

## Consolidated Responses for the PAFPNet Discussion for the month of September 2015

Date: 15/09/2015 – 02/10/2015

### "Agricultural policy access, uptake and content"

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

Five questions were underlined for the discussion that triggered a thorough exchange of views. The accessibility of agricultural policies was highlighted imperative for Pacific Island countries. According to Vanuatu, their Agricultural sector policy was non-existent until provision was granted by the European Union (EU) supported Pacific Agricultural Policy Project (PAPP). The forum also drew attention to the availability of agriculture sector policies and its availability in their countries. The ad-hoc attitude without a vision of long-term strategic planning is an issue the ministries in the Pacific must address in order to achieve an effective and concise sector policy.

It is vital that underlying issues pertinent to each country be strongly emphasized in their national sector policy. Identifying these issues will contribute to strengthening each sector in the economy, specifically those in direct relationship with the agriculture industry. On a larger scale, a regional approach is what is needed to address certain issues. Contributors to the dialogue stated that finance access, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), marketing, processing (value-add process), youth in agriculture and climate change issues are problems that need a regional approach.

In addition, national commodities were also described as a means to contribute in the progression of each country's national policy. Placing more focus and emphasis on agricultural produce, fruits and livestock production were pinpointed critical for improving national policy in the Pacific.

Moreover, a common trend had been identified among farmers for their lack of active engagement in the formulation of sector policy development. It was suggested by our PAFPNet members that more meetings and stakeholder workshops need to be held in order to tackle this issue. Involving farmers, businesses, private sectors and youth in policy consultation processes would help reinforce national agriculture sector policies in the Pacific. On the same note, the discussion also generated a table topic of youth participation in sector policy development. Apprentice programs with growers/farmers and national youth consultations were listed as a channel to increase youth participation in this area.

Lastly, information and communications technology (ICT) has been considered essential for the evolution of the agriculture industry and national policy sector. Respondents stated that in order to maximise ICT to create an effective policy sector system, tools should be utilised for information dissemination via social media and be given proper training, for instance Web 2.0. Additionally, using existing institutions like that of the ministries, farmer schools and organisations would be a great vehicle to provide effective training on capitalizing ICT and catering for capacity development.

The assessments of the consolidated responses were gauged from the questions below:

**1] Policies need to be made easily accessible to all key stakeholders. Do you know if your country has an agricultural sector policy document?**

- If yes, do you have a copy or know where you can get one?
- If no, would you like to get access to a copy?

[Please list Country Name]

**2] What are 3-5 issues (eg exports, import substitution, access to finance, health/NCD, youths, food security) that your national sector policy should contain?**

- What are 3-5 commodities or industries that your country's national policy should help progress further?

**3] What are 5 issues that need a regional approach?**

**4] How can farmers better engage in sector policy formulation/development?**

- How can business/private sector engage in sector policy formulation/development?
- How can academia/youths better engage in sector policy development?

**5] How can ICT help disseminate agricultural policy information? Are there other media forms that would help policy makers disseminate agricultural information quickly to rural households?**

Please visit the following link PAFNet discussion:

<http://www.spc.int/pafpnet/pafpnet/discussion-summaries>

Responses from:

1. [Mr. Howard Aru, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity – Vanuatu](#)
  2. [Mr. Fernando Sengebau, Bureau of Agriculture – Palau](#)
  3. [Mr. Minoru Nishi, Nishi Trading – Tonga](#)
  4. [Mr. Patrick Arioka, Ministry of Agriculture – Cook Islands](#)
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1. Mr. Howard Aru, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity – Vanuatu

**1] Policies need to be made easily accessible to all key stakeholders. Do you know if your country has an agricultural sector policy document?**

- ***If yes, do you have a copy or know where you can get one?***
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***[Please list Country Name]***

Vanuatu launched its first ever Agriculture sector policy (since Independence in 1980) on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015. We received support from the PAPP project for design and layout plus printing;

thanks to Vili and PAPP team for all support. Yet again with the help of PAPP project and CTA, Vanuatu will be launching this and several other key policies in the Pacific Region's first every

'policy bank' next Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> September. This will be launched before a regional audience in Port Vila following a three-day long IKM workshop in the capital. The policy bank will make life

easier for policy makers, researchers, students, and other stakeholders in providing a ready source for them to resort to in order to find relevant policy documents.

