

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2022

A row of ten terracotta pots, each containing a healthy basil plant, sitting on a grey metal shelf.

FARMERS HAVE THEIR SAY

A row of black plastic trays filled with green leafy plants, likely bok choy, sitting on a grey metal shelf.

**GENDER AGRICULTURE POLICY AIMS TO
PROVIDE CRUCIAL SUPPORT FOR WOMEN**

WOMEN FARMERS THRIVE

**FO4ACP MID TERM REVIEW
FARMERS HELPING FARMERS**

A row of black plastic trays filled with green leafy plants, likely bok choy, sitting on a grey metal shelf.

**TEI TEI TAVEUNI BUILDS TOWARDS
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

**BOOK LAUNCHED TO MARK CULTURAL
TRADITIONS AND VALUES**

**PLUS FO4ACP & PIRAS
REGIONAL PROGRESS**

A row of black plastic trays filled with green leafy plants, likely bok choy, sitting on a grey metal shelf.

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE ///

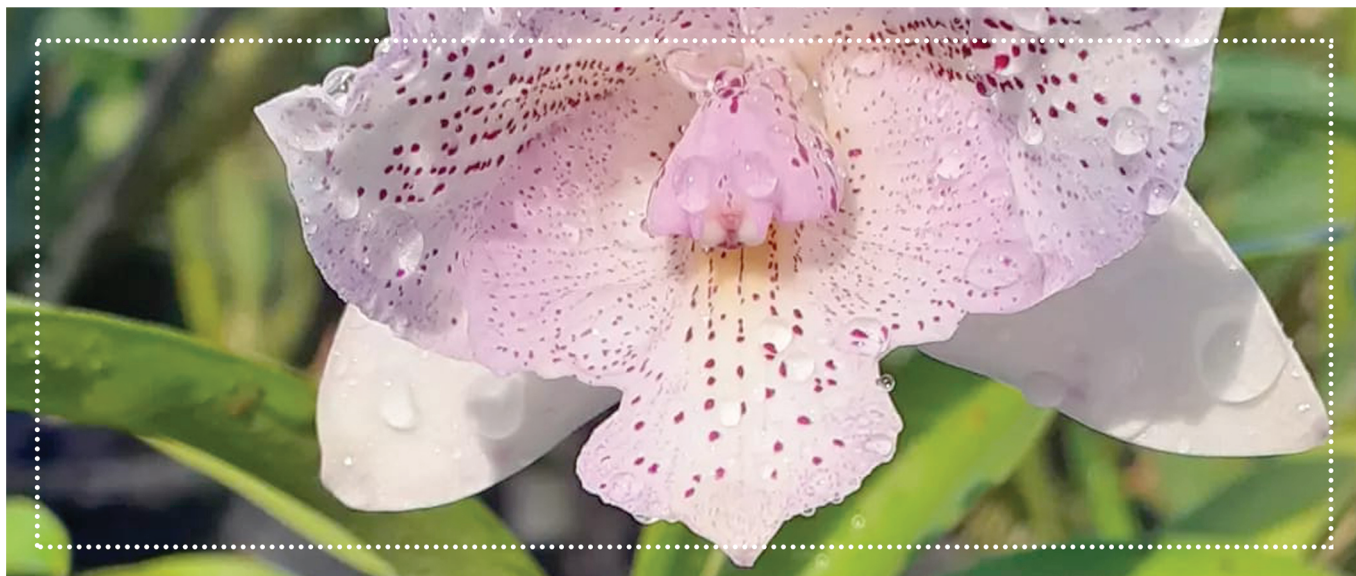
A close-up shot of various green plants, including some with large, heart-shaped leaves and others with smaller, more delicate foliage, growing in pots.

**“WOMEN ARE SHOWING
INCREDIBLE LEADERSHIP IN
THESE CHALLENGING TIMES”**

FARMERS HAVE THEIR SAY

Gender Agriculture Policy aims to provide crucial support for women

Policy and agriculture leaders have highlighted the importance of gender equality in the agriculture sector while marking International Women's Day 2022.



