



PARDI2

# **Summary Report: Fiji Agritourism Experiences Talanoa 2**



28-29 October, 2020

Novotel, Nadi.

[pardi.pacificfarmers.com](http://pardi.pacificfarmers.com)



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The Pacific Agribusiness Research in Development Initiative Phase 2 (PARDI2) has provided support to industry development within the agritourism sector since 2018.

In 2020, PARDI2 issued a call for agritourism operators for product development support and mentoring to assist operators in becoming market ready and strengthen the diversity of experiences available to support the tourism recovery. Thirty eight applications were received with nine operators shortlisted and five receiving site visits and business planning support.

All those that applied, along with existing agritourism operators and other interested stakeholders were invited to The Talanoa 2: Agritourism Experiences in Fiji. This built on the first Agritourism Talanoa for the Pacific held in February 2019. The two day workshop had a more focussed purpose; to provide existing agritourism experiences operators assistance to enhance their products as the world awaits the resumption of global travel.. More specifically, the workshop was centred around marketing, including digital marketing - how to best position one's agritourism experience on various online platforms. This is with the expectation that such awareness will create interest to potential domestic and international visitors, resulting in actual visits. The agenda is attached at Annex A of the Concept Note.

This event was supported by PARDI2 and its partner, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON).

A total of 61 participants attended the two days event. The participants included existing agritourism experience operators, a few who attended the first event in 2019, interested smallholder farmers and tourism industry experts from the private and public sectors. These experts included professional chefs, tourism operators and government ministries representatives. A participant list is available at Annex B.

The two day event provided opportunities to discuss current market trends and opportunities and challenges to developing agritourism experiences in Fiji in a COVID-19 world. Tourism products operators shared how the closure of borders had impacted their businesses and offered ways to pivot in order to keep some staff at work and be able to keep afloat. The discussions also brought the type about It also addressed research and support required for new operators to enter the market. The existing ones also highlighted areas of challenges in the compliance areas of land tenure, licensing and accessing public liability.

The 5 objectives below helped guide the discussions over the two days;



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- Share experiences and ideas with established and emerging operators, tourism industry experts, policy and decision makers;
- Share successes and barriers to the development of agritourism experiences in Fiji.
- Reflect, understand and adapt to the current global travel requirements, behaviours and demands in a Covid19 world, now and beyond
- Identify strategies on how to develop your experiences to be visitor ready for when global travel resumes.
- Further develop your product and value chain partnerships for a sustainable and enhanced agritourism experience.



### **Day 1 - Setting the Scene, Product Design and Tourism Value Chains**

Tourism industry experts included the likes of **Chef Lance Seeto**. He shared his story of opening his new restaurant in the midst of lockdown and strategies he used. Some of his key messages included; targeting the local market first, being prepared to operate one's business in a lower margin, mastering the use of social media, and being consistent. Lastly, he emphasised that listening to regular criticism and making adjustments, in response to reviews, was critical.

[Alika Cooper](#) of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) presented on tourism trends and



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linkages of the Fiji agriculture and tourism sectors in the current COVID19 environment. This included opportunities to shift menus to more locally-based recipes and use the time to strengthen relationships between tourism properties and suppliers.

In the area of marketing in a COVID19 world, Katie Smith, a marketing consultant, shared with the audience the importance of building content for any communications channels. David Solomone, a local social media influencer, provided a condensed social media tutorial. This included strategies such as identifying which social media platform best suited your business, understanding the backend of Facebook and Instagram and recognizing one's target market and creating appropriate content.

A representative of the Novotel Nadi Hotel and Vou Dance Group founder/director shared how their businesses navigated with no international visitors. These included reduced rates to attract the local market. The Vou Dance Group, who are Nadi based, have had to put up shows in Suva, to be closer to the larger Suva domestic market.

The Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport (MCTTT) and the Fiji Hotel & Tourism Association (FHTA) in their panel discussion, shared what their various organisations were doing in terms of getting Fiji ready for when global travel resumes.

Tourism Fiji gave participants information on how to be listed on the organisation's website. <https://www.fiji.travel/>

By listing on their website, operators' various products are accessible to a wider global audience. Requirements for listing included compliance with their guidelines in terms of content and valid liability insurance.

A panel of four existing agritourism operators; Spices of Fiji, Nabogiono Farms, Nukubati Private Island Resort and South Sea Orchids provided an insight on how their businesses have been impacted by COVID19. The owners also shared the challenges each faced and how they have dealt with them in order to continue operating. Some actions taken by the operators included, focusing back to full time farming and hosting events such as luncheons and dinners at the tour venue.

