

I M P A C T STORIES

Strengthening Farmer
Organisations in the
Pacific 2014 – 2018



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PACIFIC FARMER ORGANISATIONS COME OF AGE

The following pages contain a series of stories about farmers, and more particularly, about farmer organisations. They reflect some of the impacts of a five-year funding programme (2014-2018) that has changed the way farmer organisations operate in the Pacific Islands. Stories like these have become common in farmer organisations across the region. What follows is not a comprehensive list of the impacts, but is intended to provide a glimpse into these transformations. Five years of capacity building has made a huge difference, not only to how farmer organisations are seen by farmers, governments and development partners, but also to how farmer organisations see themselves.

Through increased activity, improved visibility and a greater capacity to serve their members, farmer organisation membership has seen substantial increases. In the seven national implementing agencies of the programme, there has been a 32% membership increase over the past

five years, equating to an extra 5500 new farmers now being represented and served in the Pacific region by these seven organisations. These farmers join farmer organisations for many reasons, but central to the membership increase is the belief that farmer organisations are now more relevant and have greater potential to improve the income of Pacific farmers than ever before.

A long list of activities successfully completed and real impacts on their farmer members has redefined what farmer organisations are capable of, their role in the agricultural sector, and their role in the broader development of rural communities. Where once farmer organisations were largely the passive receptors of other people's ideas and projects, they are now identifying their own ways to best serve their members and are promoting these ideas to their governments and development partners.




Through the MTCP2 programme we have been able to extend our reach to more regions of PNG, with more farmer organisations having participated in our national activities. Our farm leadership training, for example, brought together more than 100 farmer organisation leaders and professional women from across the country. I'm very proud of what we have been able to achieve, but regret that we didn't have the resources and time to do even more."

Maria Linibi, President,
Papua New Guinea Women
in Agriculture Development
Foundation

¹Based on the difference between 2013 and 2018 membership figures for Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands national implementing agencies. Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste are based on the membership figures for the years they entered the funding programme, 2015 and 2016 respectively.





The Pacific Breadfruit and Seeds Programme is one example of this new attitude. Having developed their own regional breadfruit programme, the regional farmer organisation collective was unable to secure funding to implement it. Rather than discarding the programme, they agreed at the Pacific Breadfruit Roundtable to divide the work amongst their organisations. Basing the division upon their individual capacities and strengths, they have been progressing the work as they are able. More details of the regional work on breadfruit and the coordination of the programme can be found in the Broad Regional Impacts section.

Farmer organisations' vision for what they are capable of has also grown since 2014. With support from the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network, they have carried out a range of new activities that have built their organisational capacity. Whether it is coordinating groups of farmer organisations to work and plan together at the national level; engaging with farmer organisations in different Pacific countries to share experiences and technical expertise; or through hosting national and regional events, farmer organisations have found that they can do it, and do it well.

Further, by sharing with each other, farmer organisations have started to understand what does (and doesn't) work best for their farmers in the region. As a result of this, they have collaboratively and separately begun to develop their own best practice Pacific farmer organisation models for workshops, learning exchanges, value chain analyses and project development. They are asking for changes to the way agricultural research is conducted and to the traditional model of farm extension services. Using evidence-based approaches that involve partnerships between governments and farmer organisations, and utilise the comparative strengths of each, farmer organisations are now at the forefront of regional changes to deliver better services to farmers.

There has also been a push to improve farmer organisations' financial management skills. The programme has required that farmer organisations at the national level become increasingly responsible for managing their own programme funds. A shift from activity-based funding to a quarterly release based on projected workplans and budgets has been part of the decentralisation of responsibility and institutional strengthening requirements for the programme. Managing this has stretched the capabilities of many of the farmer organisations and their staff, who have often not had much financial management exposure. However, at the end of five years, staff are better trained (opportunities for training being provided through the programme) and many of the organisations have upgraded their financial systems to be able to track funds better. These changes have served them well in being accountable and transparent to their members, as well as helping them to attract and manage further funding.

Moving Into Events Management

Through the MTCP2 programme national farmer organisations across the region stepped up to host some very large regional events. These included:

- Pacific Open-pollinated Seeds Roundtable – Solomon Islands
- Pacific Breadfruit Roundtable – Tonga
- Pacific Week of Agriculture, including two major regional workshops – Vanuatu
- Regional Soil Forum and Soil Learning Exchange – Fiji
- Farmer Organisations Leadership and Strategic Planning Training – Papua New Guinea

Developing the organisational capacity to be able to host these events, and the self-belief that has followed from taking the lead role and successful delivery is typical of how the long term, capacity building approach of this programme has led to some outstanding impacts.

Not only does hosting these events provide farmer organisations with an additional income stream and a new service they can offer, supporting their financial sustainability, but also they ensure that farmer organisations are placed at the centre of these regional events, where they have the opportunity to influence key discussions and decisions within the region.



We have seen a big change in how our farmer organisations manage their funds. It was pretty bad at the start of the project. However, they now have proper financial policies in place and are working to a quarterly reporting cycle. There are still some gaps but overall my job is a lot easier."

Aneet Kumar, Finance Manager,
Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network

Out of this five year proven track record in activity and programme implementation has come a range of new partnerships and funding opportunities. Farmer organisations are now being sought out by development partners in a way not seen before, with some funders insisting on the involvement of farmer organisations in agricultural projects as a precondition of project acceptance.

To go with this new demand, has been a new awareness by farmer organisations that not all development projects are "good" projects, and that they need to understand how projects fit in with their own strategic plans and the needs of their members before signing on. Poorly designed projects and projects that don't support the core needs of the farmer organisations and their members can end up wasting an organisations limited resources, while delivering very little in the way of impacts to members.

"The ten year review of our research and extension program was invaluable to help us take stock of our achievements and identify a correct structure moving forwards. With the review document in hand, we have been able to secure additional funding that is targeted to our needs."

Livai Tora, Chairman,
Nature's Way Cooperative, Fiji

To support better usage of donor funds, farmer organisations are increasingly being brought to the table during the project design phase, to provide inputs and share their experiences and knowledge around what does and doesn't work.

In a landmark agreement with the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network signed a Declaration of Commitment between the two organisations on the role of farmer organisations in agricultural development. This is the first such official declaration between the International Fund for Agricultural Development and a farmer organisation anywhere in the world, and enables greater opportunities for Pacific farmer organisations to be part of the very early stages of programme development and to help shape projects that will better meet the needs and realities of Pacific farmers.

Taken individually, each of these changes is quite remarkable. Taken all together, they represent a quiet revolution in Pacific agriculture that has been driven by farmer organisations and catalysed through five years of carefully allocated programme funding. By decentralising much of the programme decision making, requiring national level farmer organisations to set their own priorities and activities, and allowing these to be adjusted mid-programme as circumstances and need require, the impacts have been considerable.

For many of the farmer organisations the journey has not been an easy one. Much has been demanded of them throughout the programme and it has often stretched the organisational capacity and financial management skills of the various organisations. However, a core of dedicated staff, managers, board members and farmer members in each organisation has had the belief and commitment to make changes, accept new ideas, undertake training, tackle varied tasks and believe in themselves, their organisation and what they can become. It is on their efforts that the success of the programme has depended and the many impacts detailed in these stories result from.

GROWERS' FEDERATION OF TONGA .INC

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Vision

- Profitable and Sustainable Growth in Tonga's Agricultural Sector

Mission

- A Peak Industry Body through leadership, advocacy and growers support



ANL
FAIRS & TRADE



Organisation Network



THE MTCP2 PROJECT

The first phase of the Medium Term Cooperation Programme ran from 2009 – 2012 and succeeded in bringing together national farmer organisations from ten countries in Southeast and South Asia. It was a response to a growing call from farmer organisations worldwide, through the Farmers Forum processes of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

The Medium Term Cooperation Programme with Farmer Organisations in Asia and the Pacific Phase 2 (MTCP2) aimed to support poverty reduction through strengthening the capacity of farmers and their organisations. The main participants were 150 farmer organisations representing 20 million small-scale farming families across 25 countries in Asia and the Pacific.

Hoping to strengthen and expand the gains from the first phase, the second phase commenced in 2014, running for five years. The programme had four components:

1. Strengthen farmer organisations and their networks
2. Support participation of farmer organisations in policy process
3. Farmer organisation services and involvement in agriculture development programs
4. Programme management and coordination

It was a complex programme with three grant providers and with the programme implemented at the regional, sub-regional and national levels. The Regional Implementing Agency was a consortium of the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (Philippines) and La Via Campesina (Indonesia). The Regional Implementing Agency was supported by three Sub-Regional Implementing Agencies:

- Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (The Pacific)
- All Nepal Peasant Federation Association (South Asia)
- Asian Farmers' Association / La Via Campesina (Southeast Asia + China)



National Implementing Agencies then support the Sub-Regional Implementing Agencies in: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam, China and seven countries in the Pacific region.

The entire five year programme was funded with grants from the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Swiss Development Corporation and the European Union, worth a total of USD 19million.

Programme Structure

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

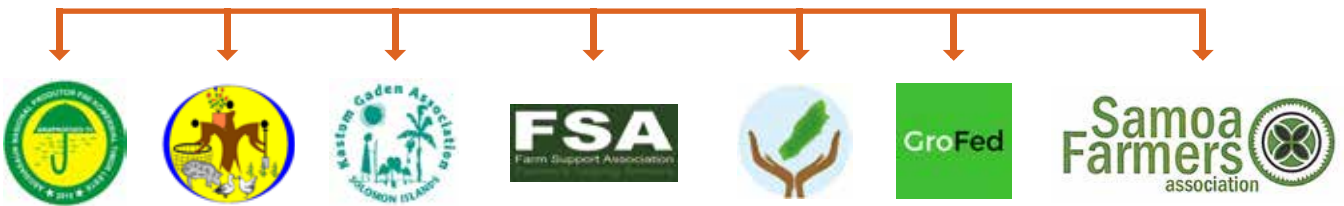
Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



Regional
Implementing
Agency



Sub-regional
Implementing Agency



National Implementing Agencies

MTCP2 IN THE PACIFIC

Until recently, farmer organisations were a rarity in the Pacific Islands. Governments largely monopolised the roles of agricultural extension, research and commodity marketing, which stifled the development of effective farmer organisations. This approach is changing with the realisation that government structures have not always been effective in providing these services and an increasing acceptance that there are alternative ways to support farmers in their income generating endeavours. It is now widely accepted that farmer organisations in the Pacific Islands will need to play a critical role in empowering rural people to take advantage of economic livelihood opportunities.