Fiji's Agriculture Minister, Dr. Mahendra Reddy has launched the Gender in Agriculture Policy (2022-27); the four-way action strategy is expected to provide much needed support in the sector CREDIT : SSO

Fiji's Minister for Agriculture, Dr Mahendra Reddy has launched the Gender in Agriculture Policy (2022-27) saying women were "important in achieving household agricultural output" as part of delivering national food security.

Data from the 2020 Fiji Agricultural Census shows 46.8% of women participated in at least one Agricultural activity — crop, livestock fisheries and forestry.

The launch of the Gender in Agriculture Policy was held at South Sea Orchids.

"This policy proposes to address the identified gender gaps in agriculture and incorporates actions related to farming, livestock, forestry or fisheries," Dr Mahendra Reddy told the gathering.

"Despite the high incidence of women participation in agriculture, only 14% of professional farmers are women.

Data also showed that female farmers have lower level of education than their peers in all levels, and less access to agricultural inputs, such as land or farming equipment and services such as finance, markets or technical assistance."

The policy includes a four way action strategy:

(1) Equality of access to the economic resources required for productive and resilient agriculture and markets;

(2) Equality of access to the information, technology and training needed for secured livelihoods and healthy diets;

(3) Equality of representation and participation in decision making for informed future agricultural planning and resourcing;

(4) Effective mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all programmes through strengthened capacities, resources and commitment in the agriculture ministries

Dr Mahendra Reddy said the policy was prepared through a participatory process that included consultation with other government ministers and stakeholders following which a validation process was conducted with participatory from civil society and development partners as well as women farmers and groups.

The policy will see much needed support within the sector and is expected to address climate change, disaster resilience, a strong and healthy sector that will

also provide a decent source of livelihood to men and women in Fiji.

Pacific Farmer Organisations manager, Lavinia Kaumaitotoya has welcomed the Gender in Agriculture Policy (2022-27) describing it as a “major breakthrough”.

“We’re very pleased that the government is taking concrete action to address the challenges; our members are encouraged with government’s support in promoting gender equality, and shares the Organisation’s belief that it can open up significant opportunities for the farming industry in Fiji.”

Meanwhile the Pacific Farmer Organisations yesterday afternoon opened a 2-Day regional dialogue with 10 women farmer leaders to celebrate their rise in leadership and resilience in the era of climate change and Covid-19.

Samoa Farmers Association executive Leaupepe Lasa Aiono said while there were many challenges to overcome in agriculture, women have come a long way.

“We’re seeing major shifts in all areas of women’s lives; it’s evident now with many of the farmer groups, NGOs and the private sector are led by women including Samoa’s Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries where 60% of influential leadership positions are held by women, and then of course there’s our first woman Prime Minister — need we say more?”

“While there’s some hesitance in traditional rural settings and may require time for it to sink in, there’s an increasing number of women matai. Leadership comes naturally to a Samoan woman.”

Joining her at the Pacific Farmer Organisations International Women’s Day Talanoa Webinar Event were Cook Islands Te Tango Enua’s Bernadette Teremoana, Fiji’s Tutu Rural Training Centre’s Serenia Madigibuli and Pacific Farmer Organisation’s Lavinia Kaumaitotoya.

The 2-Day Dialogue continues with members from South Sea Orchids (Mrs Burness, Fiji), Nishi Trading (Jenny Nishi, Tonga) and Fiji Crop Livestock & Council (Jiu Daunivalu) who will be weighing in on the discussion.

Women farmers thrive

The recent COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing climate change crisis have pushed some economies into unprecedented challenges but for the Pacific Agriculture sector, it has created some champions.

The banner features the Pacific Farmer Organisations logo on the left, followed by the text 'Celebrate Women WEBINAR' in large, bold letters. To the right, it says 'Celebrating Leadership & Resilience #BreakTheBias'. Below this, there are logos for FO4ACP, the European Union, COOP, and JILFAD TODAY. The main title 'Talanoa with 10 Pacific Women in Agriculture' is prominently displayed in the center. Below the title, there are ten circular portraits of the participating women, each with their name underneath: Aileen Burness, Bernadette Teremoana, Jenny Nishi, Jiu Daunivalu, Lasa Aiono, Lavinia Kaumaitotoya, Lice Movono (marked as HOST), Maria Linibi, and Serenia Madigibuli. At the bottom, an orange box contains the text: 'Leading members of the Pacific Islands Farmer Organisations Network from 9 Pacific Island countries will meet for a 2-Day Talanoa Dialogue on International Women’s Day'.