An officer from the iTaukei Land and Trust Board, the governing body of land leasing in Fiji provided an insight into what the organisation has available for their farmer clients. This is especially for those who currently have an agricultural lease and which to conduct tourism activities on it.

The first day concluded with field trips to the Bulaccino Organic Farm and South Sea Orchids tour. These fieldtrips enabled some members to experience an agritourism experience product for the first time.



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## **Day 2 - Markets, Marketing and the future of Fiji tourism**

Day 2 centred around discussions of the future of Fiji tourism post COVID19. Professor [Stephen Pratt](#) The School of Tourism and Hotel Management (STHM) at the University of The South Pacific (USP) provided information and the 'new normal' to be expected, and new trends and demands from visitors. He emphasised that operators will need to prepare their businesses for such changes.

A group activity enabled participants to identify aspects of their product and experience that needed strengthening to ensure a quality, engaging and standout experience. The areas identified by the participants are summarised in the list below;

### **Marketing and branding**

- Improving websites and social media presence
- Support small businesses with marketing and branding assistance
- Identifying suitable payment gateway. Small businesses have difficulty in accessing online payment solutions.

### **Compliance issues**

- Clarifying land issues regarding tenure and compliance - development of clear guidelines by the iTaukei Land Trust Board, particularly for existing agriculture lease holders and conditions for obtaining an agritourism lease
- Public liability insurance requirements are onerous for small businesses
- Development of a checklist for compliance to help businesses/farmers to navigate through all these areas
- Development of standard operating procedures for agritourism businesses to help as a guide
- Identification with Fiji Revenue and Customs Services (FRCS) of any tax incentives or requirements for agritourism operators



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### **Product development**

- Improving consistency of food supply and quality
- Ensuring strong feedback mechanisms from customers about one's product/experience e.g through feedback forms, survey links etc

### **Enabling environment**

- Strengthening private sector networks and developing an agritourism association within the private sector
- Strengthening networks amongst operators
- Building a strong and constructive relationship with government
- Establish a database of local produces/ suppliers details
- Development of a Policy for Agritourism – needs consultation with the Fiji Agritourism Working Group and new members of Agritourism Association
- MCTTT (Min. of Commerce Trade Tourism and Transport) is reviewing the Fiji Tourism Plan 2021. They are open to involve agritourism in the consultation and PARDI2 to be liaison in this regard.

The concluding session of the workshop saw the formation of a community of practice amongst existing agritourism experiences operators and interested small holder farmers via facebook called AGRITOURISM Fiji. This community allows for knowledge and information sharing and peer to peer mentoring amongst established and emerging operators. There are currently 173 members in this Facebook group. The FB page can be viewed here, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/850806959021501>.



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Additionally, a Fiji Agritourism Association was established, with those at the workshop as founding members. The group comprises representatives from around Fiji with a diverse range of expertise and agritourism experiences products. It is anticipated that the main role of the Association is to act as the voice for the industry to government, provide support services to its members such as mentorship, checklists, access to group cover for insurance, amongst others to name a few. It was also confirmed that two representatives will sit on the Fiji Agritourism Working Committee (FAWC).

The five volunteers for the Fiji Agritourism Association committee are Elenoa Nimacere, Karen Mills, Talei Tora, Vinit Lal and Solo Kaumaitotoya.

At the end of Talanoa 2, participants were asked to identify areas in which they had faced challenges whilst trying to set up their agritourism business. This was carried out through an evaluation survey. The areas identified as the biggest challenges include; compliance with all the relevant regulatory agencies for example iTLTB, Fiji Hotel and Licensing Board, Ministry



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occupational health and safety amongst a few. Issues on land tenure with iTLTB, marketing their products, networking, attracting visitors to isolated destinations, technical advice and assistance from relevant government agencies were a few others.



### **Conclusions and next steps**

Talanoa 2 has equipped the participants with more knowledge in the areas of digital marketing. This has been exceptionally helpful and important, given the current situation the word over is in. It is evident that digital marketing will be the new norm moving forward.

It was unanimously agreed that there was a need for an agritourism association. The main purposes of such an association is to build networks, share knowledge, connect farmers, producers and consumers and above all create a community of practice.





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The following are key next steps;

- a. Establish formally register the Fiji Agritourism Association as an industry association.
- b. Complete the mentoring of the 4 agritourism enterprises, all of whom were in attendance at Talanoa 2, by January 2021.
- c. PARDI2 to develop a partnership work plan with Fiji Govt Ministry's Ministry of Ag, Ministry of Commerce Trade, Tourism and Transport and Tourism Fiji to contribute to the development of Fiji's Tourism Strategy / Recovery Plan.