The Pacific Island Farmers Organisations Network is the Pacific umbrella organisation for farmer organisations. It exists to create linkages between national farmer organisations and to improve the flow of relevant information and resources that facilitate the participation of rural households in income earning agriculture.

In the Pacific sub-region, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network was selected to be responsible for overall implementation of MTCP2, where US\$1.18 million was allocated across the five years of the programme. Three hundred and fifteen national and local farmer organisations directly benefited from this funding. In addition, it is estimated that through the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network, indirect benefits reached 21 national farmer organisations across nine countries, which links with hundreds of local farmer organisations, representing around 80,000 farmers.

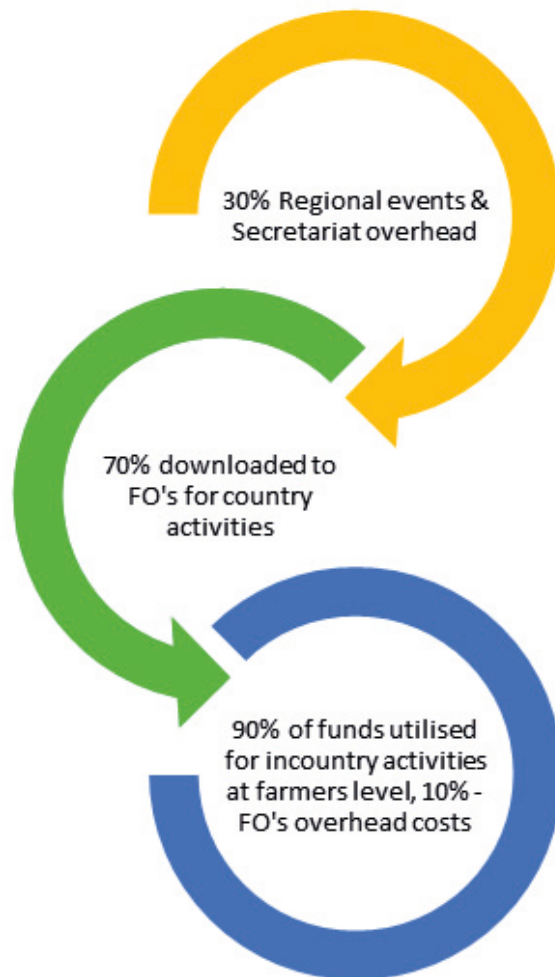
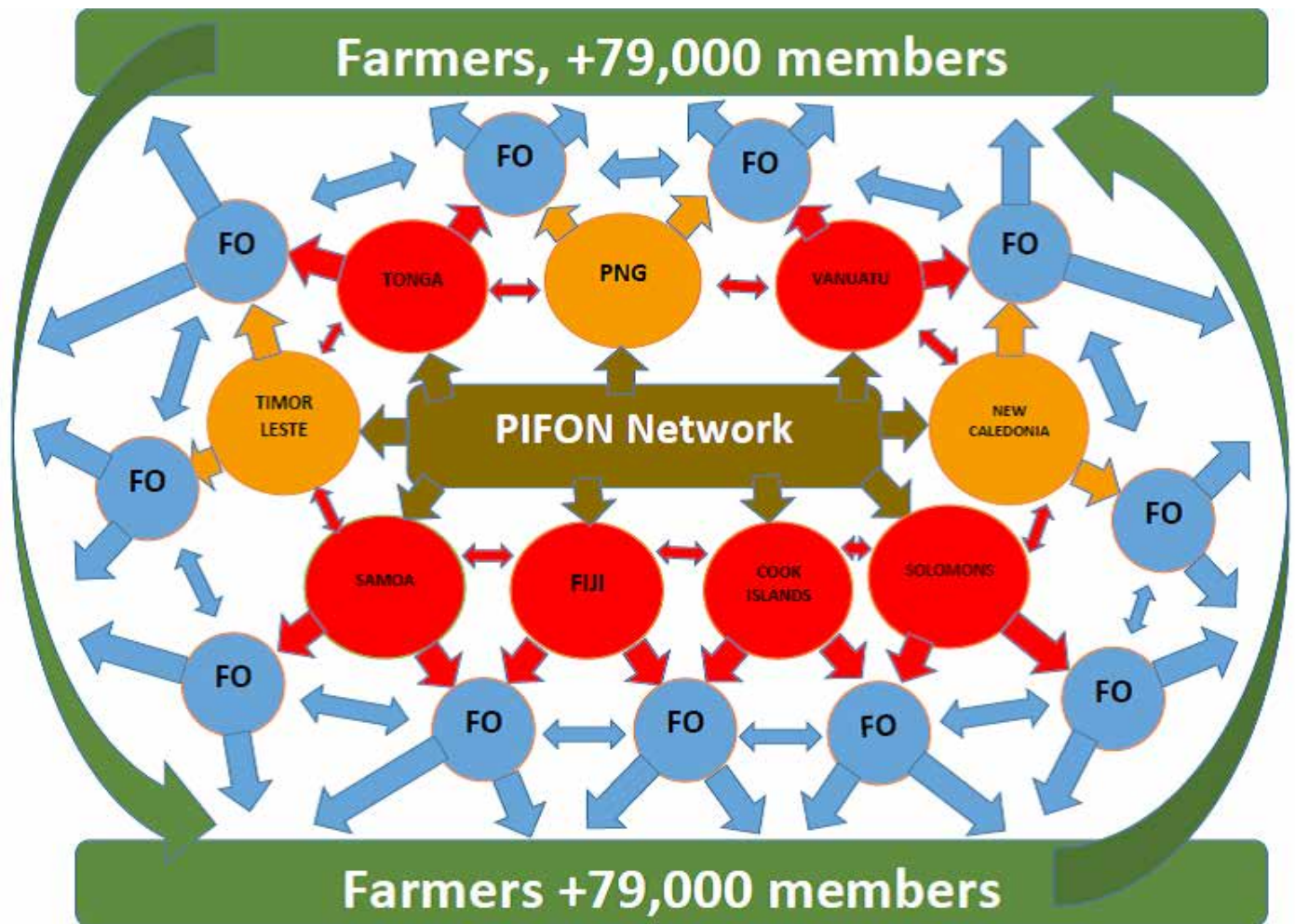
Programme funding flowed through the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network out to seven national farmer organisations, who were chosen to implement at the national level in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste. Ninety percent of the funding allocated to the national level was used for 'boots on the ground' activities with farmers. These activities were determined by the national farmer organisations, based upon their identified national priorities. Where needed, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network provided additional support to implement these national level activities.

In addition to the national level activities, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network organized activities at the regional level, such as farmer-to-farmer learning exchanges between countries; representation at regional and international meetings and forums; and the development of regional policy positions that represent farmers' interests.



It is important to note that implementation of MTCP2 in the Pacific was through existing farmer organisations, with their own strategic plans and priorities. Implementation, therefore, was not programme-led, but rather fitted into the orientation and strategies of the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network and its members. It was farmer organisation priorities that identified the activities to be supported through the programme.

As well as the very specific, targeted support that farmers in the region received as a result of MTCP2, significant progress was made integrating Pacific farmer organisations into International Fund for Agricultural Development programs. Critical to this integration was the relationship developed between the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network and the International Fund for Agricultural Development staff in charge of the Pacific. This important relationship is reflected in the fact that Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network hosted the International Fund for Agricultural Development Country Program Review in 2015, which allowed for firsthand interaction between the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network and all the active International Fund for Agricultural Development projects in the region.





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IMPACT STORIES





“After the training we see that the farmers really understand what their role is, so it makes them work smarter, makes them make more money, the production goes up.”

Praneel Mudaliar,
Managing Director, Sunshine Produce (exporter)

THE VALUE CHAIN WAY OF THINKING

Today, if you talk to farmers organisations, government agricultural officers or agricultural development practitioners in the Pacific, there is a good chance you are going to hear them talking about value chains. In fact, it is likely that you will also hear farmers, exporters and agro-processors also discussing value chains. Value chains have become widely accepted as a principal tool in understanding and improving agriculture in the region.

Value chains aren't a new idea, the concept has been around since the 1980s, however, in Pacific agriculture it was largely considered a theoretical idea, better suited to academic discussions than practical application on the farm. The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network, with its associate partner, Koko Siga Pacific and through funding from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA), developed and published its own 'Agricultural Value Chain Guide for the Pacific Islands' that has helped to demystify and produce its own value chain steps and a model for Pacific farmers understanding.

This has allowed a series of value chains analyses to be conducted over the past five years, which provide in-depth insights into agricultural commodity production and have led to significant improvements to farming practices, farmer incomes and export revenues.

Value chain analyses funded, or partially funded by MTCP2:

- Ginger, Fiji
- Taro, Fiji
- Papaya, Fiji
- Papaya, Tonga
- Off-season Vegetables, Fiji
- Vanilla, Tonga
- Spices (Vanilla and Pepper), Vanuatu
- Virgin Coconut Oil, Fiji
- Green Coconuts, Samoa
- Cassava Chips, Tonga
- Fruit Juice pulps and drinks, Fiji
- Fresh Pineapple, Solomon Islands



"When they (farmers) get exposed to this type of training and see the whole picture of their produce from farm to market to plate, it really opens their eyes and they get to appreciate everyone along the chain."

Alan Petersen, Tei Tei Taveuni, Fiji

Driven by the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network and farmer organisations across the Pacific region, considerable work has been done to make value chains accessible and relevant to farmers. At the heart of this is the need to involve farmers, buyers, processors, exporters, quarantine officials, and agricultural extension officers in the process of developing value chains. Not only does this result in better information being inputted into the models, but also the relationships built during these processes often become as important as the technical information derived.

Not all the work being done on value chains has been funded by the MTCP2 programme, however programme funding has been critical in developing a large enough set of value chains and conducting enough value chain training to be able to understand the strengths of the tool, refine the model and test its robustness by replicating it across the region.