**2] What are 3-5 issues (eg exports, import substitution, access to finance, health/NCD, youths, food security) that your national sector policy should contain?**

- ***What are 3-5 commodities or industries that your country's national policy should help progress further?***

For Vanuatu, as already contained in our agriculture sector policy, the document focuses on thirteen key thematic areas, namely: Institutional Setup and Compliance, Extension and Training,

Finance, Agriculture Land use, Agriculture Investment, Research and Development, Planting Materials plus tools and Agricultural inputs, Environmental Protection and Sustainable farming,

Production and market access, to name a few. Health/NCD is also an important component we want to take up specifically with our colleagues at the Ministry of Health, as well as 'Youths in Agriculture' – which is a very important component of work we want to do in the future in addressing 'Civic Youth Engagement' measures which was the theme of the UN's 2015 focus on this particular sector.

### ***3] What are 5 issues that need a regional approach?***

Whilst a number of regional subjects may have already been discussed in the PAFNet grouping over the last few months, I think the issues of access to finance, marketing, ICT for Agriculture,

Agricultural mechanisation, and light industrial processing of agricultural produce/products are areas that seriously need discussion regionally. The last one on processing in Vanuatu's case can be a bit tricky as it is generally viewed as being the ambit of our colleagues at trade and industry. Whatever the case may be, from the Agriculture Ministry side, it is imperative that when we encourage farmers to 'produce' more, we also need to know that the big picture is addressed so that we are not left with disappointed producers who cannot find good markets for their produce.

One way to ensure broadening the market base is through light processing to target the tourism market – which in Vanuatu's case is growing (despite the setbacks imposed on us by TC Pam last March).

### ***4] How can farmers better engage in sector policy formulation/development?***

- ***How can business/private sector engage in sector policy formulation/development?***
- ***How can academia/youths better engage in sector policy development?***

Farmers, business/private sector and academia plus youths can better engage in sector policy formulation/development largely by actually involving them in our policy consultation processes

as we've already done for the agriculture sector policy and now our livestock sector policy for which a final validation workshop for our northern provinces is currently underway in Santo. The

final validation workshop for our southern side will take place in Port Vila soon. Without the engagement of these very important stakeholders our relevant policies will be incomplete. Soon we

will be into policy formulation for our Biosecurity policy and by early 2016 our national fisheries policy. Both will follow the same processes as the other departments already mentioned earlier.

### ***5] How can ICT help disseminate agricultural policy information? Are there other media forms that would help policy makers disseminate agricultural information quickly to rural households?***

In Vanuatu, the Ministry of Agriculture by far is the lead Ministry in pushing for and advocating for the use of 'ICT for Agriculture' (besides the Office of the Chief Information Officer – which role is largely to facilitate this infrastructure to relevant line Ministries/Users). Our top level officials have recently undergone web 2.0 training on ICT to complete a series of three training programs, two of which were conducted earlier. Soon we will purchase relevant tools to help our officers begin to use ICT in more proactive ways in disseminating information from provinces and from farmers to HQ. Eventually we want to have lead farmers also networked into our ICT system. Right now we already have an ICT Unit at the Ministry's newly established Directorate Building.

We want to push for greater ICT work in Agriculture in Vanuatu so we have sought support from CTA to help draw up an ICT strategy for us. Groundwork preparations are on. The road is still challenging, but we will get there.

Howard Aru

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## **2. Mr. Fernando Sengebau, Bureau of Agriculture – Palau**

**1] Policies need to be made easily accessible to all key stakeholders. Do you know if your country has an agricultural sector policy document?**

- ***If yes, do you have a copy or know where you can get one?***
- ***If no, would you like to get access to a copy?***

***[Please list Country Name]***

Yes, Palau has an Agricultural Sector Policy and I do have a copy...

