

PACIFIC AGRICULTURE POLICY DIGEST

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AGRICULTURE POLICY BANKS – A REGIONAL SHOWCASE

Online agriculture policy banks are ushering in a new era of access to information that is benefitting diverse stakeholders and promoting growth in the Pacific region's agriculture sector. A recent workshop in Suva, organized by the European Union (EU)-supported Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP) and the Pacific Community (SPC) with support from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), provided a platform for 10 Pacific countries to share experiences so far with the policy banks.

The workshop was opened by Dr Audrey Aumua, Deputy Director-General of SPC. She commended the leveraging of information and communication technology, and application of knowledge management to help develop the agriculture sector.

Representatives from the 10 Pacific countries included participants from farmer organisations, regional development partners and private sector organisations. Vanuatu and Solomon Islands are two of the first countries to establish agriculture policy banks, in the last six months. Participants from these countries shared their experiences with countries that are still developing their banks. They reported that the banks helped them to communicate and transmit documents easily to government departments, private sector partners, farmers and development partners.



The bank has made our work of engaging with stakeholders easier, and has enabled us to also start translating our documents into Bislama and French. All these are in the bank and available to everyone.

*– Policy Officer,
Vanuatu Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
Mark Vurobaravu*



SPC's Agricultural Policy Adviser, Vili Caniogo, who is helping lead this work at SPC, said that the policy banks not only provide easy public access to a range of information, but are a vital tool enabling complementary work within the region. He said that countries and development partners had talked about collaboration in the sector for a long time, but this had been hampered by the lack of a tool or a medium to facilitate this. The policy banks provided this tool.

The week culminated in a showcase of the new agriculture policy banks, which attracted various development partners, private sector representatives and Suva-based diplomatic missions. Representatives from development agencies from Australia and New Zealand attended, as well as the Deputy Chief of Mission



for the Federated States of Micronesia, Wilson F. Waguk, and H.E. Roving Ambassador Corporate, Matai Kaukilakeba, from the Fiji Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The Deputy Head of Mission at the French Embassy to Fiji, Jules Irrmann, who officiated at the showcase, said that such portals encourage complementary efforts and also encourage countries to work together to promote the agriculture sector.



I'm very impressed with what I've seen so far of the e-agriculture policy bank. Each time you want to make a policy, you can check what the other countries are doing...

*– French Deputy Head of Mission
Mr. Jules Irrman*



“It is very important for farmers to have direct access to those documents. Instead of taking hours to go to ministries and get the results – now they can have it on their mobile phone,” he added. Pacific countries will now focus on a number of agreed actions to further build the momentum of these knowledge management initiatives. These include the design of national outreach plans and initiatives to promote regional complementary work. It is intended that this work will be presented to the meeting of SPC, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Ministers of Agriculture at the first-ever Pacific Week of Agriculture in Vanuatu scheduled for May 2017.

VANUATU PAVES THE WAY FOR PACIFIC AGRITOURISM

Tourism is a vital industry for Pacific Island countries such as Vanuatu, where it contributes around a third of GDP. Vanuatu recently took a major step towards strengthening the links between agriculture and its tourism industry with the establishment of an Agritourism Steering Committee (ATSC). This was one of several initiatives following the first Pacific Community Agritourism Week, held in Nadi, Fiji, which aimed at strengthening links between the two industries and providing much needed capacity across the region.

The Pacific Community Agritourism Week was organised by PAPP. The event was held in partnership with the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at the University of the South Pacific (USP), the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO) and CTA. Over 100 participants from the Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean regions attended, and over the course of the week they explored innovative ways to reduce poverty through linking smallholder agriculture to the tourism industry.

The Vanuatu ATSC is a joint initiative between the Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Industry, Cooperatives and Ni-Vanuatu Business (MTTICNVB) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity (MALFFB), and includes representation from the private sector. ATSC aims to strengthen and increase the supply of local, high-quality, primary and value-added products to the domestic tourism market, and to develop export market capability. The committee will also be responsible for the development of plans and policies of the agritourism sector.

According to the Vanuatu Director of Tourism Development, Mr George Borugu, "It is vital that exports are increased through greater productivity, as a means of growing foreign exchange earnings." He also mentioned how this measure could help decrease the unemployment rate for young school leavers.

The Director General of Agriculture, Howard Aru, was also enthusiastic about the establishment of ATSC and the support received from PAPP. He said, "We had the ATSC established to fully ensure that agritourism work in Vanuatu is not left to chance, but that there is a proactive, systematic push for agritourism in Vanuatu."