A key impact of value chain training comes from the changed mindset of the participants. Responses repeatedly indicate that they develop a new perspective on their role and their relationship with the other value chain actors. This changed perspective helps participants to think more critically about the business of agriculture, improves relationships, leads to better collaborations and often increases the supply of produce.

By being at the forefront of these developments, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network and farmer organisations engaged in the programme have developed considerable in-house value chain expertise. This means that they can not only provide an additional service to their own members, but the demand for further value chain analyses and training across the region means that they can generate income by offering these services to government, other farmer organisations and development partners.



"Before the value chain training, I only thought about what was in it for me. I didn't care about the others. If their produce went bad that's theirs to deal with. I just needed to make my money. Something I've learned from the value chain training is to take care of all my produce, so my buyer's business also benefits."

Waisea Turaga, Farmer, Fiji

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE – THE BREADFRUIT STORY

There are many reasons for Pacific farmers to get involved in producing breadfruit: it is highly nutritious; it can be used as an import substitute for wheat, rice and potatoes; there are untapped

export markets; it is natural disaster and climate change resilient; and there is an expanding body of knowledge on growing, agro-processing and end-product development which farmers can now access.

A large, stylized graphic of a quotation mark in a dark brown color, set against a teal background. The quote text is positioned below the graphic.

the nutritional value of breadfruit is undisputed and its economic development is still yet to be realized. Our challenge in Tonga is for us to find the market opportunity that this crop offers so that it may assist the livelihood of Tongans."

Minoru Nishi, Nishi Trading and Nishi Foundation, Tonga

While farmer organisations have been quick to identify the benefits of breadfruit, governments and donors have generally been slower to see the importance. So, after developing a regional breadfruit programme, the farmer organisations found themselves unable to source funding for its implementation. At the Pacific Breadfruit Roundtable, held in Tonga in 2016, farmer organisations therefore collectively decided that breadfruit was too important to be ignored and that they couldn't wait for governments and donors to come to the table. They therefore coordinated their separate work plans and resources across the region to progress the breadfruit programme on their own.

The MTCP2 programme has been able to fund a considerable amount of this independent, yet coordinated work relating to

breadfruit. As a result, breadfruit is becoming more integrated into farming systems in more concerted ways and is becoming lodged in the minds of Pacific farmers. The programme has supported some really exciting national and local activities, which were then strengthened by regional learning exchanges.

In Fiji, Nature's Way Cooperative already had its own breadfruit programme, but with further funding and the opportunity to draw on and learn from other farmer organisations in the network, they have had some very tangible impacts.

In Tonga, farmer organisations have been doing some great work, after an initial learning exchange to Fiji opened their minds to the potential of this indigenous Pacific tree.



our farmers learnt that breadfruit can be planted in orchards instead of how we traditionally plant them, anywhere and everywhere. From Fiji they were taught the technical skills required for orchard cropping and since they returned, those farmers have put their newfound knowledge to practise. Further, they have trained other farmers as well on this knowledge too."

Sinai Tuitahi,
Chief Executive Officer, GroFed Tonga

The three major farmer organisations from Tonga that are engaging in the MTCP2 programme came together to coordinate their activities around breadfruit. MORDI Tonga is concentrating on various technical aspects of breadfruit propagation and growth, Nishi Trading is focusing on breadfruit processing, while GroFed is leading the way with orchard establishment.

MORDI's work has involved construction of demonstration nurseries, collecting breadfruit seedlings, training on breadfruit propagation, conducting a breadfruit baseline survey, breadfruit nursery monitoring and exploring new ways of cooking breadfruit.

Nishi Trading has been conducting tests on drying breadfruit for subsequent processing into snacks and flour, and is now taking their results out to the community for feedback. They also have their own breadfruit planting program, where breadfruit is intercropped with a range of other cash crops, such as: coffee; lettuce; taro; sweet yams; pineapple; plantain; sandalwood; peanuts; cow peas; moringa; cassava and maize.

In 2017, both MORDI Tonga and Nishi Trading, in partnership with the Government of Tonga, secured Japanese aid for a US\$3million, five year Breadfruit and Nutrition project through the JICA Partnership Program. This project builds on the breadfruit work already carried out through MTCP2.

Meanwhile GroFed, as well as establishing single-crop breadfruit orchards, is working on establishing SMART farms where breadfruit is intercropped with a variety of other plants, such as: coconuts; sandalwood; vanilla; kava; pele (spinach); and papaya. These SMART farms meet the daily domestic needs of the grower and his family; provide for annual family

and church obligations; provide for long term needs, such as building a new house or university education fees; as well as providing food security and helping to protect the grower against the impacts of climate change.

And back in Fiji, the Tutu Rural Training Centre has developed a thriving cottage industry around breadfruit flour and breadfruit chips, which is detailed in a story in the Fiji section. In addition, Tutu was nominated by the other farmer organisations to lead the implementation of the Pacific breadfruit programme, coordinating the six other collaborating farmer organisations in the region.

This level of commitment to a project that requires them to make significant allocations of their own resources to achieve outcomes is unprecedented for farmer organisations in the region. It has also required a level of regional cooperation between farmer organisations that would not have been possible before the MTCP2 programme. A series of inter-regional technical partnerships between the farmer organisations working on breadfruit has ensured that knowledge and learning outcomes are shared, and reduces the likelihood of unnecessary replication of activities.

For many Pacific Islanders breadfruit is still a food of last resort, often called 'cyclone food' it is what you eat when nothing else is available. That attitude is starting to change however, and breadfruit is starting to become "cool". A large portion of this changing attitude is the result of the work being done by farmer organisations across the region and the subsequent sharing of this information. Once a forgotten tree in terms of investment, all the signs now point to breadfruit having a big future!

CONNECTING THE DOTS – OFF-SEASON FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

Fruit and vegetable production in the Pacific is generally highly seasonal, with very little production of many crops during the hot, wet-season months. This often pushes prices up dramatically and for farmers who take the step into off-season production, it can be highly profitable. Off-season production is rarely about only one thing however; it is about connecting the dots through a range of different technologies and utilising a variety

of tools to achieve results. This can make it difficult for many farmers to get started effectively.

Off-season fruit and vegetable production was therefore highlighted as a priority by many farmer organisations across the region. There already existed a large body of great knowledge and technology, but much of it wasn't readily available to farmers.

A large, stylized quotation mark graphic in a dark teal color, set against a light teal background. The quote text is positioned to the right of the graphic.

So what the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network did was to bring all the technology together, then connect the technologies with the people, and then connect the people with other people. When you get it right, then you have enabled people to run with it in their own way, at the national and community level."

Kyle Stice, Manager,
Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network

The regional work was spearheaded by holding a farmer training on technologies supporting off-season vegetable production in 2015. This gave farmer organisations from across the Pacific a broad understanding of what was required to produce off-season, and the ability to go back to their members and work out their local and national priorities.

The MTCP2 programme then stepped in to fund a series of farmer-to-farmer learning exchanges around off-season fruit and vegetable production. These exchanges involve farmers from one Pacific farmer organisation, who have the know-how, visiting the farmers of another farmer organisation to provide

the training. This model of using farmers to train other farmers, with most of the training occurring on the farm and in the field has proven to be very effective. Refining this farmer-to-farmer model through the lessons learnt from successes and failures has been another big impact of the programme and is discussed further in the Samoa section of this report.

Around the region there have been many successes from these off-season fruit and vegetable farmer-to-farmer exchanges. They have proven to be profitable for farmers, as well as helping to address food security issues in Pacific Island countries by increasing the quantity and quality of local produce available all year round.

FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

It may seem obvious that seeds are where most crops come from, yet much agricultural work in the Pacific had focused on the end product, and ignored these small, but essential components. Timor Leste is still the only country in the region to have a national seeds programme, and while work on seeds had been done in the Solomon Islands and Fiji, it was a long way from being embedded into comprehensive government programmes.

The past five years have seen a rapid rise in the recognition of the importance of seeds, and farmer organisations have been at the forefront of these changes. By utilising the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network to share knowledge between the farmer organisations already working on seeds, and to engage additional farmer organisations across more countries into seeds projects, farmers have become increasingly aware of the impact different seeds can have on their profitability.

Farmer organisations have started importing new varieties of tropically adapted seeds for their members, rather than using temperate climate seeds. They are improving the storing and packaging of seeds to extend shelf life and seed viability, and they are learning better techniques for collecting their own open-pollinated seed varieties, reducing dependence upon commercial hybrid varieties.

In Vanuatu, the Farm Support Association has seen farmers' yields and incomes increase when they started importing and selling tropically adapted seeds. Previously, they had only temperate climate seeds available in the country, but now that Farm Support Association is importing these new seeds in bulk and repacking them for sale to farmers, there are noticeable improvements. There is more and better quality produce available in the markets for consumers, as a result of better germination rates and disease resistance. The seeds are in such hot demand from farmers, that the Farm Support Association is working with two retail outlets on the outer islands to improve the availability. Recognition of the impact of the new seeds has



not gone unnoticed, with the Vanuatu Government now looking at importing these tropically adapted seeds themselves, making them available to even more farmers in Vanuatu.

These changes are bearing fruit, and farmers are benefiting from better disease resistance, increased yields and greater profits. What's more, by selecting and saving seeds from their best, farmers will continue to adapt their crops to changing climatic conditions.

Recognising the achievements of farmer organisations, and under sustained pressure at the national level to get serious about seeds, governments across the Pacific have made establishing seed systems a national priority. Regional organisations and donors, responding to this new priority, are now developing their own seed programmes, often building on the work that has already been done by the farmer organisations.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND SOILS

For many Pacific Islanders, living on islands means not having access to large areas of land for farming. It is therefore necessary to maintain fertility on small amounts of soil, so as to continue to be able to earn an income and grow food.

The island of Taveuni in Fiji is known as the Garden Island because of its lush vegetation. However, unsustainable land use has led to declines in soil fertility and dramatic decreases in crop yields, which threaten the livelihoods of farmers on the island. It shouldn't be surprising then that the Taveuni farmers have been at the forefront of efforts to farm more sustainably, forming Tei Tei Taveuni in 2009 as a direct response to these problems.

