

# PACIFIC AGRICULTURE POLICY DIGEST

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SEED BANK  
PROGRESS  
IN TONGA

PWA REPORT

VANUATU  
STEPS UP  
FOCUS ON  
AGRI-TOURISM

PAIS

PACIFIC PESTS  
& PATHOGENS  
APP

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Welcome to our 9th edition of the Pacific Agriculture Policy Digest. The Digest is prepared by the European Union supported Intra-ACP Agricultural Policy Program (APP\*) which is implemented in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions. The Pacific component of the Program or "PAPP" (Pacific Agriculture Policy Project) is implemented through the Pacific Community (SPC) and has been in place since July 2014.

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We hope you will enjoy reading these stories.

Also you will find previous Issues of the Digest at <http://pafpnet.spc.int>

Don't forget to subscribe to receive upcoming editions of Digest and to see what is coming up for PAPP; and HAVE YOUR SAY through PAFPNet!

\* *The APP aims to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers by strengthening their linkages to markets, improving access to information, research, and knowledge, and by improving the policy and operating environment for farmers through evidence-based policies. More information about the APP can be found on <http://pafpnet.spc.int>*

\*\* *Our cover photo features Mary Nadang, a young farmer at Napil Rural Training Centre, inspecting peanuts and corn growing in her garden plot on Tanna, Vanuatu.*

#### DISCLAIMER

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## VANUATU STEPS UP FOCUS ON AGRI-TOURISM

Participants at the Vanuatu Agri-tourism Linking Farmers to Markets training talking business.

A workshop aimed at promoting fresh local fruit and vegetables to Vanuatu's growing tourism markets was held on 17-18 October, 2017 at Port Vila, Vanuatu during the first Pacific Week of Agriculture (PWA). A total of 29 farmers, 6 hotel purchasing officers, government agencies and other stakeholders met over the 2 days and developed an Action Plan for Farmers that would upskill farmers with the basic tools and knowledge to get better involved in supply chains for tourism. The workshop was an initiative of the Vanuatu Agri-tourism Steering Committee (ATSC) supported by SPC APP.

In opening the Workshop, Vanuatu's Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Forests, Fisheries and Biosecurity, the Hon. Matai Seremaiah Nawalu welcomed the focus on local markets and that Vanuatu was proud to be celebrating a strong agri-tourism theme during the PWA. He remarked that the first priority for farmers after meeting local food needs was to focus on domestic tourist markets, before looking to export. He said that there were plenty of opportunities for farmers if they worked closely with the tourism industry.

The Workshop helped farmers build crop calendars, calculate unit costs and quality awareness and then used these tools to negotiate with Hotel Purchasing officers and Chefs to simulate sell and purchase negotiations with hoteliers or institutional buyers.

The Action Plan which will be part of Vanuatu's broader National Agri-tourism Plan calls for more business and finance training, food safety training, post-harvest, development of market information systems and better extension services for targeted

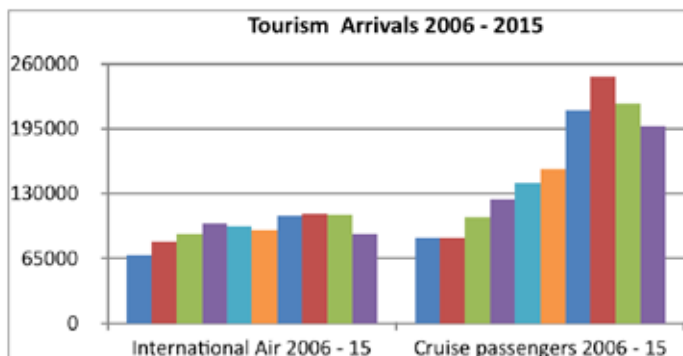
value chains. The Workshop also called for more support for developing on-farm tourist attractions and models for scaling up business such as companies, cooperatives and/or social enterprises.

Farmers also learnt about HACCP requirements (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) for managing risks - microbiological (fungi, bacteria, insects), physical (dirt, plastic etc.) or chemical (herbicide residues etc). The need for good post-harvest management was emphasized including handling before and during transport to market, keeping produce cool and quantities manageable for safe transportation.

### **Tourism in Vanuatu**

Tourism is a significant contributor to Vanuatu's GDP, with tourism related activity estimated to contribute 20 percent of GDP, and support 10,000 jobs. Both air and cruise ship passengers are important markets for Vanuatu. Visitor arrivals by air peaked at almost 109,000 in 2014 and the market grew by almost 60 percent between 2006 and 2014. However, arrivals have declined significantly since the peak. Just under 90,000 air arrivals were recorded in 2015, a decline of 17 percent. This decline was primarily due to the impacts of Cyclone Pam.

