

# PACIFIC AGRICULTURE POLICY DIGEST

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## AGRICULTURE POLICY BANKS A FIRST FOR THE PACIFIC

On 10 September 2015 Vanuatu launched its agriculture policy bank, the first of its kind in the Pacific region. The bank, developed in partnership with the European Union's Pacific Agricultural Policy Project (PAPP) which is implemented by the Pacific Community, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, Forestry and Biosecurity (MALFFB), is an electronic repository containing information on Vanuatu's key agriculture sector policies, including its recently released Agriculture Sector Policy 2015–2030.

The agriculture policy bank enables farmers, entrepreneurs, government officers, researchers and the public to access the country's agricultural policies and related documents and papers easily. General consensus of guests attending the launch was that there is an abundance of information relating to the agriculture sector, but up to now this has not been easily accessible to the stakeholders who need it.

It was confirmed at the launch that the bank will be supported by cross-media platforms such as rural radio, television and print programmes, to reach rural stakeholders who do not have reliable internet access.

Soon afterwards, in November, Solomon Islands followed Vanuatu's example and launched its inaugural agriculture policy bank, once again supported by the EU PAPP project. This houses key policy documents for Solomon Islands' agriculture sector including the new Solomon Islands



**Agriculture is the lifeblood of the economy so it has to keep moving to create change, employment**

– Director General Howard Aru, MALFFB



Agriculture and Livestock Policy 2015–2019.

SPC Adviser and Team Leader for PAPP, Vili Caniogo, said the policy bank initiative is in line with the vision to make agricultural information more accessible and to foster knowledge sharing. Other countries in the region have welcomed this initiative and Mr Caniogo confirmed that similar policy banks are planned for 14 other Pacific countries, including Timor-Leste, in the next 6 to 12 months. Other partners in the initiative include the Intra-ACP Agricultural Policy Programme which coordinates inter-regional exchanges between the Caribbean and the Pacific ACP countries, and the ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA).

The agriculture policy banks are hosted on SPC's Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy Network portal, the PAFPNet portal ([www.spc.int/pafpnet](http://www.spc.int/pafpnet)).

■ source PAPP team





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## AGRICULTURE SECTOR POLICY OUTLINES HELP SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Easy-to-read summaries of the Vanuatu Agriculture Sector Policy 2015–2030 are now available in English, Bislama and French. These policy outlines answer key questions, such as why a national agriculture policy is important and how it will be implemented.

Following the success of the Vanuatu outlines, a summary of the Solomon Islands Agriculture and Livestock Policy 2015-2019 was also produced in English to answer similar questions on the purpose of the policy, its use and implementation.

Both the Vanuatu and Solomon Islands policy outlines can be accessed on the PAFPNet portal (<http://www.spc.int/pafpnet/policy-bank>). Printed copies are available from the national ministries (Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Tagabe, Vanuatu; and Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Honiara, Solomon Islands).

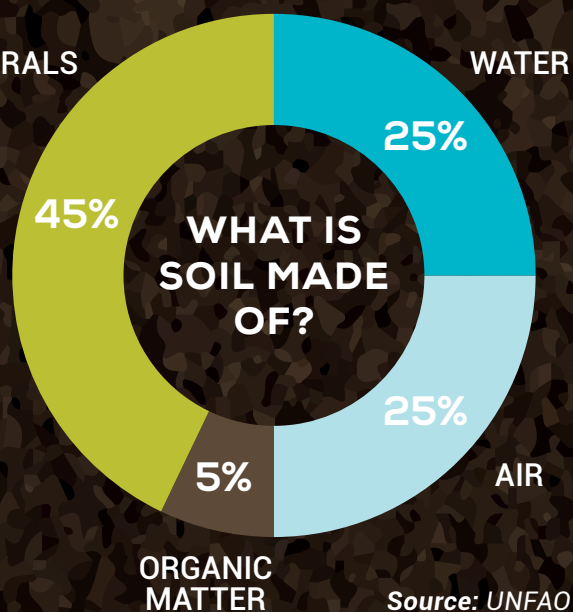




# HEALTHY SOILS FOR A HEALTHY LIFE

The island of Taveuni in Fiji was the venue for a Pacific Soil Learning Exchange, held from 20 to 26 September 2015 with the theme 'Healthy soils for a healthy life'. The meeting was arranged by the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) and hosted by Teitei Taveuni with support from PAPP. This collaboration brought together participants from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga to exchange knowledge about soil science and its impact on farming practices.

Taveuni's recent history of soil problems was among the reasons that the soil forum was held on the island.



In growing taro for the export market, the island's farmers overlooked soil health aspects, which resulted in degraded soils and a high rate of deforestation as farmers sought more fertile soils. However, the farmers recognised the damage that was being done, and have made significant

efforts to restore soil health over recent years, building useful knowledge and collaborations in the process.

The forum provided a platform for over 60 farmers, extension workers and soil scientists to exchange experiences and information on the importance of healthy soils and how to implement sustainable soil management. Good land management was also emphasised, to ensure a healthy and productive food system and improved rural livelihoods.

