Paradise Taveuni

Paradise Taveuni is a boutique resort located on the southwest coast of Taveuni. The resort primarily attracts divers. Given the remote location, the resort seeks to purchase produce locally and utilises its own land to provide produce for its restaurant.

# Agritourism proposition

Paradise Taveuni wanted to improve its self-reliance and farm-to-table experience by expanding and modifying their piggery to enable a more stringent breeding program, and expand their chicken inventory to increase the supply of eggs to their restaurant. Simultaneously, they wanted to improve the appearance of their farm so that they could integrate farm tours into their list of activities for guests.

# Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The resort was forced to close following the closure of the borders to international visitors. Many employees turned to farming as an alternative to working at the resort. With the opening of borders in December 2021, many former employees have chosen not to return to their jobs immediately, but continue to work on their own farms.

# Agritourism Support Programme

## Support requested

Paradise Taveuni requested assistance to improve their farm facilities. This included rebuilding and renovating their piggery to create more pens and provide separate birthing, breeding, raising pens, and slaughter pens; and renovating their chicken coop by strengthening the current roof structure using additional pine posts, reposition egg laying nests, and rebuilding sleeping roosts to reduce losses to vermin. Allied to this they wished to increase their stock levels of chickens. Additionally, they requested support and advice aimed at holding their first organised farm tour on 1 April 2022.

## Successes

* The piggery was renovated separating the existing five pens into 10 pens.
* The renovation of the chicken coops was completed.
* Related roofing and security fencing was installed.
* Training of staff members had started.
* A full time female employee was engaged to manage the piggery.
* Pig breeding pairs were increased to 1 male 1 female. 1 male 6 females, and 1 male 5 females.
* The sourcing of chicks for biannual purchases has started.
* Tours of the farm commenced in March 2022, 3 times per week, with in-house guests and guests from yachts.

## Lessons learned

With the encouragement and support to start the project, Paradise Taveuni realised that there were better options for the work that they wanted to do and consequently decided to invest their own funds from a limited reserve.

Expanding their farming efforts highlighted the challenges of farm management and the need for a steep learning curve. Of 200 purchased chickens only 73 survived due to unexpected cold weather, and 13 piglets died due to skin disease. This was solved by purchasing medicine from the Ministry of Agriculture.

A key lesson was the importance of having a deadline to aim for and the usefulness of having another party involved to make them accountable and maintain their enthusiasm for driving the project along through regular check-ins.

## Community impacts

### Economic impacts

Once the resort fully reopens the supply of eggs and meat to the kitchen will reduce their overheads, and the farm tour experience will provide an additional revenue stream making the project self-sustaining.

### Social impacts

A new female member of staff was recruited to manage the expanded piggery. A new changing room will need to be built for staff who work on the piggery to meet health and safety requirements. Farm paths are easily accessible for people with limited mobility or who use wheelchairs.

### Environmental impacts

The resort has retained the natural vegetation of their farm area. The only land clearing to take place was the weeding out of overgrown shrubs to plant *yagona*, taro and vegetables. There were no slash and burn activities. Their farmland is flat and close to the resort.

# Future steps

Paradise Taveuni are anticipating a significant increase in both the number of tours and farm production levels, including visitors staying at other properties. In the future they hope to be able to export their pork to other islands and possibly out of Fiji.

| Paradise Taveuni was supported through the PARDI2 Fiji Agritourism Support Programme. The programme provided existing agritourism experience operators and agribusinesses with technical support and mentoring to be market ready for the domestic market initially, as COVID restrictions ease, and for the international market eventually. Five enterprises were selected by an expert panel. Each enterprise received a small grant to further support market readiness. |
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