ATSC is currently in the process of developing a national Agritourism Strategy Action Plan. The Action Plan, which is being developed with assistance from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, will provide a clear roadmap for the way forward. It will be the first plan of its kind in the Pacific region.

RETHINKING ORGANIC TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY



The Pacific Agricultural Policy Project supported a regional workshop held in Nadi, Fiji, in May 2016, to review the draft of the Organic Tourism and Hospitality Standard. This is a new organic standard for tourism operators in the Pacific, based on the Pacific Organic Standard. This standard – the first of its kind in the Pacific – will allow tourism operators to procure fresh and value-added products through a certified organic value chain and, if they are compliant with other environmental and social standards, will allow them to be certified to the Standard and to use the 'Organic Pasifika' mark in their branding and marketing.

The workshop was facilitated by SPC's Agribusiness Group in collaboration with staff from the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom). The workshop included stakeholders from both the organic and tourism industries, who worked together to ensure the Standard is practical and implementable by both industries. The aim is to support development of tourism-based agribusiness value chains and add value to the Pacific tourism brand.

The workshop achieved its objectives and produced an agreed second draft. There was enthusiasm for the concept from the tourism sector, which will be key for uptake of the standard and certification. The participants were all highly engaged in the process and strong consensus was reached on the content and scope of the Standard. The second draft will now be circulated to a wider group of stakeholders in these industries.

It was noted that there is a risk in creating demand that cannot be immediately met. Therefore, developing projects to support production and value chain development will be critical in achieving the overall objective of improving organic farmer livelihoods.

PACIFIC SOIL PARTNERSHIP FOCUS ON ICT CAPABILITIES



The second Pacific Soil Partnership (PSP) workshop, supported by SPC and PAPP in partnership with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), brought together over 22 members of the soil community to learn about the latest developments of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) and the PSP. The aim of the PSP is to stop the widespread decline in soil health across the region. The meeting, which took place in Nadi, Fiji, in April 2016, also made plans for a regional soil project and development of a Pacific soil portal.

Participants represented the major soil institutions of the countries within the PSP. The meeting built on the momentum developed during the International Year of Soils (2015) and considered new strategies, plans and activities directed towards achieving sustainable soil management. These included a detailed discussion on the proposed Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management.

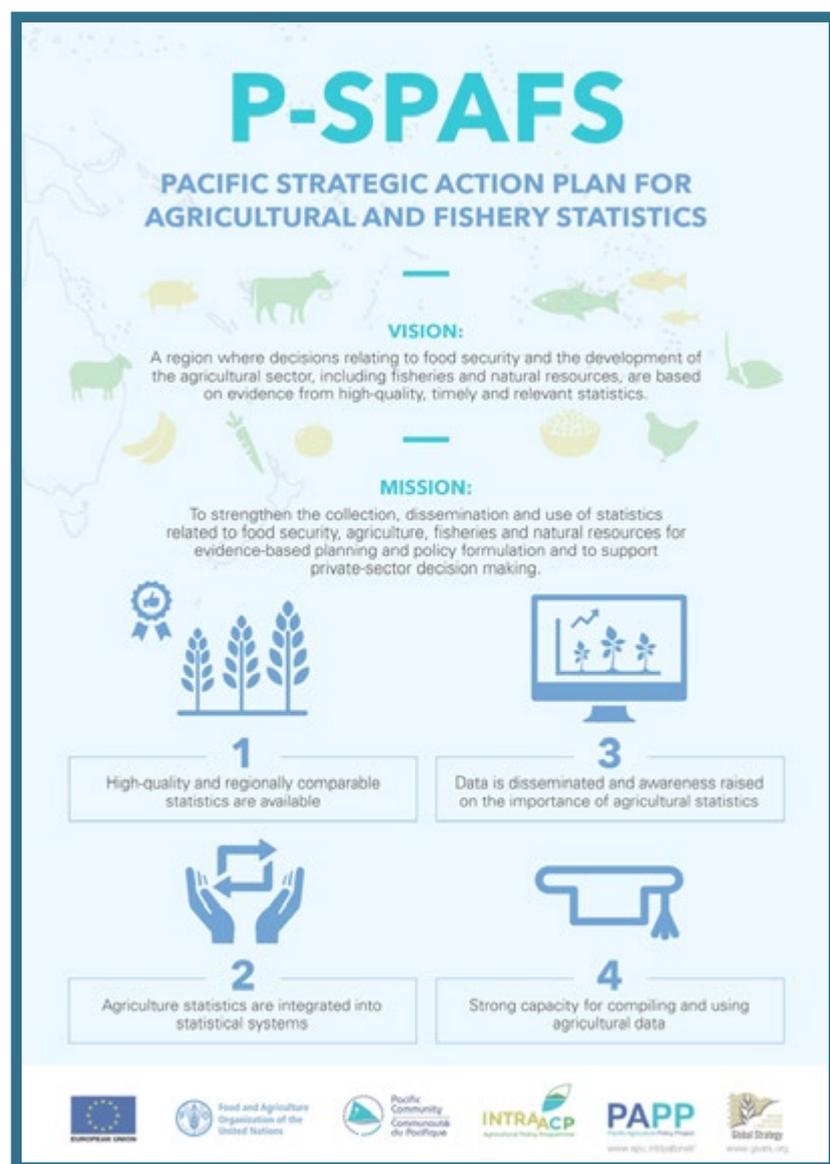
The region's soils are diverse and vulnerable, and through joint activities the PSP intends to maintain and improve productivity, and increase local food production and quality, including through resource and information sharing. Addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation, controlling land degradation and improving environmental management are key outputs for this partnership.