According to SPC Sustainable Land Management advisor, Maria Elder, healthy soils make healthy farms. "Farmers must manage soils sustainably and to do this they need to understand soil types, structure, biology and chemistry as well as have the ability to manage soil organic matter, soil health and determine soil erosion", advised Elder.

The learning exchange achieved significant progress towards a common understanding in the Pacific about the various methods and techniques for maintaining healthy soil in the region – a key element for the Pacific if it is to grow its crucial agricultural industry.

Activities held during the week included farmer-to-farmer exchanges, farmer registration with the Fiji Crop and Livestock Council (FCLC) database, technical panel discussions and site visits.

A publication and video covering the event produced by Business Melanesia and PIFON is now available.

# INAUGURAL PACIFIC AGRITOURISM WEEK ACKNOWLEDGED AS A SUCCESS



The first-ever Pacific Community Agritourism Week was held from 29 June to 3 July 2015, with nearly 200 attendees from the Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean regions. Farmers, chefs, government officials, and national, regional and private sector representatives gathered in Nadi, Fiji, to explore ways to increase the contribution of agriculture to the tourism sector. The Pacific Community Agritourism Week was coordinated by the Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP) – which is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC) – and was supported by the EU, the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) and the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at the University of the South Pacific (USP). The African Caribbean Pacific–European Union (ACP-EU) Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO) were also event partners, providing technical and business perspectives.

The week's objective was to explore innovative ways to reduce poverty through linking smallholder agriculture to the tourism industry. This initiative was a carryover from the Farmer Hotelier Mart and Culinary week held earlier in the year in Nukualofa, Tonga.

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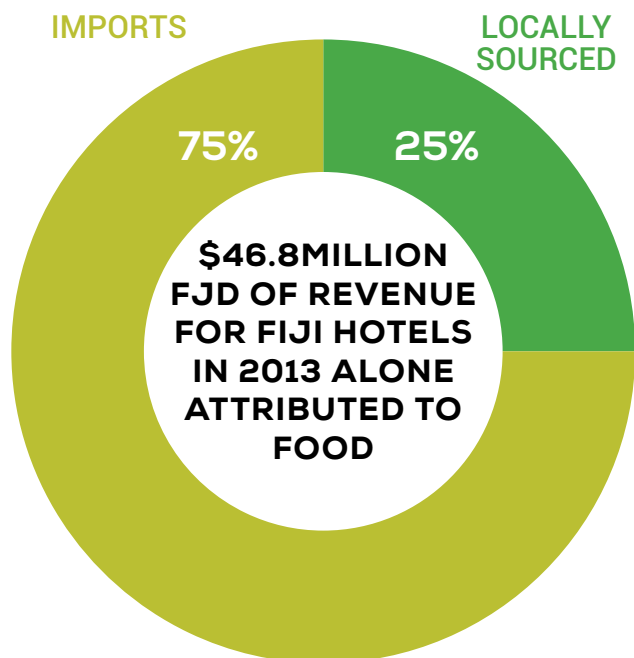
**Promoting links between agriculture and tourism can contribute to improve economic opportunities, build resilience in rural communities and enhance sustainable development...**

*– Renato Mele, Head of Operations, Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific*

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Exploring Fiji's fresh produce value chain is an essential component for this linkage. Elenio Yap, Small- and Medium- Scale Enterprise Development Officer housed at the Land Resource Division at SPC indicated that there are monetary opportunities currently available within the tourism sector for the local agriculture sector. “In the year 2013, turnover in Fiji Hotels indicated \$195million (24%) total turnover which was earned from food of which only 6% (\$11.7m) was local sourced ingredients – so there is an 18% opportunity ” said Mr. Yap.





The event pushed to include more local produce on the dinner tables of hotel restaurants, and to connect farmers directly with hoteliers, and reduce misunderstanding in terms of supply and demand of local vegetables and crops.

Activities during the week focused on sharing knowledge and experiences through workshops and technical exchanges for farmers and private sector 'agripreneurs', as well as practical culinary training for hotel chefs and trainers in catering institutions. Celebrity chefs, Shalesh Naidu, Colin Chung and Robert Oliver, were on hand to advocate the merits of using local ingredients, and to explain to farmers the chefs' expectations on quality and quantity.

Key activities held concurrently during the event included, an agribusiness forum, a regional knowledge exchange workshop for farmers and a buyer-seller exchange.



## AGRIBUSINESS FORUM

Elevating the Importance of Connecting Agriculture to Tourism was the highlight of the forum where selected participants presented and further discussed likely linkages between 1 and 3 July. The forum was opened by Hon. Inia Seruiratu, Fiji's Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management, who noted that agritourism is one of the most promising avenues for diversification and trade growth for the agricultural sector.





## FARMERS KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

A farmer knowledge exchange workshop was organized for farmer representatives to hear directly from hoteliers, chefs and private sector providers about the vast opportunities within the culinary tourism market. In this exchange, limitations were examined as a measure for a way forward.



