



Climate Change & Development (CCD) Community, of the Pacific Solution Exchange

Consolidated Reply

Query: Engaging Youth in Agriculture and Forestry - Experiences; Advice.

**Compiled by Jacqui Berrell, Community Facilitator, and Finau Domonakibau, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Pacific Centre
Issue Date: 24 June 2013**

**From Anju Mangal, Miriama Brown and Maria Elder-Ratutokarua
Land Resources Division (LRD), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Suva, Fiji
Posted 22 March 2013**

Dear Members,

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community's (SPC) Land Resources Division (LRD; www.spc.int/lrd), is working on two youth projects. The first focuses on how best to engage and involve youth in agriculture and the second investigates ways youth can use Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones and social media, to develop agricultural opportunities for youth.

Firstly, in collaboration with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) ACP-EU (African, Caribbean and Pacific - European Union), SPC-LRD is in the process of facilitating a project on 'Promoting Coherent Multi-Sectoral Youth in Agriculture Policies in the Pacific'. A key element of this project is documenting and sharing experiences, case studies and lessons learned on best ways to engage youth in agriculture. SPC-LRD plans to share these stories via a portal and through printed and electronic publications to assist people who work with youth and agriculture (including youths), to further implement some of the recommended actions and initiatives from the 'Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy' report (http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=678&Itemid=396).

Complementing that project, is the CTA funded 'Agriculture Rural Development and Youth in the Information Society' (ARDYIS) initiative that also promotes youth and agriculture in ACP countries, but with an emphasis on how social media and other ICTs may be used to develop agricultural opportunities for youth. This includes how youth may develop IT platforms or mobile applications for agriculture, or in other ways to improve their livelihoods. This project will also seek experiences and lessons learned for youth and agriculture relating to ICTs.

Thus, your shared experiences, stories and case studies from this PSE query will assist both projects.

Specifically, **what are some ways to engage youth in agriculture programs?**

- **Are youths interested to learn about agriculture?** How may social media and other ICTs be used to engage or educate them, such as training young farmers to better manage their agri-business?
- **What youth in agriculture activities or groups and programs exist in the Pacific?** For such programs, what challenges do we face in engaging youth and how do we overcome these?
- Do you know youths who are developing software or mobile applications for agriculture?

Experiences may be specific to agriculture or youth projects, or relate to whole-of-community programs or to other program areas such as development, climate change, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) or Management (DRM), renewable energy, gender or any other topic given it's likely we can transfer the stories, lessons learned, social media and ICT innovations, into practical applications for youth and agriculture approaches.

Your responses will assist SPC LRD to collate these valuable experiences to help with both their projects and, ultimately, to help people working with youth and agriculture in the Pacific.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [Karen L. Mapusua](#), Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCOM), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Suva, Fiji
2. [Ateca Dimaiwea](#), Secretariat of the Pacific Community – Land Resources Division (SPC-LRD), Animal Health and Production, Suva, Fiji
3. [Rae Bainteiti](#), Kiribati Local Government Association, Betio Town Complex, Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati
4. [Kiblas Soaladaob](#), GEF Small Grants Program, Ngermid, Koror, Palau
5. [Andrew McGregor](#), Koko Siga Fiji, Suva, Fiji
6. [Tokintekai Bakineti](#), Researcher, Bikenibeu, Tarawa, Kiribati
7. [Brian Tairea](#), Agriculture/Horticulture Science Teacher, Cook Islands
8. [Elenoa Salele](#), Animal Health and Production Intern, Land Resources Division (LRD), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) – Animal Health and Production Team, Suva, Fiji
9. [Kamilo 'Ali](#), Pacific Livelihoods Programme, Oxfam New Zealand, Auckland, New Zealand
10. [Momoe Kaam](#), Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives, Kiribati
11. [Shane Tutua](#), Zai Na Tina Centre for Organic Systems, Honiara, Solomon Islands
12. [Ferdinand Strobel](#), United Nations Development Programme, Suva, Fiji
13. [Manu Tuionoula](#), Department of Agriculture, Pago Pago, American Samoa
14. [Jonasa Delai](#), Fiji Museum and Part-time Farmer, Vorovoro, Tailevu, Fiji
15. [Ledua Ravatu](#), University Student and Part-time Farmer, Matuku Island, Lau, Fiji (residing in Suva, Fiji)
16. [Jale Vakatale](#), Ministry of Agriculture Training, Raiwaqa, Fiji
17. Saula Mule, 24 years, Natauloa Village, Nairei District, Lomaiviti (farming in Tailevu) ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
18. [Nunia Thomas](#), NatureFiji-MareqetiViti, Suva and Taveuni, Fiji
19. High Chief Vaasiliifiti Moelagi Jackson, Faasao Savaii Society and Samoa, Umbrella of Non Governmental Organisations (SUNGO), Samoa ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#); [Response 3](#))

20. [Anju Mangal](#), Maria-Elder Ratutokarua, Miriama Kunawave Brown, Land Resources Division (LRD), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Suva, Fiji
21. [Iaitia Varani](#), Nakorolevu Village, Namara District, Tailevu Province, Fiji
22. Manasa Luvunakoro, Department of Forestry, Forestry Training and Education Division, Nabua, Fiji ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
23. [Joji Vuinanu](#), Nakorolevu Village, Namara District, Tailevu Province, Fiji
24. [Praneet Goundar](#), Biosecurity Authority Fiji, Nadi, Fiji
25. [Saula Mule](#), Project Survival Pacific, Suva, Fiji
26. [Andrew Weleilakeba](#), Border Solutions Fiji Ltd, Nausori, Fiji
27. [Isikeli Mataitoga](#), Embassy of Fiji, Tokyo, Japan
28. [Don Griffiths](#), Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) RAP, Bangkok, Thailand
29. [Ganesh Bhattarai](#), Junior Professional Officer (Climate Change and Food Security), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Sub-regional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP), Apia, Samoa
30. [Venina Niumataiwalu](#), Youth Research Officer, Research, Policy, Planning and Information Unit, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Fiji
31. [Alana Tukuniu](#), Senior Crop Development Officer, Niue Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Niue
32. [Jacqui Berrell](#), Pacific Solution Exchange, Suva, Fiji
33. [Riten C. Gosai](#), Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, Nadi Airport, Fiji
34. [Ropate Ligairi](#), Permanent Secretary – Agriculture, Ministry of Primary Industries, Raiwaqa, Fiji
35. *[Dr Rajesh Maharaj](#), Maharaj Medical Centre, Suva, Fiji

**Offline Contribution*

Further contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)
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Summary of Responses

This Query sought member feedback on ways to best engage and involve youth in agriculture and forestry, particularly via the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as mobile phones and social media. Query respondents mostly discussed the varied challenges that organisations and stakeholders face in engaging youth, with reciprocal comments from a quorum of youths about how more follow-up is needed to enhance the suite of engagement initiatives. Striking the reader, is a sense throughout this conversation that the agriculture sector is unified, passionate and focussed in its desire to drive change and engage youth. However, it seems that the significant amount of effort and inputs to increase youth involvement is not necessarily reflected in the level of successful outcomes, making this a particularly challenging issue.

This Query stems from a problem, whereby “the Pacific is facing an aging farming population... but unlike most previous generations, children are not following in the footsteps of their farming parents.” There are multiple reasons for this, such as many rural areas having a “lack of access, support and enabling environment” and that is resulting in an “urban drift” – a significant issue in

the Pacific. These impediments to youth farming are further exacerbated by issues related to natural disasters and climate change impacts such as sea level rise, flooding and soil salination that can make farming difficult.

There was also a perception among the respondents to this Query that jobs in agriculture and forestry are not seen as a career but as something "school drop outs" revert to as a last resort to make money and feed their family. One 24 year-old explained that: "farming for me, I have no other choice for work as I am not qualified to have a white collar job... if I could get a job in town I would move because with farming you have to struggle."

On the other hand, 28 year-old Joji returned to the farm after working in towns as a Shoe Shiner and says being "back on the farm... feels 'ons' (good)." Other positive stories and comments voiced by youth included:

- "For me it's a priority to always to have some land, and even though financially I am fortunate enough that my family does not need farming to earn money."
- "Maybe because I thought I was slow to learn, I cancelled from my mindset the idea of working so I looked at agriculture... others my age in the village work in shops... but the elders treat me better because they see me as hard working..."
- "I'm 22 and very proud of being a farmer... I even remember being proud when I was back at school... the boys... would think you were cool... we'd say to them "look at my hands" cause you know they are farming hands... "
- "I'm a young person who is passionate about agriculture... I'm not in the majority and so I spend my free time with... my church youth group, encouraging them to take an interest."

Youth advocates and agricultural professionals are united in this sectoral groundswell to convert the negative perception and educate people that "agriculture isn't all just farms and tractors" but also professional careers incorporating scientists, teachers, doctors, economists and more. Respondents said "there are quite a lot of people out there who don't have a clue at all about... potential careers in agriculture" so to attract youths we need to "change the current perception of agriculture from a dirty job to an attractive enterprise, (so) behavioral change will be crucial." One respondent tagged the term "i-farmers" who are young entrepreneurs that are dynamic, educated, technology savvy and environmentally conscious. This was one of the few responses addressing the Query's request for ICT uses to engage youth, in addition to [Project Survival Pacific](#) and some youth advocates who use Facebook and blogs to engage youth.

Given these challenges of perception and follow-up, how then do we best engage young people? An excellent list was compiled by participants at the '[Engaging Youth in Agriculture](#)' workshop in Tonga. In [Cook Islands](#) a local school teacher believes it is "basically not true" that youth are not interested in agriculture and the trick is to "create a WOW! Factor, by getting them to plant crops they are interested in... watermelon, sweet-corn... even popcorn and peanuts". In [Fiji](#) an urban youth inspires others to replicate her backyard vegetable garden at their own homes "but usually they always lose interest... that's the challenge." Another Fiji youth uses her [faith-based](#) linkages to promote agriculture. Others say "it can be done" with examples given from [Palau](#) via the creation of the Taro Festival; in [Kiribati](#) where sport was used directly to engage youth in agriculture; also in [Kiribati coconut sugar](#) production was encouraged via guaranteed overseas sales; and in [Solomon Islands](#) where a visionary orphan converted other youth-in-need to farming. The project in Solomon islands and another in [Fiji](#) are driven by youth advocates who created cooperatives or networks of self-driven youths.

Suggestions from young people on how to improve engagement were topped by a request for more "follow-up", especially directly after training or workshops, to provide a more holistic approach to assistance. One youth explained that they have the advice and information but need hands-on assistance with start-up tools and follow-up as "at workshops there is new information

and sometimes they provide seedlings... that is good but then follow up... monitoring would be really good." Another youth agreed "it's the continuous support that is important... (but) limited resources in the Pacific so we can't give every youth one-on-one attention on an ongoing basis."

In other cases, youth are requesting more information especially research and assistance for new agri-business opportunities such as organic farming and export markets. Research for new crops is currently very informal. For example "in the village when they drink grog they talk about... agriculture 'tips and hints' they heard from people in other villages" but young farmers recognize the need to be more savvy than relying on 'grog gossip'. Introducing new crops can also be controversial and difficult for these youths who carry the pressure of trialling a new crop recommended at a workshop – its success often being necessary to their farm's survival – versus the resistance of Elders and parents who are typically staunch advocates of traditional crops and labour-intensive farming methods. In some Fiji villages "the Elders tell the youths they should do the traditional farming like using the stick (doko) instead of a spade" and it is difficult for youths to defy them as "in the social structure the youths are at the bottom of the structure."

In terms of training it seems [Tutu Rural Training Centre](#) in Fiji leads the pack with its non-formal adult education for self-employment in agriculture (it is being replicated in Vanuatu). Also in Fiji is the [Youth Feed the Nation](#) program with four main training centers across the country. Multiple respondents called for agriculture to be more dominant in the school curriculum with examples provided from [Bangladesh](#) and with the international [School Kitchen Garden](#) (SKG) Program. Other school-based programs include the Junior Farmers Field School (JFFS) and in Niue where a Hydroponics system was installed for students to sell produce to teachers and the local resort.

Training needs to go beyond only the youths. The influence of parents, family and friends is significant as "it's up to the parents and the Elders and the family to encourage the youths to farm". One respondent explained about youth that do not farm, "it's mostly their parents who didn't farm very much when they were young, so it goes from one generation to another."

Overall, it makes sense to increase the level of youth engagement in agriculture given some of the key socio-economic issues facing youth in the Pacific are urbanisation, unemployment and lack of career choice – the agriculture and forestry sectors offer all of the above yet young people typically disregard them. The challenge ahead is essentially three-pronged: to engage youth in agriculture; then to maintain this engagement; and finally to encourage behavioural change to overcome the negative perceptions of farming being for "school drop outs" and that there is no career potential in the agriculture and fisheries sectors. As one respondent concluded: "for those who still think agriculture is a dirty job... just turn to them and say: "What are you going to eat?""

Comparative Experiences

Solomon Islands

Homeless Youth Revert to the Soil for Sustenance and Livelihoods (from [Jacqui Berrell](#), *Pacific Solution Exchange, Suva, Fiji but on behalf of Solomon Times newspaper*)

As detailed in the Solomon Times "with little more than a bush knife and an axe between them" a group of abandoned and homeless boys between the ages of nine and 18 years have taken food security and schooling into their own hands by establishing a cooperative farm. The boys earn enough money to pay for their needs, enrol as full-time students and have improved nutrition. It is now the largest urban agricultural enterprise in the Munda area. Read [more](#)

Kiribati

Sport Used to Engage Youth in the Development of Sustainable Agricultural Project (DSAP) (from [Tokintekai Bakineti](#), Researcher, Bikenibeu, Tarawa, Kiribati)

To overcome the issue of disengaged youth the DSAP in Kiribati used sport, specifically a soccer competition, as an engagement tool given sport has been highly rated among other things that youths seem to favour. The pre-requisite to join the DSAP youth soccer competition was for each youth to plant a certain number of crops as an entry to the game. A committee oversees the crop planting and ensures the youths maintain the crops. Read [more](#)

Incentive of Guaranteed Overseas Sales Encourages Coconut Sugar Production (from [Rae Bainteiti](#), Kiribati Local Government Association, Betio Town Complex, Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati)

During a Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment, to help counter the environmental risks in Kiribati, the local Organic Farmer's Association provided training mainly to women and youths. A focus was how to make coconut sugar (a high demand market overseas) from fresh toddy and Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO). Participants were encouraged to continue with the production because of the health benefits and economic benefits with overseas buyers already engaged. Read [more](#)

Fiji

Tutu Rural Training Centre (TRTC) (posted on behalf of [Andrew McGregor](#) by: Jacqui Berrell, Pacific Solution Exchange, Suva, Fiji)

For over 40 years the Tutu Rural Training Centre has encouraged youth careers in agriculture through its non-formal adult education for self-employment in agriculture. Students are given exclusive access to land while they learn plus earnings generated from the land, so they graduate with banked savings, an education in agriculture and business planning plus a five-year life plan. A TRTC [report](#) encourages replication of the "Tutu model" such as in [Vanuatu](#). Read [more](#)

Faith-Based project Encourages Youth in Agriculture (from [Elenoa Salele](#), Animal Health and Production Intern, Land Resources Division (LRD), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) – Animal Health and Production Team, Suva, Fiji)

The need to raise money for a church rally event prompted youths to plant cassava, with a local youth advocate and agricultural professional overseeing the project to also educate youths about farming. The youths were given tools and planting materials so they could each plant cassava in their own backyards and, soon, they also began practicing farming at their homes to support their families. The church group of youths is now planning a piggery. Read [more](#)

Urban Youth Vegetable Gardening (from [Ateca Dimaiwea](#), Secretariat of the Pacific Community – Land Resources Division (SPC-LRD), Animal Health and Production, Suva, Fiji)

Agriculture was and is still the main source of food and income for many families in Fiji but there is a decrease in youth interest especially in urban areas. An urban vegetable garden grown by a youth advocate is a local, successful example that motivates other youths to also garden. The problem is they start gardening but then always lose interest and so the challenge is engaging the youth, getting them interested in agriculture, and then keeping their interest. Read [more](#)

Cooperative Farming to Help Youths Enter Export Markets (from [Andrew Weleilakeba](#), Border Solutions Fiji Ltd, Nausori, Fiji)

Since 2007 a network of many small scale farms began with the plan to, over time, form a large network or cooperative so young farmers can compete against the 'big boys' who have more land and cashflow to take advantage of export opportunities. A growing number of villages are connecting together in mini youth groups to help each other and share resources. The network encourages young farmers to view agriculture as a career and not subsistence living. Read [more](#)

Bangladesh

Fisheries and Aquaculture within the Secondary School Curriculum (from [Don Griffiths](#), *Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) RAP, Bangkok, Thailand*)

To increase youth interest in agriculture the Northwest Fisheries Extension Project (NFEP) funded a bi-lateral project between the British Government and the Government of Bangladesh to include fisheries and aquaculture within its Agriculture Curriculum for secondary school children. The NFEP provided training of trainers (TOT) for secondary school teachers. Impact assessments later showed many children were advising their parents on aquaculture techniques. Read [more](#)

Palau

Introducing a Taro Festival (from [Kiblas Soaladaob](#), *GEF Small Grants Program, Ngermid, Koror, Palau*)

To promote and support women in art the first ever "Taro Festival" was launched, considering the cultivation of taro is strictly the domain of women in Palau. During the three day festival women of varying ages, students, health representatives, farmers and environmentalists engaged in discussions, cooking demonstrations and field trips. Youth realised how important taro is for consumption, cultivation, traditional practices and environmental sustainability. Read [more](#)

Cook Islands

Making Curriculum Fun by Growing Watermelons for Smoothies and Corn for Popcorn (from [Brian Tairea](#), *Agriculture/Horticulture Science Teacher, Cook Islands*)

The teacher in charge of agriculture/horticulture science works to increase youth interest in agriculture by making it fun to learn at school. Students are encouraged to plant crops in the school garden that interest them such as watermelon, peanuts and sweet-corn and then create a product like a watermelon smoothie or pop their own popcorn. Students also earn by selling their popcorn, vegetable seedlings, watermelon and sweet-corn to the public. Read [more](#)

International

School Kitchen Garden (SKG) Program (from [Ganesh Bhattaraj](#), *Junior Professional Officer (Climate Change and Food Security), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Sub-regional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP), Apia, Samoa*)

Children who go to school hungry cannot learn well, have decreased physical activity, reduced resistance to infections and their school performance is often poor. The School Kitchen Garden (SKG) Program was developed for adoption into school curriculums so students learn how to grow, tend, harvest and prepare nutritious produce. As a results the FAO has been promoting SKG and developed the [Manual](#) 'Setting Up and Running a School Garden'. Read [more](#)

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

Tutu Rural Training Center: Lessons in Non-Formal Adult Education for Self Employed in Agriculture - Study Report on the Tutu Rural Training Centre in Fiji (from [Andrew McGregor](#), *Koko Siga Fiji, Suva, Fiji*)

Report: by Andrew McGregor, Livai Tora with Geoff Bamford and Kalara McGregor; published by the Marist Rural Training Center

Available at:

1) Overview: http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_details&gid=1701&tmpl=component&Itemid=130

2) Report: http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=1701&Itemid=10 (PDF, Size: 1.6MB – very large document)

Pacific Youth and Agriculture Strategy (from [Karen L. Mapusua](#), *Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Suva, Fiji*)

Strategy: by Kamilo Ali (Tonga) and Bernadette Masianini (Fiji), other contributors include Staff of the Land Resources Division and Human Development Programme of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Vikash Kumar, Livai Tora, Tarusila Bradburgh, David Hunter, Malcolm Bossley, Shaun Kennedy, Ron Duncan, Malcolm Hazelman and FAO staff, Dr Danny Hunter, former DSAP team leader, who produced the original concept note for this work, ©Copyright Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) 2010

Available at:

http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=678&Itemid=396

Recommends actions and initiatives that all stakeholders can pursue to encourage the active engagement of youth in agriculture across the region

The Rockefeller Foundation – Media Release (from [Ferdinand Strobel](#), *UNDP, Suva, Fiji*)

Media Release; Rockefeller Foundation, 26 June 2012

Available at: <http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/news/press-releases/rockefeller-foundation-announces-8>

Awarded several USD \$100,000 grants to a number of projects aiming at engaging youth in agriculture in Africa and supporting young people to enter and stay in farming

Teaching Youth about Forest Stewardship (from [Manasa Luvunakoro](#), *Department of Forestry - Forestry Training and Education Division, Nabua, Fiji*)

Report: Publications Distribution Center, Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, United States

Available at:

http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_005470.pdf (PDF;

Size: 303KB)

To empower youth to meet the challenge to sustain future forests and pass these forests on to their children in better condition than they received them

From [Ganesh Bhattarai](#), *Junior Professional Officer (Climate Change and Food Security), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Sub-regional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP), Apia, Samoa*)

Setting Up and Running a School Garden

Manual; by the Nutrition Programmes Service of the Food and Nutrition Division in consultation with the Crop and Grassland Service of the Plant Production and Protection Division in FAO.

Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0218e/a0218e00.htm>

Manual for teachers, parents, community member and others who wish to start or improve a school garden with the aim of helping school children to improve their health

Cook Islands Young Agricultural Entrepreneurs Program - Manual

Manual; Cook Islands Young Agricultural Entrepreneurs Program, Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, Rome, 2009

Available at: http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/toolkit/ERptkPrintSingleItem_en.asp?codeID=736

Educating youth about agri-business opportunities with an emphasis on best practices and business planning (market appraisal, production costs and cash flow)

Solomon Times – Youths Find Future in Food Production (from [Jacqui Berrell](#), Pacific Solution Exchange, Suva, Fiji (on behalf of Solomon Times newspaper)
Solomon Times, Honiara, Solomon Islands; <http://www.solomontimes.com/news/youths-find-future-in-food-production/7607>

School-aged abandoned and homeless youths create a farming cooperative to earn funds to pay for food, enroll in school and other costs to sustain their own livelihoods

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

Tutu Rural Training Centre (from [Andrew McGregor](#), Koko Siga Fiji, Suva, Fiji)

Tutu, Cakaudrove, Taveuni, Fiji; <http://www.caritas.org.au/learn/programs/pacific---fiji-agricultural-training-for-rural-fijians>

Offers five courses (Young Farmers; Married Couples; Young Single Women; Parents and Village) with hands-on training and long term sustainability in-built into the program

Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCOM) (from [Karen L. Mapusua](#), Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Suva, Fiji)

Head Office at Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), 3 Luke Street, Nabua, Suva, Fiji; http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=748&Itemid=495

Promotes Organic Agriculture in helping change attitudes and perceptions and creates opportunities for youth

Project Survival Pacific (PSP) (from [Saula Mule](#), Project Survival Pacific, Suva, Fiji)

Suva, Fiji; Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/projectsurvival

Youth climate change movement that works to safeguard the survival of the Pacific island people from the impacts of climate change and promote sustainable development

EU Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) (from [Rae Bainteiti](#), Kiribati Local Government Association, Betio Town Complex, Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati)

University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus, Suva (or European Union for the Pacific, Level 4, FDB Building, Suva), Fiji; <http://eugcca.usp.ac.fj/AboutUs.aspx>

To strengthen dialogue, exchange of experiences and cooperation on climate change with developing countries most vulnerable to climate change

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (from [Kiblas Soaladaob](#), GEF Small Grants Program, Ngermid, Koror, Palau)

Headquarters, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP France; www.unesco.org

To develop solutions for global sustainability challenges by ensuring decision making is informed by the most relevant available knowledge through academia and peer review

Small Business Training for the Rural Dwellers and Youth Groups (from [Jale Vakatale](#), Ministry of Agriculture, Raiwaqa, Fiji)

Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI), Raiwaqa, Fiji; www.agriculture.org.fj

Develops Staff Capacity Building and Farmer Education in terms of new technology initiatives and market driven approach with very few emphasis on Business training

Junior Farmers Field School (JFFS) (from [Ganesh Bhattaraj](#), Junior Professional Officer (Climate Change and Food Security), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations)

Sub-regional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP), Apia, Samoa; <http://www.fao-ilo.org/?id=20904>

Provides a "school without walls" for learning, discussion and experimentation on agricultural strategies for improving their food and livelihood security

Youth Feed the Nation Program (from [Venina Niumataiwalu](#), Youth Research Officer, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Suva, Fiji)

Ministry of Youth and Sports, Suva, Fiji; www.youth.gov.fj

Encourages youth to become involved in agricultural activities and for schools to go into farming; operates from four centres at Sigatoka, Kadavu and two in Vanua Levu

Farm Support Association (FSA) in Vanuatu (from [Kamilo 'Ali](#), Pacific Livelihoods Programme, Oxfam New Zealand, Auckland, New Zealand)

P.O. Box 68357, Newton, Auckland 1145, New Zealand or Level 1, 14 West St, Newton, Auckland; www.oxfam.org.nz

Based on Tutu the Vanuatu Rural Training Centre at Napil offers practical agricultural and business training for graduates to maintain long term farms or agribusinesses

Food for Life Fiji (from [Dr Rajesh Maharaj](#), Maharaj Medical Centre, Suva, Fiji)

Lot 4 Vesivesi Road, Kinoya, Suva, Fiji; Tel: 3390400; <http://fiji.ffl.org/>

Promotes healthy eating especially to young people by educating youth about diet and by distributing vegetarian food to different schools per week

Development Of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific (DSAP) (from [Brian Tairea](#), Agriculture/Horticulture Science Teacher, Cook Islands)

European Union (EU), Level 4, FDB Building, Suva; <http://www.adaptationlearning.net/project/development-sustainable-agriculture-pacific-dsap>

Using sport to develop a youth soccer competition with a pre-requisite requiring youth to plant a certain number of crops as an entry to the game

Bio-security Authority Fiji (BAF) (from [Isikeli Mataitoga](#), Embassy of Fiji, Tokyo, Japan)

Biosecurity House, Nadi Airport, Nadi; Tel: 6725092, Fax: 6720053; www.biosecurityfiji.com

Manages quarantine controls at country borders to minimise the risk of exotic pests and diseases entering the country

Recommended Communities and Networks

Facebook Group 'Youth and Agriculture – Sustainability & Modernization through ICT'

(from [Elenoa Salele](#), Animal Health and Production Intern, Land Resources Division (LRD), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) Animal Health and Production Team, Suva, Fiji)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com>

This joint Facebook page (with Riten Gosaic) disburses information about health and agriculture and encourages youth interaction about agriculture and gardening

Blog: 'Finding ME in the Agriculture world' (from [Elenoa Salele](#), Animal Health and Production Intern, Land Resources Division (LRD), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) – Animal Health and Production Team, Suva, Fiji)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/agrifiji?fref=ts>

Targets youth to eradicate the stereotype that agriculture is for the rural populace and a layman's subject, and to get youth to say 'yes' to agriculture.

Facebook Group 'Project Survival Pacific (PSP)' (from [Saula Mule](#), Project Survival Pacific, Suva, Fiji)

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/projectsurvival

Generates discussion and knowledge sharing amongst Pacific youth, primarily, to rally support to adapt to the impacts of climate change and promote sustainable development

Food Inc –Video on You Tube© (from [Alana Tukuniu](#), Senior Crop Development Officer, Niue Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Niue)

You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgQVII-MP3I>

Educational video to raise public awareness about how access to food is influenced by multinational corporations coupled with politics and other issues

Young Agrarians (from [Ferdinand Strobel](#), United Nations Development Programme, Suva, Fiji)
<http://youngagrarians.org/>

Many enthusiastic young farmers are found in urban settings where space is scarce and farming is unusual and thus involves more technology ie aquaponics, rooftop farming

Recommended Portals and Information Bases

Fiji College of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Koronivia (from [Ateca Dimaiwea](#), Secretariat of the Pacific Community – Land Resources Division (SPC-LRD), Animal Health and Production, Suva, Fiji)

Koronivia Campus, P.O. Box 7222, Nasinu, Suva, Fiji. Tel: 3479200, Fax: 3400275;
http://www.fnu.ac.fj/newsite/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=390&Itemid=193

Dedicated to advancing agriculture and research across all fields of study, believing in a research culture that has a clear application and relevance

Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) (from [Karen L. Mapusua](#), Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCOM), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Suva, Fiji)

SPC Suva Regional Office, Private Mail Bag, Suva. Telephone: 3370733, Fax: 3370021;
http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=627&Itemid=263

Aims to change some negative attitudes and perceptions of business or careers in agriculture, especially for youth, including via the promotion of organic agriculture

Recommended Tools and Technologies

Teaching Toolkit & Blog for 'Setting Up and Running a School Garden'

Toolkit; Electronic Publishing Policy and Support Branch, Communication Division, FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy or by e-mail to copyright@fao.org
<http://thegrowingconnection.wordpress.com/2010/08/03/tgc-newfao%E2%80%99s-new-school-garden-teaching-toolkit/>

Teaching Toolkit that features eight comprehensive, step-by-step lessons for teachers to implement in their class-gardens

Recommended Training Courses

Farm Support Association (FSA) in Vanuatu (from [Kamilo 'Ali](#), Pacific Livelihoods Programme, Oxfam New Zealand, Auckland, New Zealand)

P.O. Box 68357, Newton, Auckland 1145, New Zealand or Level 1, 14 West St, Newton, Auckland; www.oxfam.org.nz

Based on Tutu the Vanuatu Rural Training Centre at Napil offers practical agricultural and business training for graduates to maintain long term farms or agribusinesses

Tutu Rural Training Centre (from [Andrew McGregor](#), Koko Siga Fiji, Suva, Fiji)

Tutu, Cakaudrove, Taveuni, Fiji; <http://www.caritas.org.au/learn/programs/pacific---fiji-agricultural-training-for-rural-fijians>

Offers five courses (Young Farmers; Married Couples; Young Single Women; Parents and Village) with hands-on training and long term sustainability in-built into the program

Related Consolidated Replies

Promoting Youth Employment through Collaboration, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (Experiences)

Solution Exchange Bhutan. Issued 16 July 2012

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.bt/repository/bt/sebhutan/cr-se-bhutan-16071201.pdf> (PDF; Size: 208KB)

Provides suggestions and inputs to address the problem of youth unemployment in Bhutan

Poverty, Youth Employment and Resilience to Crime

Pacific Solution Exchange. Development Effectiveness Community. Issued 10 August 2011

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net/repository/pc/dec/edisc5-en-08062011-1.pdf> (PDF; Size: 331KB)

Discussion about Pacific island countries' tried solutions and good practices in creating employment opportunities for youth and building resilience to crime

Responses in Full

Karen L. Mapusua, Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCOM), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Suva, Fiji

Talofa Members,

In response to this Query about 'Engaging Youth in Agriculture' I would like to share some comments from participants in the Building Capacity of youth in organic agriculture workshop – train the trainers programme, Tonga 11-16 March 2013. The objectives of the project are to enhance livelihood opportunities for youth in organic agriculture, training of trainers for extension providers in sustainable organic production methods, provide ongoing mentoring and support to young farmers to update knowledge and skills, capacity building in organic production for youth farmers and linking youth agricultural enterprises into existing organic certification and market programmes.

The Pacific is facing an aging farming population, like many other parts of the world, and this means many aging farmers. But unlike most previous generations, children are not following in the footsteps of their farming parents, with agriculture not being seen as a viable career option and often viewed as the job for 'drop outs'.

Students and youth living in urban areas used words like 'dirty job', 'embarrassment' and 'shame' when asked to share their views of why young people did not engage in agriculture, for a survey noted in the Pacific Youth and Agriculture Strategy (http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=678&Itemid=396). The views of those living in rural areas on why young people were not taking up agricultural activities indicated lack of access, support and enabling environment. At the same time unemployment and underemployment, urban drift and associated social issues and lack of livelihoods opportunities are key issues for Pacific youth.

The Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) believes promotion of organic agriculture can help change some of these attitudes and perceptions. And create opportunities for youth.

The average age of organic farmers worldwide is 5 to 8 years younger than conventional farmers and we believe the Pacific will follow this trend. Organic agriculture is attractive to younger people because it addresses the concerns most pressing today such as climate change and environmental issues such as loss of biodiversity and desertification as well as providing viable livelihood opportunities. Youth can feel they are more than labourers, that they are actively contributing to a better world.

As this month's workshop in Tonga there were 30 participants, of which 1/2 were women and 2/3 were youth (under 35). Apart from youth representatives, there were participants from Ministry of Agriculture, Tonga National Youth Congress, Women in Business in Samoa, Niue Organisation Farmers Association, Titikaveka Producers Cooperative, Department of Agriculture in American Samoa. The welcome address was made by Drew Havea, President of the Tonga National Youth Congress (TNYC), who explained how TNYC works with a network of youth groups across Tonga so it is an excellent position to provide training and ongoing mentoring support to young farmers who wish to convert to organic and engaging in organic trade once they themselves have received appropriate training. TNYC is the Tongan National focal point for POETCom and continue to receive support from POETCom for their organic initiatives.

At the workshop we focused on organic agriculture, so the following comments were directed in particular on how to engage youth in organics:

Issues/ideas:

- Those working with youth need to be passionate and believe in organics
- Find the WOW factor – natural systems are amazing, organic agriculture is practising science youth need to experience this
- Make organic agriculture cool – get inspiring spokespeople that relate to youth eg comedians like Fili Tonu or Laughing Samoans
- Find role models amongst young farmers and use them to share their stories and motivation and have demonstration farms
- Develop youth focused events at Ag shows, take youth to Ag field days
- Ministries should work closer with NGOs that work with youth
- Organics should be included in school curriculum
- Farm/garden work that is used as punishment in schools can create negative ideas about farming
- Include business and marketing side in all programmes
- Promote organics as more than just farming but an answer to other issues like environment and climate change – this will empower youth feeling they are contributing to something bigger

Lessons learned from past experiences

- Finance issues need to be addressed, youth don't have access to finance
- Money is important – projects where youth aren't working to earn income for themselves or their family don't seem to be sustainable (as opposed to fundraising for something).
- Land access needs to be addressed; youth often don't have access to/management control over land. Titikaveka Growers Association recognised this issues and in their programme are working with young offenders for whom they provide the youth with plots of land to work and manage if they don't have access themselves
- Just providing training isn't enough - Create programmes that are the 'whole package' – ie. production training, certification, value adding and through to market such as TNYC are doing with VCO where youth groups are trained, business systems are set up, equipment is provided, they join the organic certification programme and the oil is marketed through TNYC – and the groups receive ongoing support and mentoring.

- Real experience of farming as a business is required – eg. Zai na Tina Organic Systems Demonstration Farm in the Solomon Islands runs internships for students from Rural Training Centres, they get on farm as well as business training on a working commercial farm. One graduate has gone on to establish his own commercial organic farm.

This workshop was a first for the Polynesian countries - Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tonga – with similar workshops to be conducted for Melanesian and Micronesian countries. It was held in Tonga, which has established an organic certification programme and is developing exports of certified organic virgin coconut oil, vanilla and coffee but lacked specific capacity in organic production methods.

Hope this helps.

Ateca Dimaiwea, Secretariat of the Pacific Community – Land Resources Division (SPC-LRD), Animal Health and Production, Suva, Fiji

I'm a Fijian youth who advocates the importance of agriculture to others, having studied agriculture at the Fiji College of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry located at Koronivia and I am now working as an intern at SPC-LRD (Secretariat of the Pacific Community – Land Resources Division), Animal Health and Production.

Agriculture was and is still the main source of food and income for most families. Today more and more youth lose interest in being engaged in agriculture, such as crop farming and also dealing with the livestock to further improve individual livelihoods and also the countries economy in terms of trade. We must encourage youths to know why agriculture is important. At the moment, mostly people in Fiji are focused on livestock more than crops as its easier for them to raise and they sell them as well to get income.

I want to help the community, so I'm trying to acquire as much experience from the senior staff here at SPC and I learn a lot from them as well. It's the people who show an interest in agriculture and have a success in agriculture who I would really like to help the most and let them know that agriculture is important for us in Fiji and the Pacific island countries as we have a lot of resources and we can use that to our advantage.

In my community there is not much of our youth engaged in agriculture so it's like I'm the first one. So I try to get them interested in agriculture because it is important, and I mainly do this by growing my own garden and then when they see it they want to grow their own garden.

Currently we have a small garden at home that I am still trying to perfect, in terms of growing more vegetables in it. I mostly plant leafy vegetables because the soil is not really good for growing food crops. I encourage my fellow neighbors that have access to a larger perimeter of land to start off with backyard gardening, as growing their own vegetables means they can avoid disappointment with the rise of vegetable costs in the market.

Most of the other people who live in my community at 7miles are Indigenous Fijians so many have a lot of land back in their village that they are not using. I try to get them to be engaged in agriculture by starting first at their home, with a simple backyard garden, then if they would want to extend it they can do the same back at their village land.

It's interesting that a lot of the parents in our urban area will grow crops and vegetables in their backyard gardens, but when they have agriculture issues, like their plant may have a disease, they get their children to come to me and ask me questions to solve the problem – questions

about both crops and animals as well. So I let them know what to do, and if I can't answer their questions then I will have to do some research first or ask my fellow colleagues if they have solutions to the problems faced and answers to questions asked by the community. As soon as a solution is identified, the necessary steps will be taken to help with the problem.