This includes 10 women who are leading farming communities across the Pacific and who were singled out by the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) to share their work.

Manager Lavinia Kaumaitotoya said the women would be part of a two-part ‘Online Talanoa’ to take place on International Women’s Day on Tuesday, March 8, and Wednesday, March 9.

“Pacific Women in Agriculture play a considerable role in contributing to the livelihoods of their families and economies yet their potential has not fully developed because of the lack of recognition of their contribution to agriculture,” Ms Kaumaitotoya said.

“It is a celebration of the leadership women farmers provide and the resilience they displayed over these difficult two years.”

The women who represent farmer organisations from across the Pacific region are led by octogenarian Aileen Burness, the strong force behind the Pacific’s largest orchid nursery South Sea Orchids.

The line up includes Lasa Aiono of Samoa Farmers Association, Maria Linibi of the Papua New Guinea Women in Agriculture and Development, PNG, Jiu Daunivalu of the Fiji Crop Livestock and Council, Jenny Nishi of Nishi Trading in Tonga, Bernadette Teremoana of Te Tango Enu in the Cook Islands and Serenia Madigibuli of the Tutu Training Centre.

“Women farmers have led communities in the Pacific during some of the worst times in our global history with climate change and COVID-19 compounding the economic difficulties we already face in this region,” Ms Kaumaitotoya said.

“During these most recent challenges, these women have shown incredible leadership at keeping the Agricultural Sector at a time when the whole world turned to farms for opportunities.”

PIFON works through its Women in Agriculture Network (WIAN) to support farming initiatives, which involve women to raise the profile that women make in the agricultural sector of the Pacific.

“Mainstreaming of gender perspectives in agriculture and other rural sectors is necessary so that national policies are accurately informed by the reality on the ground which can lead to better allocation of resources,” Ms Kaumaitotoya said.

“In highlighting the work and lives of these hardworking Pacific farmers on International Women’s Day, Pacific Farmer Organisations hope to raise awareness of this important gap in the agricultural sector.”

The Pacific Farmers IWD Talanoa Event will take place at 4.30pm-6:30pm Fiji Time on March 8 and March 9.

Source : The Fiji Times

FO4ACP Mid-Term Review



Leading the Mid Term Review Assessment Team are International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)'s David Young, Sakiusa Tubuna and Ovini Sawiri

The Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific- fo4acp Program has reached its midpoint of implementation since its Pacific Inception in 2019 and is the product of months of planning and activities by members of the Pacific Islands Farmer Organisations Network in the Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu.

In addition to presenting their various work, the Mid-Term Review is an opportunity for members to share their challenges and learning experiences while participating in a collaborative post Covid recovery discussion to strengthen existing and ongoing efforts in food and nutrition security in the Pacific.

“We’re seeing an increasing participation of farmer organisations who are helping shape supportive business environments in the sector,” said Manager, Lavinia Kaumaitotoya.

“We saw it when the Network came together in 2020 to coordinate recommendations for Governments and stakeholders following the disruption of supply chains, we also saw farmer organisations really stepping up and connecting members from online markets to online communities, its’ not only changing the way we do business but also how we’re exchanging technical knowledge and training.”

Executive director, Kyle Stice said despite the disruptions of the global pandemic, farmer organisations in the Pacific are the driving force of these innovations, adding there was still more work to be done.

“We’re seeing a lot of great benefits through our various partnerships but much more needs to be done

in linking researchers and academics with farmer organisations.”

“Our Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network is working to help members become stronger and more effective but we also need Governments and development partners to make them stronger and give them the opportunity to have a voice in the planning process to help channel resources to farmers that need it.”

Executive director, Kyle Stice and manager Lavinia Kaumaitotoya lead presentations on the overview of #FO4ACP in the Pacific with members presenting their work in the Country Sessions; Tonga and Fiji have been selected for the Mid-Term Review.

Leading the Mid Term Review Assessment Team are International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)’s David Young, Sakiusa Tubuna and Ovinia Sawiri.