Cruise passenger numbers have increased substantially from around 86,000 in 2006 to a peak of 248,000 in 2013. Numbers have again declined since 2013 but there are signs of growth during 2016 from the level of 197,000 achieved in 2015. The chart below indicates the level of arrivals for air and cruise ship passengers from 2006 to 2015.



The tourism sector in Vanuatu is centred on Efate and specifically on Port Vila, which contains the majority of accommodation. There are estimated to be over 2,500 rooms in Vanuatu with the majority in smaller owner/operated accommodation. No one hotel exceeds 200 rooms, but approximately 20 percent of supply is concentrated among the five largest hotels in Port Vila (Holiday Inn, Le Lagon, Iririki, the Grand and the Melanesian). The target market for Vanuatu hotels is broadly the family and couples market, divers and niche culture/adventure segments. Port Vila also has a particularly strong appeal with Australian and New Zealand couples for extended weekend/week long holidays

### National Focus on Agri-tourism

Over the last 18 months, the Government of Vanuatu has strongly signalled its focus on local markets such as tourism. Following an inaugural Regional Agri-tourism Workshop in Nadi, Fiji in mid- 2015 (organised by SPC APP, CTA, PIPSO and SPTO), Vanuatu has since established a national agri-tourism committee and a National Agri-tourism Plan.

With the growth in tourism and Vanuatu's increasing urbanization, Vanuatu's import bill rose 11 percent between 2011 and 2014. The food and live animal import bill alone was VUV5.9 billion in 2014 - about 20 percent of the total import bill for the country. The total demand for vegetables was VUV190 million of which VUV108 million was spent on imports.

The hotels and restaurant sector attributes the demand for imports to a lack of reliable supply of high quality local produce. According to an IFC Study (2015), constraints include:

- Lack of linkages between the buyers (hotels and restaurants) and the farmers via an aggregator or wholesaler, leading to a gap in information exchange and effective marketing of the produce

- A lack of modern infrastructure and farming tools and techniques including irrigation
- Inefficiencies of inter-island shipping with associated costs and post production food mishandling
- Competition from lower quality and lower priced imports, especially from south-east Asian countries
- Inadequate access to high quality training and sources of affordable capital, limiting semi-subsistence farmers' ability to scale up, along with absence of mainstream farmers association leaving farmers with insufficient bargaining power.

The IFC study highlights various opportunities for increased local production (where current import values are greater than VUV400 million include:

- Vegetables, in particular potatoes, onions, carrots and capsicums
- Fruits, in particular tomatoes, oranges and canteloupe
- Seafood items, in particular prawns and fish
- Meat, in particular pork, lamb, bacon, beef and chicken.

The Workshop culminated in the signing of a regional Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between representatives of peak national farming networks of Fiji, Vanuatu and PNG to build on relationships with key value chain actors in the tourism and productive sectors. They committed to promoting exchanges and knowledge sharing for agri-tourism. The MoU was signed by representatives of the Fiji Crop and Livestock Council, the Vanuatu Agri-Tourism Steering committee, the Vanuatu Farm Support Association, the Vanuatu Neleya Eco-Farm Enterprises, PNG Women in

### Participants at the Vanuatu Agri-tourism Linking Farmers to Markets training talking business.

Vanuatu also hosted a similar workshop involving business from the region at the PWA to share agri-tourism opportunities with CTA (the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation). This Workshop also recommended strengthening Pacific Chefs' Associations, increasing local consumption and demand, building the supply capacity in quantity and quality and enabling knowledge sharing across African-Caribbean and Pacific.





## SEED BANK PROGRESS IN TONGA

Mr Mani Mua (SPC), Principal Rev. Mr Tu'ipulotu Finau, Deputy Principal Mr Fa Taufu, Mr Gibson Susumu (SPC), Hango Seed Centre manager Mr Taufu Tu'a, and Mr Sione Foliaki (MAFFF) with the Stage 2 site of Hango Seed Centre in the background.

A recent integrated training workshop was conducted at Hango Agriculture College (HAC) with the aim of providing staff, students and farmers with context and detailed hands-on training relating to seed production, agroforestry and integrated livestock management.

The workshop, which was attended by 50 people including 13 students, 9 farmers and 16 government officers, also brought progress on Stage Two of the Hango Seed Centre (HSC).

HSC will improve the access of Tongan farmers, particularly those on 'Eua Island where the College is located, to improved seed and planting materials, which have been screened for their suitability to Tongan conditions.

Tonga Ministry of Agriculture Food Fisheries and Forests (MAFFF) requested support from SPC through PAPP to establish the seed centre at Hango Agricultural College (HAC). The seed centre will involve open pollinated vegetable seed and new resilient varieties from the SPC Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) of fruit trees and marketable resilient root crops.