What I find is that this interaction is a great opportunity to promote agriculture to the youths who have been sent to me by their parents. I use it as an opportunity to engage youths. Usually they have a lot of questions, I think more than just the questions their parents wanted them to ask. Questions like "how to start off your backyard garden", "what kind of soils they would want to use", but I just inform them to just start with the seeds that you buy from the shops, and then once they are growing into plants to try and extend to have other vegetables in their garden.

We live in an urban area, so they just have small gardens but it's just enough for the family. Probably it is the parents who start off the gardens usually as the youths are not so interested in them. But often after asking me questions or seeing my garden they begin to show interest and would want to be involved in a family garden, or have their own. The problem is at first they start but then they lose interest! Well, I can't do much as I can't force them so I keep telling them if they need any advice, like where to get manure and products from, then I will let them know how to get it.

The other thing is that for them the backyard garden is only a food source of consumption, just for the family, and they do not consider selling their produce. So how it happens is that they will come around just to inspect my backyard garden and are surprised with what I am doing, and they would like to try it out. That how it starts, but then after a while they lose interest so that's when I tell them they can make money from their garden, and then they will stay interested for a bit longer.

But usually they always lose interest.

That's the challenge. Not just engaging the youth and getting them interested in agriculture but how to keep them interested in agriculture.

Youths are quite distracted and don't necessarily stay interested in any one thing for too long. When someone is interested in something then everybody follows him but when he turns away everyone turns away. So it is like people follow someone's idea but do not really get into it, they just follow the idea for a while, until there's another idea and they lose interest. They are interested and then after a while they get bored. So I don't think there is any progress in the community because it picks up and then it fails, there's no success in that.

Its also tough for me to get them to be interested because they are thinking of their career pathway and I try to encourage them but they say "Its a hard job" and its hard to be in agriculture because most of us are out in the field and they are not interested in going out to do fieldwork, probably because of the weather change everyday.

But agriculture is really important and so I will keep trying to engage other youths. I am still trying my best to do what I have learned about agriculture and informing my fellow youths about the importance of agriculture and how it can improve the life's of many people which includes us and our families.

So when other youths in my community come to me and ask for advice it makes me confident that they are somehow interested, but not to the fullest extent. If I can just get people a little bit interested and a little bit active that's a good step forward! I wouldn't call myself a role model just yet.

Rae Bainteiti, Kiribati Local Government Association, Betio Town Complex, Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati

Hello,

My name is Rae, 23 years of age and currently employed at the Kiribati Local Government Association as Finance & Administrative Officer. I was reading with great interest Karen's reply to this Engaging Youth in Agriculture query, and updates on the recent train-the-trainer youth in organic agriculture workshop conducted in Tonga this month for the Polynesians.

Last year, I was part of the EU Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) team who conducted its Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment on three sites in Kiribati namely Buariki, Abaiang and Kuria. The ICC (In-Country Coordinator), Ms. Pelenise Alofa managed to bring along a friend, Mrs Ahling Onorio, from the Kiribati Organic Farmer's Association to Buariki who was keen to visit the outer islands but lacked the funding to do so.

Mrs Ahling Onorio is a skilled, well trained and a passionate organic farmer. In her capacity, she was able to deliver training on how to make Coconut sugar from fresh toddy and Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO). She emphasized more on the Coconut sugar production because our youths possessed the skills, there aren't many in other parts of the Pacific Island who have these skills and because of the high demand in markets abroad. The training was conducted in a week span, and attracted youths and women from Buariki.

The point; I realized that it is indeed the lack of funding and capacity that is preventing our youths from becoming passionate farmers.

At the end of each workshop, Ahling encouraged men, women, and the younger generation to continue with the productions because of the health benefits of the products and the economic side of it "earning easy money" and that she has already located buyers. Her word itself was a very good incentive.

While in Buariki, I was unable to conduct the Community Based Enterprise Development which is a business training program provided by ILO (International Labour Organization; www.ilo.org) but I was able to do it on the other two sites to complement Ahling's training. Unfortunately, she was not able to join us because of immediate health problem she has to tend to, but plans to go back with the EU GCCA team on their next visit, the implementation phase.

The two trainings were Value-added programs that contribute to economic development of the communities visited.

Life in Kiribati is very hard, with the increasing population, and limited job opportunities; youths are often the ones left unemployed. I strongly recommend that they should be engaged so that they realize that there is just so much to do than being left out: a drop out, useless, a burden to the family.

Hope that a similar TOT workshop is conducted for the Micronesians soon and I would be very keen to be part of it.

Kiblas Soaladaob, GEF Small Grants Program, Ngermid, Koror, Palau

Hello everyone,

My name is Kiblas and I am 28 years old from the islands of Palau, Micronesia. In relation to the query "Engaging youth in agriculture", I found the discussion to be very interesting and very important for many small islands in the Pacific. As many previous comments have addressed, the involvement of youth in agriculture really needs to be strengthened in order for us to be able to carry it forward for the future. In Palau, the youth in agriculture is slowly progressing. But of course, there are challenges that still need to be looked at.

I would like to share my experience when I was involved in a project in 2010-2011 in Palau. The Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs in Palau, with funding provided in 2010 by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; www.unesco.org), was able to coordinate a program to promote and support women in art. Our Ministry decided to emphasize the practice of taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) cultivation and consumption and launched the first ever "Taro Festival" in Palau. Many factors pushed the decision for using taro as part of UNESCO's objectives.

First, the cultivation of taro is strictly the domain of women in Palau. Their status was marked by their commitment to the maintenance and cultivation of their taro fields. However, younger women today are not as interested in taro farming. So the idea was to use taro farming to empower women's roles in Palau.

Second, the impact of imported foods resulted in NCDs (Non-Communicable Diseases) and the youth consuming more imports than local foods. This also brought up the issue of food security, especially in small islands like Palau.

Thirdly, the use of taro in Palauan culture had many aesthetic aspects that could be re-emphasized as part of arts development (i.e. taro pounders, coconut baskets, historical accounts, songs and dances).

And finally, the impact of climate change in the cultivation of taro fields was becoming a big issue for many farmers. For example, most taro fields in Palau are planted near mangrove areas and many suffer from salt-water intrusion. Taro farming also proved to be an environmentally sustainable practice with the traditional/indigenous knowledge of women.

In coordinating the Taro Festival, we had a 3 day festival where we held a small 1 day conference where women of varying ages, students, health representatives, farmers, environmentalists, and artists were able to engage in discussion about the status of taro cultivation and consumption and its benefits. On the second day, there were field trips to different taro fields and contemporary taro farms using modern technology. The final day displayed culinary cuisines using only taro, taro art work (paintings, carvings, weaving materials) and performing arts that relate to taro.

Through the Taro Festival, we were able to engage not just the older generation in taro farming but also the youth. Our efforts brought out many ideas from many perspectives on how to continue the practice of taro farming.

What was positive that came out of this project was that the youth (those in high school and college) were able to see that taro farming was not only for consumption or cultivation, but it could also relate to environmental sustainability.

Environmental issues are a big thing here in Palau so when they saw how it could relate to adaptation measures for climate change and how it is a more sustainable approach to farming rather than commercial farming, they were able to see different opportunities for continuing the practice.

Another factor that was made aware after the Taro Festival was agro-tourism. Many Pacific Islands have a booming tourism industry and it was addressed that perhaps using tourism programs that cater to agriculture can also enhance the use of taro farms and provides jobs for the local people as well.

However, there are some challenges we still face. One is that Palau is still very reliant in imported foods. While the youth are beginning to understand the advantage of taro farming for the environment and are involved in many environmental programs in the island, they still would rather consume imports (i.e. rice and canned foods).

Even though we addressed it during the project, I think we did not emphasize it as much. Food security is also an issue because many taro farms are abandoned due to the reliance of imports. Working parents see the convenience of buying imports due to its accessibility rather than going to a family member who grows taro, or even start their own. Obesity is also a big issue in Palau because of consuming imports. Promotion of consuming local foods is not really being seen in Palau.

I hope for the others that have been discussing these see a good opportunity for agriculture in relation to the environment and the arts.

My question to you all would be, how do I get the youth to WANT to eat locally grown food? Perhaps when they begin to prefer local foods, the agriculture sector in Palau would be further strengthened.

Any other experiences and comments would be greatly appreciated!

Andrew McGregor, Koko Siga Fiji, Suva, Fiji

(Posted on behalf of Andrew McGregor by: Jacqui Berrell, Pacific Solution Exchange, Suva, Fiji)

Hello,

One of our members, Andrew McGregor of Koko Siga Fiji, kindly emailed our Facilitation Team this reference document yesterday, which I now forward to you. Andrews says "members might be interested in the report on the Tutu Rural Training Centre in Fiji", which is available on the website for the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC; www.spc.int).

Here is an overview of the document on the SPC site: http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_details&gid=1701&tmpl=component&Itemid=130

Tutu Rural Training Center: Lessons in Non-Formal Adult Education for Self Employed in Agriculture

Reasons for the study:

The study is the result of request from the Fiji Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). There were a number of reasons behind this request:

- The Tutu Rural Training Centre (TRTC) on Taveuni has been in operation for over 40 years. Thus, the Centre was keen to have a comprehensive document produced that described the achievements over that period and what the lessons learnt were with respect to non-formal adult education for self-employment in agriculture;
- The Fiji Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) was anxious to have a detailed analysis of the lessons learnt from the TRTC to determine the opportunities and requirements to extend the "Tutu model" elsewhere in Fiji; and
- The long experience of the TRTC in training for self-employment in agriculture has attracted considerable attention in other Pacific Island Countries (PICs), particularly in Melanesia. Thus, there was a broader regional interest in relevance and applicability of the "Tutu model" to other countries.

Prepared by: Andrew McGregor, Livai Tora with Geoff Bamford and Kalara McGregor
Published by the Marist Rural Training Center.

The PDF is very large document to download (PDF, Size: 1.6MB) but contains some great information:

http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=1701&Itemid=10 (PDF, Size: 1.6MB – very large document)

Wishing you a lovely Easter.

Mr Tokintekai Bakineti, Researcher, Bikenibeu , Tarawa , Kiribati

Dear Moderator and Members,

With regards to the theme posted, let me share some of my experiences gleaned from the EU-funded Development of Sustainable Agricultural Project (DSAP) drawing on the programs implemented in Kiribati.

In fact, we all share the common dilemma which adversely impacted the capacity of the youth to partake in agricultural activities which has been shared by the group. Despite such impediment, there are so many avenues that need to be explored according to the situation and context of a particular Country in order to open up opportunities for youth to effectively engage in agriculture. A one-size-fits-all model is not a solution to the problem hence a more context specific approaches is pivotal.

In this regard, aligning the program with the youths' interest is what DSAP-Kiribati embarked on as an engagement tool. SPORT has been highly rated among other things that youths seem to favour. Hence, DSAP developed a youth soccer competition with a pre-requisite which requires youth to plant certain number of crops as an entry to the game. A committee was formed to oversee that such arrangement is fully entertained and maintained until a stage when such crops are believed to be able to survive and progress on their own.

I hope that from sharing this experience in Kiribati, we could able to recognize the role of SPORT in our endeavour to open up avenues to engage youth in agriculture and forestry.

Brian Tairea, Agriculture/Horticulture Science Teacher, Cook Islands

Kia Orana,

Firstly I guess you know me as Brian Tairea. I'm a teacher in charge of agriculture/horticulture science at the main college of the Cook Islands. My passion is agriculture and I am teaching students from the ages of 13 yrs to 19 years.

To begin with believing 'that the youth is not interested in agriculture' is basically not true. The school I'm teaching at had to create extra classes of the same age group to cater for their interest.

Traditionally, the public always think that doing agriculture is a dirty job or a subject for illiterates. That was the mentality at that time until now. There are young ones who are keen to do planting, but do not know where to start.

When I first started teaching 5 years ago (I'm 35yrs) I had to get rid of that mentality so a couple of my lessons was based on what can you do for the country. In the Cook islands, we do not have an entomologist, soil scientist, plant pathologist etc. Get the students to think business wise.

I also like to create a WOW! Factor, by getting them to plant crops they are interested in. Watermelon, tomatoes, corn seems to get their interest. Even popcorn and peanuts. Students or the youth are asked to create a product from what they produce, like a watermelon smoothie or pop their own popcorn and try and sell it.

Having a field day or trip may not always work. I am at an advantage being at a school as there is a school garden. I normally inform the students that they are going to organize a field day and invite the general public to look at their wares and displays. Let them take the role of an advisor.

My year 12 students (18-19 yr old) were invited to a Non-Communicable Disease gala in February where they were to sell vegetable seedlings, watermelon and sweet-corn to the public. They were on hand to answer any queries. (Cook Island News 28 Feb 2013). One thing you must never do is be the boss, let them lead the way and let them take ownership. We do have students from the atoll islands, so creating an environment similar to theirs are challenging.

I am in a planning stage of organizing a young growers agriculture show (ages 18yrs – 29 yrs) where they can show off their produce/products. The task of getting youth interested in agriculture is a long task. BUT it can be done.

Also do not work on your own. I was lucky I had assistance from the Ministry of Health, Agriculture, the grower's organization I'm a member of, other young growers and the school I'm teaching at. I was also fortunate that the current Minister for Health and Agriculture has invited me to his office if I need assistance.

Another resource I normally go to is the Young Farmers Organization in NZ. Using them can inspire the youth in the Pacific. For those who still think agriculture is a dirty job, the youth and students just turn to them and say "what are they going to eat?"

That's all I can think of as I'm doing this at work and my students need my attention.

I hope this helps.

Cheers.

Elenoa Salele, Animal Health and Production Intern, Land Resources Division (LRD), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) – Animal Health and Production Team, Suva, Fiji

Hello,

I'm a young person who is passionate about agriculture, but unfortunately I'm not in the majority and so I spend my free time with my family and my church youth group, encouraging them to take an interest in agriculture. I also enjoy being involved in my family's farm, and last year we've started planting more vegetables, like cabbages, tomatoes, lettuce and pumpkins etc.

With my church youth group we have days set aside to discuss projects; at the moment our youths have started off with farming of vegetables and crops and I'm also looking at introducing a piggery farm with the youth. I'm also the Animal Health Intern at SPC-LRD, Animal Health and Production Team, and that really helps me to share my knowledge with my families, friends and youth group. What I learn from my internship I try and apply to the church youth, community, my families and our backyard garden. Also I get advice from our experts and officers here especially on the livestock side.

I think it's good to get youths involved in agriculture as they are young, active and strong hence they get more work done faster, i.e. either crop farming or rearing of livestock's for household or commercial use. Agriculture is something to keep unemployed youths grounded at home and keep them out of mischief but at the same time they learn and earn from it. Farming is one profession that is a major source of income today and not many youths realize that. Unfortunately most youths look at agriculture as a dirty and 'last resort' profession, I guess it's the mentality of people and that's why agriculture is being looked at this way - people's mentality of being successful is to be a lawyer, doctor, nurse etc.

At the church our youths ranges from 19 to 28. Some of their families have farms, but usually away in their family village and not in their backyard; it might be someone else doing the farming and not them hence getting them out there together and involved in agriculture with everyone is a good motivation for them. For the youths, it's something that brings us together and it encourages them to learn about farming and its importance.

Urbanization and Youth Drift

We live in urban areas, it is convenient and easy for us as we're close to the markets and shops – so many ask "why should we bother growing vegetables and crops if we can just get it from the markets/shops"?

Through growing and harvesting of crops with the youth group they are starting to appreciate the benefits of farming. Most youths are moving out of the rural areas into urban, leaving older people and young children behind who are not able to work and do not have the energy to plant or farm more, maybe if we could get some sort of source of production and incentive on agricultural attraction i.e. money wise set up in the rural areas for agriculture farming then we will be able to keep the youths there and encourage them to farm more.

Agriculture for fundraising

The opportunity to make money through agriculture is how our farming program initially began. We usually have rallies and sometimes we host them and as hosts we need to have enough funds to pay for the rally event. It started off with a chat with a friend of mine about how we can use farming as a way of earning some money for our youth group and to use them for other church events. While we were chatting we came up with some ideas on how to fundraise, and

she said "why don't you bring in your agriculture skills and things you have learned in uni (and at SPC) and we can all pitch in".

This became one way to raise money and also educate our youths on farming. Our youths started off with planting of crops and vegetables. Tools and planting materials (such as cassava stems from our own family backyard gardens) were readily provided for so we did not need funds for this. Planting of cassavas were done on backyards of whichever youths that volunteered to give their land for farming.

We talked about; when to harvest and who to sell it too and thought it would be better to sell them to our neighbors and church members. It is interesting to see how the youths get interested in details of farming such as harvesting periods, the potential pest and diseases that can affect the crops etc. It is also rewarding to see youths practicing this at their homes hence saving money from buying in markets.

I also get asked a lot of questions, especially about pests and diseases that impact the crops and vegetable, and when we can plant taro? - so that will be another step. It's great that we also get support from our families and communities.

We've also got a new piggery farm idea and we have discussed this with our cell group to get our youths involved in it. A while ago a youth member of our community mentioned that they have a piggery farm in the village and asked for details in maintaining the farm. The pigs gave birth to 5 healthy piglets. Through the knowledge and information, I received from co-workers in AH&P, LRD, I was able to provide advice to the community and the particular youth on their enquiries on how to maintain the piglets. The piggery idea came up again when we had a meeting with an NGO as they were setting up a pig farm in one of the schools in the outer islands. Also a friend asked me to help with setting up he's new piggery farm. I helped them organize the piggery and I thought "why not just do these for the community as well?" Hence, we have discussed this with our cell group and they think it is a great idea, so at the moment I'm writing a project proposal on the pig farm.

Agriculture is like a farming cycle. We can plant crops and vegetables; it would not only feed us as individuals but our animals as well. We can also benefit from animal waste by setting up a Biogas Digester. The effluent (pig waste) can be used as fertilizers to crops and vegetables and production of green energy i.e. electricity and heat to a community. This reduces the cost of buying chemical/artificial fertilizers to keep the soil fertile but is also environmentally friendly.

Youth Agriculture Facebook and Blogs

I have a Blog and a shared FB (Facebook) account that promotes agriculture. ICT (Information Communication Technology) is a great way to attract the attention and get the message across to our youths on the importance of Agriculture. We try to promote agriculture in the form of social media as many youths are on FB (Facebook), Twitter, G+ (Google+) etc.

The FB account is called 'Youth and Agriculture – Sustainability & Modernization through ICT' (login to Facebook, then search: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/agrifiji?fref=ts>). This is a shared account with Riten Gosaic. This page is for the people, especially the youths of the Pacific who are involved in agriculture or are thinking of making it a profession.

The major objective of this page is to eradicate the stereotype (preconceived negative attitude) that agriculture is for the rural populace and a layman's subject. This page also aims to encourage the youth in saying 'yes' to agriculture. Remember, we in the Pacific survive through agriculture. It is the Pacific mainstay and we need to prioritize it. Everyone is invited to share their ideas on ACP agriculture & improvements!