FARMERS HELPING FARMERS

PIRAS : Farmers complete Phase 1 Training on Nursery Management



Bula Agro Nursery at Votualevu, Nadi hosted a total of 55 Nadi Farmers who came in numbers to learn from the nurseryman himself Mr. Sant Kumar; who is known for his knowledge and wealth of experience in the agriculture field

‘As farmers you need to take ownership of the project and implement what new and improved things you learn from the trainings you attend’

PIRAS: FARMERS COMPLETE PHASE 1 TRAINING | PG 10

“The engagement of young people is key to rejuvenating the sector”

Rome, Italy — While much has been said about the opportunities the agriculture sector offers youths, the future of farming and of farmers in the Pacific Island region and around the world is not as secure as we might expect.

Youths are reluctant to consider agriculture as a viable livelihood option and associate it with low returns, hard work and low social status, with many more leaving the islands for attractive jobs and career opportunities in urban centers or overseas.

The FAO says it is a narrative that has to change and that investments in the development of sustainable agricultural value chains offer immense opportunities for youths in rural and urban areas.

Agricultural economist of the agrifood economics division, Heiko Bammann said : “Young people are best placed to rejuvenate the sector, acquire the knowledge and skills needed to innovate, uptake new technologies, foster competitiveness and spearhead the digital transformation.

“The engagement of young people in agriculture value chains and agrifood systems development is key to addressing the significant untapped potential of this sizable and growing demographic.

He explained : “With their ability to learn fast and their innovative spirit, youth can drive change and accelerate the transition to more sustainable production and consumption patterns that are needed to achieve the goals of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and feed the world’s growing population.

“In their school to work transitions, youth are driven by economic opportunities and the value chain development approach can help to identify these opportunities and decent youth employment within the sector.”

Heiko Bammann said three publications including Youth Sensitive Value Chain Analysis — Guidelines for Practitioners and Enabling Sustainable Food Systems by FAO, and Living Income Concept by GiZ have been developed to help farmer organisations promote youth in agriculture, fair agribusinesses and innovation.

“The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network is taking great strides to make agriculture more attractive by promoting viable agribusinesses and sharing best practices, technologies and success stories.”

Tei Tei Taveuni builds towards a sustainable future

Taveuni, Fiji — Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a growing demand from farmers to rebuild degraded farms productivity on Fiji’s Garden Island.

Tei Tei Taveuni have begun plans to implement 11 model farms of 5 acres using sustainable agro-forestry and eco-agricultural farming practices with a clear emphasis on mineralization of the soils, diverse biological soil life and diverse multi-cropping.

“We will be working with farmers to use a combination of long-term tree crops, medium-term commercial crops and short-term cash crops using agro-forestry or eco-agriculture model to build a diverse multi-cropping system,” said Alan Petersen, the chairman of Tei Tei Taveuni.

“We also have plans in place that will generate income for implementing and expanding the concept.”

The project is a continuation of the work done by Tei Tei Taveuni since it was founded in 2009 and has over the years seen partnerships with ACIAR, SPC and MPI that has given “farmers a good foundation to build our model farms on and in a sustainable direction.”

Given the interest in collective action, the model farm project is expected to enhance these ambitions while reiterating commitment to rebuilding degraded farms productivity on Taveuni.

“The capacity building through the 2 years of soil schools and the follow up 3 years mentoring of farm groups in implementing a local version of biological farming has created an understanding among the participating farmers that change towards a sustainable living production system is necessary,” said Alan Petersen.

The project will be significant in the pandemic era as it brings together farmers from around Taveuni to plan and implement collective action towards a sustainable and resilient future.

The project also marks 11 years since Tei Tei Taveuni set up the MOA Lime Taskforce, making local lime available for ½ the imported price to support farmers who depend on implementing the move towards sustainability.

The project also comes after the regional consultation on forgotten foods in Asia Pacific by Asian Farmers Association which warns, that many nations are being challenged by modern and industrialized agriculture



The fo4acp funded project will be significant in the pandemic era as it brings together farmers from around Taveuni CREDIT : Tei Tei Taveuni | Pg 6-7

with consequent changes in policies and programme priorities that has effectively replaced traditional foods and now almost a forgotten food.

Expectations among farmers are therefore understandably far higher than in previous years.