In 2015, Tei Tei Taveuni and the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network brought farmers from around the region together on Taveuni. The plan was to share their own experiences and to learn from other Pacific farmers how they could better care for their island. The Pacific Soil Learning



like a mother nursing its babies, it needs to be fed, it needs to be looked after"

Father Petero Matairatu,
Tutu Rural Training Centre, Fiji

Exchange was the first step for many farmers across the region to not only care for their soils, but to generally farm more sustainably.

Promoting the sharing of information on sustainable soil management between farmer organisations has become a focal area for the regional network, with Taveuni a testing ground for many different approaches to sustainable agriculture, and through their passion and hard work they are starting to see the results.



the impact it had on us in Taveuni now with farmers using mucuna beans and where participants took home with them the mucuna beans they can plant for the fertility of their soils ... to see firsthand the dalo farms using mucuna beans and the differences in their crop yields compared to the majority of the farms that did not use mucuna beans."

Serenia Madigibuli, Tutu Rural Training Centre, Taveuni, Fiji

But the farmers of Taveuni aren't the only ones making the move to sustainability and like ripples on a pond, the ideas sown back in 2015 are increasingly taking hold. More and more regional farmers are finding out that looking to the future also makes good business sense, and are finding that farmer organisations are able to provide them with the knowledge and tools, as well as connecting them with the right people to make the shift.

Changing the mindset of farmers to take a longer-term view, and treat their farming as a lifelong and inter-generational calling isn't always easy, but through persistence and practical experience a lot of the ideas have now taken root and are set to flourish through the work of farmer organisations.





Vanuatu

A TALE OF TWO TRAINING CENTRES

The Society of Mary (Marists) established the Tutu Rural Training Centre (Tutu) on the island of Taveuni (Fiji) in 1969. In 1983 they started running a Young Farmer Training Course “to help form and train young single men from the province of Cakaudrove”. Running now for 35 years and training more than 200 men, the results have been spectacular, with more than 90% of course participants still farming as their main source of livelihood. Around 2,000 people have completed some form of training at Tutu and another 25,000 adults have attended shorter village based training courses run by the Centre. Having designed their own unique approach to training, the ‘Tutu model’ is recognised across the Pacific as best practice, with significant ability to be replicated in other countries.

On the island of Tana in Vanuatu, the Napil Rural Training Centre (Napil) was established in 1999 to offer a range of vocational training to local communities. Largely underutilised, Napil underwent a revitalisation in 2011 after Farm Support Association Manager, Peter Kaoh, and the Napil Lead Trainer, Tom lotil, visited Tutu. Recognising that the Tutu model could be applied to Napil, they were determined to create a pilot youth in farming training program.

On returning to Vanuatu, a three-year Vanuatu Young Farmers Development course was designed, in collaboration with the local communities, and commenced in 2012 with eight participants. The participants are between 18 and 30 years old and are mostly selected from within the local villages. A condition of entry into the course is a signed agreement with the participant's parents and village chief that land will be allocated to them for a period of at least three years. The area allocated can vary between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ of a hectare. These land agreements are critical components of both the Tutu and Napil courses.

Skip forward to 2014 and the Farm Support Association requested technical assistance to undertake a review of the Napil Rural Training centre and assess the effective application of the Tutu model in terms of providing self-employment in rural agriculture. A second review was carried out in 2016.



The reviews found that the Tutu model has been generally well applied at Napil and that the trainees are starting to reap the benefits. Fresh vegetables are being produced and sold on local Tanna markets, providing cash income and enhancing nutrition. The impacts are being felt beyond the Napil trainees, with seeds, seedlings and nursery supplies now becoming available to local farmers, and more sustainable and productive farming systems are being introduced. The arrangements at Napil are seen as pioneering for Vanuatu in terms of the involvement of village-based youth in commercial agriculture, particularly with respect to young women.

These successes are based upon a good understanding of the key principles of the Tutu model, which has enabled successful adaptation to the specific circumstances found on Tanna. The ongoing sharing of experiences between Napil and Tutu has been vital and highlights the importance of regional networks of farmer organisations for transferring successful practice within the region.



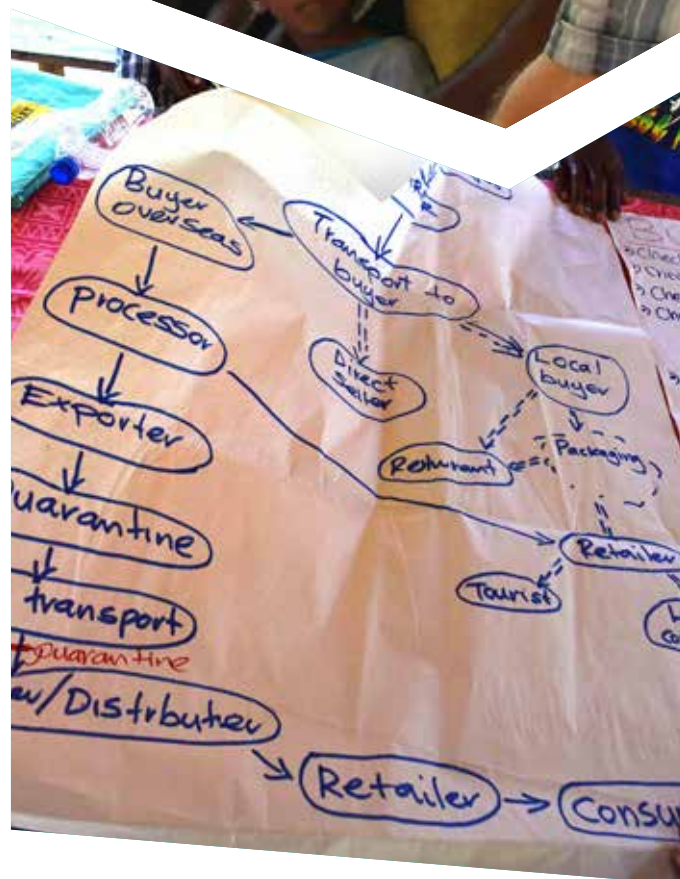
SUPPLYING SPICES AND PARTICIPATORY VALUE CHAIN TRAINING

Most farmers around the world feel that their buyers are giving them a pretty bad deal. In Vanuatu, the smallholder, organic pepper farmers of the island of Malo were no exception. They worked hard to grow their crop and support their families, but never seemed to get paid what they felt was right. This feeling was made worse when they heard about the high price organic pepper retails for in the shops in Port Vila.

Then in 2014 the organic pepper farmers of Malo attended some training organised by Farm Support Association and the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network. The training introduced them to the value chain way of thinking about agriculture and how to see themselves as one of several necessary links in a long chain that takes the product from the farm to the table.

Importantly, the organic pepper buyer, Mr Piero Bianchessi of Venui Vanilla, was also part of the value chain training. He was able to directly explain to the participants the entire process of pepper processing and retailing. With a better understanding of all the steps and costs that were involved after the pepper left their farms, they could now understand why they received only a small portion of the final retail price. Maybe they still weren't entirely happy with their share, but at least they now understood where all the money was going.

Additionally, by talking with Piero, the farmers were able to make him aware of all the difficulties they faced in producing the pepper, and in turn learn how their farming practices affected the quality and usability of the pepper. Together they were able to immediately work on some of the issues that were affecting the quality of the crop and come to an understanding about how improved quality of the pepper on the farm would lead to less risk for the buyer and more money for everyone.



By the end of the workshop the farmers not only had a better understanding of the entire pepper value chain and their role in it, but they also knew the buyer as a person. Piero had been very open in discussing his business, and trust had started to grow between them.

Going back to their farms, the improved techniques they learned at the workshop were put into practice, but the farmers also found themselves working with fresh enthusiasm, because they no longer felt that the buyer was ripping them off. Instead they were all trying their best to make a living and everyone had a part to play to make sure everybody got paid.

Six weeks after the training Piero could see a marked improvement in the quality and quantity of pepper he was being supplied with. He put this down to the value chain training and the new level of understanding and respect between farmer and buyer that resulted from a participatory approach to conducting the value chain analysis.

Papua New Guinea

YOUNG FARMERS LEAD THE WAY – OFF-SEASON VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

Kevin Gabriel of Jiwaka Province was able to attend training in Fiji on off-season cropping of fruit and vegetables. On returning home, he used his experiences in Fiji to form the Jiwaka Youth in Agriculture Association and put his learning into practice. Today, the Jiwaka Youth in Agriculture Association are involved in many agricultural projects including capsicum, watermelon, papaya and cabbage. They also have a gender equality component to their work, making sure young women farmers have opportunities and are welcomed.

Early on, one of their commodity groups, the capsicum farmers, managed to secure themselves a contract to supply a local retail outlet twice a week. This regular source of year round income provided a steady wage to the young farmers, which helped them to get started on a better life for themselves and their families.

Three years later and Kevin and the Jiwaka Youth have grown to around 250 members, from their initial 25, and they now have contracts for both capsicum and watermelon. They are supplying 1000kg of capsicum every week, and 600kg of watermelons every fortnight to one of the largest supermarket chains in Papua New Guinea. It should be mentioned that this is the first time that watermelons have been successfully produced in the highlands of PNG, having previously been a crop only of the coastal areas.

Kevin still feels that his team are a semi-commercial operation and is pushing towards going fully commercial and securing contracts in other provinces. To do this they are looking to make



Photo Credit: Jiwaka Youth in Agriculture



better use of information and communication technologies as a way of connecting with new markets. To support this, the national implementing agency for the MTCP2 programme in Papua New Guinea has been able to connect them with a training opportunity on E-Agriculture run by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

In fact, Maria Linibi, from the PNG National Implementing Agency has been a regular advisor and supporter of Kevin and the Jiwaka Youth over the years and follows their progress very closely. Learn more of Maria's story below, and how she has taken on the role of the National Implementing Agency for Papua New Guinea in a very pro-active way.

Meanwhile, these regular contracts are paying off for the Jiwaka Youth and many of them are now able to build proper houses for their families. There has also been a noticeable shift in how Kevin and the other young farmers are treated in their communities. Their successful farming activities haven't gone unnoticed and people now treat the youth farmers with more respect and listen to them when they speak.