## BUYER – SELLER EXCHANGE

The farmer knowledge exchange was concluded with a Buyer-Seller Mart bringing together 20 farmers and 20 chefs from Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Palau and Fiji. Ideas were shared on hotel requirements for food standards, procurement processes as well as direct-supply opportunities. The mart was a demonstrative format for chefs (buyers) and farmers (sellers) to practice business discussions and arrange transactions, in the hope they will replicate this process when they return to their home countries.

In addition, other activities were hosted for the week which included a display of locally produced food, practical sessions on preparing local produce for international visitors new to Pacific cuisine, field visits, and a finale dinner showcasing local Pacific produce.

A team of reporters, selected from 198 applicants, covered the sessions using social media such as Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube. While the main objective of the social media reporting was to raise awareness of the event, engaging on-site participants and reaching out to a wider audience remotely, another key objective for CTA and SPC was to build capacity of social reporting in the Pacific region.





# PAFPNET HAVE YOUR SAY

The Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy Network (PAFPNet) is a regional network that helps connect the people of the Pacific by facilitating sharing of experiences on issues related to agricultural and forestry policy at home and further afield.

This newsletter will feature PAFPNet discussion topics for this quarter, July – September.

## JULY 2015

Our July query **“Addressing Biosecurity in the Pacific Island countries and Territories (PICTs)”** highlighted questions that brought to light problematic areas being faced in this industry. The five (5) questions that were presented during the discussion were posed also with the intention of determining the needs for improvement to be better able to shape possible solutions.

Issues that were pinpointed included:

- Ineffective and inefficient country border control
- Lack of adequate human and financial resources to improve biosecurity efforts

A single solution to improving and further developing biosecurity in the PICTs, as agreed upon by the PAFPNet forum, was to further the efforts of making known the existence of the Pest List Database (PLD). Moreover, to have the database must be constantly updated to help formulate an effective and efficient implementation strategy that will help tackle the border control issue.

For more information regarding this discussion, please follow the link:

<http://www.spc.int/pafpnet/pafpnet/discussion-summaries/298-addressing-biosecurity-in-the-pacific-island-countries-and-territories>

## AUGUST 2015

The PAFPNet topic for the month of August, **“Relevance of Policy Framework to Support Strengthen Agricultural Extension and Rural Advisory Services”** pinpointed similar views on establishing a solidified framework for extension services support by tackling central issues. This discussion focused on five (5) questions rendering the key priorities that should be deemed paramount in various countries regarding extension services, its limitations and the roles of various support systems.

Points discussed on the network included:

- The need to implement or update policy guidelines to place specific emphasis on certain agriculture types.
- The importance of capacity building and proper training among extension officers and

new recruits to help in the understanding of the various roles and functions in extension services as a channel to strengthen extension and research linkages

- Funding and resources being key tools to carry out an effective extension service system

For more information regarding this discussion, please follow the link:

<http://www.spc.int/pafpnet/pafpnet/discussion-summaries/384-relevance-of-policy-framework-to-support-and-strengthen-agricultural-extension-and-rural-advisory-services>

## SEPTEMBER 2015

For the month of September, PAFPNET hosted the discussion topic themed, **"Agricultural policy access, uptake and content"**. This dialogue provided an insight on the significance of clear, evidence based national agriculture/forestry policies for the security of rural livelihoods as a contributing progressing factor for the Pacific agriculture sector.

The accessibility of agricultural policies was highlighted imperative for Pacific Island countries. Understanding the underlying issues pertinent to each country should be strongly emphasized in national sector policies to achieve this accessibility.

Contributors to the dialogue stated that finance access, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), marketing, processing (value-add process), youth in agriculture and climate change issues are problems that need a regional approach to find possible solutions.

For more information regarding this discussion, please follow the link:

<http://www.spc.int/pafpnet/pafpnet/discussion-summaries/456-agricultural-policy-access-uptake-and-content>



## WHAT'S COMING UP

DATE	EVENT	VENUE
<b>October</b>		
5 – 8	Regional Agriculture Statistics Workshop	Nadi, Fiji
14 – 16	Timor-Leste mission coinciding with World Day of Rural Women event on the 15th	Timor-Leste
19 – 22	PNG Farmers' Organisation and Learning Exchange and Women's Leadership Training	Lae, PNG
<b>November</b>		
23 – 27	Fiji Crop Sector Forum	Nadi, Fiji
19 – 20	Solomon Islands Policy Bank Launch	Solomon Islands
<b>December</b>		
7 – 11	Samoa Knowledge Management Scan	Samoa



PAPP operates in the 15 Pacific ACP countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu), and Timor-Leste.

PAPP aims to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers by strengthening their linkages to markets, improving access to information, research, and knowledge, and by improving the policy and operating environment for farmers through evidence based policies.

Within the twelve months since the commencement of the project there have been a number of activities, as detailed in this newsletter, structured around PAPP's 3 Key Result Areas (KRA):



### 1. Strengthened regional agricultural development strategy



### 2. Improved dissemination and adoption of applied agricultural production research



### 3. Agricultural enterprise development through improved market linkages

For additional information on the PAPP project,  
visit our website PAFNet web portal:

**<http://www.spc.int/pafpnet/>**

For feedback, comments and contributions please contact:

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#### D I S C L A I M E R

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