Alan Petersen said the project is working towards 4 key sustainable outcomes :

- (1) Farming principles to increase soil organic matter and soil productivity;
- (2) The system will be viable for the farmer short term/medium term/long term;
- (3) TTT must be able to establish market access with a fair price for a quality product and;
- (4) TTT must be capable to sustain continuous mentoring of the 11 farmers and be able to expand the consent to Taveuni's farmers in general.

"In 5-10 years these farms should have fertile land with well-balanced soils that will allow farmers to have coconuts to sell, breadfruit to sell fresh or to the processing facility procuring gluten free breadfruit flour, ivi for food or for sale to processors or exporters, citrus for the family or for sale to the tourist industry, vanilla beans for sale to processor or exporters, voi voi and masi for sale to handicraft producers, yaqona, dalo, eggs and vegetables for the family and for the sale locally to the middle men."

While these goals are significant, he added the roadmap towards achieving the goals of the project will determine how effectively farmers in Taveuni can shift

the scale on sustainable farming systems.

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

Book launched to mark cultural traditions and values

Suva, Fiji — President Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere has launched the iTaukei Trust Fund's publication, Healing Plants of Fiji.

Centered on traditional knowledge covering Fiji's flora and fauna, the book follows years of collating information from over 75 healers in widely located villages around the country and is authored by one of the Pacific's distinguished botanist, Suliana Siwatibau.

Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere said the launch of the publication in addition to an online learning management system and website successfully fulfils the iTaukei Trust Fund's mandate in developing and facilitating "initiatives that will improve the quality of life and enhance cultural traditions and values of iTaukei and Rotumans through culture, heritage and language programmes."

Suliana Siwatibau works across multiple fields including agricultural research and has made immense contributions to the Pacific region over many decades.



Global SIDS Solutions Dialogue: Call for more commitment and integration

Rome, Italy — Small Island Developing States will struggle to reach SDGs unless more political commitment and regional integration for inclusive agri-food systems, knowledge sharing and capacity development is prioritised.

Leaders at the Global SIDS Solution Dialogue have called for further action as the move towards the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has "severe challenges" in building the resilience of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic.

While the pandemic has shown that local leaders can get things done they say the volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga last month highlighted the vulnerability of SIDS.

Technical presentations from SIDS Coordinator for Africa Mbuli Charles Boliko and FAO's Subregional Coordinators for the Pacific Islands, Xiangjun Yao and Caribbean, Renata Clarke also highlighted the important role of innovation to meet the call for inclusive agri food systems and knowledge sharing and capacity development in the follow up of the SIDS Solutions Forum 2021.

In the Pacific it will mean increasing scaling up capacities to positively catalyze agri-food systems in communities while in the Caribbean it will be about leveraging partnerships to emphasise innovation on novel water treatment while in Africa there is an urgency to implement inclusive information systems to accelerate the transformation in food systems in Africa.

Speaking at the Dialogue, FAO's Chief Economist, Máximo Torero Cullen said: "FAO is supporting SIDS to build back better and achieve better production, better nutrition, better environment and a better life."

Land Access Guide to transform PNG landscape

Lae, Papua New Guinea — PNG's agriculture sector will be transformed to combat land grabbing by major domestic and transnational companies, the Papua New Guinea Women in Agriculture Development Inc says.

President Maria Linibi said the successful launch of the Land Access Guide will alter the landscape

more than most people expect.

While impacts have yet to be seen, awareness campaigns and training programs are making its way across farming communities in Papua New Guinea, she said.

PNG Women in Agriculture Development Inc spearheaded discussions in 2019 with Grow PNG and Asia Farmers Association to identify key land issues in the sector.

Maria Linibi says a recurring challenge was revealed in the series of dialogues with major stakeholders.

"Farmers were signing off their land to big companies to develop and they did not realise their potential in doing negotiations for a better value of their potential and their approach in land negotiations, identification and development."

She told PIFON: "The Land Access Guide Training and Awareness Program is the result of these ongoing discussions, we've yet to see the impact because we are just starting.

"These discussions however has helped to change a lot of farmers and traditional land owners way of thinking and give them options to open discussions on their land negotiations with major developers before making decisions and having a fair decision in developing their land."