For my blog "Finding ME in the Agriculture world" (basically to find myself as a youth in the agriculture sector) – The blog is about myself, you may be wondering why it is about me, I'm an agri. graduate and as a youth I feel that after graduating we find ourselves drifting from one point to another. We do not know which field we want to be involved in or some of us do not get into the field that we really want to be involved in and this blog is also to help other youths who feel the same to basically find our footings and adapting to it. At the same time i post up scholarship opportunities for agri., farming and some of the workshops that i attended etc.

A particular social media success has been on my Blog, the piece about "Biogas Digester Effluent Trial" at Koronivia Research Station (KRS) and a comment also from a youth was later posted asking which effluent was used in particular. I was able to personally discuss my experience with the youth. It is a great feeling to know that youths are also reading your posts and sometimes we both learn from each other by information's exchanged. This interest in biogas also feeds my interest in the piggery.

What can be done to improve services of projects to youths?
It's this follow-up that's so important.

For example, SPC LRD in collaboration with CTA organized the web 2.0 training in Fiji and I invited youths from my community as the training would help them. It was great and we all learnt a lot, especially about how to get information using the internet, information about agriculture. Also, these youths knew about FB, but didn't really know about Twitter and Blogs and how to best search for information using Google. Blogs were quite new to them so I showed them about blogs and how other youths are able to read them and get involved in discussions. They really enjoyed using those social media tools and were keen to present what they learnt to their supervisors after the workshop but they had trouble and sometimes found it hard to figure out some details, like for GIS mapping and blogging – for that I took a bit of time to show them afterwards.

It's the continuous support that is important, and I think that's difficult to provide as we have limited resource in the Pacific and we can't give every youth one-on-one attention on an ongoing basis. It's the same for all projects, whether for social media education or planting crops or rearing livestock, we should follow up with that, as if we leave it, the youth will typically lose interest – it's just how it is - so we need to take them through to the very end.

In conclusion, it is important that we encourage youths to participate in agriculture and not have this profession looked down at. Most youths do not realize that no matter what, ultimately our "survival originates from the soil!"

Momoe Kaam, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives, Kiribati

Dear colleagues,

I certainly agree with Brian Tairea, as it presents from the outset a very good and comprehensive example that we must try out in our individual countries in order to build and transpire interests in agriculture to our children at the primary and secondary levels. Dropped out students who are not able to continue up to their forms six/seven and tertiary levels, this will provide an opportunity for them to start their own home farming/gardening.

It is vital that primary and secondary schools do have agricultural classes and necessary support from the community and government ministries to expose students to agriculture, especially

planting of traditional crops and other very well-known nutritious crops such as cabbages, tomato, cucumber, etc.

If this is properly mainstreamed in the school curriculum, then teachers will be invited from Agricultural departments to teach basic and advanced farming. Practical demonstrations and competition on their gardening productivity can be organised to motivate students to look after their home and school gardening. The lessons learnt from Brian is to think outside the box and the need for us to come out to lead the show, especially teachers who are being looked upon by students as role models, therefore their involvement will boost the interest of students to come out and do the work that has no place in their dreams.

If there is a better model that has been tried out within the region, we hope there is financial assistance that can be tapped to replicate the same as part of trial and error and, if proven successful, with a few adjustments to reflect differences at the country's levels, then this will pave the way for youth to consider agriculture positively as opposed from our negative mentality about agriculture.

Thanks

Kamilo 'Ali, Pacific Livelihoods Programme, Oxfam New Zealand, Auckland, New Zealand

Bula vinaka,

I would like to start this sharing by:

A. Introducing a concept

One may picture young people as individuals leading their daily lives inside a multitude of spheres starting from the inner sphere; the family, next the boyfriend/girlfriend, then the highly influential peer friends/groups, the school, the village youth group, the extended family, the church, the village, the traditional community (or "fakataha fono" in Tongan), the local youth NGO, the local government, the local and introduced agricultural supply/value chains for domestic and export markets (or trade opportunities) is another sphere, the national government, and so on and so forth. Again picture that a young person, boy or girl, is the innermost entity (the individual self) and outside are the layers of spheres, one after another, like the layers of an onion. And in reality these spheres are enduring an increasingly cash-based economy in a global village.

Examining this sphere concept closely from a youth development perspective, it eventually becomes clear that the spheres do matter because they together hold some, if not all, of the answers when one asks this decisive question about youth in agriculture: "How can the spheres create and maintain an inspirational yet experiential learning environment for young people to learn something that is not so inspirational like farming/agriculture at the village level?" Listing the combinations of elements which would be needed including ICT and trade opportunities to start building comprehensive answers, at the village level, to the above question can be a viable starting point for rural youth development.

B. The concept in practice

Yes it is practicable! It has been proven that inspirational learning environment can be created and maintained so that young people are continuously inspired towards farming or agriculture in their village. I now have to acknowledge Tutu Rural Training Centre on Taveuni Island Fiji for pioneering this work on inspirational learning or teaching. (NB! If you are interested to read this

further, I advise that you must also read the paper: "Tutu Rural Training Centre: Lessons in non-formal adult education for self employed in agriculture" by McGregor et al 2011, which Andrew McGregor posted earlier.)

C. Combinations of elements to create and maintain inspirational learning environment
I myself was fortunate enough to visit Tutu years back and would like to share some key insights I picked up.

In Tutu I learned one 'invisible' selection criteria when Tutu selects students; Tutu gives first priority to applicants (students) from poor, marginalised and dysfunctional families.

Also, I remember the principal of Tutu shared a story about one of the introductory sessions Tutu tutors do on the first day students enter Tutu. Tutors would ask students to stand up close their eyes and dream about their future what they would like to achieve after graduating from Tutu in 4 years time. In one intake, some students dreamt to have fancy cars, some to have big beautiful houses and so forth, but one particular student who went to Nadi airport once and was very impressed with the security guard outfit shared his dream that he would like to become a security guard!

After students shared their dreams, tutors then bring the students back to reality by saying something like this; "...dreams are an amazing gift, but in reality you are poor, but that doesn't matter because we will support and work with you, help set your own learning milestones as we mentor and guide you, so that you may reach towards your dreams. No one knows what the future holds, but please hold on to your dreams while we tutors walk beside you as you pursue those dreams, during your next 4 years here in Tutu...."

This Tutu story is significant because it sets the stage to what it means by creating an inspirational learning environment for young people starting from hope and dreams. Tutu redefined mainstream formal education system where information flows almost only one direction - from teacher to student. Tutu adopted adult learning system where students are given opportunity to explore the most appropriate way for them to learn, and tutors the guiding facilitators.

Tutu student selection process; each applying student (applicant) must first get signed legal document from land owners stating that applicant has secured access to a piece land in his village for the duration of the training period. After getting the document, applicant must then plant kava and taro before launching his application form. Tutu tutors will visit the applicant's family and then assess the applicant's plantation before making final decision.

When students enter Tutu, each is given another piece of land for his exclusive use for the duration of the training. Student will also plant their own kava, taro and vegetables targeting accessible supply chains. Tutu then set up individual bank account for each student. This account is to deposit all the income each student would make from selling crops from both the Tutu and village-based plantations. The money is owned by the student and kept until the student graduates.

As from Oxfam, we have been working with our partner Farm Support Association (FSA) in Vanuatu, for just over a year now, replicating the Tutu model at one of Vanuatu Rural Training Centres namely Napil RTC on Tanna Island. It was certainly extremely helpful when FSA staff and Napil tutors had been sent to Tutu to learn the model prior to commencement of the replication exercise. At Napil RTC, two of the students are girls and they both have attained legal documents signed by their community customary head chiefs and their fathers (land holders/owners) giving them secure access to community land for their village-based plantations. Kava and taro are

planted in students' village-based plantations and in the RTC-based plantations vegetables is included.

FSA exceptional technical expertise in organic farming contributes to continue inspire students especially when they wake up every morning, either at the village or at the RTC, and see their evergreen, healthy looking plants and vegetables fruiting. Nabil students' vegetables have now become popular with restaurants and resorts that cater for tourists visiting Tanna to see the roaring active volcano and local customs. Taro and vegetables also have made their way to the main domestic food market in Vila. The high value kava will have been sold and deposited to bank accounts before graduation.

Bank accounts have been set up for each student and short-term crops like vegetables meant money in individual student own bank account after a short period attending the training, again contributes to inspiring students while studying. Tutors are responsible for building trust between them and the students knowing that after every sale money is deposited to student bank account. Some students have deposited 30,000 to 40,000 vatu in their bank accounts and communities have commented to say it was unheard of for young school dropouts (from formal education system) to have earned such big sum of money. Ownership of the cash returns from their efforts and sweat is inspiring for the students while they accumulate new knowledge and hands-on expertise.

The way the training course is structured; students spend two weeks every month at Napil RTC attending classes and tend to their plantations and two weeks every month at the village tend to their village plantations. The key reason for this two week oscillations between the RTC and the village is to have students return with their work & learning plan which they have built with tutors and trial them against the norm so that students learn to live a 'time management' life style in the village. With the support of the village and parents safeguarding student's plantations, students are supported with opportunity to make their own decisions to achieve learning plan while in the village. Leadership and moral guidance are integrated into the training programme so that students aspire to become role models to their peers as they enrich village agricultural expertise. They can contribute to broadening the wisdom base of existing leadership - a leadership which will become theirs. Also, it is an opportunity for students to have a sense of satisfaction while in the village knowing they have cash-in-bank to demonstrate their achievements to date, that they can contribute positively to their families and the community and they are on a path towards leading a responsible and dignified life that people look up to.

In Tutu, graduation does not award a certificate like the formal education system. Instead, the certificate is a 5-year life plan of how each student would live their life straight after completing their time in Tutu. The implementation of the plan will start with the money they saved when in Tutu. Tutors will continue monitor the ex-students as they implement their plans back at the village and these plans are filled with self-employed intentions waiting to be translated into reality.

One obvious question now is; what institution (or development programme) other than the RTCs that can deliver this approach at village level?

I would like to end by going back to the sphere concept. In many writings often the notion "to make young people's voices heard" is repeatedly mentioned. At Napil RTC, I see FSA staff and Napil tutors as voice bearers or resonators of young people's aspirations back and forth across the many layers of spheres. They took courageous but constructive conversations to the heart of rural Vanuatu introducing to elders and parents a new way of learning agriculture. In return they got rewarded for their courage with two legal binding documents signed for two young girls to have secure access to land – a first I have ever come to know. Of course there are many other

rewards benefiting young people. FSA staff and Napil tutors used their technical strengths and knowledge of Vanuatu culture and context-fit accessible supply chains to turn the resonated message into tangible reality witnessed by the many spheres. Napil RTC is becoming popular and other RTCs in Vanuatu have gravitated to Napil to learn the elements and their combinations to adapt and adopt them into their agricultural training contexts. Government Minister of Education has also indicated interests to visit Napil.

Overall, I believe that the sphere concept can be applied to a wide range of youth development programming, help with analysis, build a multi-sphere strategy for long term attitude and behavioural change.

Tank yu tumas.

Shane Tutua, Zai Na Tina Centre for Organic Systems, Honiara, Solomon Islands

Hi all,

I am Shane Tutua from Solomon Islands. Thanks for your valuable contributions to this important topic. I would like to share some experiences I have with you. I am a practicing organic farmer and I want to be a role model for young people by getting down and dirty with my PhD. I want young people to see that it is "cool" to be a farmer. Recently, I was one of the facilitators of an organic workshop in Tonga for young people in Polynesia. I hope that my participation can inspire these Youth to continue their engagement with Agriculture.

I also want to influence young graduates (not just drop outs) in any discipline to consider farming as a professional career. These are what I would like to call the "i-farmers", just like the cool new generation gadgets such as i-phones and i-pads. They are dynamic educated, technology savvy, market oriented, environmentally conscious, young entrepreneurs who will add value to the farming discipline with their analytical and problem-solving skills gained from various disciplines.

I manage Zai Na Tina Centre for Organic Systems, which runs an organic farm on the outskirts of Honiara to demonstrate and promote organic farming. We engage young people in our organic farm from 2-4 months as a way to promote organics but also agriculture/farming as an alternative career path. We let them experience farming from production to marketing/delivery of the products to our clients. During their internship I like to emphasize the science behind what they are doing so that they see farming as a scientific discipline, because science is cool but farming is not cool. Also business is cool but farming is not cool so I think if we show them that farming is a business then maybe it will help. Perhaps establishing an entrepreneurship or business course that is specifically focused on farming (from nursery to plate) would help.

Also by creating "star-like scenarios" like hosting Young Farmer of the Year Award or Prime Minister's Young Farmer of the Year Award or Pacific Young Farmer of the Year Award or Young Female/Male Farmer of the Year/Most Improved Farmer of the Year/Young Exporter of the Year Award would motivate young people to engage in agriculture. It would also be an opportunity to give them cash prizes to invest into their farm development.

Engaging youth in Agriculture is a challenge because of multiple factors. So far there are only two young people that came through our farm that I think really got hooked into farming. One is a graduate of a rural training centre, a girl on Guadalcanal who is currently growing vegetables and selling in Honiara. The other is a young man in Munda, Western Solomon, who is a recent Form 6 leaver who just want to be a farmer rather than going to college. This guy thinks very highly of farming as a career and is even talking about doing a PhD in the future. He runs a farm

in Munda and the last he told me was that he couldn't meet the demands of his clients. He has recruited 4-5 young people full-time in Munda to work with him. I even heard that he formed a soccer team for young people working with him.

So perhaps mixing sports and farming might work.

Ferdinand Strobel, United Nations Development Programme, Suva, Fiji

Dear Members,

The problem of engaging youth in agriculture is a global one. Everywhere the average age of farmers is getting older. In many countries it is above 55.

In the west, there are a few sprouting youth movements around farming and food (growing your own food, organic food, etc...) sees for example e.g.: <http://youngagrarians.org/>. Interestingly many of the most enthusiastic young farmers are found in urban settings where space is scarce and where farming is unusual and thus involves a bit more technology (i.e the success of urban aquaponics, rooftops farming, etc...) this adds an element of 'coolness' that is attractive to youth, but we are far here from commercial or even subsistence farming, it's more like a hobby.

In the developing world, the Rockefeller Foundation awarded several USD \$100,000 grants to a number of projects aiming at engaging youth in agriculture in Africa, several of which are using social media see: <http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/news/press-releases/rockefeller-foundation-announces-8>. One of the project intends to run a sort of 'reality show' where young people compete to make the best garden. It reminds me a bit how celebrities like Jamie Oliver and reality shows like master chefs made cooking 'cool' and attractive to the youth so why not trying if for farming?

However, changing the image of farming through media and addressing cultural disincentives are one thing but first and foremost there needs to be economic incentives. This is a fundamental problem that needs to be resolved and that has broad implications i.e food import dependence, NCDs, unemployment, etc...

A region of the world that shares, to some extent, some similarities with the PICS is the Caribbean. The doc below might be of interest: <http://www.bb.undp.org/uploads/file/pdfs/poverty/CARUTA/Final%20Report%20%20Yth%20in%20Agriculture%20Minus%20Inception%20Report.pdf>

Nigeria is also a country that is taking this issue seriously and held series of broad consultations with youth to ensure they drive policies and initiatives aiming at reviving their involvement in farming.

Manu Tuionoula, Department of Agriculture, Pago Pago, American Samoa

Hi,

It was in Tonga that I saw the interest and involvement of the youth in agriculture (at the 'Building Capacity of Youth in Organic Agriculture' workshop mentioned by Karen).

They really inspired me and I was wondering, "how could I do it in American Samoa?" It is totally a different story with the youth over here in American Samoa because, being a US territory,

things here are very Americanized and people are kind of self-sufficient in most of the things. Majority of farmers are Western Samoa citizens and Chinese. Therefore, the youth are mostly looking forward to go to Hawaii or to the mainland US, whether they finish high school or not. The rest that remain here can live a life without farming, depending on what comes from Uncle Sam.

Frankly speaking, we do not have a youth program regarding agriculture, but we might be having a gardening project with the elementary schools this year which will involve 8th and 9th graders.

Looking at the responses received in this conversation, hopefully that will help me inspire and motivate the youth to have interest in agriculture.

Thank you.

Jonasa Delai, Fiji Museum and Part-time Farmer, Vorovoro, Tailevu, Fiji

Hello to the people in this discussion,

My name is Jonasa Delai and I live in Vorovoro in Tailevu, Fiji, where I work on our family farm. But most of the week I am in Suva where I work 5 days a week at the museum here.

I'm 22 and very proud of being a farmer – I even remember being proud when I was back at school at QVS (Queen Victoria School) and when the boys would hear that you could plant and grow crops and they would think you were cool. We'd say to them "look at my hands" cause you know they are farming hands that show we can grow plants and crops.

In the village from the point of view of the community they are happy to see the youths planting and doing agriculture, as that takes the laziness out of them and its good to see them doing things. People who do the farming are seen as the hard working people in the village and are respected. In our village of Vorovoro all the youths are doing the farming because farming is the only source of income for most people in the village. Some complain and say they have a lack of farming tools and then there are natural disasters like floods and heavy rains and all those things. The Elders tell the youths they should do the traditional farming like using the stick (doko) instead of a spade, and other traditional ways like after you cut the grass you should use it as mulch, though only some of us do that.

The traditional old way of mixing crops is popular and everyone does that - like having cassava in one row and then bele in the next row and then banana to fence it. That helps with nutrients and prevents water loss and can act sometimes like a natural fertiliser. So it's helping the cultivation. Some youths use fertilisers and chemicals and the old people in the village say for the long term its no good and you should use the old traditional style of farming. Some of the youths follow their advice and others prefer to use some modern approaches as it makes the work easier. But the long term effect is that it has more effect on the environment. That's why the older people prefer the old way.

While all the youth's farm, some of them don't farm much. Their excuse is that they prefer to buy shop items like canned food. So they don't mostly do the farming and some just stay in the village and roam around. For money they rely on their parents.

What is the reason for them being like that? It's just because of the parents bringing them up and not teaching them the right things like the importance of farming. They just haven't been

made aware of the importance of farming. Interestingly it's mostly their parents who didn't farm very much when they were young, so it goes from one generation to another. This generation is no worse or better than any other in the village. But they don't want to move away from the village, they are happy here and want to stay here as they like the village and the rivers and the nature around the village.

For my farm I have different plants than what my parents had, and I introduced ginger and a different breed of dalo – it's a hybrid breed. In the village when they drink grog they talk about different breeds of dalo and agriculture 'tips and hints' they heard from people in other villages, and those villagers heard it from another village and another village. They say "they are selling this for that amount" and so they try and plant that to get a better income from the land and the crops. It's like "tips" for the agriculture and "what goes around comes around".