PUTTING WOMEN FARMERS CENTRE STAGE

Maria Linibi is not your average farmer, in fact, she is not your average person. As the founder of Papua New Guinea Women in Agriculture and Development, the National Implementing Agency for the MTCP2 programme in Papua New Guinea, and also as a Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network Board Member, Maria sits at the centre of a vast network of people, information and opportunities.

Likening her role to that of a mother, she tries to broker relationships, matching people with the information and opportunities that daily pass across her desk. And while the additional burdens she faces implementing a programme of this scale sometimes get to her, like any mother, she takes great pride in the farmers' and farmer organisation's successes. Whether it is a farmer getting their first payment for a new crop; a farmer group taking the first steps into agri-processing; or an entrepreneur setting up their first agri-business; you can be sure that Maria will hear about it and celebrate their achievements.

Talking to Maria is a lesson in connectivity. She clearly draws lines between different activities that have been supported through the programme and shows how each was a necessary step to reaching the next. Take the Pacific Women in Agriculture Forum that was held during the Pacific Week of Agriculture held in Vanuatu in 2017. From there she returned to Papua New Guinea with a powerful message for policy makers and set about making sure she took that message to the Policy Dialogue on Women in Agriculture and Fisheries at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in 2018. Her presence meant that farmer organisations and Pacific women farmers had a front row seat in the highest level of Asia-Pacific policy making. Maria was also the Pacific Farmer Organisation Leader and Civil Society representative that presented the Asia Pacific civil society organisation statement at the Food and Agriculture's Asia Pacific Regional Conference held in Nadi, Fiji. Also following from the Pacific Women in

Agriculture Forum is an invitation to the Australian Women In Agriculture 2018 Conference, which includes participation in meetings shaping Australia's future aid budget, Maria has been a regular participant at this conference for the last four years, representing PNG and Pacific women and taking their issues for discussion and deliberation.

Meanwhile, back in PNG she follows up with farmer organisations to make sure they provide reports back to donors and to the organisers of training and events that they participate in. She stresses that this is a responsibility recipients have to provide feedback and make sure the impacts are documented. Setting up social media pages is another way she encourages farmer organisations to let the rest of the world know what they are doing and to improve their visibility, with visibility being an important step in securing new opportunities.

As well as the direct activities programme funding has paid for, it has also been utilised for creating partnerships with other farmer organisations, government and the private sector. Partnerships allow the sharing of costs, as well as spreading the benefits of training and other learning activities. The funding has also been an important catalyst for securing participation in large projects with other donors. MTCP2 funding is helping to roll out solar rice mills to women farmers in PNG as part of an Australian Government project. Ten of the thirty rice mills being supplied will be allocated to PNG Women In Agriculture and Development. Likewise, partnering with the Korean and PNG Governments on a solar irrigation project has been made possible. So far five solar water pumps have been installed, servicing around 300 farmers. The water provided is not only used for growing crops, but provides accessible drinking water to women who previously carried 20 litre water containers up to 20kms to access drinking water.

Despite the substantial impacts seen in Papua New Guinea, and the large increase in her networks, Maria still has many unanswered business cards on her desk, and a seemingly endless list of invitations to come and meet with farmer organisations around the country that she just doesn't have the time or resources to get around to. Lamenting these lost opportunities she is mentally developing structures and methods to improve the connectivity of farmer organisations and the flow of information in the future.



Samoa

PINEAPPLES IN PARADISE

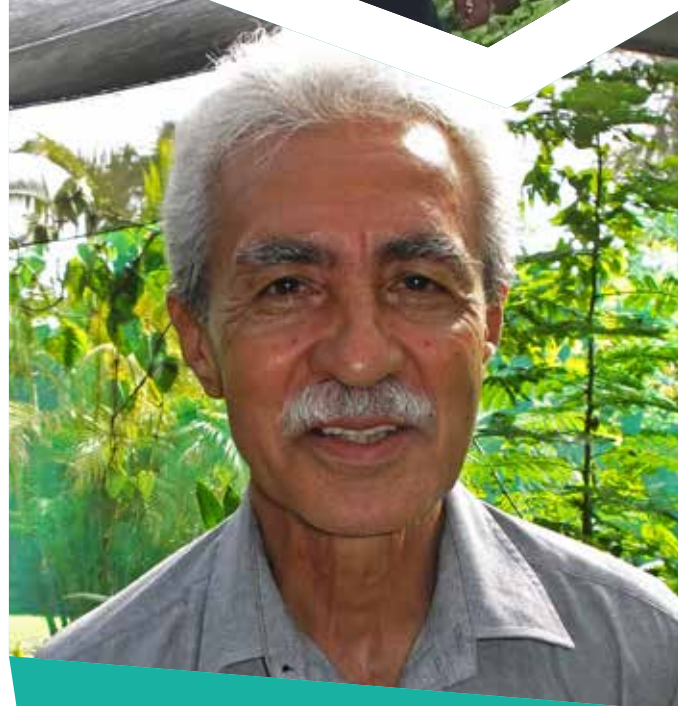
Originating in South America, pineapple is now grown all around the world and in the Pacific we like to think that we produce the sweetest and tastiest pineapples there are. Whether you think they are the best or not, there is no arguing with the fact that Pacific pineapples are great!

However, there has been a problem that in many Pacific countries pineapples are not available all year round. There is a natural pineapple season and left to themselves the pineapples will all produce fruit at the roughly the same time. Wouldn't it be better for consumers to be able to enjoy eating pineapple all year round? And wouldn't this year round production be more profitable for farmers?

In 2014 a technical exchange initiated by the Samoa Farmers Association sought to address this very issue, with follow up training in 2015. These two trainings were a mix of classroom based presentations and hands-on field demonstrations focused around planting, flower induction, and nursery propagation of planting material, with the ultimate goal being the introduction of off-season pineapple production to Samoa.

By 2016 there was some initial success, with the natural pineapple cycle being broken on a number of farms and 65,000-70,000 plants ready to produce off-season fruit. However, problems still remained and so a third technical exchange was organised with the Fiji farmer organisation, Tei Tei Taveuni. This third technical exchange found that only one farm in Samoa had successfully produced off-season pineapples in 2016, with 10-12 tonnes being sold through retail outlets in Apia. Still a significant achievement, but not yet delivering the full outcome expected.

A monitoring visit by the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network in July 2018 revealed that while there is still only a limited number of farmers following the off-season production practices, pineapple is now available nearly all year round in selected outlets. What is more, with the visibility of successfully operating local farms, Samoan farmers are taking note of the 100% price increase between regular season and off-season pineapple.



Samoa Farmers Association believes we can't work with every farmer to transfer technologies. That's why we choose some lead farmers, who can test and refine the skills and then serve as demonstrations for other farmers."

Afamasaga Toleafoa, President
Samoa Farmers Association

FARMER TO FARMER EXCHANGES YIELD RESULTS

Farmer-to-farmer learning exchanges are not a new concept and many of them have been run over the five years of the MTCP2 programme. Running a large number of these exchanges, across seven countries and a variety of crops has allowed refinement of the farmer-to-farmer exchange model so that they now work better for farmers and farmer organisations in the Pacific.

In Samoa there have been a variety of farmer-to-farmer technical exchanges during the programme. These have included off-season pineapple production (see previous story), papaya production, soil management, floriculture, dragon fruit and agro-processing. The Samoa Farmers Association has therefore had plenty of opportunities to make their own refinements to the model.

One of their key findings is the importance of careful selection of participants in initial farmer-to-farmer exchanges. The aim at first should not be to train a large number of farmers, but rather should be to establish a small number of local champion farmers, who can implement what they learn on their own farms, apply the technology and build their own expertise. Follow up exchanges are important for reinforcement of the initial training and to provide additional knowledge and skills.

Once the local champion farmer is successfully producing their own crops, they can start to train other local farmers. Using the skills they have learnt, plus their own local farming experience, makes the knowledge transfer to other farmers easier. Their farm provides a visible, working example to other farmers, while the champion farmer is on hand to mentor them as they make the changes to new crops, or to new production methods.



Tonga

BUILDING NEW EXPORT INDUSTRIES – PAPAYA

Like many things that make a lasting change, it started off with something simple – in April 2015, a farmer from Fiji, Livai Tora, was invited to Tonga to work with 68 farmers on papaya production in the country. The farmers came from five separate farmer organisations and such was the impact of this initial technical exchange, that three follow up visits were arranged, with the farmer organisations investing their own funds to make them happen.

The technical exchanges included a broad range of up-skilling of Tonga's papaya growers aimed at enabling them to better participate in commercial agriculture, including value chain training. At the same time, work was done on increasing the productivity and the environmental sustainability of the growers farming operations, and to develop and implement a commercial papaya production plan.

In May 2016, five growers and two exporters from Tonga visited the Nature's Way Cooperative in Fiji to gain first-hand exposure to an operating papaya export industry. They visited a variety of actors along the value chain including: nurseries, growers, exporters and biosecurity. The group met with active industry people, directly involved in the fresh papaya export business.

Two years after the initial technical exchange, in June 2017, the Growers Federation of Tonga sent their first shipment of export sunrise papaya to New Zealand. Initial feedback was very positive on the quality of the fruit. Since the initial shipment, a further four shipments have been made, representing a total of 4.6 metric tonnes of fruit, worth TOP 21,409².

The total annual value of this export market is estimated to be 20 metric tonnes, worth TOP 92,000. Of this total, it was expected that around 20% would reach the growers, providing an extra TOP 19,700 into the pockets of Tongan farmers every year to provide for their families. A further TOP 55,000 was expected to go to the other Tongan actors in the value chain, providing an important boost to the economy and an additional source of foreign currency.

The development of this new export industry, which was driven by farmer organisations, highlights the benefits which can be



achieved from collaboration between regional and national farmer organisations, participatory value chain training, farmer-to-farmer exchanges and the need for partnerships between a range of government and non-government organisations to achieve results.

Unfortunately, despite the initial successes, Tropical Cyclone Gita hit Tonga in February 2018, destroying many of the papaya trees and putting a temporary halt to the export industry. Natural disasters are an ever present threat in the Pacific and largely beyond the control of farmers and farmer organisations.