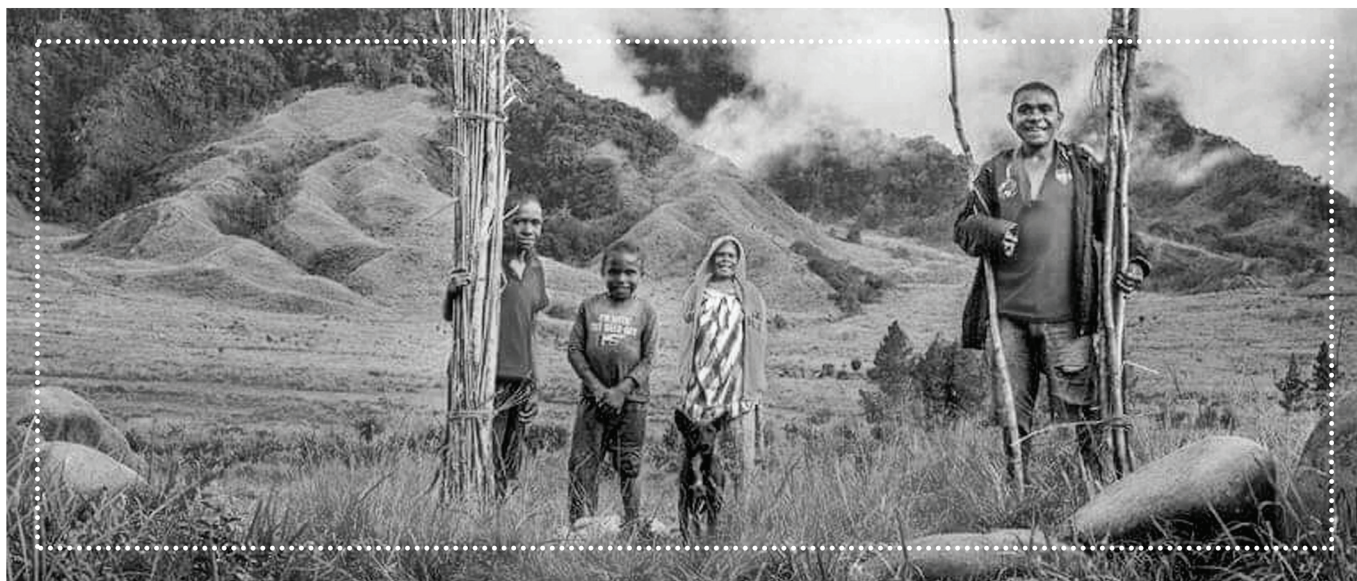
She points out companies are acquiring land because they expect world food commodity prices to rise.

It means there is money to be made in agriculture but farmers and traditional landowners currently receive almost none of the benefits mostly swallowed up by major domestic and transnational companies.

"We feel it is a very important lesson for our farmers when it comes to land allocation and development and doing negotiations not just for today but the future and that of their families."

Maria Linibi said: "In the long term we hope to see better improvements in land negotiations for better farming families as we are seeing a lot of land grabbing by big companies with no proper negotiation skills."

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



In 2019 PNG Women in Agriculture Development Inc partnered with Grow PNG and Asia Farmers Association to identify key land issues in the sector. | Pg 8

Nature's Way Cooperative embarks on the expansion of seed blocks

Nadi, Fiji — Nature's Way Cooperative want to help members increase their economic return when growing Fiji Red Papaya to meet consumer demands and enhance their competitive edge in domestic and international markets.

It's the reason why they have embarked on the expansion of seed blocks which is expected to supplement current stocks.

"We are seeing an increase in the sale of seeds during this cyclone season as nurserymen and nurserywomen start cultivating their own seedlings for post cyclone mitigation," said Donald Pickering, the manager at Nature's Way Cooperative.

"Currently we have a seed stock of about 4kg and with the rising need for papaya exports, there is an increase in the cultivation of Fiji Red Papaya seeds."

The results has led to the support of operational costs to increase quality and quantity of fresh produce for export.

"We follow a strict product description and guideline from farm to packaging and seed storage.