**2] What are 3-5 issues (eg exports, import substitution, access to finance, health/NCD, youths, food security) that your national sector policy should contain?**

1. Food Security
2. Health/ NCD
3. Import substitution
  - ***What are 3-5 commodities or industries that your country's national policy should help progress further?***
    - Vegetables
    - Fruits
    - Livestock Production

**3] What are 5 issues that need a regional approach?**

1. Agricultural Subsidies

2. Climate Change Issues
3. Youth & Agriculture
4. Farm Input Cost
5. Farmers' Associations

**4] How can farmers better engage in sector policy formulation/development?**

- **How can business/private sector engage in sector policy formulation/development?**  
Stakeholder workshops/ meetings
- **How can academia/youths better engage in sector policy development?**  
Apprentice Programs with growers/ farmers

**5] How can ICT help disseminate agricultural policy information? Are there other media forms that would help policy makers disseminate agricultural information quickly to rural households?**

- ICT can help by posting information in websites/ social media
- Television/ Radio are very effective

Fernando

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**3. Mr. Minoru Nishi, Nishi Trading – Tonga**

**1] Policies need to be made easily accessible to all key stakeholders. Do you know if your country has an agricultural sector policy document?**

We are about to approve our first ever Agriculture Sector Plan which is all inclusive and includes livestock, crops and a separate one for Fisheries.

- **If yes, do you have a copy or know where you can get one?**

I do have a draft but this is currently under review by our Agriculture Sector Committee which is a PPP. I would have to get permission from the AGC to be able to give this to your office.

- **If no, would you like to get access to a copy?**

Tonga

[Please list Country Name]

**2] What are 3-5 issues (eg exports, import substitution, access to finance, health/NCD, youths, food security) that your national sector policy should contain?**

Value adding/Processing to address import substitute opportunities, thereby help reduce our balance of trade deficits with neighbouring countries such as Australia and NZ. This will also increase niche export market opportunities. FYI, our proposed sector plans looks covering all of the above.

To achieve this, we need to improve and address the following:

- i). Infrastructure
- ii) Transport/Logistics
- iii) Capacity Building for farmers and processing plant (technical support)

- **What are 3-5 commodities or industries that your country's national policy should help progress further?**

root crops, cucurbits, processing, Farmer Field School and Research and Development AND extension services to be strengthened. Vehicle for this latter could be through the FFS concept through applied research in the communities combined with strengthening the capacities of extension officers.

**3] What are 5 issues that need a regional approach?**

1. Climate Change
2. Harmonization of market access submissions
3. Advocate and provide support to a collective of private sector led initiatives that will impact improved trade opportunities for our small holder farmers.
4. Health - NCD's is a major issue in the region. A stock take of what is happening in each country is needed so that a more effective regional approach can be developed.

**4] How can farmers better engage in sector policy formulation/development?**

- **How can business/private sector engage in sector policy formulation/development?**
- **How can academia/youths better engage in sector policy development?**

Country consultations to include all key stakeholders. We in Tonga have certainly gone out and done this in the developing and forming of our sector plan. The following groups were interviewed throughout the country and island groups:

Church leaders, Youth, farmers, district and town officers, private sector, NGO's and government employees

***5] How can ICT help disseminate agricultural policy information? Are there other media forms that would help policy makers disseminate agricultural information quickly to rural households?***

ICT is necessary and could be released through town and district officers who are government reps appointed by the people. We should train them, especially those in remote isolated communities to be able to use basic ICT tools to enable to gain access to simplified policy information. The Farmer Field School would also be a good vehicle to provide effective trainings on ICT and this should slowly provide capacity over time for the people to access information to allow them to make informed decision whether it be weather (climate change) or technical for addressing production issues.

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**4. Mr. Patrick Arioka, Ministry of Agriculture – Cook Islands**

***1. Policies need to be made easily accessible to all key stakeholders. Do you know if your country has an agricultural sector policy document?***

For a very long time and for many years now the Cook Islands agriculture development had unfortunately operated on a typical ad-hoc basis, heavily politicised by government minister of the day, who at his own discretion pursue on what the Agriculture industry will focus on without any strategic planning or long-term holistic vision goal. Until such time that the end of that government minister reign have concluded, and a new minister in transition changes over, so as a new shift in agriculture focus. This in its self was the typical dilemma since the 1990s, early 2000 to 2013. Based on this, you can immediately agree that the accessibility of an agriculture sector policy was not the problem, but the need to create an agriculture sector policy document is what the Ministry of Agriculture is currently carrying out to date. So for the first time ever, the Ministry of Agriculture Cook Islands is developing its Food and Agriculture Sector Policy document and still progressing to capture the needs of industries, the intention of the communities and the support Small Medium size Enterprise needs. And so we are thankful that this document will be completed through the funding of FAO and SPC under the Pacific Agricultural Policy Program PAPP.