While work is being done to try to re-open the export market for 2019, the technology transfer and know-how remains in Tonga to benefit papaya production for domestic consumption. GroFed has convinced several of their growers to continue production for the local market, with domestic sales of papaya providing an estimated TOP 5,000 per grower annually. One grower has been able to pay-off his long outstanding housing loan from his papaya income, while the two women growers have both indicated that they will go local.

In the meantime, GroFed continues to distribute papaya seeds and provide production training to local farmers, improving the domestic papaya industry. Their research into papaya based agro-processing is also progressing, with products like dried papaya likely to be available in the near future.

²TOP = Tongan Pa'anga

FILIFE THE FARMER

Filipe Filihia is a Tongan farmer. He was involved in both the breadfruit and papaya farmer-to-farmer technical exchanges that were conducted through the MTCP2 programme. These exchanges opened his mind to the full possibilities of farming, improved his farming knowledge and changed his farming practices.

He first learnt how to grow papaya for export, and how to propagate breadfruit seedlings and prune breadfruit to picking height. He has gone on to learn about planting according to the season, for example, in Tonga you should plant your taro in November so that it gets plenty of water before the dry season sets in, and has learnt many other farming tips and techniques. Two years after being planted, his breadfruit orchard is now ready to bear fruit, which will provide another source of income, and he has started to make cassava chips from his own cassava, adding value to this basic root crop.

The other big change for Filipe has been that he is now considered one of Tonga's lead farmers, and farmers look to him for advice. He has become an asset to his farmer organisation and they make use of his skills for training other farmers. Not only is training other farmers very satisfying for Filipe, it is a very effective way of transferring skills and knowledge, and the other farmers in Tonga are benefiting as a result.

Through the training he has received and the support of his farmer organisation, Filipe now grows about eight acres of cassava, two acres of taro, one acre of yams, three acres of corn, three acres of peanuts, 100 kava plants and 100 sandalwood trees, a lot more than he was five years ago. Many of these are new crops for him and provide additional income security for his family. In fact, his income has risen from around TOP 100/week in 2013 to around TOP 300/week today.

This additional income means that he can pay his children's school fees and meet his obligations to family and church. Life in general has become more comfortable and he has bought a vehicle, which he can also pay for the fuel to run. His family is happier as a result, and this makes Filipe the Farmer even happier.





Fiji

BUILDING A NATIONAL PLATFORM – FARMERS FINDING THEIR VOICE

Bringing farmers together to talk about the technical side of farming is pretty easy in the Pacific. Farmers want to talk to each other and learn from each other. The success of farmer-to-farmer learning exchanges is testament to this.

Bringing farmers together to talk about issues and policy is a little bit harder and sometimes involves a bit of arm-twisting. It was, however, one of the only requirements of the programme that really didn't fit with how farmer organisations in the Pacific region saw themselves. So, when the project that is funding the other great work that you are doing demands that you meet and develop a national platform – that is what you do.

In Fiji, when the invitations to attend the Fiji Farmers Forum (the first ever national Farmers Forum in Fiji) went out, many of the farmer organisations were reluctant to attend. They saw themselves as local organisations, working locally with their farmers and couldn't really see the point of coming together with other farmer organisations from other parts of the country. What could a dalo farmer from the island of Taveuni have in common with a dairy farmer from the interior of Naitasiri?

Yet, in August 2017 approximately 50 participants from farmer organisations across the Fiji agricultural sector, the Fiji Ministry of Agriculture, and various NGO and development partners came together for two days to highlight the opportunities and constraints facing their members and to provide solutions for consideration to policy makers. The Fiji Crop and Livestock Council hosted the event and by the end of the two days many participants had changed their views on the value of having a national platform to raise farmers' voices.

Direct access to government officials was only one of the benefits, enabling the participants to not only learn about the



various government programs and policies already in existence and how they might be able to make use of them, they had also been able to provide their own inputs into what was and wasn't working and make suggestions on how these programs and policies could be improved.

Perhaps considered even more useful (and unexpected for many of the participants), was finding out that many of the local issues affecting farmer organisations and their members were the same across the country and across the different commodities – that the dalo farmer on the island of Taveuni and the dairy farmer from the interior of Naitasiri did have things in common after all. A shared understanding of issues and solutions enabled the Fiji Farmers Forum to issue a Farmers Communiqué at the end of the Forum and present it directly to the Government as the combined voice of over 30,000 Fiji farmers.

Further this understanding that farmers' issues were shared across the country and that by working together and presenting a unified 'farmers' voice Government would be more likely to listen has heralded a new era in cooperation between farmer organisations in Fiji and coordination in their representation to influence policy.

COTTAGE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT ON TAVEUNI

In the earlier Vanuatu section we were briefly introduced to the Tutu Rural Training Centre on the island of Taveuni (see the story A Tale of Two Training Centres). Tutu has embarked on a significant new innovation with the creation of a food development unit in the Centre and programs of training to encourage cottage industries on the island.

This undertaking addresses several issues, including:

- expanding Tutu's income generating capability and increasing its self-reliance;
- improved nutrition for the Centre's staff and trainees, as well as for local communities.
- additional opportunities and support for women entrepreneurs;
- better utilisation of fruit and root crops that were going to waste;

In 2013, Tutu began planting over 600 breadfruit trees at the Centre. By 2017 they were now producing large amounts of fruit and it had become important to find a use for the breadfruit supply. As there is no easy access to quarantine facilities for fresh fruit on Taveuni, other ways for the produce to be used had to be found.

The initial priority was to improve the nutrition of the 40 Young Farmer trainees studying at the Centre, by replacing imported wheat flour with the more nutritious breadfruit flour where possible. To assist the transition to breadfruit processing, Dr Richard Beyer, a well-known food technologist, provided technical advice and training. An initial week of intensive, hands-on training saw 14 new food technologists, not only producing breadfruit flour, but also producing a range of preserves, chips, chutneys and sauces from the full range of locally produced fruits and vegetables. Twenty-eight new products were developed in just four days, with many of these products being of international standard.



With the commissioning of new equipment and follow up visits from Dr Beyer, it has become possible to produce breadfruit flour in large quantities at Tutu. The flour is not only being used in the Centre's own kitchen, but is being retailed in stores on the island and in the capital Suva as well. Dr Beyer is also undertaking applied research into the qualities of breadfruit and breadfruit flour and identifying a range of innovative uses that are likely to lead to a new range of potential breadfruit products.

The local demand on Taveuni for Tutu's breadfruit and vudi (plantain) chips has been exceptional. These are sold at \$1 for an 80g bag during sporting events and at other gatherings. Current production of chips falls well short of the local demand and there is plenty of opportunity for up scaling production. Chip production lends itself well to cottage industries and there are opportunities for increased production at the village level.

Complementing the training and research in processing breadfruit and other produce, and the purchase of new equipment, has been the exposure to new ideas in entrepreneurship. In 2014, Serenia Madigibuli attended a women's entrepreneurship event in India through the MTCP2 programme. Being responsible for the women's training programme at Tutu, she was able to incorporate much of what she learnt directly into their programmes, particularly in relation to the development of micro-businesses for women to become self-reliant. These improvements to the Centre's training programme have enhanced the ability of the women participants to take advantage of the developments in breadfruit products and technology, taking the skills back to their villages and using them to establish their own cottage industries.



Solomon Islands

PLANTING FOR THE FUTURE

Kastom Gaden Association in the Solomon Islands has been promoting open-pollinated seeds and seed saving for almost 20 years. Through the Planting Material Network they supply approximately 100 varieties of open pollinated vegetables and root crops to around 3000 farmers across the country.

Much of the MTCP2 programme funding to the Solomon Islands over the past five years has been focused on strengthening this network so that it is more decentralized and community focused. While Kastom Gaden Association remains the focal point for the network, less dependence on Kastom Gaden means that more farmers and community groups are sharing seeds directly between themselves. This decentralization is part of a process to help address some of the issues around the limited volume of seed that can be produced from the relatively small plot of land Kastom Gaden has access to, and also the logistical issues that occur trying to distribute seeds across the many widely-spread islands that make up the Solomons.

Knowledge about seed practices in the Solomon Islands was almost exclusively passed on by word of mouth, limiting people's access to this information. Documentation of these practices for growing, collecting and storing seeds, funded through the programme, has enabled much wider dissemination of this knowledge. Upgrading of the facilities at Kastom Gaden Association has also meant better processing and storage of the seeds at their centre. The result of these two activities has been increased quantities of higher quality open-pollinated seeds being available to Solomon Island farmers, both through the Planting Materials Network and through farmers' own collection activities.

Up until recently, people in the Solomon Islands didn't think highly of open-pollinated fruit and vegetable varieties, preferring the hybrid commercial seeds. The past five years has seen a noticeable increase in the interest and understanding of the importance of open-pollinated seeds by farmers, the Solomon Islands Government and donor partners. The demand for open-pollinated seeds now far exceeds the local supply and this demand has largely been driven by the work of farmer organisations, such as Kastom Gaden Association, through activities funded by the programme.

This increased demand is what encouraged Dr Shane Tutua of Zar Na Tina Organic Farms to start producing and selling open-pollinated seeds as an independent commercial venture. While he sells both hybrid and open-pollinated seed varieties, he has



noticed an increase in the number of people coming to him for the open-pollinated varieties.

Dr Tutua is quick to point out that he wasn't directly funded through the programme and selling open-pollinated seeds is his own private business initiative. However, he recognises that by participating in the Pacific Open-pollinated Seeds Roundtable, which was organized by Kastom Gaden Association and the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network and funded through the programme, he learnt better seed saving techniques, particularly in regards to being more selective about where on his plots he collects seeds from.

Dr Tutua's story in many ways embodies one of the strengths of how the MTCP2 programme has developed in the Pacific. The funding has often been used to bring new knowledge and technologies into a country, or to identify and document existing practices and technologies within the country. Farmer organisations are then enabled to act as catalytic centres of innovation, to share these technologies and practices. Farmers and other actors in the value chain are then free to utilize them in their own way, completely independent from the funded programme.

