

Executive Summary

Grassroots Partnerships for Pacific Solutions

*Addressing Climate Adaptation and Food
Security TOGETHER*

Rarotonga, Cook Islands. August 21-25, 2023



Attendees from across the Pacific assembled in Rarotonga, Cook Islands to discuss 'Pacific Solutions by Pacific People' addressing climate adaptation and food security TOGETHER



Executive Summary

The week of **'Grassroots Partnerships for Pacific Solutions'** was convened in Rarotonga, Cook Islands from 21-25 August 2023. The event was organised by Pacific Farmer Organisations and local partners Te Tango Enea and Kōrero o te 'Ōrau with financial support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development, U.S. Department of State, AgriCord and the European Union.

The week of events attracted over 180 farmers, government officials, researchers and development partners from 15 Pacific Island Countries with a focus on strengthening partnerships with grassroots organisations to address the key challenges of Climate Adaptation and Food Security. The interrelated events spread through the 5 days and included: Grassroots Partnership Symposium, Stars of Oceania Awards Ceremony, Global Breadfruit Summit, Pacific Agriculture Solutions Summit, Farmer to Farmer Learning Exchange and a PFO Learning & Planning Meeting & Annual General Meeting.

Some of the key outcomes from the week of **'Grassroots Partnerships for Pacific Solutions'**, include:

- Highlighted the important contributions of smallholder 'family' farmers to the health and wellbeing of all Pacific Island peoples and the critical role they play in achieving the goals of the [2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent](#).
- Acknowledgement that smallholder 'family' farmers are some of the most impacted by climate change but also hold the key to adaptation efforts and ensuring food security. Despite this fact, [less than 4% of climate financing](#) globally targets smallholder farmers.
- Reinforced the importance of grassroots organisations for tapping into traditional knowledge and innovation, providing key services to rural people, amplifying the voice of rural people and bridging the gap and extending the reach of government and development partners.
- Demonstrated the potential for climate resilient, traditional crops like **breadfruit** to improve food security, nutrition and livelihoods for Pacific people.
- Showcased the impact of local solutions developed by Pacific People to address climate adaptation and food security including: Climate resilient farming, Farm to School initiatives, Agro-processing and Agri-tourism.
- A call to focus policy and investment efforts on: Traditional Crops (staple crops, fruits, vegetables), Improved Traditional Agriculture, Local Food Systems and Value Chain Development and Strengthening of local organisations to deliver local solutions.
- Renewed commitment to forging closer relationships between grassroots organisations, governments and development partners.

Specific outcomes and messages that emerged from the various events are summarized in the sections below.

Grassroots Partnership Symposium

- **The value and contribution of Grassroots Organisations is under-recognised :** Presenters and panelists acknowledged that the Pacific region does not place enough attention on the work of existing grassroots organisations nor invest enough in the development of these organisations and future ones.
- **Stronger representation from Grassroots Organisations is needed:** Policy development and implementation in the region could be greatly enhanced through better engagement with grassroots organisations which means ‘a seat at the table’ alongside governments and development partners. The current review of the ‘Regional Architecture’ being undertaken by the Pacific Islands Forum provides an opportunity to strengthen the role of CSOs.
- **A model for development partners - IFAD Declaration of Commitment with Pacific Farmer Organisations:** IFADs Declaration of Commitment signed with Pacific Farmer Organisations in 2016 provides an important model for how a development partner can institutionalise its partnership with grassroots organisations.
- **Adapting systems and processes to better support grassroots organisations:** It was acknowledged that many of the systems and processes for development assistance are not well suited to the needs and capacities of grassroots organisations.