The progress so far; we are privilege to gain funding through FAO to complete phase 1 and 2 of our sector policy document and through SPC – PAPP program we will be completing phase 3 and 4 of the sector policy document. Our intention is to get the policy document **right by the all communities** and all those who has strong invested interest in this document. In terms of accessibility, our intent is to make sure that the policy design for awareness is **public tailored** with limited to no policy jargon use



of words, very simple language and translated into Cook Islands Maori so that every citizen will be able to understand our 3 – 5 year development plan of intent and its impact measures that influences change and gains for all beneficiaries. We are happy to date that SPC through the PAPP program will be supporting Cook Islands towards these improvements. Our intention is to gain stakeholder buy-in into our new agriculture programs, selling new initiatives around the top 5 development initiatives of increasing agriculture economic growth, private sector engagement, the essential key indicators of measuring our policy effectiveness. So this is not just about accessing a copy of our policy document, but to help better inform policy initiative expectation to the various entities of Cook Islands civil society.

- *If yes, do you have a copy or know where you can get one?*
- *If no, would you like to get access to a copy?*  
*[Please list Country Name]*

**2. What are 3-5 issues (e.g. exports, import substitution, access to finance, health/NCD, youths, Food security) that your national sector policy should contain?**

The Cook Islands Agriculture Sector Policy Strategic Vision focuses on 4 key elements (i) Healthy Soils, (ii) healthy food, (iii) Local and appropriate, (iv) While sustaining our common livelihoods. Under these four elements, immediately it captures all 5 issues above intended for development in the next 5 – 10 years. However they are spread over immediate, medium to short and long term priority groups. What is of interest though is that our vision goals for export priority have reduced to the lowest on the list. It means that the rest of the issues are more pressing concerns to our social, economic and environmental development needs in the agriculture sector. It means it calls for immediate attention to concerns around NCDs import substitution and food security which are key areas that the Ministry of Agriculture have heard loud from our stakeholders, the community, the private sector and partners in which we are working to develop around these issues policy objective and guiding principles necessity to meet local food product demand and supply to cater for tourism demand, healthy living from food nutrition and climate change resilience in food security. For example;

- i. **Import substitution** and **NCD health** concerns are closely related synergies, as well with **Food Security**. Cook Islands is at the highest peak of obesity or NCD fatality, a population dependent on imported low nutritional food. The 2011 Census confirms that while the population earnings is high, and unemployment estimates is below 1.0%, the productive workforce age group no longer engages in any farming but consumes heavily on prepared local and imported fast food. While at the same time import substitution opportunities to substitute imported food crops can be grown locally; it means a portion takeover produced by local farmers falls in the millions of dollars. Our % target focus on 8% food substitution means that the total of \$NZ 48million of imported food alone will be taken up locally by our farmers at a total of \$NZ 3.4 million of our domestic market. This is a huge retention to reduce leakage from 48 cents to 35 cents of every \$1 dollar, a realistic

target. Over the 5 years, we expect an increase forecast of 2.7% every year in agriculture GDP. Already in 2014, we have made an increase by 0.9% growth, when our agriculture GDP contribution was 2.6% and now a growth to 3.5%. And so there are already triggered changes through Agritourism, chef programs and restaurant innovations on local food menus into the hotels and motels which are some of the causes in demanding fresh local food products. We intend to grow more in these areas.

While we are addressing import substitution, the focus of NCDs is critical. High deaths due to NCD are clearly government highest priority. Our role is to promote high nutrition value crops, increase awareness on how best to cook and promote new vegetable recipes in the likes of cooking egg-plant, a foreign crop 10 years ago and now a famous food dish. At the same time, we are attending to increase resilient crops that are necessary for food security; crops that are resilient to high heat tolerant temperatures, pests and diseases, salt inundation, resistant to draught and flooding. These are in propagation phase to increase planting materials and through the regional SPC germplasm tissue cultured laboratory. These crops are becoming available to the most remote atoll islands in the Cook Islands. So these strategic visions are initiatives to some extent complementing policies that are reasonable targets, necessary government investment, economically important and environmentally sound against climate change preparation and impacts for the next 5 years.

