000 for the Breadfruit Project and have contracted the services of a consultant to undertake the study.

“Te Tuhi Kelly comes with experience in trade and business profitability and will be completing the study this month.”

Heather Webber said Te Tango Enea erected a shade house in November last year in preparation to receive kuru seedlings from Fiji.

The Breadfruit Project 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).



SFA TO LEVERAGE SERVICES & MOBILIZE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT FARMERS

Apia, Samoa — A new database by the Samoa Farmers Association is expected to transform agriculture for farmers and farmer organisations.

“We will be conducting a survey that will identify farmers current land, their preferred crops and area available, this information will be stored on the new database for farmer organisations to easily find farmers of each crop type and volume,” said Afamasaga Toleafoa, the President of the Samoa Farmers Association.

The survey will provide input for accurate and flexible data management in an electronic data collection tool featuring advanced multimedia and GPS functionality.

“We will be using the smart digital form tool for surveying purposes, it’s an ideal tool for surveying farmer profile as well as farmers’ land area and location.”

Afamasaga Toleafoa said the digital forms are able to capture and measure areas, take GPS coordinates and photographs from any smart and handheld device.

“The forms can be used through an app or on a web browser, once a form is submitted, the data is instantly uploaded and published onto the database.”

The survey is expected to take place over 15 days and 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).

KGA RECORDS HIGH DEMAND FOR SEEDS & SEEDLINGS KNOWLEDGE

Honiara, Solomon Islands — The Kastom Gaden Association’s Model Farm situated at Burns Creek has recorded a high demand for seeds and seedlings knowledge in the last four months and it’s expected to increase over the year.

“We continue to offer learning opportunities, planting material and serve as an information center for farmers, schools, institutions and the general public,” says Pitakia Tikai of Kastom Gaden Association. “We’ve received more than 900 visitors requesting for seeds, seedlings and information between October and November last year.”

“We expect these numbers will rise and we’ve been busy raising the production of vegetable seedlings for distribution to farmers and farmer groups as part of the COVID-19 support package.”

Pitakia Tikai said farmers and farmer groups including Popoloi Farm who received the nursery seedlings support initiative have continued to farm their land.

“For example we supplied Popoloi Farm with 780 seedlings, who supply vegetables to the central hospital and others where they had signed contract with.”

Kastom Gaden Association is also working with Gerefesu Organic Farm, George Farm, Bloody Ridge Farm, Bethsaida Rural Training Centre, Christian Care Centre, Marephoto Home Farm, Zaina Tina, Barana Farmer Group, Sape Farm and John Ladota.

The nursery vegetable seedling productions and distributions project 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).



GROWERS WELCOME INDEPENDENT FARM INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

Nuku'alofa, Tonga — A unique structured data system, AgWorld, is advancing the work of Nishi Trading and its growers.

“Everyone is keen and are actively engaging with AgWorld, we’re sharing our experiences and its helping improve production and capacity,” says Minoru Nishi Jr, the Managing Director of Nishi Trading.

In addition to mentoring and face-to-face meetings, the commercial export business is proposing an enterprise subscription for AgWorld following challenges currently affecting growers.

“We continue to support farmers trialing the software and the main constraint is the cost of subscription for individual farmers.”

“We will be proposing the purchase of an enterprise subscription, where all registered farmers will be able to access one account where they’re able to use the software for production details, mapping out their plots and spray diaries.”

The platform training 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).

WiBdi & SAMOA AGROMARKETING TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP

Apia, Samoa — The development of a business partnership proposal between Women In Business Development Inc and Samoa AgroMarketing is expected to strengthen the existing partnership between the two organisations.

“Our key market development activities continue to be a priority focus to strengthen supply chain readiness and income generation opportunities,” says Gillian Stewart, the Programme Manager of Women In Business Development Inc.

“The informal partnership we have with Samoa AgroMarketing has continued to strengthen in our project activities, despite a shutdown of the Hawaiian export market due to a Quarantine issue which has since been resolved in January.”

Gillian Stewart said both organisations have formalized their commitment to continue pursuing market access opportunities through the submission of a ‘Business Partnership Proposal — Concept Note’ to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Australian Government.

“It’s funding consideration for the construction of a warehouse to improve product sourcing, storage, quality control and expanded export market access.”