Times are hard nowadays but when the price of goods are going up it's good for the farmer selling the goods, and so by planting you can save a lot of money and use your farming for income – I think if more youths heard about that then they would be more interested in farming. Also we have houses going up in price and the land keeps going up and being more valuable, so if youth realised what they had in their hand (with the value of their family land being something that is useful and expensive), and if they can utilise their time well, they could be earning money and buying goods from the farm earnings. So the land and the farming give fresh produce and an income.

By relying a lot on money does not take you anywhere – they just see the dollar signs. I don't farm for the income but for the love of farming, with money I make being a bonus – not the reason I do it.

Farming is a good source of living and the land is there so use it – land is more available and it is better to use your time well and stop roaming around and do the farming.

Thank you.

Ledua Ravatu, University Student and Part-time Farmer, Matuku Island, Lau, Fiji
(residing in Suva, Fiji)

I am from Lau originally but I grew up here in Suva, and still live here. Our family has land in Lau but also we have land in Tailevu province and that's where I do my farming every week. I am 23 years old and studying civil engineering at FNU (Fiji National University), and I really enjoy farming in my spare time.

I farm dalo and ginger at Tailevu to help my extended family. For our family farm in Lau, one of my cousins looks after it but most of the youths in Lau want to come here to Viti Levu and earn a living rather than stay there. That's because in Lau it's isolated because the government and others don't usually go that far with development ideas and funding – it's very far to travel to Matuku Island in Lau. The other provinces that are closer, like here in Viti Levu, they get far more help. It's a bit unfair.

In Lau they have the manpower, the land and the plants but the connection between here and there means they don't have the price, or value, for all their efforts, after the cost of transport. Also in Lau the copra (coconut kernel) is not so good now. For me farming is like a hobby but more than a hobby – last week after church group ended at 12 (12pm midnight) I got my friend to drop me at the bus stop, as I still wanted to catch the bus and go to the farm. I didn't want to sleep at home as I wanted to be there early.

I'm very driven and want to farm and be involved in agriculture. I've done it since I was a child and I would go out to the farm with my parents and so it's like in our system or 'in our blood' to want to farm. And we know how valuable the land is – it's gold. It's just fun and rewarding when you plant a plant and you see it grow. And it's also to support my family.

In the future how do I see myself balancing full-time work as an engineer and farming? Well, I will try and balance it. I want to at least have some land, and as I grow up and have a family I'll make sure I have at least a backyard garden or something like that if I end up living and working in an urban area. Just so I can do some farming, and teach my children and have back-up food for us to eat.

For me it's a priority to always to have some land, and even though financially I am fortunate enough that my family does not need farming to earn money, it still makes farming no less important to me. I think some people they have good brains and their IQ is high and so they tend to leave farming because they are good in education and their parents are well off and they'd rather not go and farm. But some people, even though their parents are well off, they still have an inner drive where they want to plant their own food. Maybe that is like me in many ways because I still want to farm, regardless of wealth or education I see farming as something important to me and my family and my culture.

I hope that sharing my story will encourage some youths to want to farm and enjoy the satisfaction of seeing their plants grow, or maybe my story will help practitioners better understand how some of us youths think and therefore may be encouraged to do more farming.

Jale Vakatale, Ministry of Agriculture Training, Raiwaqa, Fiji

Bula,

Working as a Training Administrator and Facilitator with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) Fiji has given me full confidence to pursue my endless career of giving back to the community what I do best and that is facilitating Small Business Training for the Rural Dwellers and Youth Groups.

Majority of the Training activities at MOA training, Fiji, are directed towards Staff Capacity Building and Farmer Education in terms of new technology initiatives and market driven approach with very few emphasis on Business training.

The MOA training in conjunction with Farm Management Unit designed a training program for the young farmers of Koro Island that will start from 15/04/13 to 19/04/13. The team of 5 facilitators from the Extension, Animal Health, Land Use and Research will depart on Monday night for this training on Koro Island. Farming as a Business Training is a program design especially for Young Farmers in the rural sectors to enhance the existing financial position of Farmers into a more productive and efficient way of generating income from the locally available resources.

The MOA Training with the Fiji Government is committing \$11,000.00 on this training and will replicate the same to the rest of Fiji depending on the availability of funds.

Before I join MOA Fiji, I spent 20 years with the Department of Co-operatives and the bulk of my duties involve business advisory service and training for co-operatives and individuals entrepreneurs.

This program with technical expertise of the Agriculture staff provides the platform for efficient delivery and sustainable programs that can be champion around the region.

Purpose of Training

1. To assist Young farmers or Farm Managers & farming families develop a property plan focusing on improved natural resource management for sustainable farming production.
2. To promote farming as a business and rewarding form of employment to alleviate poverty in Fiji.

Target Beneficiaries

45 Crop and Livestock farmers – 3 each from 14 villages and 1 farming settlement

Learning Outcomes

- i) Develop goals for the farm business.
- ii) Describe the physical environment of the farm.
- iii) Assess the condition and health of the farm's natural resources.
- iv) Assess the viability of the Farm Plan.
- v) Farmers to make sound decisions in the choice and running of their farming enterprises.

2013 FARMING AS A BUSINESS TRAINING TIMETABLE ON KORO ISLAND 15-19 April 2013

DAY 1

UNLOCKING AND CREATING YOUR FUTURE

8:00am – 8:15am

Registration of Participants.

8.15am- 8.30am

Opening of Training

8.30am-10.00am

Market Opportunities for Agricultural Commodities.

HOW DO WE LOOK AT FARMING? Farmers Role in the Value Chain Development & The Need to work together to Increase Production & Adding Value in meeting the Market Demand.

10.00am-10.15am

TEA BREAK

10.30am-12.30pm

Sustainable Cropping and Livestock Systems - Lecture

12.30pm–1.30pm

LUNCH

1.30pm–4.30pm

Understanding Basic Business Concepts (Lecture and Group Discussion)

DAY 2

YOUR FARM TODAY

8.00am–10.00am

Where Are We Now?

- Assessing Your Current Farm Situation
- Translating Analysis into Action
- Understanding Enterprise Profitability
- Preparing for a Market Survey

10:00am – 10:15am

TEA BREAK

10.15am-12.30pm How to choose your cropping mix with the use of Gross margin analysis - Group Discussion. Developing a Farm Vision and Goal.

12.30pm–1.30pm

LUNCH

1.30pm-4.30pm

Knowing Where We Want to Go! Developing a Farm Vision and Goal together with a Farm Business plan.

DAY 3

YOUR FARM TODAY

8.00am- 8:15am

Recap

8:15am – 10.00am

Keeping Records

- What is a record?
- Why keeping records?
- Advantages of keeping Records
- Types of Farm Business Records.

10.00am – 10:15am	TEABREAK
10.15am–12.30pm	Group Discussion on Different Types of Records kept by Participants.
12.30pm-1.30pm	LUNCH
1.30pm-2.15pm	How to choose your cropping mix with the use of Gross margin analysis - Lecture & Group Exercise.
2.15pm – 3.15pm	How to set the price of your produce?
3.30pm- 4.30pm	Group Discussion on Farm Plan

DAY 4

8:00am – 10:15am
 10:15am – 10:30 am
 10:30am – 12:30pm
 12:30pm – 1:00pm
 1:00pm – 3:00pm
 3:00pm – 3:15pm
 3:00pm – 4:00pm

OTHER FARM OPPORTUNITIES

other off Farm Opportunities
 TEA BREAK
 Value Adding Group Exercise on Jam making, Peanut Butter, Cassava and Bread fruit flour and Cassava Bread.
 LUNCH
 Continue Group Work
 TEA BREAK
 Continue of Group Work.

DAY 5

8:00am – 8:15am
 8:15am – 10:15am
 10:15am – 10:30 am
 10:30am – 12:30pm
 12:30pm – 1:00pm
 1:00pm – 2:00pm
 2:00pm – 2:30pm

YOUR FARM TOMORROW, MAKING IT HAPPEN

Recap
 Group Presentation
 TEA BREAK
 Group Presentation
 LUNCH
 Certificate Presentation
 Official Closing

Saula Mule, 24 years, Natauloa Village, Nairei District, Lomaiviti (*farming in Tailevu*)

Actually farming for me, I have no other choice for work as I am not qualified to have a white collar job and also I had some financial difficulties so I moved out to do farming. While I am from Lomaiviti I live and farm in Tailevu and I am 24 years.

In Fijian villages farming is like a job for everyone in the village for food security and also for development, when you are harvesting your crop or vegetable you can extend your house or buy new clothes from that money. I like farming because I enjoy myself when I go to the farm.

I haven't always farmed as sometimes when I do farming its not like flowing so I moved back to town to find work but then back again to the farm – I move back as I have no choice in the towns for work so I have to move back to the village and farm. It's hard sometimes to get fulfilled with farming. First time when you come there you have to weed and plant and when you plant you still are not fulfilling your dream until after 2-3 weeks when you finally see the things you plant is growing. You see the first 1 or 2 leaves and then you get fulfilled and so you keep on farming. Then you look at your plots of dalo and cassava and yagona and it grows up and you can estimate the money you can get from it. You can calculate before you harvest.

Farming is for financial security. People put money in the bank for security but for us we put money in the farm. Yagona is long term so you grow it for 3 years or so – so its money in the soil. If I could get a job in town I would move because with farming you have to struggle first and you have to be patient and sometimes the climate can affect the seedlings and the dalo

suckers (baby plant) and it can kill the plant. Sometimes you can lose hope and motivation when you don't see the farm grow and that is why there is a need to introduce new seedlings.

These are ideas I think would help me and other youth to be better interested in farming:
We are wondering if the agricultural authorities can provide new seedlings like vegetable seedlings for a short time – now we plant the same 3 plants that are our traditional crops. The 3 traditional crops are long term and harvest only once a year so it would be good to have vegetable crops that we can harvest in 1 month or 3 months or 6 months. The problems we face is from the Elders who only want the traditional crops and also we need more help to know what vegetable seedlings we should grow and how we should grow these.

With the Elders, in the social structure the youths are at the bottom of the structure then the ladies then the clan leaders then the chief and the spokesperson. So we are neglected in Fijian culture and we can't speak out – like the voice of the youth. Maybe it can be done like through this Pacific Solution Exchange or by people coming to the village and speaking with the youths and also the Elders, about the youths engagement in farming. Like the "boseva koro" is the only legal meeting for the government, and if we had workshop people at these talking for the youth this can give a voice to the youth to speak out at a meeting like that, then that would help us. We can then be involved in the talks about development or talk to donors or things like that.

For now if there is a meeting or an obligation in the village, then the youth are instructed to not go to their farms and instead stay in the village and help prepare the grog and the food for the Elders – so we can't farm but also we can't be involved in the meeting - we are only asked to help prepare the meeting but not have a voice in the meeting. So these meetings are a drawback for the youths rather than letting them go and do their farming or have their voice heard.

The other problem I mentioned is a need for help with seedlings. Important is the introduction of new crops and seedlings for short term planting so we don't have to rely on the traditional crops that are all long term. Long term crops means we only harvest and earn money once a year and also if the weather or crops go bad then everything for the year is lost. It's best to have a mix of long term and short term. But most of the time the Elders speak out and say we should follow the traditional way and youth should follow this instruction with no talk back and so they don't support new short term vegetable crops.

Also sometimes the workshops about new seedlings only help us a bit. Some of the workshops that have come are good but the assistance is not there, so some of the things they say then requires us to spend money and we cannot. So we need the workshop and then the initial assistance.

At workshops there is new information and sometimes they provide seedlings and if they see your interest in that kind of seedling then you ask them and they will give it to you. That is good but then follow up would be good too like once a month or twice a month monitoring would be really good. Like a monthly report and we can get export value and local value and the farmer can know what gives him more or less. So I can decide if that is a crop I want to grow again or change to a different one that will make more money. Also monitoring helps us grow the new seedlings like sometimes with the soil the second crop does not grow so big the first crop, like with mixed farming when we mix cassava with beles and then rotate crops so the soil stays healthy – maybe we need to change the new seedling crop to ensure the soil stays fertile and we need help to know this.

Also if they can do monitoring and follow ups for the farmers for the new seedlings, like from the farm to the market, and how to grow the seedlings but then get seeds from them for the next

crop and do a regular check up and make sure we are doing it properly. If they come and give new ideas it can help us to do more farming. Also it makes it more effective, like if they give a tractor and they say we need you to plant this many crops, but if there is no monitoring then we will slack off – like being in a classroom and having homework, if you have homework then you will do it.

Also at the workshops its best when they give us seedlings or the tools to help us, rather than just providing us with the information. They need to provide tools for the youths to use not just information. Because if you are given a task to complete a job and you just have a fork and a spade then it is hard. We already have the advice and the information but we dont have the money and the tools to start off the farming. Like with large scale farming machinery rather than using the fork it will be easier and more effective to have better tools like a tractor that can plant 10,000 plants in an hour rather than fork planting 100 in a hour.

These are just some ideas.

We are keen to be invited to workshops and to learn new things especially about new seeds, and how to grow them in our soil and climate conditions, and how to have the best plants to make money here and for exports.

Nunia Thomas, NatureFiji-MareqetiViti, Suva and Taveuni, Fiji

Dear Members,

I have just been reading through the posts made to the conversation. What a wealth of information and experiences! Especially from young people and their passion for agriculture and forestry! I am truly humbled at the sharing that has been done so far.

Congratulations to all those who have shared on this forum. We should take these experiences out to other young people to encourage them to look to sustainable agriculture and forestry for future livelihoods. All that I can contribute is that there are many case studies out there, and the more we publicise these, the wider the scope of our lessons learnt, and the broader the audience who will find it useful. We need to modularise these case studies and give them to the youths, who in their energy and eagerness to learn and experiment can begin trialing some of the methods showcased.

I urge the young people involved in agriculture and forestry to continually seek advice for sustainable methods and those that have little damaging impact on the environment; to ensure that they are getting correct information from the relevant authorities; to do their research and know their Rural land use policy, Fiji forest policy and how these feed into their livelihoods and sustainability. With kind regards.

High Chief Vaasiliifiti Moelagi Jackson, Faasao Savaii Society and Samoa Umbrella of Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO), Samoa

Dear CC and Development Community,

Thank you for sending me the link for this discussion as this is one of my strong and am promoting topic.

Congratulation [Saula Mule](#) of Fiji. "Ni Sa bula Vinaka vaka levu" for the courage to join the conversation as the decision makers and the Planners need to hear your voice. Your thoughts and scenario of what you had gone through is a regional practice that a lot of our young people today had gone through and gave up.

The Fact Remains:

- a. We have so much unused and uncultivated land thats laying fallow awaiting people like Saula Mule to come home and develop.
- b. Many organisations are driving some of these young people to do exactly the same.
- c. Many gave up and are either loitering around a successful cousins home in town or around, and become a burden to another struggling part of the family.
- d. Some of these young ones, single or couple, become successful and start selling the crops at the market or on the road.
- e. **HERE IS WHERE SOME OF THE GAPS TAKES PLACE AND RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME OF THE FARMERS TO GIVE UP OR DRIVE SOME OF THE YOUNG AWAY FROM THE LAND**

I. Lack of coordination or networking of the system - from the Agriculture Desk to the Farming Org. to the Village Community and the rest.

ii. Lack to guidance for these young and and struggling sector trying to do something for themselves and their family. (agricultural advice, the choice of crop, a seasonal marketing plan, a seasonal growing Map of the islands, a map of crop growth according island soil fertility, a map and plan of local and overseas market so that farmers could plan.

So far I see and hear young being driven to go back to the land and they usually plant and become successful with provision of their first or two crops, but only to find that the market has been flooded with the very crop her/she had chosen.

My advice to this forum: Agriculture wise we should take it seriously for Food Security esp. with Climate Change Planners etc.

- a. Change our approach to be more holistic.
- b. Research and results must be made available and to the local language as well as their traditional language - in Samoa the language of the land.
- c. Close collaboration between Agriculture Sectors and all others like water, Private sector Health and the rest no more Piece Meal Planners.
- d. Knowledge - to be passed to the locals therefore some of the villagers esp. Young couples or single going back must be given opportunities to take three or Month training on certain areas of their interest.

Please let us call up the many Saulas to come up and let's hear your voices and your struggles so that the planners and our partners could help. So many would like to help if we or they know how and where the help could be provided.

Enough for now until later. (I went back to Savaii 1974 and started from scratch as am agriculture and did everything and was successful until I became a businesswoman)

Anju Mangal, Maria-Elder Ratutokarua, Miriama Kunawave Brown, Land Resources Division (LRD), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Suva, Fiji

Hello members,

Firstly thank you to everyone who has contributed to this e-conversation so far:
<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net/pacific/ccd/ccd-subj-week.php>

When our team here at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's (SPC) Land Resources Division (LRD; www.spc.int/lrd) asked Pacific Solution Exchange to moderate this Query we had not realised what a wide range of people would respond, especially youths themselves, so thank you so much for your insights.

Given the great feedback so far, we've requested this conversation be extended another week, until Thursday 18 April 2013.

In response to comments by Nunia and others, we would like to reiterate the purpose of gathering your experiences and advice is for SPC-LRD to share these stories via the LRD website and through printed and electronic publications to assist people who work with youth and agriculture (including youths), to further implement some of the recommended actions and initiatives from the 'Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy' report (http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=678&Itemid=396). Here's more information about this process and the related projects: http://www.solutionexchange-un.net/repository/pc/ccd/cr20-qry-en_1.pdf (PDF; Size: 123KB)

Please keep sending your responses, which will assist SPC-LRD to collate these valuable experiences to help with our projects and, ultimately, to help others working with youth and agriculture in the Pacific.

Thank you.

Ilaitia Varani, Nakorolevu Village, Namara District, Tailevu Province, Fiji

I was a full-time farmer since I was 15 years. I'm now 20 years. My parents moved around and it was hard to stay in school and to learn and I felt I was slow at learning, though probably it was only because I moved around so much. So I quit school and started farming.

When I quit I thought of my grandfather who is a role model and he used to plant taro, he would grow really big taro. Back in the village he was a really good farmer. So I thought I should follow my grandfather. Maybe because I thought I was slow to learn, I cancelled from my mindset the idea of working so I looked at agriculture as the way I could earn income and have a future livelihood, as that will give me everything I need. So I taught myself to work hard in the farm and never think twice of other options. I am happy on the farm.

To get started with farming, my family land was already occupied so I had to go and ask another village if I could use their land and they said ok. I don't have to pay them to use the land but if there is an occasion in the village or when I get my harvest then I give some to them, it's like good manners. It's a long way to walk to there, about 1km from my home to the farm, and I farm alone. I don't mind farming alone, as I learnt a lot about farming growing up. Also my friends who are farmers help; we help each other on our farms. When I was a little kid I would follow my grandparents or the elders and listen to what they say about farming, and how to plant, and how I have to go about planting root plants. So that way when I was 15 I got the urge to start the farm myself.