- ii. Our 5 commodities apart from fruit and vegetables, and food crops are of high value long term crops necessary to maintain ongoing livelihoods on small islands industries like the **Maire lei's, Vanilla farming, Organic Noni farming, Coconut oil extract, pig and goat hunting gaming enterprise**. These crops and tourist operator businesses are both traditional value crops and our policy initiative of intent allows government to engage in increasing accessibility to **finance and mentoring package facility**, that is provided through our Private Sector partner, the Chamber of Commerce. Funding injections are channelled through to existing growers operations who needs small seed funding injection enough to increase and/or maintain production value. It also focuses on small community based programs where the Mitiaro Island Maire lei's program are community based livelihoods. The intended growth to increase Maire lei's to Hawaii is expected to increase another 15% in the next 3 years. The demand and value of the lei's are so high that the island council and communities are paying more attention to protect this small industry. Success stories of other islands in the past in similar programs needs to be told and reviewed to help capture some of the gaps and issues. Through FAO technical support we are able to ignite more fuel into these traditional industries that needs a little more financial boost into the business. While funding is made available to these industries, the catch here is to ensure a mentoring component is factored into the project that will help re-address administration and governance issues, ongoing data capturing and proper standard recording keeping, book keeping and finance and other areas.

There are other areas working towards supporting industries which our sector policy of intent is progressing towards. What remains to be seen, is the engagement of other stakeholders who has the necessary mandate of playing a much proactive role to support these initiatives. As sector, the approach of implementation cannot be done by the Ministry of Agriculture alone but with the involvement of other agencies in government, NGOs, and the private sector that has the influence, mandate advocacy and network to push policy engagement. For the first time, the Ministry is gaining traction through the support of entities of the private sector, NGOs and government ministries and therefore we are expecting to expand and solidify better partnership in these areas.

- ***What are 3-5 commodities or industries that your country's national policy should help progress further?***

### **3. *What are 5 issues that need regional approach?***

#### **1. SPC PAPP program Needs Continuation, Countries need more Technical Support:**

For the very first time ***“finally”*** the Pacific Countries Agriculture policy departments are being supported through a regional program by SPC under a PAPP initiative. ***“It is our belief, more is needed for Pacific Country policy support needs and therefore more emphasis to continue the PAPP is critical”***. Thanks to SPC, Land Resource Department, a PAPP program devised to address governance and help develop tangible policies, an area unfortunately are not part of the Agriculture University Curriculum of the University of the South Pacific. Only unless you choose to undertake a management and governance degrees that your awareness for stringent policy and its purpose to drive agriculture farming systems becomes critical to the formation structure for the industries, country agriculture development plans, which are the essential instruments for effective sound implementation mechanisms to drive short and long term agriculture development towards robust economic growth. As an Alafua undergrad, and now an MBA graduate it was clear to me that the Agriculture Ministries not only the Cook Islands are overwhelmed with highly technical agriculturalist with limited to no experience or qualification in policy, project or operations, systems management qualification which are unfortunate gaps in today agriculture institutions. The evidence are, Vanuatu Agriculture Ministry recent launch of a Sector Policy today is proof that for the first time ever Vanuatu has a national plan, a holistic approach with determined strategic goals for the next 15 years. The initiative was driven by those who realised the necessity of streamlining development ideas into a holistic vision that requires justified government and donor support. Today it Vanuatu policy plan affirms the people of Vanuatu, governments' intention for the next 15 years and where it is heading to guarantee economic growth

and sustainability. The same applies to the Cook Islands. We are in the final phase of completing our sector plan and for the first time ever, we have *“finally”* determine our destination for the next 10 years. It affirms government and to our partners our priorities as farming communities, and where they can assist as donors. And so this is proves that our agriculture institutions focus mainly on technical interest puts us behind the others if we are to compare with other development institutions like, the Health, Education, Infrastructure, Finance institutions of government and many others. ***“Why? Because we have been more concern about planting, growing too much for no reason and forgotten about how we can best market our products, become business entrepreneur driven and focus on increasing efficiency, profit and sustainability streamlined into an holistic long term vision”.***