This project has allowed Nature's Way Cooperative to work with 2 seed block farmers that will become certified Fiji Red Papaya Seed producers," Donald Pickering said.

The project, conducted in Nadi feature the foundation seed of Solo Sunrise obtained from the University of Hawaii Seed Lab. As part of the project, both seed block farmers were assessed from previous projects as having successfully grown papaya in addition to the membership survey conducted by Nature's Way Cooperative.

"The two beneficiaries of the Fiji Red Papaya seed block project were both terminated Fiji Airways cabin crew following the global lockdown of 2020. They are registered with Nature's Way Cooperative and the farms are monitored fortnightly during bagging period and weekly during harvesting period," he added.

"Both seed block farmers were assisted with land preparation and supply of Fiji Red Papaya Seedlings from Bula Agro Nursery and other farming implements.

The Ministry of Agriculture Research Division provides quarterly audit for seed producers, currently Nature's Way Cooperative provides Fiji Red Papaya seeds to all nursery around Fiji at \$20 a packet, these are 10gram packets and can hold a minimum of 600 seeds."

Fiji Red Papaya is popular amongst consumers with most largely from the country's salad bowl of Sigatoka Valley passing the High Temperature Forced Air (HTFA) treatment for Bilateral Quarantine Arrangement with Australia and New Zealand.

Nature's Way Cooperative hopes to replicate the development of Fiji Red Papaya within the Nadi and Lautoka areas.

The is project is funded by the Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (FO4ACP) Programme.

PIRAS : Farmers complete Phase 1 Training on Nursery Management

Sigatoka, Fiji — The nursery management training for farmers of Fiji's Western Division was recently completed following a series of workshops over a four-week period starting in February.

While attending the first phase of training in Sigatoka, Sant Kumar — the nursery owner and managing director of Bula Agro Enterprise — spoke on the importance of using the right potting media, identifying quality seeds and controlling pests and diseases.

"During the pandemic most new farmers lacked the knowledge on ways to manage vegetable seeds and seedlings from sowing right to the harvesting stage."

Mr. Kumar explained that many new farmers were unsuccessful because they were new to the areas of soil health, seeds and seedlings, pest and diseases which he added is critical to farming.

This was a growing concern as many had lost their jobs due to the pandemic and farming was one of the doors many knocked on to keep food on the table.

Following the ongoing requests from farmers experiencing issues on seed growth and productivity, Phase 1 of the PIRAS Training was developed with farmers now equipped with the proper training on :

- (1) Open Pollinated Seeds
- (2) Composting
- (3) Soil Preparation (Potting Media)
- (4) Raising Seeds and Seedlings
- (5) Pest & Disease Management
- (6) Plant Propagation (Marcotting and Grafting)

PIRAS is a joint partnership between the Pacific Islands Farmer Organisations Network, the Australian Government and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); the initiative will directly target rural households vulnerable or potentially vulnerable to nutrition insecurity, while also maximising potential and driving productivity in food and nutrition security, safe post-harvest handling, local food preservation and functioning local markets.

Speaking at the Lautoka Training, Sub Regional Coordinator for Pacific at International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) — Sakiusa Tubuna said : "As farmers you need to take ownership of the project and implement what new and improved things you learn from the trainings you attend."

With a lot of interest in farming, he stressed the need for proper training as rising issues in climate change

faced ongoing disruption to food availability, access to food and affecting food quality.

It is envisioned that PIRAS will assist 110 farmers along the tourism belt of Sigatoka to Tavua who were affected by the pandemic with technical trainings and advise, market linkage and capital items needed for expansion/improvement.

PIRAS : "I hope to see more women involved in agriculture"

Nadi, Fiji — Rural women are performing and fulfilling multiple roles from managing their families and farms to small businesses.

The impacts of Tropical Cyclone Cody however is expected to increase existing challenges for those affected by Covid as they struggle to put food on the table.

Sant Kumar, the owner and managing director of Bula Agro Nursery is preparing breadfruit seedlings for potential growers and believes women in agriculture should receive more support.

"Through the PIRAS project we are aiming to assist the women who were directly affected by the pandemic because they can influence the eating habits of their household and help create a more healthy population."

According to Ministry of Health — Fiji, 80% of deaths in Fiji are caused by an NCD. Sant Kumar said unless more women are involved in agriculture those numbers are likely to increase.