Valued at \$500K, Gillian Stewart said the proposal was well received and the organisations were invited to submit a full business proposal that’s expected to improve market access opportunities for vulnerable families to supply koko, fresh and frozen taro and coconuts.

The application process was partly 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).



ANAPROFIKO SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDE WOMEN'S WORKSHOP

Dili, Timor-Leste — ANAPROFIKO have successfully concluded a 3-Day saving & loans workshop for women.

General Secretary, Joanico Ximenes said the objective of the training was to increase members existing knowledge.

“We have trained about 35% of our members in this programme and we’re training more of them so that they’re well equipped with the necessary knowledge in saving money and acquiring a loan so that they can manage a successful business.”

The saving and loans 3-Day 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) and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

AGRICULTURE STUDENT IN TONGA ESTIMATED TO EARN MORE THAN TOP \$40,000

Nuku'alofa, Tonga — Agriculture students in Tonga are expected to earn more than TOP\$40,000 from the sales of their produce according to Growers Federation of Tonga.

“Students of Tupou College and Tonga College plant food for the school’s main meals as well as for selling,” says Office Manager, Mele Asena.

“Growers Federation of Tonga assisted with agricultural tools, seeds, fertilizer and fuel which will be utilized across 50 acres of land. The combined income from the sales of fresh produce by the colleges will be more than TOP\$20,000.”

Mele Asena said they were also working with Umataha Youth on 8 acres of land to produce yams where tools, fertilizer and fuel was also provided for the group consisting of 10 females and 15 males.

Growers Federation Of Tonga are also assisting Women In Development who are estimated to earn TOP\$100,000 from Pele Production geared for export.

The activities 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).

FSA-VANUATU PARTNERS WITH TANNA COFFEE BEE

Tanna Island, Vanuatu — In an attempt to meet the high demand for honey in Port Vila, Farm Support Association and Tanna Coffee Bee have introduced queen bee rearing to supply beekeepers.

“We’ve delivered 8 sessions of queen rearing conducted on Tanna; 10 successful queens bred, 6 survived and were introduced to 5 new hives in Vila,” says Peter Koah, the Associate Director of Farm Support Association. “Grafting of queen is very new to Farm Support Association and Tanna Coffee Bee, the success rate of the last 8 session was too low.”

“Going forward, we’ve identified areas to be improved with more exercises planned for the year.”



Peter Koah said wild harvest of queen colonies continue to take place on Tanna Island to boost honey production.

“It’s a very challenging exercise and we’re working with local farmers together with Tanna Coffee Bee to harvest any identified wild bee hives on the island.”

Twenty-four wild colonies have been harvested to date with most being transferred to hives at the Tanna Coffee factory.

The activities 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).

TEA EXPORTS RESUME FOR WIBDI

Apia, Samoa — Exports has resumed for Women In Business Development Inc following limited capacity to access international air freight schedules during the state of emergency in 2020.

Programme Manager, Gillian Stewart said a consignment of dried tea components consisting flowers, fruits and spices was well received by clients in New Zealand.

“We’re looking forward to a more regular supply and broader range of products and amounts planned for the year.”

“Trials will commence to determine the best methods for packaging, temperature control and efficient delivery timeframes to maintain food grade quality standards.”

The activities are 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).

PNGWiADF STRENGTHENS PARTNERSHIPS

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea — The Papua New Guinea Women in Agriculture Development Foundation Inc, have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) to partner in agricultural development.

The signing will see the foundation and its partners coming together and work closely with the department to ensure the foundation’s members around the country received support.

“The sustainability of more than 85 per cent of total population depends on agriculture,” Kombuk said. “We have rural dwellers whose livelihood and economic sustainability depend on agriculture.”

He said with the Government increased support for the agriculture sector in the country, the department was moving forward to revive its research stations nationwide. Kombuk said through the partnership with the foundation, the department was looking at reviving the Erap research centre which could then distribute genetic resource materials throughout the country.

“Through this initiative, we are trying to help those smallholder growers in the rural setting in the country and they are the ones that do not get any help from the government but produce 85 per cent of PNG’s cocoa and coffee exports,” he said.



Kombuk said the MoU would help increase the volume of produce for export commodities by smallholder growers and provide marketing incentives.