I am happy working on the farm because I see the soil and it is really fertile and I see the crops are green and growing and it makes me happy to look at it. I have fresh fruits and its like a peaceful place from where I get everything. I also provide food for my family and that makes me happy because they get to thank me and treat me well and some even give me money to go to town and buy stuff. So with farming it's like a village exchange. Others my age in the village work in shops. But in the village the adults and elders treat me better because they see me as

hard working and I will stay in the village for the long time but people who work often move away or do not understand the traditional culture so much as me as a farmer.

I also have started a piggery. I did some part-time work for a few weeks at a local business and saved all the money and bought a pig, a female pig, and then I borrowed a male pig from the village for a little while (to service my pig). Now I have seven pigs in the piggery. I started the piggery in 2011.

What would I say to people trying to engage youth in agriculture? They should be empowered and there should be workshops encouraging youths to go farming or short courses to be given to youths for ag and that would make them more interested. Because now they are split minded and looking at white collar jobs rather than farming so it's up to the parents and the elders and the family to encourage the youths to farm. That's workshop for the youths and the parents because they all work together and if the parents are slacking then the youths won't move. But really they have to find a way to survive.

Manasa Luvunakoro, Department of Forestry - Forestry Training and Education Division, Nabua, Fiji

Bula vinaka,

I have extracted some of the comments below from the magazine: Forest Stewardship - Teaching Youth about Forest Stewardship (Issue 3; <http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/freepubs/pdfs/uh077.pdf>) which I think is relevant to this discussion:

"The health and well-being of our youth will be one of the greatest concerns as we move into the next century. In Fiji and other Pacific countries, we can observe that the loss of outdoor time and a disconnect with nature has serious health and social threats to youth, as well as the future of our forests. More land is being developed for urban and suburban residences, businesses, utilities, and other structures and we cannot argue or go against those decisions. Majority of these developments will result in less open places to play, fish, hike, and explore. Unplanned growth threatens our land resources, and proper management of our natural resources, particularly forests, is a pressing need as well.

To establish a tradition of forest stewardship for future generations, it is important to involve youths and provide them with information and awareness about responsible land management. They are the ones that will inherit those resources in the future.

We need to empower youths to meet the challenge to sustain our future forests and pass these forests on to their children in better condition than they received them."

© The Pennsylvania State University 2008 (copyright permission sought via PSE 2013). Bulletin was prepared by Sanford S. Smith, natural resources and youth specialist; James C. Finley, professor of forest resources; Shelby E. Chunko, project associate, Forest Stewardship program; Stephen B. Jones, former associate professor of forest resources; and Ellen M. O'Donnell, former stewardship associate. It was made for the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program and was printed in 2008. It belongs to the College of Agricultural Sciences at The Pennsylvania State University.

Joji Vuinanu, Nakorolevu Village, Namara District, Tailevu Province, Fiji

I'm 28 and I farm dalo and tavioka (cassava) and yagona (kava). I was about 24 when I started working on the farm. I did that farming for 3 years then there were troubles in the village and so I took 1 year break, and I lived in Lautoka and Suva looking for work mainly I worked as a shoe shine. That was last year and I'm now back on the farm this year and it feels 'ons' (Moderator note: Fiji slang for "good").

I like farming in the village and getting food for the relatives and family as thats important. My relatives in Suva they work and they buy the food so instead I can bring the food to them so they dont need to buy it, especially the cassava and dalo. Sometimes they pay and sometimes not, like a barter system I bring food and they give clothes or money and food like noodles and tinned tuna for me to take back to the village. I don't want to go to work in the city this year and I just want to plant on my farm. I just bought some roofing iron last week to make a shed on my farm – 4 irons each 12 feet. I want to make a shed house so I can spend more time in farming - rather than walk from the village. So soon I can stay in the shed through the week, then come to the village on the weekend where I stay with my grandmother. I wake at 5am and have breakfast and walk for 1 hour and a half to the farm, then rest and then start farming. So instead of taking all that time I can build a shed and rest there and cook there. Its a good idea rather than walking 3 hours a day to the farm and back every day.

Its a long way as our village is coastal but our shared land is in the interior and thats why it is so far away. Its my grandfathers land and the land is owned by the clans - in Fiji everyone in the clan has access to the land but its first come first serve deal. Our part of this land is far in the interior.

Also I am on my own and soon I want to stay in my own home and start a family. This year I want to farm a lot so then at harvest time I can make enough money to start building a house. I started farming a bit later, about when I was 24. Before I stayed at the old capital in Levuka for schooling and after school I stayed there for a few years before I came back to my fathers village here at Nakorolevu. I was about 20 when I came back. Then I was just moving around for a few years, going to Suva and Lautoka and moving around and struggling living in the city. It was hard times. In the city we always looking for money every day, and so I chat to people in the market and we see that other people are selling their farming produce and so that's why I decide to go back to village. I decided to go back and do the farming to earn money.

Now I work for the money but also to help provide for occasions in the village and to provide for my family. It is like my job so I can farm and feed my family and relatives and I can be a good person and help the food security that is facing people. So I came back to farm and make money but now farming is also about me being a good person, enjoying planting and planning a future and maybe a family. It is a way for me to maybe build a family. On the farm I can go there and forget about the pain and the hard times that I used to go through and I can just do my farming.

So it was the market vendors who make me decide to farm. One in particular said "Farming is good work and it is free and it means we can pay the fees for our children to go to school and then when we are working on the farm they go to school and learn so then they when they grow up they can earn a living." Vinaka.

High Chief Vaasiliifiti Moelagi Jackson, Faasao Savaii Society and Samoa Umbrella of Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO), Samoa

Dear Youth Farmers or Agricultural Developers and ICT,

This is an excellent program (highlighted in this Query) and a challenge to the youth to combine their interest in Agriculture and their IT Knowledge and at the same time a great opportunity for them to be in the village and learn from their elders of Tradition and Indigenous Agriculture - while their grannies and aged uncles and aunties are still alive.

Learn about the selection of crops for the seasons using IT Knowledge to link with others or sharing and receiving from other planters. In that way they can learn and share from each other.

At present there is an outcry of having no markets. When website-internet and mobile phones could be used to sell the agriculture products around our small islands;

IT Tech can help link the agricultural and Farmers to the Business and hoteliers with collaboration would help Plan season products or according to the market demand.

Praneet Goundar, Biosecurity Authority Fiji, Nadi, Fiji

My point of view in all this is very simple, I like to think it as from a youths point of view and I hope other youths can see it the same way I do: a professional, potential money making, thriving industry i.e. Agriculture.

I work for Bio-security Authority Fiji as a Biosecurity Officer at the Nadi International Airport. My job enables me to protect the flora and fauna of Fiji. It facilitates a safe agricultural trade path way among many other things. Ultimately, I plan to open an integrated farm of my own someday when I am well learned of the trade. It will be a big farm, and there will be many of its kind, especially designed to attract and teach youths.

The following is a personal account of how I see things and what I think can help us youths move forward in the right direction.

Imagine if we could get as many young people as possible on here just to hear how they feel about this and what they feel needs to be done to help them find agriculture attractive. This is after all about getting youths involved in agriculture, they would be second to none in knowing what they feel is lacking and what they find appealing. The perks are already there, we just need to expose them through proper means and methods and devise appropriate plans to implement what youths want.

AN ACCOUNT OF:

WHAT IS;

Agriculture is a great essence of the forever growing human enterprise. In our new world it is a business that requires new innovations, technology, insight and vision to prosper. The world population stands a little over 7 billion and the 2 biggest challenges facing us and threatening the future are climate change and the survival of agriculture to sustain the increasing population, the fates of both intimately inter-twined: farming practices and methods having an impact on the climate and the change in climate influencing the types of farming practices we employ and the crops/animals we grow and the innovations we come up with to sustain agriculture.

Amidst these pressing issues another more daunting dilemma brews; that is going to realize this very essence of agriculture, its viability and continue this forever growing enterprise. The trend these days is that more and more of our prospective human resources (youths) are increasingly interested in IT studies, finance, business management, science (except agriculture science), biotechnology and laws and so called other technical studies which earns them a lot of dollars.

The irony i think in all this is how these exact areas of study can all be applied to the agriculture sector and make it an even more thriving industry despite youths thinking how unrelated agriculture and the other disciplines may be. Agriculture is a never ending business and has a unique characteristic; the ability to employ anyone form any background; from on farm production right up to global marketing makes it the most viable and diverse employer. In fact, it maybe the only field that can employ anyone with any education background, think about it!!

The answer lies with each one of us on how best to engage youth in agriculture. Its simple just ask yourself what encouraged or motivated you to join the agriculture sector, that's what I did.

WHAT IT SHOULD BE: CHANGING MINDSETS

POINT OF VIEW MATTERS, ATTITUDE CONQUERS

As youths, we need to feel pride, ownership and see how much it is worth and what benefits we can derive from agriculture. We can become self sufficient, keep a consistent job, earn a decent living, and maintain health and wealth.

As community educators and change agents, we need to market and sell agriculture in the best ways possible, there are many sides and faces of agriculture and these need to be exposed to youths so they can make well informed choices about getting into agriculture and not feel embarrassed about it because feeding oneself and the others is anything but to be embarrassed about.

It should be something innate, the basic instinct to survive and to help others survive as well, how could that ever be embarrassing or less of a job?

WHAT YOUTHS WANT?

They want something that will earn them money; something that will be viable in the long run, and a job that makes them feel successful. What better way to make money than by engaging in a business which will always grow in demand with the increase in population. What better way to feel successful and proud than by knowing you are feeding hundreds to keep them alive and in many ways doing service to humanity.

MONEY MATTERS - THE POWER OF THE DOLLAR SIGN

Agriculture needs to be viewed as a business, perhaps in viewing it as such we can turn a lot of heads and change not just youths but everyone else's attitudes and mindsets about agriculture. As a never dying industry, the income generation prospect as well as viability is high. Everything has to do with money, youths want their fair share of the deal as well and with adequate training and supervision they too can earn a decent living and explore agriculture as a career.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Youths need to be exposed to current thriving agriculture enterprises in and around Fiji in an effort to show them that this is a worthwhile and satisfying area to invest in. There are so many things we are all oblivious too, and exposing youths to other successful (youth) entrepreneurs will definitely boost morale and confidence. It will also show them that it's not all just forks and knives and a knapsack sprayer.

Agriculture requires vision and precision, management, development, technology and sophistication. It is something that is doable, profitable and humbling.

PROFESSIONS IN AGRICULTURE

The reason why so many young people turn their backs on agriculture is because as soon as someone mentions agriculture the immediate picture that forms in their mind is a farm (try it on yourself or someone else). Agriculture isn't all just farms and tractors. Its laboratories, trials and testing. There's sales and marketing as well. There are managers, agro-climatologists, scientists, developers, teachers, doctors, breeders, sales agents, economists and so many more professions within the agricultural umbrella which young people can choose to join.

METHODS OF TEACHING AT INITIAL STAGES

When I was making my climate change presentations I got to meet a lot of interesting youths. Their issues are very real and genuine. They are worried about land issues and the constant flooding in the West parts of Fiji, to finance sourcing and support once they start up a farm. While they are 'all for' ICTs most of them would still prefer the initial stages of the teaching learning process to be more personal ie. the initial stages of any teaching scheme should be done in person rather than by some new downloaded application online or via sms. The personal approach is still very much in demand and appropriate especially when it comes to younger people, perhaps to reassure confidence. ICTs are equally important but perhaps as a follow up tool, information provider or "continued education" provider. Its best used an integrated tool just like integrated agriculture.

So what kind of activities and programs can be formulated to best capture, captivate and engage youths in agriculture? Again, I ask myself, what would interest me and attract my attention enough for me to devote my time towards agriculture.

The general idea in the following concepts is to change youth's mindsets about agriculture, promote agriculture education, take a business approach towards agriculture (putting a dollar sign to agriculture) and identify possible finance sources and allocation of these finances in the best way possible. Also, to get all agricultural orientated organizations to come together to be a part of the solution in terms of providing work experiences or learning opportunities.

• SCHOOL BREAK CAMPS

In collaboration with, ministry of education, high schools and Universities (agriculture faculties) a several week program can be developed to engage and educate all interested youths alike, whether they are in year 8 or 13. Not only would it comprise of classroom work, but field trips and hands on experience. Everyone would be learning and doing the same thing and it would give them a "university life" experience especially for those that do not want to or cannot attend the 3 to 4 year university programs. The program could best equip them on small scale backyard farming for self-sufficiency or even a small scale farming business. In Fiji, the Fiji National University agriculture campus could best facilitate this program during school holidays. Teachers could be volunteers or other agriculture professionals.

• MOBILE TRAINING CAMPS

this would mean taking the classroom or the ideas, concepts and principles out to the youths on their turf. It would suit anyone wanting to start up a small scale farm or to expand on what they already have. Trainers would move from community to community, just like shifting agriculture, teaching young people the basics of agriculture. Extension officers could best help facilitate this program, or they could train other agriculture professionals like other youths with tertiary qualifications or someone with a strong agricultural background.

• BUDDY SYSTEM/PEER EDUCATORS

Youths can be paired up with other successful agricultural entrepreneurs in their communities as a means for them to learn from the best on the field. This would be a perfect hands on teaching and learning scheme eventuating with them starting something up on their own. For instance, there are many poultry farms around Fiji. 2 or 3 youths could be assigned to each farm manager

as farm hands and they would be expected to learn the job on the job and ultimately acquire enough knowledge and skills to start up their own shareholder farms.

Upon the completion of the above 3 schemes, each individual would be awarded a certificate of completion which will be their earned qualification. The other idea behind the 3 schemes is to promote on the field education as opposed to classroom confined education.

• JOINT VENTURES

There are many youths like me, with degrees and diplomas and many of them are still unemployed. The ministry of agriculture and or other relevant organizations could help these youngsters start up joint ventures. Many want to start up their own farms and businesses but are afraid or lack the finance, but getting into a joint venture maybe the right thing for them. They could have a business mentor and with the help of appropriate professionals they can draw up viable business plans and seek finances to get started. Having a joint venture in itself will provide them with support and risks spread. Two is always better than one.

• YOUTH FARMS/ INTERNSHIPS

A number of integrated farms, owned or co-owned by governments, private bodies or even communities that would create employment for prospective youths. This would be beneficial on several levels. One creates jobs for unemployed youths in rural areas hence preventing rural-urban drift. Two, it'll be an ongoing continuous venture, so once youths are confident they can start something up on their own they can move on and make way for others. It will serve more as an internship of sorts for a year or more. Three, the output from the farms can be sold within the community and generate income to pay the youths at the same time to help maintain the farms or open other farms. It would be very beneficial if we could create a database or website that specifically lists jobs in agriculture, be it from farmhand to farm manager as long as it has something to do with agriculture.

• ICTs

With the use of ICTs and such gadgets, information dissemination and education has become much easier. ICTs are especially beneficial if it is used as a means of continued education ie. as a means of continuous information dissemination after initial face to face teaching. It can be an essential follow up tool as well. An application or program can be created together with the agriculture extension division to keep a proper continuous outflow of information ongoing. The extension services section would be the best body to manage such information systems.

• POLICIES AND FUNDING

Policies and funding would go hand in hand. Any policy drawn up would require some form of funding to implement it. But simple policies like teaching agriculture as a compulsory subject at least up to year ten could prove to be very beneficial for those youths who might tend to drop out. Funding for agriculture studies at the tertiary level is also becoming very limited. Perhaps it could be made mandatory for bigger agricultural orientated companies to step in and sponsor students to study agriculture and then hire them to work for the company in return. Funding can be sourced from government, NGO's, private firms, individuals or even communities.

Overall, if we expose youths to the success agriculture has to offer, they will change their mindsets. If we source enough funding and design appropriate teaching schemes we take a step in the right direction in trying to engage youth in agriculture.

I am Praneet Goundar and this is my point of view.

Remember, point of views matter and attitude conquers!!

Saula Mule, Project Survival Pacific, Suva, Fiji

Hello,

I'm a Fijian youth involved with the Project Survival Pacific (PSP; Facebook page: www.facebook.com/projectsurvival) youth climate change movement that works to safeguard the survival of the Pacific island people from the impacts of climate change & promote sustainable development within the Pacific.

I am responding to this query in my capacity as a youth and also a representative of PSP.

Youth look at farming as a thing of the past so it's good to create awareness about agricultural opportunities for today, ie growing ginger and its economic benefits. There's a lot of unemployed youth and so farming is a great opportunity, especially for those who have family owned land they can use for free. Knowing there's a way of making money often drives youth into action.

We're trying to create awareness; wake them from a deep sleep. To create awareness we need to give them something, a lot will come to the workshop for the free food - I try to address this with my peers - but if it's a good workshop they'll stay and get interested. We also need to give them incentives like highlighting the dollar value of farming and how much they could earn. For the unemployed youth I find it amazing it's not something they really want to change by working on a farm, at least part time.

Youths they don't seem to care now but when it comes time to be leaders in their community, then they care. But we want youths to care now, not just later.

I find a champion in a group can influence the rest. Also how we reach the youth best is by informal not formal meetings. For most when they come to a formal meeting, some listen but youths listen better if it's informal as they feel more at home and relaxed. For myself I used to go to formal meetings and I was shy because I thought whatever I say would be stupid and looked down upon. It's that mentality. We listen throughout but we can't give our ideas. Then I learnt there are ideas for everyone not just Elders but young people too.

I often just chat with youth about agriculture, climate change and other issues. Like the QVS 'Old Boys' (Queen Victoria School) who I talk to and we highlight some problems with youth; at QVS most are born leaders as QVS contains mostly children born to be chiefs.

Some of the time when I try to discuss matters with youth they're not on the receiving end, they're more rebellious. So when you try and teach them something good they say "who do you think you are?" So I just lay down the facts and they can receive it or not. For example at Makoi, which is located on the outskirts of Suva in Fiji, there were about 10 youths and I told the kids in the community not to drink because it is bad for health and they asked me "who do you think you are" and they didn't want to listen. They don't want to believe the truth. But what's right for them - when they do whatever they want - is usually wrong for the community. But they don't care. I say "we can enjoy alcohol but can't you enjoy it in a different way, and not a way that is bad for them and for the community?". When I talk to them I use a softer tone because you can't fight fire with fire.

Later, I was going to work in the morning and I saw them about to buy alcohol and grog - usually it's grog through the night then by morning they want alcohol to wash it down. After chatting with them I went to work, not sure if they really listened to me. But then one of them came and wanted to stay at my house, to be free from their friends and the grog/alcohol cycle.

Peer pressure is quite high because most of the kids roll in groups, even though they know it's wrong - the main aim is to target the leader as they're the main one pulling the group.

Also I use Facebook; I will find an article that I think is interesting for others to read and I'll try and paste it on all their walls and they will ask me "what's it about?"