#### **Agri-business, Incubation Approach and Agri-Tourism:**

The recent AgriTourism Conference held in Fiji confirmed expected Tourism growth in the next 3 years to increase at levels of 16% which expects to increase import substitution. It means Pacific Countries will need to seriously look into these trends and consider the facts on how much it will impact the people socially, environmentally and economically. Some pointers from the Cook Islands are now in motion. These are;

- a. The increase in import substitution means, higher dependency on imported low nutritional food leads to increase in NCDs related deaths, exarcerbate health capacity and resources.
- b. Every \$dollar in the Cook Islands spent means the increase in leakage from 48 cents to 52 cents of a dollar leaves the country.
- c. Food to feed tourism will be heavily monopolised by retailers and wholesalers with the tenancy to exarcerbate price influencing the increase in cost of food and cost of living particular to more remote outer islands in the Cook Islands.
- d. Cost to agriculture inputs also increases and dependency on season crops will not be enough to maintain domestic supply if nothing is done about it.

What the pacific needs are real tangible support in Agribusiness. A much further push into not only increasing production, but diversifying production in other means of products from cold storage facility investment, processed goods into substituted processed products. It needs to be driven under Agribusiness principles. Agri-Business Incubation approach type of support where farmers through extension services are not enough. We need business mentors support from areas in book keeping, financial mentors, and includes agriculture extensions on crop technical needs, to marketing, food safety and many others that contributes to entrepreneurship package. The Cook Islands FAO program have engaged with the Chamber of Commerce to drive similar projects by injecting funds into potential farming

business with business mentoring support package. The results are very promising however more is needed as part of a regional approach to package a better agribusiness incubation approach. The benefits therefore are;

1. Funding injection commitment to well established farmers that are possible enterprise graduates, which is the next level to becoming business livelihoods.
2. A support package to strengthen weaknesses and counter opportunities, from increasing continuous market quality and quantity.
3. Better trained and coached to manage the farm as a business.
4. Better trained to understand demand and supply trends.
5. Able to diversify from a single crop into multiple products.
6. Has the ability to determine long term goals and the means to guarantee future bank loans into other operations.

It is without question that the shift from traditional way of farming to business type of farming needs to change while considering the impacts to tourism and the technological age.

#### **Agriculture Market Information System – Expanded to the rest of the Pacific Island Countries as a Regional Approach:**

The Cook Islands has initiated an Agriculture Market Information Systems program called the AMIS program. Through the assistance of SPC PAPP program we were able to secure professionals to setup the necessary data questionnaires to give us answers as to what farming performances are failing and succeeding from a farmer point of view, to an enterprise point of view and from the market point of view. The program is driven by a database under Microsoft which is a common software used by many. What is of interest to the Cook Islands is that we needed a baseline on these indicators, to provide us some answers as to what measures that needs assistance, policy support, injected technical and/or financial support and to where it is most critical to production. To-date, we are thankful that for the first time, we were able to determine what specific crops responsible for the increase in agriculture share in GDP. And now we are concentrating our resources to nurture those crops that are significant to our domestic market. There are many benefits of the AMIS which are;

1. A baseline data as to what performances are in various crops from the farmer, enterprise to the market point of view.
2. Proof of reasons why should government investment go towards identified gaps through evidence based data.
3. Evidence based policy formulation and decision making.
4. Better forecast on various crop production expectations.
5. Determining gaps for better assistance.
6. And many others.

The question may be asked as to why the census data not used for the same purpose? The reason being is that census survey happens every 5 or 10 years and therefore so often it is outdated as soon as it is published. Furthermore, the parameters of the census do not cover areas of market and the enterprise which are the businesses, shops, hotels motels, as they are the disposal end of agriculture products. The AMIS survey is required to be done every 4 months which means in order to have better decision making process the need for regular survey every 4 months is part of the process. This cannot be ignored.

***It is of interest that AMIS needs to be promoted into other countries and therefore more initiatives from SPC to drive AMIS with the use of today's technology are highly important to the Pacific Region.***