Foundation president Maria Linibi said her organisation was dedicated to helping women farmers through any support it received. Linibi called for more training of farmers on how best they could become successful small scale producers at their own locations further contributing to reduction of poverty levels in the country.

CANC BOOSTS FO4ACP PROGRAMME VISIBILITY

Noumea, New Caledonia — The Chambre d'Agriculture de Nouvelle-Calédonie website now features FO4ACP Activities as part of key plans to boost project visibility and communication.

The move is in addition to existing updates on their social media channels: <https://bit.ly/3oYKpQV>

The activity 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).

NISHI TRADING FACILITATE SOIL & LEAF ANALYSIS

Nuku'alofa, Tonga — Nishi Trading have successfully facilitated a soil and leaf analysis workshop following a soil training instructed by Dr. Siua Halavatau.

Managing Director, Minoru Nishi Jnr said soil samples were collected from farmers for testing and where a recommendations report was also made available to each farmer on nutrient requirements for each of their crop types.

"Follow up leaf tests was also carried out to determine any further nutrient deficiencies with immediate corrective actions."

Minoru Nishi Jnr said 27 leaf tests were conducted for Nishi Trading's registered growers. He said growers are now familiar with the process of collecting samples for testing and can now provide samples directly to Nishi Trading.

The activities were 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).

WiBDi NAVIGATE NEW MARKET

Apia, Samoa — The Women in Business Development Inc (WiBDi) are navigating new markets to support families affected by the global pandemic.

"Since the COVID lockdown in Samoa, WiBDi has actively been seeking new local markets to support families during this difficult time for regular income generation," says Programme Manager, Gillian Stewart.

"Looking for opportunities within the local market is also critical and not just focusing on an export lens. There's a high demand from businesses to source fresh, organic ingredients for their value-added products."



“We’ve been addressing barriers with sourcing and logistics to enable families in rural areas to engage into these supply chains and deliver product into the Central Business District of Apia.”

Gillian Stewart said the Women in Business Development Inc are adapting to the circumstances and have also expanded the tea garden concept to include fresh and dried ingredients to link into emerging local markets including tea and tonics.

“The tea garden expansion in thinking and design has been motivated by the need to adapt to income generation pathways like the virtual market and ensure reliable product supply and demand can be met.”

“Family suppliers from our Certified Organic villages are being connected into these customers and setting up regular supply arrangements on a weekly basis.”

Gillian Stewart said the Women in Business Development Inc are currently utilizing their vehicles and other inter-island transport to establish a reliable delivery service that meets customer processing timelines.

The activity 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).

FSA-VANUATU BOOST NATURAL DISASTER RECOVERY PLANS

Tanna Island, Vanuatu — Natural disaster recovery plans are underway to establish open pollinated seed gardens on Napil Training Centre in addition to planned trainings on seed preservation methods.

Peter Koah, the Association Director of Farm Support Association said farmers in rural areas are not able to access seeds for sale in urban areas and have to use networks, usually family, to purchase seeds.

“Access to vegetable seeds is always challenging for small scale farmers in Vanuatu and there’s a big need to address the issue,” says Peter Koah, the Association Director of Farm Support Association. “Napil Training Centre will be planting and multiplying open pollinated seeds that will be used later during disasters and when other issues arise.”

“At Napil Rural Training Centre, nine different varieties of tomato, one pumpkin variety and three papaya varieties has been collected from the open market and young farmers. More range of open pollinated seeds will be collected according to demand and need required by farmers.”

“This work is important because farmers usually do not save open pollinated seeds.”

The activity 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).



BLOG

CELEBRATING PINEAPPLES & FLORICULTURE



“ We've been in this business for nearly 20 years now but nothing like what we're experiencing in these COVID times ”



“Pineapples is one of our fast selling fruits because it's everyone's favorite! In these COVID times, our business Farm Boy is selling more pineapples because we've reduced the orders for imported fruits like oranges and apples to support our local farmers instead. We work with around 500 contract farmers; before the pandemic they were supplying the bulk of their produce to hotels but since they closed last year, we have continued to support farmers where we can. It's very hard at the moment because the hotels are closed and there are barely any restaurants that are still operating but we're here, supporting our contract farmers where we can. Our family is thankful to all our loyal customers who continue to support us during these times.” - Angie Prasad, Director (Retail), Farm Boy, Namaka Market, Nadi (Fiji)

Angie Prasad is joined by client Tahn Strawhan who buys fresh produce every day for his restaurant, Small Plates Garden Restaurant, “We've been buying from Angie for over two years now and she sells everything we need, we've developed a good relationship and I love coming around to get our supplies from her, it's a nice highlight of my day.”