For events, ie a recent panel discussion for the public at USP (University of the South Pacific, Suva) I started texting all of my friends to come and learn about the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG; www.msgsec.info) and what it does and what it can do. Actually a lot of them came, and learnt about MSG and upcoming events that they're also interested in. So we got to create awareness but also provide incentive to get their attention.

At Project Survival Pacific we are planning for a PowerShift youth event hopefully in June (like that held in NZ recently but this time just for the Pacific) where can bring youths together about issues like sustainable development, climate change and unemployment. We are looking for funding. After the event we want to get their thoughts and ideas and present them, maybe to Foreign Affairs or other government ministries or NGOs or environmental agencies. Ideally we want to have this before the climate change summit. For PowerShift we want to get more than 300 youths from across Fiji together, and have their input feed into the summit.

In the future it would be good to expand beyond Fiji to the Pacific.

Saula Mule, 24 years, Natauloa Village, Nairei District, Lomaiviti (farming in Tailevu)

Bula vinaka,

I made some comments the other day, and these are some of my other ideas that can add on to youth in agriculture.

Agriculture must be addressed to youths by their families, community, nation and non government organisation. As we know that agriculture is primary industry or mother of other industry because it's a major source of food, which help in food security. Also it can create employment to youths and it would solve the problems of rural to urban drift.

In many country agriculture is the backbone of its economy e.g. In Fiji we have the sugar industry which collects more that 50% of the governments revenue.

Youths are assets of any community, leaders and elders must nurture them, listen to their needs, respect them... Also to educate to youths the importance of agriculture. Governments should give assistance and also look for markets for goods to be sold. Aspirations of young people can be the successful development of any community.

My definition to Agriculture: mother of all industry, income generating [more you plant the more you get]

Thanks you.

Andrew Weleilakeba, Border Solutions Fiji Ltd, Nausori, Fiji

The project I'd like to highlight is a youth in agriculture network that comprises friends and relatives from Tailevu and Natisori. What we are trying to do is create a network of many small scale farms that, when united, form a large network or cooperative so we're more competitive against the 'big boys' who have more land and cashflow, to take advantage of export and other opportunities that aren't accessible to small scale farmers. Together we will have the economies of scale to better access export opportunities and so get better returns for our farm work. But also we know the future is going to take a lot of work especially around researching overseas market opportunities plus training young, subsistence farmers to change their thinking about agriculture, from it being a subsistence lifestyle to a profitable career that requires them to learn about new crops and farming techniques.

Our network is fairly new and started in 2007. At the moment we have close to 2 acres of seedlings planted which is projected to generate enough seeds to plant an area of 20 acres. Members of the network are a mix of mature and young farmers – a ratio of about 80/20 where 80% is young people and 20% are mature. It's good to have the mature farmers as they give experience and advice, moral support and encouragement. Everybody in the network is already involved in doing their own farming – all are subsistent farmers who currently work on their farms.

In a certain villages they connect together in mini youth groups by village, and they share resources and help each other. Traditional subsistence farming needs a lot of labour, and there is not a lot of machinery. Especially ploughing takes a lot of time, to plough in the traditional way. Tools and other things are also being shared across these mini networks and I also gave them some fertilisers to share. So they go to each others farm to help with labour, and just to help one another so everyone can get their farms going. Then these mini groups all unite under the broader network.

Here's some of the issues I want to talk about in relation to small scale farming and what we want to achieve with our network:

- Breaking into exports – having the funds and expertise to export
- Challenges of researching overseas market opportunities (this is not currently a priority for the govt)
- Agriculture as a profession rather than subsistence living
- Training important to develop agriculture
- The future

My biggest request to government and agencies is for more training; more research about which crops offer the best overseas market potential and then training on how to grow and export these crops.

Breaking into exports

It's hard for small scale farmers to compete against large farms and for us to look for export opportunities, on the small farmers in our growing cooperative have asked me to explore avenues like exporting ginger to NZ (New Zealand). So we did the research two years ago and found the local guys here buy ginger for 90c to \$1.20 kilo but the ginger in NZ is \$14 off season, so our farmers would probably get about \$4 a kilo. Imagine!

So we are trying to break into that but there are a lot of restrictions and requirements and, for us as small scale farmers, we can't individually cover the costs of export facilities and that's why we are trying to build this network to get economies of scale to share the large overhead. Also it means we'll have a reliable base of supply as when we go into the export business we need to be consistent in terms of supply and quality. So on behalf of this network I'm taking a lead role not

only in managing but also monitoring according to international standards like the Organic Foundation (www.organicfoundation.in) as that is our bigger plan.

Challenges of researching overseas market opportunities

The reason why we want to have this network is cause govt is providing seedlings and technical assistance to farmers but it is not their priority to look for new markets and the young farmers don't have the capacity to reach out and seek new markets, like export opportunities in NZ, Australia and close-by countries where we freight to. That's the problem with this govt they don't look for markets.

Firstly, what we want to do is engage government to assist us with their data because they have contact with farmers and statistics about who is planting what, and what volumes, and what locality. This information is useful for us to help us know what we should and could be doing as farmers, and perhaps also grow our network. So it would give us useful market information not just for ginger but also about chilli and other crops.

Then maybe in the future they could dedicate more resources to researching new market opportunities and helping to train small scale farmers in how to grow those new crops.

Agriculture being recognized as a profession rather than subsistence living

In Fiji we think about farming as a tradition and we need to change that attitude to agriculture – it's not just about feeding our stomachs but there is a potential in agriculture to generate income and contribute to food security.

As mentioned, a thing hindering us is that we don't have an office where everything is formulated, coordinated and gathered. For exports you really need a centralized operation, to present yourself professionally to importers while also coordinating the many small scale farms. What we can do is have an office where it is independent and from there we just coordinate the network members without any direct ownership of the farms. Everybody contributes 'equally' in some way.

When our network talks to the govt they are asking for us to be more organized and so when we talk we are recognized as having one – we are farmers who are united and want to be heard as one voice. The problem is we are not all in the one town and our network has farms everywhere, and so when we are trying to connect it is difficult. This is why an office is important so we are seen as one network.

It's also important to have an office to coordinate training for our farmers. In Fiji traditionally we are subsistence farmers but there needs to be more recognition that agriculture is an industry and a business. And a business needs an office or a centre as if we want to go commercial we need infrastructure and centralized coordination. There are a lot of hindrances to this as many farmers are illiterate as farming in Fiji was once meant just for drop outs – but that's not the case any more farmers today being successful business people.

My view is for agriculture to be taken up as part of the curriculum. It's not in the curriculum as a part of the education system – it's not part of our schooling that ag is an industry and possible career. And it should be, and from an early stage starting in the primary school – so the interest and passion is developed at an early stage. You need a passion for this, for farming.
Training important to develop agriculture

When I talk to people in the villages I tell them "there's hope in agriculture and you can make a living out of it – even if you live in the village you can buy a house and own a car or a truck but you need the knowhow!" It's the knowhow that's missing – knowing how to grow new crops and

so they need training. Also when I go to the villages to visit them, the first question they always ask is, "is there any funding from government?" I tell them government cannot assist everybody. That's where the network is useful as people can combine their know how and resources to help each others farms.

In agriculture you don't get paid today for the work you do today – often not even this week or this month so cashflow is a problem. For example with dalo it's only after 6 months from planting that you harvest and sell the dalo, then get the money. But there are costs you incur before the harvest – so it costs money when often you are not earning money. Age is something that you work hard for and so you need a variety of crops, like some short term crops, to generate income in between the long term harvests.

Last year I tried doing something, to introduce a new short term crop to help some of the farmers with their cashflow, so I planted 300 cucumbers? I paid for them myself and planted them myself, just to show the farmers. These farmers only know how to plant dalo and cassava and so we're trying to introduce them to ways to grow other cash crops. So I started with cucumbers and when they saw the harvest and they saw the potential but they just wanted someone to show them how it is done.

I liaised with govt and extension officers to get them some assistance for the seeds, seedlings and fertilisers and they helped. It's really small just enough and not everybody can get access to that.

It's hard for traditional farmers to believe they should grow other crops and it's only when they see it with their own eyes, and they witness it, then they start doing it. So now some of them are growing cucumbers, also cabbages, watermelon, long beans.

And the problem is not only cashflow but also having a range of crops just in case something happens. For example, there was a very large and successful coco farm in Tailevu established some time ago, funded by a loan from FDB (Fiji Development Bank). They started the coco farm and after a few years there was over 2000 acres of coco so it was one of the biggest farms in Fiji. It was going pretty well until the late 1980s when coco prices fell and that affected the farm – the farm failed as all its resources were invested in just one crop. That was one of the farms close to me where I grew up and I always think of that farm but the good news is now many years later that farm is operating again but has now diversified into cattle and subsistence farming crops like dalo and cassava and soon may again go into commercial farming (though now the problem is to get govt to improve the infrastructure of local roads and water services to make the farm more accessible for commercial use). So I guess crop failure may just be a set back for farms but the learning is that diversification and a mix of short term and long term crops is good for an agricultural business.

The future

The future success of this network is going to take a lot of work if all relevant stakeholder cooperative and come to one common place and work it out and also NGOs and what's happening here is the youths we are waiting for govt and ...need technical assistance and training and its going to take time it won't happen overnight.

It is an ongoing process for all of us, including me. I have to educate myself too – I started off going to university to do an accounting and finance degree and then I joined the military for four years until the coup in 2006, after that I started work in private business providing equipment supplies. I still work in that business and continue to save money to invest in my agricultural business as I see a lot of entrepreneurial opportunity in food security, plus I grew up farming and get a lot of satisfaction from it. We started the farming business in 2010 with family and friends

and we continue to grow our business. So it makes sense for us to drive the progression of this network, because we are small scale farmers too who want to break into export markets and we know we can't do it on our own – just like all the other small scale farmers – but together we can.

It's beneficial for me to drive the network for my business, for my personal satisfaction and to help my community and other communities. As part of this plan I have launched a proposal with govt to use some of their land in Suva that is vacant and hopefully they can grant us approval so that we can have that as an export facility – that would also provide us with a centralized office. Having the govt help farmers means more money flowing into farms and that will have a ripple effect across communities and the economy.

There's a connection between plants and people. I get a lot of satisfaction working on the farm and seeing the plants grow.

Mr. Isikeli Mataitoga, Embassy of Fiji, Tokyo, Japan

Dear Andrew Weleilakeba and Saula Mule,

I am hearing the comments you have made in your recent post re: overseas markets for products produced by farmers in Fiji, whether they are youth or older people.

Since I was appointed to my current post in Japan, I have personally convinced several Japanese importers [small & medium size] to source tropical agricultural products from Fiji - especially for the winter months. In Japan tropical agricultural product that would sell well are: papaya/apple mangoes/pineapple/small pumpkin/avocados etc. Japanese market will pay high price to high quality products. Example: For \$2.50 - \$3.00 FJD I would get 4-5 Hawaiian pawpaw at the roadside stall at Volivoli Village, in Nadroga. The same pawpaw would retail in Japan at 800JYP each [roughly \$10-11.00 FJD]. That is the kind of market opportunity that is possible to access.

They have come and studied the production and commercial arrangements and they come back to Japan, unsure whether most of the farms they visited are really geared toward the export market.

The main issues are: standards – poor standards due to farm management issues and lack of appropriate technology; Phytosanitary issues; export packaging; lack of local domestic marketing mechanism to regulate contractual production and supply.

Andrew's loose cooperative arrangements for the youth farmers of Tailevu/Naitasiri, has the hallmark of growing to become something that could help.

Maybe the Ministry of Youth and Primary Industries can organize a national forum for your farmers, which should look at products for the overseas market; those that should be sold to the tourism industry for import substitution and those to go to the domestic market. These products should be listed and a mechanism developed with quotas issued to young farmers who will produce their quotas of products on time each year. The quota's as is the case in the Sugar Industry could be used as collateral. If a minimum price is guaranteed for products under quota, it will assist young farmers in discussing financing with financial institutions.

The ideal situation is where the young farmer produces agricultural products under quota, which is bought by the Marketing Organization at the farm gate and it is the farming organization that is responsible for the export/domestic market.

Submitted for further consideration and exchange of ideas.

Thank you for your consideration.

Don Griffiths, Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) RAP, Bangkok, Thailand

Dear All,

While working with the Northwest Fisheries Extension Project (NFEP), (we) funded a bi-lateral project between the British Government (Overseas Development Administration and the Department for International Development) and the Government of Bangladesh Department of Fisheries. The NFEP was able to persuade the Ministry of Education to include fisheries and aquaculture within its Agriculture curriculum for secondary school children.

Thereafter NFEP provided training of trainer (TOT) training for secondary school teachers who were to teach the 'improved' agriculture curriculum with fisheries and aquaculture. NFEP gave each teacher on graduation a box of practical equipment which they could use to do simple hands-on practical sessions with their students. NFEP impact assessments later showed that many of the children, who were taught agriculture with fisheries, were advising their parents on basic but sound aquaculture techniques.

Manasa Luvunakoro, Department of Forestry, Training and Education Division, Nabua, Fiji

Part of our role here at the Forestry Training Centre in Suva, Fiji, is to conduct Awareness Training on Forestry to Village communities in Fiji. We have just returned from the Tikina of Savatu in the interior of Viti Levu and closer to the Hydro Electricity Dam in Nadarivatu.

My first concern when I look around the village is the number of older fruit trees in and around the village. There is a few lines of orange and mango trees in the village and coconut trees as well. During our discussions, I asked the community members how many trees that are currently in the village was planted by them. The answers were that all the standing fruit trees in the village were planted by their great grandfathers.

Youths in the villages should be encouraged to plant trees especially those that can support their livelihoods. While the emphasis may be on agriculture products only, we should not forget the fruit trees that can sustain our health and recreation needs.

May I also commend the youths of Savatu for their effort in undertaking their youth project which is thriving today. They have established a youth farm and continue to support their younger generations that are still in school through the establishment of farms during school breaks.

Thank you all for the positive contributions.

Ganesh Bhattarai, Junior Professional Officer (Climate Change and Food Security), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Sub-regional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP), Apia, Samoa

Talofa all,

As youth are the future of the Pacific, mobilizing them also contributes to improved and sustainable agriculture production, productivity and maintaining a high level of food security in the region. Such activities will contribute to the general public awareness on the importance of attracting other youth to the agriculture sector for the sustainable growth of the Islands economy as a whole. To ensure the mobilization of youth in agriculture and to actively engage them in their own future, a holistic approach towards addressing the youth challenge is needed as also stressed by High Chief Vaasiliifiti Moelagi Jackson. It is undeniable that it will require a stronger partnership among youths, communities, private sectors, NGOs, government ministries, development partners and others organizations to address this in an holistic way.

In order to attract youths to agriculture, and changing the current perception of agriculture from a dirty job to an attractive enterprise, behavioral change will be crucial. This could be achieved through integration of approaches like School Kitchen Garden (SKG) Program into national education system and school curriculum. Through the SKG program, students learn how to grow, tend, harvest and prepare nutritious seasonal produce, in the educational settings of the classroom, the garden, the kitchen, the school kitchen and their home. Therefore, promoting environmental, social and physical wellbeing of the school and the community and boost the understanding children and youths of how the natural world sustains us hence create motivation to engage in agriculture.

This will also promote the extension of gardening to household and communities which reinforces the behavioral change towards involvement in agriculture as well as healthy eating. FAO has been promoting School Kitchen Garden program for many years and has developed and tested manuals which you might find useful:

• Setting Up and Running a School Garden:
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0218e/a0218e00.htm>

• Setting Up and Running a School Garden - Teaching Toolkit:
<http://thegrowingconnection.wordpress.com/2010/08/03/tgc-news-fao%E2%80%99s-new-school-garden-teaching-toolkit/>

For youth who are out of the school system, programs like Junior Farmers Field School (JFFS) could be an excellent option. JFFS provide an exceptional "school without walls" for learning, discussion, and experimentation on agricultural strategies for improving their food and livelihood security. Field schools are effective way of transferring knowledge (both local and external) through learning by doing using the Agro-Ecosystem Analysis.

Promoting youth as Agriculture entrepreneur has to be extended to specifically focus on the needs of and to provide incentives to the youth. As an agriculture entrepreneur, young male and female farmers need to understand the commercial (income and employment) opportunities agriculture has to offer and that it is more than a "way of life" but that it can be a good business and therefore attractive. So training on Organic farming including enterprise development, similar to what Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCOM; http://www.spc.int/lrd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=748&Itemid=495) has been promoting are good examples for others to follow and partner with while moving ahead in an integrated and holistic way.

A similar initiative, Future Farmers of the Cook Islands programme was supported by FAO which helped to develop youth expertise in farm management, marketing and agribusiness. I've provide a link to the business development manual prepared by the project which you might find useful:

- Cook Islands Young Agricultural Entrepreneurs Program- Business development manual (FAO webpage outlining the manual: http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/toolkit/ERptkPrintSingleItem_en.asp?codeID=736 or download the document directly – this is a very large 9MB file: http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/documents2009/cook_islands.pdf (PDF; Size: 9MB)

I hope you'll find this helpful.

Venina Niumataiwalu, Youth Research Officer, Research, Policy, Planning and Information Unit, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Fiji

Hello members,

My name is Venina Niumataiwalu and only yesterday did I hear about this "youth and agriculture" e-conversation, and so today I am just briefly providing a snapshot about our Youth Agriculture initiatives/ program in Fiji, which may be of interest to you.

First, we have the "Youth Feed the Nation program" that aims to encourage youths to be proactive and vibrant in spearheading agricultural activities in their families, schools, communities, work place and in the society as a whole, interested youths first participate in a one day Basic Agriculture technique workshop which includes a practical session, and are then distributed seedlings to start their own backyard gardens. Monitoring of the gardens is done by officers of the Ministry on a quarterly basis.

We also have 4 main training centers around Fiji, that offer Basic agriculture courses, this is to encourage youths who are out of the formal school system to go into farming and maybe commercial farming as a source of livelihood, the application for the various training centers are always advertised in the Fiji Sun, the centers are in Sigatoka, Kadavu and two are in Vanua Levu. Please feel free to email me for more information regarding our programmes.

Thank you.

Alana Tukuniu, Senior Crop Development Officer, Niue Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Niue

Hi,

I write in the context of my experience in Niue. I have listed a few pointers below, but first want to say that I think one of the things that is commonly overlooked is that "if agriculture was easy then we would all be doing it - including us!"

Reading through some of the replies I think that there are some fantastic replies from countries:

- Creating linkages is a great idea, such as Kiribati's approach to link sport with agriculture - as I know in Niue our youth are enthusiastic and committed to sport all year round.

- I think the issue of marketing has come up a lot - we need to take a good look at how music stars, actors and sports stars are marketed - this is a significant proportion of the equation... how can we market agriculture to make it more attractive to young farmers? ...animations directed at young people are always a good start, but we need to build on from here.