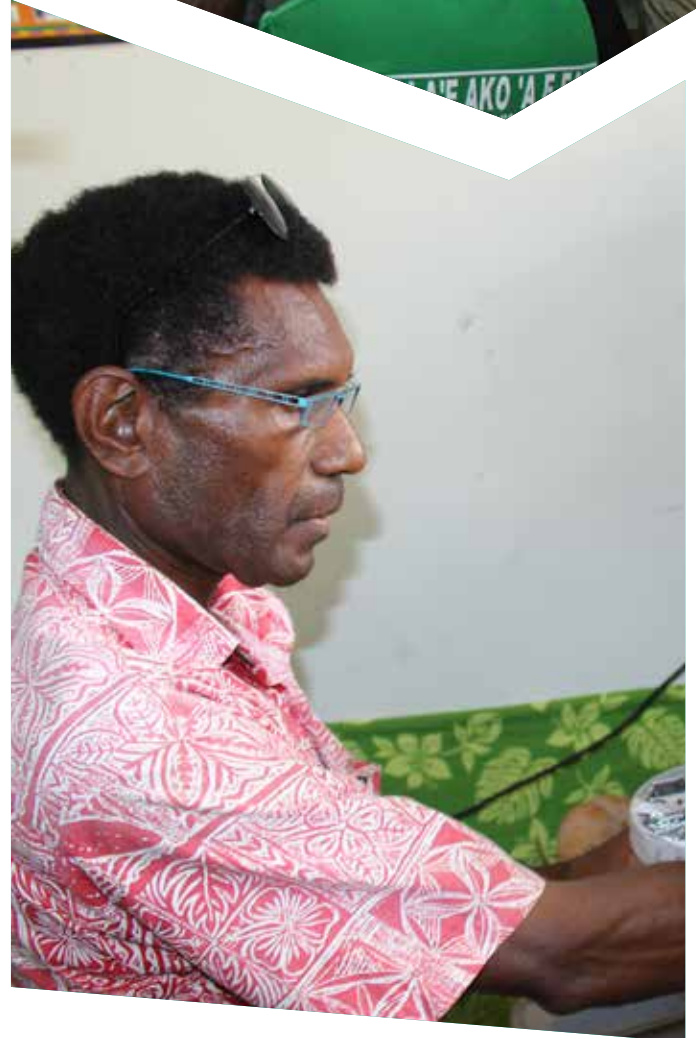


SUPPORTING THE EVOLUTION OF A FARMER ORGANISATION

In the middle of the MTCP2 programme, the national implementing agency in the Solomon Islands ran into a problem - their main donor suddenly changed their priorities and pulled all their funding from the organisation. Without alternative income streams in place, this caused some critical issues threatening the existence of the farmer organisation. The programme stepped in to support strategic planning and the consultations necessary to reduce the size of the organisation to its core businesses that served their members. This would allow the organisation to then regrow in a more sustainable way.

This is a common story amongst farmer organisations, and can be seen as part of their natural development. It is a situation that often looks disastrous from within the organisation, but when you step back you can see the opportunities for change and regrowth. This is one of the benefits of being part of a larger farmer organisation network, when things go wrong you are able to call on the other members of the network to provide perspective and help provide guidance. This incident provided a good reminder to farmer organisations across the region on the need for developing income generating activities and not being too donor focused – members should always be the first priority.

Thanks to the support provided by the programme, the national implementing agency is now operational again, with a refined focus. They have secured new funding and are pursuing income generating activities to meet the needs of their members and to provide financial security for the future.





Timor Leste

BETTER FARMER ORGANISATIONS FOR TIMOR LESTE

The Asosiasaun Nasional Produtor Fini Komersial (ANAPROFIKO) is a young organisation with a big job. It was established in 2015, as part of the Timor Leste Seeds of Life project, to act as the conduit between the government and the community seed producers. However, when the Seeds of Life project ended in mid-2016, ANAPROFIKO found itself struggling to work out what its purpose was and with no finance and procurement policy in place, it was struggling to function effectively.

Upon joining the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network and the MTCP2 programme in late 2016 it immediately found itself in the situation of not qualifying for its full release of funds because of the lack of financial systems. A first step was obviously to get these systems in place, so the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network organised a one-to-one technical exchange with their Finance Manager, Aneet Kumar.

Similar in concept to the farmer-to-farmer learning exchanges, this could be termed a finance-to-finance learning exchange that saw Aneet travel to Timor Leste and work with the ANAPROFIKO secretariat to develop their finance policies and templates. With their systems now in place, further funding could be released and it didn't take long before ANAPROFIKO was receiving, managing and acquitting their full funding allotment.

With their internal systems now working well and some funding to do their work, ANAPROFIKO has been able to focus on delivering services to its members. As a result of this, it has seen a remarkable 25% increase in total members over the past two years. Many of the new members have been women and their member gender ratio has shifted from 85:15 men to women in 2015-16, to a 65:35 ratio in 2017-18.

Of course it hasn't stopped there, and ANAPROFIKO has gone on to manage the funds for many other projects and is also working with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations to utilise the existing Timor Leste seeds network to help implement a sustainable agriculture project. Not only has ANAPROFIKO found its way financially, it has worked out how to keep on serving its members once the original project ends.





EXPANDING THE NETWORK - A WIN-WIN SITUATION

Expanding the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network membership is not undertaken lightly, especially when it involves adding a new country to the mix. It is important that new members strengthen the overall network, and don't reduce the services and benefits to the existing members.

Timor Leste has been on the radar for some time, as they have a well developed national seeds network and would bring this expertise with them. The MTCP2 programme enabled a consultant to be engaged to conduct a study of farmer organisations in the country and to identify any that might be suitable. He recommended that ANAPROFIKO would be the best fit for the Pacific Islands Farmer Organisation Network and that there was interest within their organisation to become a member.

After meeting with ANAPROFIKO and starting discussions, it was decided that they would also be a good fit for the MTCP2 programme, extending the reach to another country in the Pacific region. However, adding them to the programme wouldn't bring additional funding and so the other national implementing agencies had to agree, as their share of the MTCP2 pie would be reduced. The overwhelming response was that what they would bring to the programme more than made up for the reduced share each would receive, resulting in a win-win situation.

With a new network member and a new national implementing agency for the funding programme, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network started introducing ANAPROFIKO to a range of donor partners. It wasn't long before they were hosting a farmers' consultation meeting related to the implementation of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program. As a direct result of this consultation, farmer organisations were given a standing seat on the project steering committee.





The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network

THE RISE OF THE PACIFIC ISLAND FARMERS ORGANISATION NETWORK

Over the past five years the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network has risen and kept on rising. This is a reflection not only of the hard work by the network's member organisations but also of changes at the organisation's secretariat. A quick look at some of these key changes explains much about how they have been able to deliver these impressive impacts from the five years of the MTCP2 programme.

The membership of the Network has expanded from 13 farmer organisations in 2013, to 21 farmer organisations in 2018. These farmer organisations are found in nine Pacific countries (up from six) and represent around 80,000 farmers, a four-fold increase from around 19,000 farmers in 2013.

The hiring of a Program Manager and a Finance Manager doubled the number of staff working in the secretariat from two to four. These staff additions have enabled the secretariat to provide more support to its members, maintain better relationships with donors and other partners and improve its operational and financial systems.

Aneet Kumar, Finance Manager at the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network made these observations on the changes to their financial systems:



“ ***Before we were using Excel sheets for data entry and reporting, but now we have MYOB installed it is easier to retrieve reports. For each project the monitoring is being done and it is easier to track each budget line to avoid over spending. Our financial policies have also been updated, to reflect our new role, transferring funds directly to our members. The internal controls have been strengthened within the organisation to comply with audit and donor requirements. As a result we have started to handle more and more funding each year, as donors realise our capabilities. These changes have allowed us, as an organisation, to confidently bid for more projects, both short and long term.***”

As a result of these changes the Network has been able to secure new international and regional partnerships, source new funding and develop improved income streams. Annual income for the secretariat has risen by 260%, from FJD380,000 in 2013, to just over FJD1 million in 2018. Part of this income growth comes from the development of new income generating services, such as events management, which supports the sustainability of the secretariat between project cycles.

The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network, through its experiences over the past five years, has developed its own funding model whereby 70% of money sourced is passed directly to national level farmer organizations for 'boots on

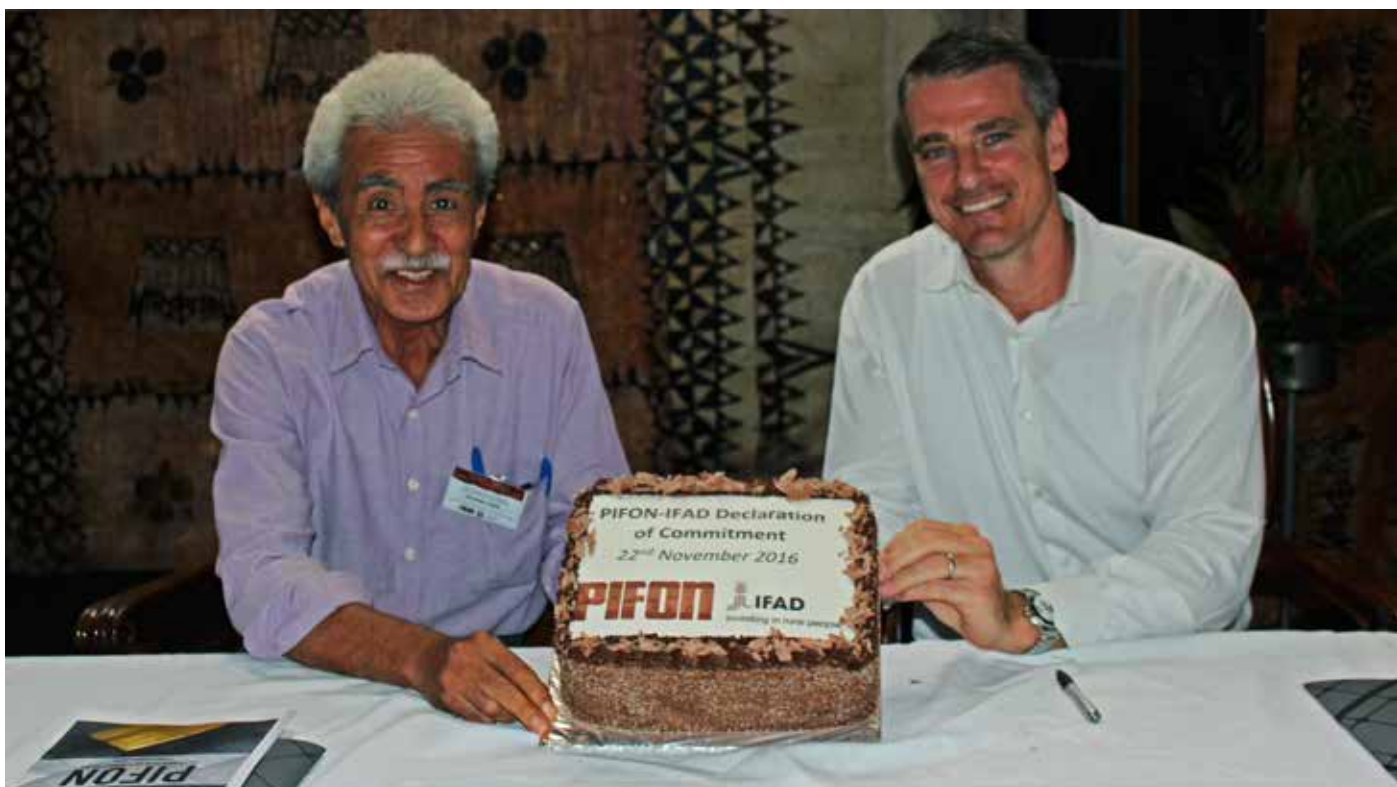
the ground' activities. There has also been development of its own brand of signature activities, with a proven track record of success. These include the farmer-to-farmer learning exchanges; participatory value chain analyses and training; and annual learning and planning meetings.