HOW THE PINEAPPLE BECAME THE ICON OF I.V.F.

By Taylor Lorenz, *New York Times*

Pineapples have become a powerful symbol for women struggling with infertility.

The fruit appears in the profile photos and Facebook feeds of women in online infertility communities, and dominates hashtags related to in vitro fertilization on Instagram.

Women arrive for egg retrievals wearing pineapple leggings, T-shirts and dresses. They jot down notes in pineapple-covered notebooks and binders. Some use pineapple cookie jars and boxes to store I.V.F. medications, and ease the pain of daily injections with pineapple-shaped ice packs.

Many who are trying to conceive wear pineapple socks and jewelry to work, and fill their homes with pineapple picture frames and other tchotchkes. Dr. Aimee Eyvazzadeh, a fertility specialist in San Francisco, said that “probably 75 percent” of her patients arrive for their I.V.F. procedures wearing something with a pineapple on it. Pineapples have long been a topic of hopeful discussion in fertility circles.

Patients tell each other that eating pineapple on an empty stomach the day of your embryo transfer can help you get pregnant. Pineapple contains a mix of enzymes called bromelain, which, according to the N.I.H., may debride scar tissue and decrease inflammation.

But evidence of the correlation between the fruit and fertility remains more anecdotal than scientific.

“There’s no evidence in the literature that says consuming pineapple prior to an embryo transfer will improve implantation,” said Dr. Tomer Singer, a reproductive endocrinologist at Shady Grove Fertility.

And while Dr. Eyvazzadeh said that bromelain could improve the implantation process, she suggested taking it as a supplement, in the form of a pill. “I ask people around the time of their transfer not to eat pineapple core,” she said. “The core can be really gritty, and the last thing you should do is introduce something that could upset your stomach on the day of your transfer.”

Regardless of its medicinal properties, women have clung to the sunny fruit as an emblem of their fertility journey. “The pineapple is a call to arms,” said Penelope Major, 38, who has dealt with infertility and now sells pineapple products through an Etsy shop called HeartMyMugs. She sees the merchandise as a conversation starter around a subject that can produce feelings of shame and unworthiness.

“If you’ve gone through infertility, you go through this stage where you just don’t feel good enough,” Ms. Major said. “You feel like there’s no one to talk to.”

Alexis Pearson, 30, who runs an Etsy shop called ThisWildNest, sells pineapple scrunchies. For each unit sold, she donates another to a fertility clinic. “The whole ‘stand tall, wear a crown, and be sweet on the inside,’” she said, explaining the pineapple’s significance, “it’s trying to give someone strength when they’re going through something that’s kind of crappy.”

Gina Rosales, 35, is pregnant with her second child through I.V.F. Even post-birth, she said, the pineapple can be a powerful tribute to a woman’s pregnancy journey. After her daughter was born, she bought a dainty pineapple charm bracelet on Etsy.



She also incorporated touches of pineapple into her daughter’s nursery. “Her laundry hamper has a gold pineapple on it,” Ms. Rosales said, “She has a little pineapple night light. Nothing overboard, but just little things paying homage to how she got here.”

The pineapple has also been picked up by people who want to show support for friends and family on their I.V.F. journeys. Tracey Bambrough and Sara Marshall-Page, two I.V.F. mothers who founded ivfbabble.com, an I.V.F. community and fertility magazine, began selling pineapple pins in December 2016.

“We’re trying to break the silence of infertility and normalize it,” Ms. Marshall-Page said. “It shouldn’t be spoken about in whispers.” The women estimate that they have sold more than 25,000 pins.

Amie Baaske, a 34-year-old who is on her third round of I.V.F., began selling pineapple merchandise on an Etsy shop called ChiefAndLily as a way to help cover the costs of infertility treatment. A baby outfit for sale on her site has text that reads, “She ate a lot of,” atop an image of three pineapples. Beneath the fruit are the words “Now I’m here.”

