



REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY RESEARCH & EXTENSION LINKAGES FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY & TRADE 24 – 28, AUGUST, 2015. APIA, SAMOA.

Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (PIRAS); Pacific Agricultural Plant Genetic Resources Network (PAPGREN); Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy Network (PAFPNet); POETCom; Reforestation Network (RFRNet); Pacific Animal Health Laboratory Network (PAHLNet);

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

LRD has a mandate to assist the Pacific Community improve food, nutritional and income security and sustainable management of land, agriculture and forestry resources. Under its strategic objective one, LRD will provide support and technical expertise to PICTS by supporting informed policy decisions, advocacy and knowledge sharing on sustainable land, agriculture and forestry development. Research, Extension and Advisory Services (REAS) are integral components for agricultural production and food and income security for rural communities. However, in most Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), REAS face many challenges to meet the increasing demands for expanded role and effective services. Declining public funding has led to reduction in staff and inadequate operational budgets. As a consequence, most public extension services are faced with the challenge of limited institutional and human capacity resulting in low coverage with distant and remote areas often poorly served and also weakly integrated into local and export markets. The often perceived problem is absence of favourable policies and limited linkage and synergy between research and extension programs. It is increasingly recognised that if REAS have to effectively support farmers in addressing the new challenges in agricultural development, there is a need to strengthen its linkages and cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders and organisations. Further, there is emerging plurality of REAS providers in the region which raises the need to assess and define national and regional fora for effective REAS.

The EU-PAPP implemented by SPC in 15 Pacific ACP countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu) and including East Timor, is aimed at addressing the development needs of smallholder farmers and the commercial agricultural sector in the Pacific region by providing clear, evidence-based frameworks for promoting production, research and development, extension, agricultural statistics and promoting stronger linkages to national and international markets through farmer associations and the commercial sector.

In addition, SPC is partnering with GFRAS and other partners to build the capacity of REAS in order to respond more effectively to the private sector and farmers innovation needs. The first ever Pacific Extension Summit was convened by SPC in the Kingdom of Tonga in 2005 and recommended the formation of the Pacific Islands Extension Network (PIEN), now renamed Pacific Islands Rural Advisory

Services (PIRAS), was endorsed and supported by the Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (HOAFS) and Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry Services (MOAFS) of the 22 PICTs. PIRAS is an informal network with ultimate aim to provide a platform for networking, professional development and representation of members. A second Extension Summit held in Fiji in 2009 recommended strengthening PIRAS governance and accountability through a board structure, representing the three Sub-Regions and SPC. LRD as the Secretariat for PIRAS had promoted and successfully linked PIRAS to GFRAS and the Asia Pacific Rural Advisory Services (APIRAS). To strengthen PIRAS Network and its linkage to GFRAS and other Regional Networks, one of the key activities identified is to develop a regional extension strategy. This activity also directly linked to LRD's mandate and the EU-PAPP's focus in strengthening policy frameworks and institutional strengthening in agricultural development.

PURPOSE

Thus, the purpose of the consultation workshop is to bring together REAS from the PICTs and key stakeholders to explore ways of strengthening REAS capacity in order to effectively support farmers to better markets access and income diversification which can ultimately benefit food security and better nutrition.

OBJECTIVES

The meeting will seek to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify and analyse priorities, policy challenges and opportunities for Research, Extension and Advisory Services (REAS) in the Pacific Region;
2. To share knowledge, experience for best fit REAS models for the different local contexts.
3. To develop a Regional Extension Strategy

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Synthesized priority challenges and opportunities related to capacity development, advocacy and networking between REAS at both national and regional levels;
2. A compendium of research and extension best practices
3. A list of priority research areas
4. Regional Extension Strategy developed

WORKSHOP ORGANIZERS

The consultation workshop is jointly organized by the Land Resources Division (LRD) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Government of Samoa (Samoa) and Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa (SROS) with funding support from the Intra-ACP EU project on "Pacific Agricultural Policy Project" (PAPP) and the International Food and Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) through the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS).

PARTICIPANTS

The opportunity will bring together researchers, extension and advisory services (REAS) and key stakeholders in agricultural innovation systems. Invited participants will include Heads of Research and Extension from selected countries in the region. Representatives from major partner agencies including regional and international organizations will also be invited to speak on selected topics related to strengthening research and extension services.

WORKSHOP PROCESS

The consultation workshop will involve joint and parallel events organised around key thematic areas:

1. Scene Setting: Thematic Areas (Monday)

- a. **Concepts and Methodologies** – the first session will focus on setting the scene with highlights of an SPC-led review of extension services in the region. The presentations will focus around key issues related to research and extension in the Pacific, extension approaches, best fit models and tools and technology transfer methodologies.
- b. **Good Practices and Lessons from the Pacific** – the session will involve presentations on research and extension programs from selected countries from the three subregions (Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia).

2. Parallel Sessions (Tuesday)

The parallel sessions involve two thematic sessions run concurrently in two separate rooms. Participants will have the option of choosing which topic of interest to attend. The thematic areas include:

- a. **Emerging Roles and Needs of Private Sector and Producer Associations REAS** – it is increasingly recognised the need to articulate the needs and priorities of the private sector and the farming community in the area of research and advisory services and the emerging role and involvement of the private sector and NGOs in research and extension services. The plenary session will involve selected private sectors experience to speak on the needs based in research and extension to meet the emerging challenges on market and food security needs.
- b. **Role of academia in strengthening REAS (Vice Versa)** – the plenary will include speakers from selected academic institutions to present the role of academia in strengthening research and extension services and current status of programs and opportunities therein.
- c. **Role of IKM and Social Media in strengthening capacity of REAS** – the session will involve plenary presentations on strengthening the capacity of research and extension on technology diffusion and adoption to strengthen their impact on agricultural production and productivity.
- d. **Strengthening Partnership in REAS** – currently, several ongoing research and extension programs in the region has been supported by several development partners including, EU, NZ AID, ACIAR, IFAD, FAO, GFRAS and many others in research. The plenary will involve selected development partners to speak on opportunities and linkages with other partners in the region and at the global supporting research and extension programs in the region.
- e. **Plenary Feedback Session** - The session will involve plenary report back on the outcomes of the parallel sessions.

3. Parallel Prioritisation Sessions (Wednesday)

Outcomes of Tuesday Parallel sessions will feed into Wednesday Sessions. The Wednesday Parallel Sessions will involve Extensionists solely focus on developing and finalising a Draft Regional Extension Strategy. The strategy will be developed prior to the meeting. Currently SPC is working with an independent consultant to undertake a review of extension services in the region to guide the strategy development. Researchers will focus on prioritisation and discussions on PAPGREN and other priority research areas at national and those that can be supported from the region. In addition, the sessions will involve looking at case studies and best fit practices for the different local contexts.

4. Field Trips (Thursday)

The event will also involve field trips to selected sites and enterprises to observe Samoa's experience and efforts in strengthening research, extension and private sector linkages to promote food and income security in Samoa. Drafting Committee will spend Thursday tidying up the research priorities and regional extension strategy to be presented to plenary on Friday

5. Plenary Sessions (Friday)

Regional extension strategy and Priority Research areas (national and regional) will be presented to plenary for feedback/comments. The final session will develop some recommendations to put forth to the upcoming HOAFS/MOAF Meeting scheduled for March 2016.