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## Appendix A : Concept Note

### CONCEPT NOTE

# Talanoa 2: AgriTourism Experiences in Fiji

Prior to this year's disruption to travel, experiential and agricultural tourism was growing globally. Local and international travellers are keen to learn more about where and how local food grows, how it is used and what it tastes like!

Are you offering an agricultural experience as a tourism product in Fiji, such as a farm tour, a farm to table experience, or a farm homestay? Are you on this path but want to improve the experiences you offer and be visitor-ready for when global travel resumes?





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## **Objectives**

- Share experiences and ideas with established and emerging operators, tourism industry experts, policy and decision makers;
- Share successes and barriers to the development of agritourism experiences in Fiji.
- Reflect, understand and adapt to the current global travel requirements, behaviours and demands in a Covid19 world, now and beyond
- Identify strategies on how to develop your experiences to be visitor ready for when global travel resumes.
- Further develop your product and value chain partnerships for a sustainable and enhanced agritourism experience.

## **Outcomes**

- Identify aspects of your product or experience that need strengthening to ensure your agritourism business is providing a quality, engaging and standout experience.
- Establish an Agritourism Experiences Community of Practice, including peer to peer mentoring amongst established and emerging operators.



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## Background

Agritourism is an experience! It allows the visitor to fully immerse him/herself in the essence of that travel destination instead of experiencing it superficially. To many, traveling is a medium of gaining new knowledge, and experiential travel can enable them to fulfill this perspective of life and leave an everlasting impact. For example, instead of eating a traditional dish in the restaurant, one would like to know where it is harvested from, how it is prepared and finally enjoying it with the local host. This way, the visitor fully comprehends the local's lifestyle and culture.

Traveling has changed as a result of COVID19. Emerging changes include new requirements (particularly hygiene standards), behaviours and demands, changing the overall tourism sector and causing significant disruption to how people travel. Those who are paying attention to and adapting to these shifts will best evolve in the new normal (Sapient, 2020). One notable new behaviour is tourists opting for less crowded places and good hygiene programs (Bloom Consulting, 2020).

Farms in Fiji offer a good variety of agritourism experiences. This is based on the types of produce available on the farms. Additionally, the art of Fijian storytelling, incorporated with legends on some of the produce and crops, make it all an enriching experience. The challenge is developing and maintaining quality and unique agritourism experiences. Overcoming these challenges will require collective collaboration and *talanoa* of experienced operators, government ministries and agencies and tourism stakeholders to support and build a sound foundation for this niche product (Bibi et al., 2020).

The AgriTourism Experiences Talanoa 2 will bring together tourism industry experts together with the public sector to discuss current market trends, challenges and opportunities of agritourism experiences in Fiji. Moreover, emphasis will be placed on how operators can adapt these niche products to meet the visitors' requirements and demand in a COVID19 world.



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## Talanoa 2: AgriTourism Experiences in Fiji

PROGRAMME | OCTOBER 28th-29th 2020 | VENUE NOVOTEL  
HOTEL, NADI

TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER
<b>DAY 1   OCTOBER 28th</b>		
8:30am	Registration	
<p><b>Session 1: Setting the Scene</b></p> <p>In this session, speakers will present an overview of agritourism and culinary tourism in Fiji and globally and share lessons learned from their experiences in developing agritourism businesses.</p>		
8.45am	Welcome and Introduction	
9: 00 am	Opening Remarks - Agritourism Farm to Table concepts /opening during COVID	Chef Lance Seeto
9.15am	Trends and Market Intelligence in Agritourism in a COVID world	IFC - Alika Cooper
9.45am	Sharing lessons in operating agritourism experiences in Fiji - panel session how businesses are navigating through COVID with agritourism operators	Nabogiono Farm, Spice Farm, Nukubati Island Resort, South Sea Orchids, The Fiji Orchid
10:30am	<b>MORNING TEA</b>	
<b>SESSION 2</b>		



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## Product Design & Tourism Value Chains

*In this session, participants will learn about designing an agritourism product, understanding the tourism value chain, how to work with inbound operators and how to interact with your visitors during your farm tour.*

