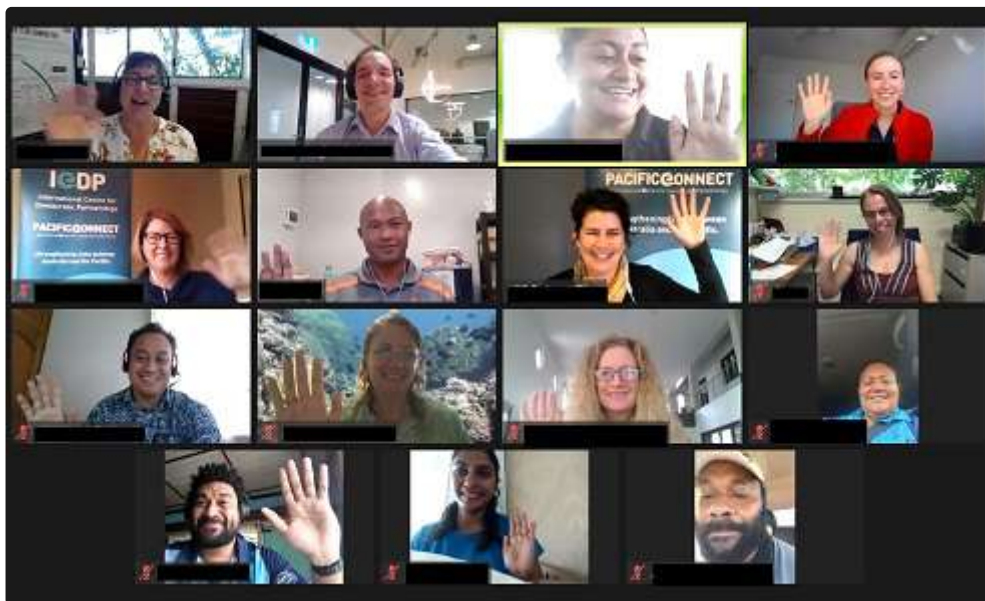


TALKING AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES IN A PACIFIC CONNECT TALANOA



The *Pacific Connect* Program continues to build opportunities for Pasifika emerging leaders, with a ‘Women in Aquaculture & Fisheries’ Virtual Dialogue held on 9 June. Twenty-one Community members, of which 12 were women, joined the half-day *talanoa* from Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu to hear from industry and academic experts and to discuss best practices and new technologies that can improve sustainable value chains.

The Dialogue was co-facilitated by long-term Community members Fiji-based Salote Waqairatu-Waqainabete (Pacific Agribusiness Research in Development Initiative), Pacific Islands Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON); and Dr Rachel Hay, Social Scientist, Senior Lecturer in Marketing, James Cook University in Townsville.

Rachel began the Dialogue by interviewing Katarina Baleisuva, Founder of Kaybee Farm, and Cathy Joyce, Co-Owner of Pacific Ocean Culture, both based in Fiji. With contrasting aquafarm sizes, participants were able to understand the operations and challenges from two different perspectives. Katarina spoke about the challenge of monitoring and the importance of new technologies in simplifying processing at her Tilapia farm. Pacific Ocean Culture uses more traditional, “eyes on the fish” resources to ensure their products are of the highest quality; both presenters expressed their interest in emerging technologies and



for Sustainable Tropical Fisheries and Aquaculture, James Cook University) demonstrated the innovative implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to help the seafood industry improve abalone assessment. Currently, assessing abalone is a physical process that often damages the produce, costing farms thousands of dollars every year. An AI programmed to recognise abalone size on farms can identify, count and measure the size of individual abalone from an image, ensuring more accurate and cost-effective farm assessment. The ability for AI to quickly analyse and produce large datasets will speed up production and research and development opportunities in the region. The potential for AI usage in the fisheries and aquaculture industries is far more widespread than abalone, and Dialogue participants discussed its potential application for fisheries.

The Dialogue wrapped-up with an inspiring presentation by Heindrick Petero, Senior Technical Officer of Seafarms Group (Australia). Heindrick spoke about the emergence of sustainable aquaculture production from Europe to Australia, and the importance of introducing to and supporting women in the fisheries workforce. The presentation turned into a participant-wide discussion on projects that could utilise innovative technologies to increase value chain sustainability and improve gender equality in the Pacific's fisheries at a technical level.

At the end of the *talanoa*, four projects (such as community groups, research task forces and data-driven analysis initiatives) were identified by the Community. We look forward to working with the dialogue participants over the coming months to see their initiatives develop and improve sustainable value chains throughout the Pacific!