Ms. Baaske said that the pineapple may resonate because it is fairly neutral and positive. “Needles,” she said, “aren’t really a symbol you’d put out there. Baby aspirin you wouldn’t think to make a symbol of hope.”

Of course, before they were adopted by the infertility community, pineapples carried other significance. They are most widely known as a symbol of hospitality and welcoming. But on social media, pineapples are inextricably tied to infertility. On Instagram, the hashtag #PineappleTribe aims to connect women going through I.V.F.

“Women are celebrating their fertility journeys and connecting with others who are on the same journey with them,” said Kati Magnauck, 33, a mother of one, who runs the apparel brand IVF Got This. “Because it’s become this symbol, whenever you see a pineapple you get excited. It represents hope.”

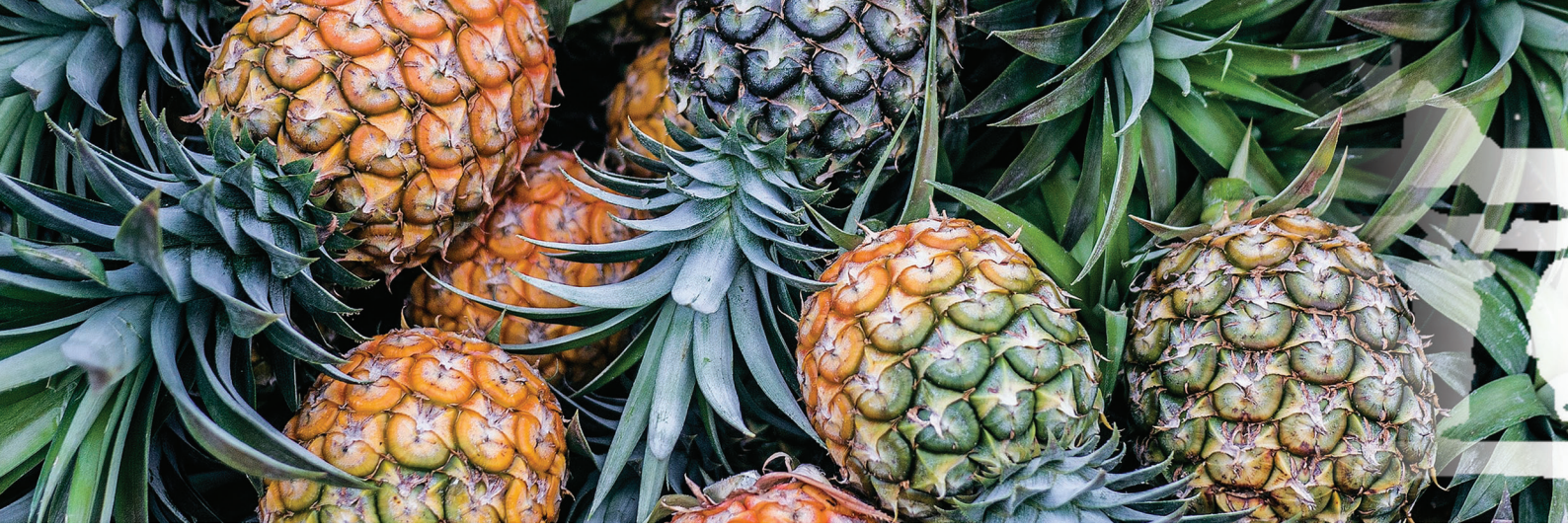
FARMERS HELPING FARMERS TECHNICAL SESSION | PRODUCING PINEAPPLES

An Introduction To Producing Pineapples By Kyle Stice, Special Advisor To PIFON

To be successful in pineapple cropping, the farmer has to be serious and fully committed to the crop, since this crop requires a continuous and intensive care over the entire cropping period.

This cropping period with pineapple is generally quite longer than other root crops or vegetables; a pineapple plant crop can take up to 24 months to come into production while vegetables such as cabbage or tomato take only 1-3 months.

Pineapple being a slow developing plant is easily over grown by weeds and can be completely destroyed or, if not too long over grown and cleaned at least loses a number of month’s growth time as well as producing lower yields.