- The issues that have been brought include how we need to communicate to youth that by being an active participant in agriculture they are becoming part of something great. What I mean by this is that growing our own food helps address issues such as climate change and culture/values. We live in a fast changing world and in our efforts to keep up we are losing our culture-agriculture links, as these are interlinked.

- We also need to work with the health Ministries because the changing diets of young people can also be linked to nutrition. Why do we need Hollywood to tell the world coconuts are a 'superfood', we have known this for centuries? In our everyday life and also traditional medicines... often this knowledge is interchanged between "coconuts being a superfood" to "coconuts being bad for us due to high fat content" - yet if we look back to our history our grandfathers and mothers did not have the incidence of NCD's like we do now... if we link the benefits of our staples to being superfoods and growing these, then I think it will increase the value of agriculture in the eyes of young people and society as a whole. I guess what I am trying to say is we need to value our staple diet first in the aim to promote agriculture in the eyes of everybody... once agriculture is valued then farming as a profession will become more attractive.

In Niue, we are trying to address this issue in a number of ways:

- The Dept Of Agriculture have worked with the Niue High School and have installed an Hydroponics system, from which the students sell produce to teachers and sometimes to the local Resort. We have also set up an A-frame chicken tractor so that students can see the benefits of an integrated system: manure, eggs and tillage.

- Niue had 2 participants at the Organic Workshop in Tonga, referenced by Karen, one from the Dept of Agriculture and one from the Niue Island Organic Farmers Association. Both participants are young active farmers, and it is anticipated that they will be leading a workshop on organic farming practices within the next 2 months. Also, they plan to set up an organic vegetable garden at our primary school to teach young children the benefits and importance of agriculture from a young age - the age where we need to instill the importance of agriculture and how it addresses cross-cutting issues, such as culture, climate change and other environmental concerns.

- Food and access to food is pushing the forefront of national agendas... the importance of agriculture is rising in the media.

- In addressing these issues of youth in agriculture we also need to address the concerns of consumers - people want to know where their food is grown and what is happening all along the value chain. I know in Niue our people are willing to pay the same price or higher for locally produced goods if it is local. (I highly recommend the great agriculture documentary called 'Food Inc.' (You Tube© <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqQVil-MP3I>).

In short addressing the issues of youth in agriculture is a long term one, but in taking the small steps it is possible to achieve.

I hope this helps.

Jacqui Berrell, Pacific Solution Exchange, Suva, Fiji (on behalf of Solomon Times newspaper)

Hello PSE Members,

Here is a great story published in the newspaper 'Solomon Times' (available at Solomon Times Online: <http://www.solomontimes.com/news/youths-find-future-in-food-production/7607>).

Big thanks to the staff at Solomon Times for letting us re-publish this, for the benefit of PSE Members.

Youths Find Future in Food Production
Solomon Times, Friday, 12 April 2013

With little more than a bush knife and an axe between them, a group of young Solomon Island boys between the ages of nine and 18 years have taken food security into their own hands.

In Kindu, a community of 5,000 people in the coastal urban area of Munda in the Solomon Islands, these boys, who have been abandoned by their parents, have transformed their lives by establishing a cooperatively run farm.

They now have the largest urban agricultural enterprise in the Munda area on New Georgia Island, Western Province, which is providing them a sustainable livelihood and boosting wider food and nutritional security.

Youth unemployment stands at 45 percent in the Solomon Islands, a developing South Pacific island state east of Papua New Guinea. Securing an occupation and nutrition here is not easy, but with a vision and wisdom beyond his years, 23-year-old Patrick Arathe has managed to do just that.

Arathe's parents abandoned him when he was just nine years old, and he was sent to live with extended family members, as is the custom here. After completing secondary school, he became deeply concerned about the many children in the area in a similar situation.

With no one to fully support their needs, they suffered from poor nutrition and a lack of clothing, emotional support and guidance. Few could afford to attend school.

"I saw the kids and I knew they were the same as me, fatherless," Arathe told IPS. Strongly convinced that "kids are the future", he was keen to find a way to support them, so in July 2012, he gathered a group of 16 youths and embarked on a small farming project.

Under the laws of customary land-ownership, Arathe managed to obtain a plot of land owned by his grandfather, where his youth group now grows cabbage, beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, pumpkins, potatoes, cassava, corn, watermelons, pawpaws and bananas.

"I thought that farming was the best idea because there are not enough vegetables at the market and there is a big need to grow more," he explained.

Though some of the youths were initially sceptical about the project, their doubts have quickly been replaced by a genuine enthusiasm for agriculture, with some members aiming to become full-time farmers once they finish school.

As the group's leader, Patrick ensures the boys have time to do their homework after school. Then in the late afternoon, when the heat of the sun dissipates, they spread out over the farm to plant, weed, water and harvest some of the crops for the next day's market.

But the going is not always smooth. "The soil is not very good here," Arathe pointed out, adding that environmental and climate challenges often plague their cultivation efforts.

The Kastom Garden Association (KGA), a national NGO, is doing its part to help this youth initiative thrive. The NGO believes that rising sea levels caused by climate change coupled with years of "slash and burn" land clearing practices have degraded the soil and compromised food security in Munda.

The KGA, which prioritises smallholder farmers and focuses on enabling village communities to develop their own practical ways of achieving household food security, has helped Arathe and his group implement a composting system and create an organic pest spray, made from locally grown chillies.

According to Arathe, "The cabbages are now growing faster and bigger."

"We have given the group advice on vegetable nurseries, organic farming methods like composting and mulching, methods to improve their soil and different planting materials to improve crop diversity," KGA's Project Officer Mary Timothy told IPS, adding that the NGO mentors youths involved in farming initiatives in other provinces as well.

Despite challenges along the way, there is no doubting the success of this unique agricultural initiative.

In addition to selling their fresh produce directly to the community, the youth take bulk orders twice a week from the local hospital and from four major businesses on the island. In a week, they can produce and sell between 500 to 1,000 "lots" – a local measurement arrived at by eyeballing the produce -- of fruit and vegetables, earning an approximate income of between 600 and 1,300 dollars.

Local households also support the initiative, with some purchasing produce directly from the farm.

By December 2012, the boys had earned enough money to pay for their needs and enrol as full-time students. Their levels of nutrition have also improved in leaps and bounds.

"We eat vegetables for a balanced diet, sometimes for lunch or in the evening," said Arathe. "The children are starting to grow healthy."

Leslie Kiadapite, principal field officer at the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in Munda, told IPS, "It is very important to engage young people to become involved in agriculture. Even with an education, not everyone here will be employed in the formal sector. So we encourage young people to cultivate the land.

"This is important for food security, income generation and sustainable livelihoods," she added. Eighty percent of this nation's population of 552,000 reap a livelihood from subsistence agriculture, cash crops and fishing. Yet food production still falls short of meeting the demands of a population growing at an annual rate of 2.3 percent, while the legacy of a five-year civil conflict (1999-2003), which erupted following disputes between communities about access to land and resources on the main island of Guadalcanal, heavily impacted infrastructure and services throughout the country.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 14 percent of children below five years of age, or approximately 5,000 in the Solomon Islands are underweight, and 33 percent suffer from stunting due to malnutrition.

Arathe's project seems to point the way towards achieving national goals. Beyond attaining nutritional self-sufficiency, farm labour is teaching boys skills pertaining to livelihood generation, food security and better eating habits, which will benefit them throughout their lifetime.

"They now have experience," Arathe told IPS. "They know how to plant and harvest...They can work at the nursery and do transplanting (of crops). They are much happier, too," he added.

Source: <http://www.iede.co.uk/>

Riten C. Gosai, Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, Nadi Airport, Fiji

Bula All,

Have had the chance to read some interesting pieces and personal experiences from a lot of people around the Pacific. Let me take this opportunity to thank the organizers of this thematic discussion and the moderators for the wonderful job they have been doing.

I felt I could also contribute a little - by sharing the article which I wrote for "The Jet" Newspaper a year back, I guess... in the article I have discussed two core issues which I personally believe are the worst enemies to youth engagement in Agriculture..

Here it is:

TO BE OR NOT TO BE: A HAMLET IN EVERY AGRICULTURAL STUDENT

By: Riten Chand Gosai

Pondering on an idyllic prelude for this article, I remembered my English literature classes back at high school and studying the drama 'Hamlet' – legend of a prince who at one stage of his life is in great dilemma. He contemplates over surviving the harshness of the living world contrary to the 'peacefulness' of death. Similarly, we all face this 'to be or not to be' decision in high school/college; or should I say 'to do or not to do' decision when it comes to choosing our subject combinations. Just like Hamlet found it hard to capitulate to death as he would be termed frail, many students find it difficult to opt for 'agriculture' with the trepidation of being labelled 'taking the easy way out' or 'a future farmer' – trust me, I was. Agriculture seems to be a harsh pill to swallow for many students.

In Fiji's contextual scenario, this old-age mindset of youths is a result of dire experiences they typically encounter at home and at school. While the national priority is to achieve certain degree of self-sufficiency in staple produce and livestock, agriculture and particularly agricultural studies is not receiving similar lime-light; the response to which I discovered in this motivating quote: "farmers are getting older while farms are getting larger and more industrialized – the economy continues to stumble. What can we do to keep agriculture sustainable? The most valuable crop we can grow is the next generation"...

However, there are two commonplace phenomenons that keep youths in a lumber whether to take up agricultural studies and develop it into a career. First being the 'family expectations' and secondly, the 'experiences at school'.

In my opinion, the family unit is extremely influential in how a person's career takes shape. In that perspective, it is common knowledge that parents with certain expectations from their children always prefer them pursuing white collar jobs; a total disregard for agricultural studies and related careers. This viewpoint is due to the fact that farming has been a tough ask for them (especially with the indentured 'Girmit' system in the colonial era and the lack of farm mechanization/ technology in previous years). Majority perceive their children will go through the

same ordeal without realizing agriculture/farming has modernised in various ways and with scientific knowledge, innovative ideas and effective organization, they can be entrepreneurs of highly profitable farm businesses or take-up well-off professions.

A survey by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Land Resources Division which is entailed in the 'Youth and Agriculture Strategy 2011 – 2015' states that young people identified the importance of family support as central to their engagement in agricultural activities and enterprises. At the same time, these young people expressed the desire to be acknowledged, emotionally and financially, for such contributions and for the supporting role they played within their families. If young people are to be encouraged to develop into successful agricultural entrepreneurs their families must recognise that they must be facilitated in accessing land and finance and in controlling the financial returns from their activities. These activities though, must be separate from their contributions to family or community agriculture.

Furthermore in my observation, an issue which is not much deliberated about and goes unchallenged is the discouragement students receive in school when it comes to agricultural studies. This is more or less a consequence of pre-conceived ideas they acquire at home or the ones imposed on them by peers and teachers alike. While conversing with several secondary school students in the quest for factual accounts, I recognized that it is in the understanding of many young people that agriculture is any 'easy' subject, not attractive and for average students. They also deem that agricultural studies do not lead to noble professions; providing evidence of their slender outlook of the diverse agricultural field and serious lack of career advice. Students can also develop this negative attitude if teachers impress upon them that agriculture is a less worthwhile subject to pursue than others and also use agriculture as a means of discipline or punishment [for example, being penalized to do gardening for not following a rule].

I have felt the brunt of this harsh reality first hand. When asked about my subject combinations at school or bachelors program at my university, a reply of agricultural science always attracted reactions of "oh ok", "oh", or "why not something else" with sarcastic grins on peoples' faces. Such discrepancies will continue to undermine the efforts of any form of awareness if the grassroots issues are not addressed.

Ignoring agriculture and its studies would be an act of foolishness so as to think we do not need food production anymore. Sometimes, it is not about what you farm (either perishables or livestock); it is how you go about executing it. Making resources available, understanding the weather, utilizing innovations (especially ICTs), manipulating cropping patterns, integration and efficient management just may be the key ingredients. Young minds have the capacity to absorb and the capability to perform this. However, unless we alter attitudes at home and actions in school, a 'Hamlet' will continue to dwell in every student wanting to pursue agricultural studies and career.

(ENDS)

The key words in the article being "change in mindset" and "altering attitudes" which would only eventuate if tackled at the very grassroots level - home and schools.

The solutions suggested by my colleague Praneet Goundar to attract youth to agriculture in his discussion is a great counter to my article... In other words, if we recognize that such core problems persist [as in the article] and undertake initiatives/proposals suggested by him... we can make a difference.

Climate Change, Population Growth, Urbanization, non-industrialized island countries - the 4 reasons we need to prioritize agriculture, its studies and the diverse careers it has to offer.

Thank you for your time all.

Hope we all can work together to bring change.

Ropate Ligairi, Permanent Secretary – Agriculture, Ministry of Primary Industries, Raiwaqa, Fiji

Hello,

I'm the Permanent Secretary for Agriculture in Fiji and am pleased to see this issue of youth and agriculture being discussed, as I've been interested in this issue because I have been teaching at the Fiji College of Agriculture for about 20 years, from 1989 to 2009. Actually before that I was in the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) working one year in research from 1981-82 and then I went to work as an Extension Officer out in communities, especially in the Western division, advising farmers and organising them.

Actually that's one area where we lack – organizing ourselves to do things together. Organising ourselves and to plan farming as a career – actually there are quite a lot of people out there who don't have a clue at all about what is going on in terms of potential careers in agriculture. A lot of people, not just youths, have no clue at all and just do farming for subsistence and they don't know about this whole value change – from the producer to the market.

There's three other things I'm going to highlight, too: that a lot of the youth programs we do are for groups but we need to start extending these activities to the individual and in a way that agriculture fits into their long term life plans; the distraction of information technology on youths who seem less able to commit to longer term activities such as agriculture; and finally that youth should not rely on funding or assistance for agriculture as they are able to be self-funding.

At MPI we assist groups whether they are youths or whatever, not only with advice but also assistance through farm implements or whatever. If the youth group is working well and they have a secured lease and they are generating produce then we can help them out.

But what happens after that? After being a member of the youth group, what does the individual youth do? What is their next step after they leave that youth group, and maybe get married and want to start a family and build a house? The bottom line is, "what are they individually going to gain (from the group) and follow through in the long term?" We need to lead the individual group members to something else.

I think we need to tell the youth that "this is your life, you really should have a plan for your whole life". Sometimes we just tell them "you group of youths go plant pineapple" and so they do it. But what about when they are no longer part of the group - they understand what they want (to get married and have a family and build a house) but they don't really think about how they are going to get it, and how agriculture can help them and be part of their life plan.

Agriculture needs to be part of a long term plan for each individual youth – as a youth group they get involved but then when they leave the group will they stay involved in agriculture? How will it be part of their daily life in the longer term? It's only then that introducing youth to a certain project will be sustainable – so they can see how it fits into their long term plans – that they do this and then they get a wife and then they get a house and so on, and agriculture remains part of their life for the long term.

A good example of this working is at the Tutu Rural Training Centre in Fiji good (mentioned by Andrew McGregor last week). At Tutu they are training there for 3 years and after that they

graduate with a master plan or business plan of what they want to achieve for the next 5 to 10 years. So agriculture becomes part of their life plan. When they become married and they have a lot of other responsibilities they still have agriculture in their life.

It's not like before when you are at home and you are mentored at home by the parents with agriculture and everything, but it's different now especially in rural areas with information technology and people moving into towns. Back then you would go with your parents to the plantation and they would tell you why they do this, and why they plant that - I don't know if parents are doing this nowadays. It used to be that when the father is away from home then at least the son can look after the home with what he has been taught. And that's about the son developing as an individual, and same for the females.

That's probably where training and education are important. That's my philosophy in life "we live to learn and learn to love". Learn to look after yourself and your environment and learn to look after others and your family, and learn to live to love.

That is one of the things with youth, everyone goes where the fun is – that's part of life and development, you come to that age when you want to be adventurous. When you live in the village you may have no lights but when you here in the city or towns there is light. Also with information technology we live in a global village, the problem with youth today is that they know a lot of things because of all the information that is coming. But with information technology, things come and go, and everything moves quickly and youth just want a quick fix, and they forget about the basic thing that is very important for them such as agriculture, which is not a quick fix or a fashion that will come and go. It's just because of the information technology that is buzzing and so we can't blame them – we are a global village but there are costs. When we are a global village everything seems to run fast, and when we run very fast we forget about the basic things.

That's the biggest challenge for us, we need to have a strong team to go around and advocate to youth and ag. Talk to them about the basic of agriculture.

But already we have some successes. We have the "one third two third assistance" program. So the farmer provides one third funding needed and we provide two thirds, such as for a tractor. Really it's meant to help out where farmers cannot - where they fall short and there is a hurdle they cannot overcome, that where the program comes in. It started about 5 years ago. We always target groups that are working and doing something already. The response has been good because in the past we never had this type of program and it works well with people who are genuinely trying to do something.

But the Tutu program teaches the student to start with nothing and they don't rely on borrowed money. If you have the resources and the land and you are still young, then you can achieve anything. That's what the youth should be taught.

Again it's about organizing ourselves, we have the resources there and the land and we have the power with the youths but we are not achieving anything and saying "there's not any money" is not really the problem. The problem is the mindset.

Our objective in government is poverty alleviation and food security – that's one of the most important things - and economic livelihood, economic recovery and sustainable development. We hope that our programs will help address those objectives especially food security and economic livelihood.

Thank you.

High Chief Vaasiliifiti Moelagi Jackson, Faasao Savaii Society and Samoa Umbrella of Non Governmental Organisations (SUNGO), Samoa

Bula Anju,

Malo lava Anju for your response that is what the community are crying out for - the experts and Agriculture Sector to come away from their desks and be visible with a friendly approach to the young agricultural sector who are hungry for things to do in such organised manner.

I like the way you are pointing out the truth between collective and individual - I strongly support that point that much of our youth have been directed to wrong causes and organised activities without sustainability in the plan.

(Ropate) Group youth activities should include the sustainability at end of the group effort each one of them should take the knowledge and the learning back home or his village - with the appropriate support of some idea on accounting and marketing (selection of crops according to the need of his community to start with before looking at the big picture like outside market away from his village and neighborhood.

Dr Rajesh Maharaj, Maharaj Medical Centre, Suva, Fiji

Hello,

Food For Life Fiji is distributing free food to different schools once per week at present. This to promote healthy eating and feed school students with vegetarian food.

We had a youth seminar on spirituality and nation building on the 13th of April which was very well attended by 200 from various schools and religious institutions. It was a huge success.

I can email you the programme; there were many topics covered including violence against women. Parents have to be exemplary and they themselves have to keep home gardens and encourage youths in agriculture....faith based organizations will have to play a role as well.

Thank you so much.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Climate Change and Development Community in the Pacific at ccd-pc@solutionexchange-un.net with the subject heading "Re: [ccd-pc-se] QUERY: Engaging Youth in Agriculture and Fisheries. Additional Reply."

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