11.00am	<p>Agritourism - Is it right for you?</p> <p>Things to consider when thinking about expanding to agritourism - assess skills, time. CHECKLIST - self assess</p>	<p>Group work</p> <p>Facilitator - Alisi Lutu</p>
11.30am	<p>Introduction to tourism value chains</p>	<p>Facilitator - Lavinia K (PIFON)</p>
11.50am	<p>Tips for working with value chain partners including inbound operators, agents, marketing bodies, particularly in uncertain times</p>	<p>James Pridgeon (Tourism Fiji)</p>
12.30pm	<p><b>Customer service training</b></p> <p>Agritourism brings people to your farm expecting a certain level of customer service. Tips on how to meet expectations and enjoy this interaction.</p>	<p>Kauwai Consulting</p>
<b>1.00pm</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	
1.45pm	<p>Fiji Agritourism Working Committee (FAWC) &amp; Ministry of Agriculture</p> <p>Our pathway to policy and strategic planning.</p>	<p>Savenaca Waqainabete - Chairman FAWC &amp; Ms Elisha Mala (Mo Agriculture)</p>



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<b>SESSION 3</b>		
<b>FIELD VISIT</b>		
2.45pm	Field Visit - Bulaccino Farm Setting goals for your business	
5.30pm	Networking Evening at South Sea Orchids Tour of home museum and orchids nursery & networking dinner	
<b>DAY 2   OCTOBER 29th</b>		
<b>SESSION 4</b>		
<b>Markets and Marketing</b>		
<i>This session will get participants to learn how to define the target market for their agritourism product and how to develop their online presence</i>		
8.30am	<b>Identifying target markets and structure</b> Where to focus currently?	Facilitator - Alisi Lutu Emma / Sera (Tourism Fiji) Sachiko Soro (VOU) Novotel Fiji
9.00am	<b>Group Work</b> Visitor Expectations - what do agritourism experience visitors want?	Facilitators
09.30am	<b>What works in marketing in a COVID19 world - brands, marketing messages and platforms, communications</b>	Emma / Sera (Tourism Fiji)



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	<p>Content marketing</p> <p>Social media</p> <p>Working with mainstream media</p>	<p>Katie (Counterpoint)</p> <p>David Solomone</p> <p>Lice Movono</p>
10.30am	<b>MORNING TEA</b>	
11.00am	Social media 101 for agritourism entrepreneurs	David Solomone
11.30am	The booking journey - differences in domestic and international tourism	Marita Manley
12.00pm	<p><b>Getting it done</b></p> <p>Each group chooses a. a social media post, b. a blog outline c. a conversational pitch and practices it as a group</p>	Group work
12.30pm	<b>LUNCH</b>	
1.30pm	<p><b>What is the future of tourism for Fiji?</b></p> <p>A talanoa panel with our tourism stakeholders,</p>	<p>Chef Lance Seeto, Prof Stephen Pratt, USP-STHM, Min of Tourism (MCTTT), FHTA</p>
3.45pm	<p><b>Wrap Up &amp; Next Steps</b></p> <p>Community of Practice</p>	PARDI2





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5pm

**CLOSING**

## References

Bibi et al. (2020). *Agritourism Experiences in the Pacific: A situation analysis*. Pacific Agribusiness Research in Development Initiative (PARDI)2.

Sapient, P. (2002). *How Covid-19 Is Reshaping Consumer Behavior – and What That Means for Travel Brands Right Now*. Skift. Retrieved from <https://skift.com/2020/08/11/how-covid-19-is-reshaping-consumer-behavior-in-travel/>

Bloom Consulting. (2020). *COVID-19: The Impact on Tourist Behaviours*. Retrieved from [https://www.bloom-consulting.com/journal/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/BC\\_D2\\_Covid\\_19\\_Impact\\_Tourist\\_Behaviours.pdf](https://www.bloom-consulting.com/journal/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/BC_D2_Covid_19_Impact_Tourist_Behaviours.pdf)



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Annex B - Participants List

**TALANOA 2: AgriTourism Experiences in Fiji**  
NOVOTEL HOTEL, NADI/28 October, 2020

No	Name	Organisation	Title	Email	Telephone	M	F	15-35Y	Signature
1	Ilikini Bulidama	Farmer		bulidama.likini@gmail.com	9452408	✓		23	[Signature]
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8	Tomasi Dakuibani	Bula Mushroom	✓	tomasi.dakuibani@gmail.com	910427	✓		✓	[Signature]
9	Ulaeya Turaga								
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25	Susana Levula								





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18	Amelia T. Vatuwailwali	Jets Homestay	Director		9676578		✓		[Signature]
19	Jone Vatuwailwali	Jets Homestay	Director	jetstahomestay.com	7661540	✓			[Signature]
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21	Karen Mills	Mudrenicagi Estate	Co-owner		"		✓		[Signature]
22	Luke	Bula Castle		luke@bulaestate.com	7557662	✓			[Signature]
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