Continual weed control in pineapple cropping is an absolute necessity; chemical spray control as well as hand weeding several times per year. Total crop failure is expected if the fields are neglected for a number of months.

Furthermore the farmer is required to have patience, since a pineapple crop takes 1 to 2 years before yielding a marketable harvest: <https://bit.ly/3w4JHGm>

Pineapple Planting Material By Aad Van Santen, Lead Author of Pineapple Production In Vanuatu

Pineapples are multiplied and planted by vegetative planting material and not through seed. This means parts of the old mother plants are used for planting, which gives the same 'generic' or 'parent like' characteristics as the basic plant the material is picked from.

It is necessary to select the good growing and producing plants to get your planting material from. It is also important that the parts collected from the mother plant are healthy and whole, otherwise a diseased or slow developing plant will be the result: <https://bit.ly/39uikMq>

Pineapple Site Selection By Aad Van Santen, Lead Author of Pineapple Production In Vanuatu

A farmer may choose to plant 100 or 10,000 plants based on the availability of land, planting material, and the market demands. However, for a consistent supply of year round pineapple it is important to plan out production and land requirements: <https://bit.ly/31xsxml>

Pineapple Land Preparation By Aad Van Santen, Lead Author of Pineapple Production In Vanuatu

Before any final preparation for planting is possible, the land has to be cleared of obstructing trees/ shrubs, grasses, and deep rooted weeds that will hamper proper cultivation of pineapple. The shallow rooted pineapple is heavily impacted by competing weeds around the pineapple beds: <https://bit.ly/39mRgi3>

Pineapple Field Cropping Layout By Aad Van Santen, Lead Author of Pineapple Production In Vanuatu

Cropping systems in pineapple farming can be divided in 3 major categories:

- (1) Sole Cropping: pineapple grown as the single crop in the field
- (2) Integrated Vegetable Cropping: pineapple grown with other vegetable crops in between as an intercrop
- (3) Perennial Integrated Cropping: Pineapple grown as an intercrop in between long term plantings, mostly orchards

In Sole Cropping entire fields are continuously planted with pineapple, allowing only space for access roads of tractor/ truck and cross escape tracks in continuous blocks for ease of harvest and crop maintenance: <https://bit.ly/3ua1pX5>

Planting Pineapple By Aad Van Santen, Lead Author of Pineapple Production In Vanuatu

Pineapple tops are the easiest to collect as they are often removed at the market or on the farm during harvest. The tops can be stored in heaps on the farm until the time of planting: <https://bit.ly/3sBILs8>



“I’ve been helping my sister with her flower business since I got laid off from the Sheraton Tokoriki last year. Sometimes we tend to look down on flowers but I’m earning more money from selling flowers than I did working in the hotel, the hours are flexible and I’m blessed to be earning a living in these hard times.” - Lai Davu with his sister, Mereia Malimali Flower Grower & Florist, Namaka Market, Nadi (Fiji)

FARMERS HELPING FARMERS TECHNICAL SESSION | GROWING ORCHIDS

Growing Dendrobium Orchids With Stephen Henry, Manager of South Sea Orchids

The conditions required for optimum dendrobium orchid production are:

- (1) Bright sunshine, a high percentage of the time,
- (2) Good drainage — native epiphytes in trees dry out within 15 minutes of rain,
- (3) Warm day temperatures between 24°C and 30°C with night time lows not falling below 18°C
- (4) Low to moderate rainfall not exceeding 10cm monthly,
- (5) Good air movement but without strong winds; and,
- (6) A level site with good drainage: <https://bit.ly/3dypW1J>

Growing Phalaenopsis Orchids With Livai Kurukuruvakatini, Technical Instructor of South Sea Orchids

Phalaenopsis orchids are suited to warm, humid areas with abundant moisture. Since all phalaenopsis are natives to tropical rain forest areas, they enjoy a year round high temperature which can vary from 16°C at night to 32°C in the day: <https://bit.ly/2PaJctZ>

Growing Vanda Orchids With Stephen Henry, Manager of South Sea Orchids

Vanda orchids are true epiphytes and therefore do not require any potting mix provided the plants are well watered during the rainy season. Most vanda orchids will be very happy as hanging plants with no media at all: <https://bit.ly/39Uelvj>