"We are seeing and especially during this cyclone season that it's the women who are keeping backyard gardening going at the grassroots and community level through their support networks."

Supported by the Australian Government and IFAD, the Pacific Islands Rural and Agriculture Stimulus Facility (PIRAS) aims to assist women and youths in agriculture who are directly affected by the pandemic through technical trainings in vegetables, seeds and seedling production, food safety, preservation, and value adding.

PIRAS : "The intensity and number of cyclones is increasing every year"

Tavua, Fiji — Smallholder farmers in the Pacific are mostly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and natural hazards, therefore, it is crucial to help small producers protect their livelihoods.



Fiji Red Papaya is popular amongst consumers with most largely from the country's salad bowl of Sigatoka Valley passing the High Temperature Forced Air (HTFA) treatment for Bilateral Quarantine Arrangement with Australia and New Zealand CREDIT : NWC | Pg 9

Tropical Disturbance TD03F intensified into a Tropical Depression on 8 January 2022 and by 10 January, it had transformed into category 1 Tropical Cyclone Cody, bringing significant rain affecting the whole of Fiji.

High level of precipitation over the Fiji group between 8-15 January was significant and disrupted essential services including water and power in most parts of the western division as a result of massive flooding.

All Seasons Nursery at Matalavu, Tavua was one of the many commercial nurseries that was affected by the recent cyclone.

"Looking after a nursery can be quite difficult especially after a cyclone. Planning and preparing for hurricanes and other natural disasters can be stressful, even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic," says All Seasons Nursery owner; Munsami Naicker.

Mr. Naicker shared the cyclone season was much different to when he was growing up: "We use to have 1-2 cyclones every 2-3 years, today we are facing 2-3 cyclones every year."

"I'm 57 years old now, the intensity and number of cyclones is increasing every year," says nursery owner.

It will be some time before smallholder farmers recover from the impacts of TC Cody but Munsami Naicker hopes there will be opportunities for farmers to learn how to prepare better for and recover from natural events and disasters

that could decrease the long-term effects on agriculture and the environment.

Through PIRAS - a Covid-19 response initiative supported by the Australian Government and IFAD - smallholder farmers like Munsami Naicker will be assisted through technical trainings as part of the Pacific Islands Farmer Organisations Network's key plans to build farmer clusters in economically impacted tourism belt areas in the west of Fiji.

Kaston Garden Association successfully launches PIRAS

Honiara, Solomon Islands — Kastom Garden Association has launched the Pacific Island Rural and Agriculture Stimulus Facility — PIRAS which aims to target women and young farmers who were affected by COVID-19.

Australian High Commissioner to Solomon Islands — Dr Lachlan Strahan said that farmers in every society perform such an important role, they are the backbone of any country.

"Today we are here to launch PIRAS, we are very proud to be here with other partners. No society can survive without food, so farmers play that vital function of not only feeding themselves but of course providing food for any nation and for export," says Dr Strahan.

He explained further by saying PIRAS is about making sure that the livelihoods of small holder farmers are re-enforced, also helping them during tough times.

N E W S

Climate change is affecting many farmers by altering rain fall patterns that is having a big impact on farms. We are now into our third year of the global pandemic, COVID has been like a racking ball to the world and unfortunately, we are not yet through with the pandemic. Solomon Islands have suffered tremendously which is why we need to reach out to the most vulnerable especially women and youths who mostly get the rough deals during hard times.

PIFON's Program Manager; Lavinia Kaumaitotoya shared that PIFON is an information network connecting farmer organizations who then work with their farmer members to make Pacific Farmer Organisations more vibrant, viable and a sustainable organization.

IFAD's Sub-Regional Coordinator — Sakiusa Tubuna in his presentation mentioned that we in the Pacific are extremely blessed to be receiving funds from IFAD for the PIRAS initiative and this is complemented by the generous donation of the Australian Government.

Tony Jansen of Kastom Garden Association concluded the launch virtually by saying the KGA approach is led by local farmer experts and looking into the market system and income opportunities.

The PIRAS Project looks into assisting approximately more than 1,000 farmers to have new and sustainable income opportunities from various agriculture products.