PSP members agreed to the following project proposal:

1. Improving soil nutrient and water management in both high volcanic islands and low-lying atolls;
2. Proceeding with the development of the Pacific soil portal originally proposed by SPC and Landcare Research NZ, and incorporating recent developments in information and computing technology;
3. Promoting innovation in capacity building and training with a particular focus on extension services for smallholder farmers.

COLLABORATIVE VISION FOR AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES STATISTICS

The EU, through PAPP and in partnership with FAO, hosted the first meeting of the technical working group (TWG) for the development of the Pacific Strategic Action Plan for Agricultural and Fishery Statistics (P-SPAFS). The meeting took place in April 2016 in Suva, Fiji. There were seven participants, from national statistics offices and ministries of agriculture, forestry and fishery, and representatives of SPC and FAO, which provide the Secretariat of the TWG. The objective of the meeting was to finalise the roadmap for development of the P-SPAFS, and to provide strategic guidance on the vision, mission, objectives and activities. The TWG was formed during the regional meeting, 'Strategic Planning for Agricultural and Fishery Statistics in the Pacific,' held in October 2015. The meeting reached agreement on the timeline for development of the P-SPAFS, and the vision, mission and objectives.



“The first Technical Working Group for the P-SPAFS was conducted between the 11th and 12th of April in Lami, Fiji. There were 7 TWG members from national statistics offices and ministries of agriculture, forestry and fishery and representatives of SPC and FAO who act as the Secretariat of the TWG’. The key outcomes of the meeting were agreement on the timeline for development of the Strategy and the Vision, Mission and Objectives. These are demonstrated in the infographic above”.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE "KAVA" VALUE CHAIN?

A two-week activity was held in Suva, Fiji to learn more about the kava value chain, and specifically to develop the Fiji Yaqona Quality Manual and the Fiji Yaqona Standard.

Kava, known as yaqona in Fiji, is a priority crop in Fiji because of its large domestic market and its growing potential for export. The Yaqona Taskforce is chaired and managed by the Ministry of Agriculture, and is the central group that identifies and processes issues for the industry. Through the Yaqona Taskforce, the Ministry of Agriculture has drafted an industry plan (2015–2019) and supporting matrix of priorities across research, legislation and standards, supply and marketing.

The two weeks ended in the completion of draft documents, which will be distributed to partners and stakeholders for national consultation.



Over 21,000 Fiji farms grow kava which is worth an estimated FJD66 million (AUD42 million) per year.



Exports in 2014 were valued at FJD7.5 million (AUD4.9 million).



WHAT'S COMING UP

DATE	ACTIVITY	VENUE
July		
1	Samoa Ag Sector Plan launch	Samoa
18 - 22	Tonga: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media awareness training• Ag Donor Roundtable• CePaCT genetic materials handover• Sector Plan and Policy Bank launch	Tonga
August		
18 - 20	Vanuatu Agritourism Week	Vanuatu
22 - 26	Pacific Agribusiness Conference	Samoa
24	Fiji Ginger Industry Plan validation workshop	Suva, Fiji
26	Samoa AgPER results + Policy Bank launch + Media training	Samoa
September		

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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