Global Breadfruit Summit

- **Breadfruit Development the Right Way:** As a Pacific Crop, Breadfruit development should focus on improved traditional agriculture systems that value not just economics but also health and culture
- **Breadfruit and Climate Change:** Science is clear that breadfruit is a climate resilient crop that is well suited to addressing the major challenges of food security, NCDs, and climate adaptation in the Pacific.
- **Breadfruit Genetic Diversity:** Investing more resources at a national level to understand, conserve and develop breadfruit diversity.
- **Breadfruit Propagation:** Improved propagation practices provide a clear example of how traditional knowledge can be enhanced by modern horticulture
- **Varietal Advantages:** An important emerging area is around different breadfruit varieties’ performance in different farming systems in terms of height, canopy size, etc..

- **Support for Agroforestry:** Breadfruit is best suited to agroforestry farming systems and not monoculture, this is based on scientific experience and traditional knowledge.
- **Farmer Led Research Projects:** For traditional crops like breadfruit, traditional knowledge should be a foundation of our action research initiatives, and the farmer led research model, currently being implemented under the FO-RI farmer led research project provides a good basis for this practice.
- **Value-added Potential:** Breadfruit has a high potential for value-added products and has shown economic success through different products in most PICs
- **Breadfruit Festivals:** Breadfruit festivals are something that is going to be replicated around the region as a means to share information, promote awareness, and promote consumption and production.

Pacific Solutions Summit

- **Value and invest in 'Local Solutions by Local People':** The summit highlighted numerous examples of successful initiatives that were developed and driven by Pacific island people and their organisations. Participants acknowledged that more needs to be done to highlight and scale up these examples as well as support people and organisations to continue to develop new solutions.
- **More finance for 'Climate Resilient Farming' initiatives led by grassroots organisations:** The climate resilient farming proposal that was presented was well received and participants appreciated the ability to adapt activities to local context and priorities. It was also acknowledged that despite the significant amount of resources that are available; within the Pacific region for climate adaptation, very little of this is reaching the grassroots. Participants also identified a need to strengthen the rationale and needs of women in climate change and changing dynamics in households and agriculture and the need to address labour loss due to migration.
- **Strengthening Youth Engagement:** A clear outcome from the summit was the need to place a greater importance on youth engagement. A number of successful initiatives and models were shared that targeted youth with educational awareness and practical training that helps them to value and conserve traditional land resources rather than exploit it.
- **Farm to School Movement:** The farm to school movement exists around the Pacific in various forms and has demonstrated successful impacts, particularly in places like Hawaii. There is significant interest and opportunity to scale up the initiatives and more importantly to foster regional collaboration in this area.
- **Agro-processing key to food security and livelihoods in the Pacific:** Several models to support agro-processing development in the region were explored in the

summit. The importance of agro processing for food security and livelihoods in the Pacific was also highlighted as well the opportunity to scale up successful initiatives and foster more regional collaboration in this area.

- **Agri-tourism an important diversification activity for Pacific farmers:** The experience from Fiji clearly demonstrates how a farm can be diversified to include farm tours with both activities enhanced as well the farmers income and long term sustainability. Participants highlighted the opportunity to foster greater regional collaboration and information sharing around this important area.

The week of Grassroots Partnerships for Pacific Solutions brought together diverse perspectives and expertise and also laid the foundation for ongoing collaborations and advancements in agricultural practices and partnership based strategic development throughout the Pacific region.

The Grassroots Partnerships for Pacific Solutions garnered significant media attention, both on the international stage and through robust social media engagement. Six articles featured in prominent international media outlets, amplifying the event's reach and emphasizing its global significance. A special highlight was the coverage by Olohana Foundation and Island Craft Media that produced an episode dedicated to the Summit, further enhancing its visibility. The event's social media campaign, running from July 6th to August 29th, 2023, witnessed remarkable traction. Posts reach 19264; 921 likes, reflecting a compelling engagement rate. Recognizing the power of visual content, video recordings of oral presentations from the event were published on [YouTube](#), ensuring ongoing engagement and extending the knowledge sharing beyond immediate delegates.



Danny Mataroa, president of TE TANGO ENUA delivers an official welcome to invited speakers and participants seated at the Avarua National Auditorium, Cook Islands.