And while this is an impressive list, it only captures some of the real changes that have occurred across the Network and at the secretariat. These changes are reflected in the preceding stories and speak of an organisation taking control of its own future. A network of farming organisations that is placing itself at the centre of agricultural innovation in the region and focussing on delivering outcomes to its members – the Pacific farmers and their families.



"It has been so exciting to grow together with our member organisations. We have learned so much from our members about the fundamentals of a good farmer organisation and we strive to apply these learnings to our regional network. I am very blessed to have seen our secretariat grow from one volunteer manager using a borrowed desk at Nature's Way Cooperative to a team of four highly dedicated staff operating from our own rented building and providing good services to our members.

Kyle Stice, Manager,
Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network



Declaration of Commitment with the International Fund for Agricultural Development

In recognition of these achievements, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network signed a Declaration of Commitment on the role of farmer organisations in agricultural development. This is the first such official declaration between the International Fund for Agricultural Development and a farmer organisation anywhere in the world, and it enables greater opportunities for Pacific farmer organisations to be part of the very early stages of programme development and to help shape projects that will better meet the needs and realities of Pacific farmers.

The relationship has been built over several years, with the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network Chairman first attending the International Fund for Agricultural Development Global Farmers Forum in Rome in 2014. At the next Global Farmers Forum, in 2016, the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network sent two representatives who presented policy briefs on the role of farmer organisations in the Pacific.

Building on this start, Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network hosted the International Fund for Agricultural Development Country Review Workshop in 2015, and their Pacific Portfolio Workshop in 2018. These workshops bring together all the International Fund for Agricultural Development's partners, across all their programmes in the region, and provided farmer organisations opportunities to input directly into their reviews.

The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network also hosted the 2016 Pacific Regional Workshop in preparation for the 3rd Global Meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at International Fund for Agricultural Development. From this workshop, several Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network members went on to represent farmer organisations at the 3rd Indigenous People's Forum in 2017.



WHAT NEXT FOR PACIFIC FARMER ORGANISATIONS

The end of the five year MTCP2 programme begs the question, where do Pacific farmer organisations go from here? The impacts on both farmer organisations and farmers have been many and varied, as demonstrated in the preceding stories, but the real test of the success of the programme will be seen when the funding runs out. How sustainable will be the gains made over these past five years?

The farmer organisations themselves are confident that the successes of the MTCP2 programme will be sustained. Already new partnerships have been forged, not only with other donors, but with the private sector and other farmer organisations in the region. National and regional coordination and support between farmer organisations, and the incredible growth of the regional network, as reflected in the development of the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network, have created a strong farmer organisation movement in the region.

There have also been some key lessons learnt over the past five years, which will serve to guide Pacific farmer organisations as they move into the future.



Key Pacific Lessons Learnt

- ▶ Farmer organisations strengthen and extend the reach of aid agency projects.
- ▶ There is great value in strengthening farmer organisations.
- ▶ Activities should be driven by priorities of farmer organisations at the national level.
- ▶ There is a need for activity flexibility to be built into project design, particularly on multi-year projects.
- ▶ Farmer-to-farmer exchanges are a key tool for effective technical knowledge transfer.
- ▶ The need for follow up on technical exchanges is essential.
- ▶ These farmer organisations are capable of receiving, administering and reporting on donor funding.

Recommendations

For Farmer Organisations

- ▶ Operate as a business. This should be your mantra.
- ▶ Let your activities be driven by your members.
- ▶ Endeavour to strengthen your organisation at all levels, including service delivery, governance, internal systems and structure.
- ▶ Pursue income generating activities that meet the needs of your members and also provide a pathway to financial self-sufficiency.
- ▶ Seek out opportunities to network and partner with other farmer organisations, government and development partners at the national and regional level.
- ▶ Keep overheads low

For Governments and Development Partners

- ▶ Consider farmer organisations as partners, and not beneficiaries or competitors in programs and projects.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for farmer organisations to engage in planning, policy and project design.
- ▶ Consider farmer organisations as potential recipients of funding and implementing partners for your projects.
- ▶ Explore the benefits of farmer led research and consider the expertise among farmers in your country and how you can best utilise that in your programs.

For Farmers and the Private Sector

- ▶ Consider joining a farmer organisation or becoming more active in the organisation you are already a member of.

LIST OF FARMER ORGANISATIONS

The following lists contain the names of farmer organisations directly engaged in activities funded through the MTCP2 programme. In addition to those listed, many other farmer organisations in the Pacific benefited indirectly from the five year programme.

Regional Implementing Agency

- Asian Farmers Association / La Via Campesina

Sub-regional Implementing Agency

- Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network

National Implementing Agencies

- Asosiasaun Nasional Produtor Fini Komersial (ANAPROFIKO) - Timor Leste
- Farm Support Association - Vanuatu
- Growers Federation of Tonga - Tonga
- Kastom Gaden Association - Solomon Islands
- Papua New Guinea Women in Agriculture Development Foundation
- Samoa Farmers Association
- Tei Tei Taveuni - Fiji

Other Farmer Organisations

- Mainstreaming of Rural Development Initiative (MORDI) (Tonga)
- Nishi Trading (Tonga)
- Hahake Growers (Tonga)
- Tutu Rural Training Centre (Fiji)
- Fiji Crop and Livestock Council
- Fiji Beekeepers Association
- Nature's Way Cooperative (Fiji)
- Fiji Yaqona Association
- Fiji Dalo Association
- Fiji Ginger Association
- Fiji Exporters Association
- Beqa Farmers Co-Operative (Fiji)
- Fiji Pig Farmers Association
- Bula Coffee (Fiji)
- Nubutautau Farmers Group (Fiji)
- Fiji Cocoa Association
- Lautoka Stake Farmers (Fiji)
- Fiji Grazing Livestock Association
- Sigavou Youth Farmers (Fiji)
- Nadi Farmers Network (Fiji)
- Vakabalea Root Crop Farmers (Fiji)
- Lomaivuna Organic Vanilla Producers (Fiji)
- Naga Farmers Group (Fiji)
- Duavata Youth Group (Fiji)
- Navilawa Farmers Group (Fiji)
- AgroNet Fiji (Fiji)
- Agro Line Fiji (Fiji)
- Floriculture Support Association (Fiji)
- Bountiful Nausori Farmers (Fiji)
- Fiji Organics Association
- Rise Beyond the Reef (Fiji)
- Bula Agro (Fiji)
- Baetolau Farmers Association (Solomons)
- Lodurimata Farmers Association (Solomons)
- West Are Are Rokotanikeni Association (Solomons)
- Star Harbour Farmers Association (Solomons)
- Planting Material Network (Solomons)
- Nut Growers Association of Solomon Islands
- Virgin Coconut Oil Producers Association (Solomon Islands)
- Gurafesu Biodiversity, Conservation and Climate Change Group (Solomon Islands)
- Syndicat Agricole Pastoral Vanuatu
- The Vanuatu Spices Network
- Rural Training Center Farmers – Napil, Navota & Vaiduhu (Vanuatu)
- Te Tango Enea O Tupapa (Cook Islands)
- Chamber D'Agriculture (New Caledonia)
- PNG Women In Coffee (PNG)
- Jiwaka Youth In Agriculture Association (PNG)

FURTHER READING

Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network website:

<http://www.pacificfarmers.com>

Visit our website to read many of the documents mentioned in these stories and to learn more details about the work done through the MTCP2 programme and other projects we have been involved in.

Some of the key resources you can find are:

- Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020
- Agricultural Value Chain Guide for the Pacific Islands
- Lessons Learned from Initial Piloting of Farmer-Oriented Value Chain Training in the Pacific
- Improving Access To High Quality Seed For Pacific Island Farmers – Scoping Study Report
- Pacific Soil Learning Exchange
- Proceedings from the Pacific Breadfruit Roundtable
- Proceedings from Regional Farmer Organisation Training on Technologies Supporting Off-season Vegetable Production
- The Vanuatu Spices Network – Lessons from twenty years experience
- Agricultural Extension and Farmer Organisations in the Pacific – Policy Brief
- Agricultural Research and Farmer Organisations in the Pacific – Policy Brief
- The Napil Rural Training Centre, Tanna Vanuatu – An evaluation Report
- The Tutu Rural Training Centre – Lessons in non-formal adult education for self employed in agriculture

Other websites:

These websites contain a range of useful documents and reports relating to different aspects of the MTCP2 programme:

- MTCP2 programme <https://asia.ifad.org/web/mtcp>
- Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development <http://asianfarmers.org/>
- International Fund for Agricultural Development <https://www.ifad.org/>

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FORUM SECRETARIAT**



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