*"Integrated training started with a bird's-eye view of Tonga, and the different soils, catchments and water supplies of each island. It looked at the combination of forests and agriculture and Tongan traditional agroforestry. Zooming in further it looked at the varieties of food plants that are suitable for these different situations on each island, and the selection and propagation of the different species. Then it focussed on human management issues of how to control pests and diseases and the safety issues of different approaches."* **Gibson Susumu, SPC**





In 2016, CePaCT distributed 2500 plantlets of climate smart varieties to be evaluated in Tonga for further distribution to farmers. In addition, under PAPP, four open pollinated varieties of vegetables were provided to Hango to support local seed production in Tonga.

The seed centre will enable the Agriculture Department to ensure that collections of important vegetable and tree crops are protected by being grown in two locations in Tonga. The Agriculture Department screens and evaluates new vegetable varieties coming in to Tonga to ensure that they are disease free and well adapted for local conditions.

Mr Sione Foliaki, Deputy CEO of the Ministry of Agriculture, who is also in charge of Vaini Research Station on Tongatapu, explained that at Vaini they have improved varieties of bananas, sweet potato, tomatoes, cassava and taro which are being screened for their suitability.

'The partnership with Hango College will help to guarantee that new varieties can be more rapidly distributed to farmers once they have been screened. We are constantly developing new varieties which are more hardy. We want to make sure that farmers have the best seeds and rootstocks to ensure that their production remains high, even as the climate of Tonga changes.'

'There is a process to multiply up plants so that there are sufficient numbers to share out to farmers. In the first instance, many of these come to us from SPC and we have to make sure that these foundation plants are really carefully looked after. The Hango Seed Centre will help us to protect and develop these new varieties. This is particularly important for plants such as citrus and bananas, which need long-term sites, from which grafts and suckers can be taken.'

This process accords with directions for CePaCT, where a recent review noted the need to improve national processes, so that after planting materials are received by countries they are appropriately handled to scale them up, evaluate them and ultimately distribute them to farmers. Improving traceability of these new varieties was one of the key findings from the report.

CePaCT is undergoing a process of business planning and integration of seed centre services. The business planning is being supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This will also enable better access of private industry to CePaCT's collections on a fee-for-service basis.

Finally, in the seeds area, work is underway on the Pacific seeds for life (PS4L) initiative, a proposal for better regional and national seed management systems, which will increase farmers' access to improved seeds.

*"Hango Seed Centre will help future students to know how to extract and grow vegetable seeds for their own communities and store them for the next planting. This will help minimize seed cost and sustain food security in different communities, especially in Vanuatu where most people live a long way from the main towns."*

**Frank Joely, Hango student from Epi, Vanuatu.**





## PWA REPORT

The inaugural Pacific Week of Agriculture (PWA) was hosted by Vanuatu in October.



The week had a wide range of activities and workshops and made sure that there was something for everyone: school children, farmers, researchers and private industry. From a policy point of view the week culminated in meetings of the Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services from around the Pacific (HOAFS), and then subsequently the regional Ministers (MOAFS). Typically these meetings occur every 2 years, although this time it had been 5 years since the last meeting.

In addition to the PAPP-supported “Linking Farmers to Markets” workshop described previously, PAPP had the opportunity to table the following strategies, which had been developed under the auspices of various specialist meetings:

**a. P-SPAFS (Pacific Strategic Plan For Agricultural And Fisheries Statistics)**

strengthening the evidence base for sustainable livelihoods). This plan will guide a 10-year funded program of improved statistics collection, which is a partnership between FAO and SPC's Statistics



for Development Division. At its heart is a plan to improve the availability and quality of a core set of regionally comparable statistical indicators related to food security, agriculture, fisheries and natural resources ('agricultural statistics') (See story in PAPP Digest # 7).

**b. The Pacific Islands Extension Strategy**

developed by the Board of the Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services network (PIRAS). This strategy establishes a regional approach to rural advisory services, including clarification of roles and responsibilities, streamlining investment and establishing structured training for extension officers.



**c. Youth in Agriculture strategy** (revised). This regional strategy has been extended out to 2025 and strengthened, emphasising:

**i.** Better organized networks and groups: There are many youth groups engaged in agriculture. However, there is a need for these groups to be better organized with regards to formalizing structure, planning, extension and markets;





Mordi lasu, a first year student at Napil Rural Training Centre on Tanna, Vanuatu in his garden, where he is retaining self-sown peanuts as a nitrogen fixing cover crop.

ii. Stronger links among government agencies working with youth to make sure that Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Youth work together;

iii. Adoption and Usage of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and technology by Youth in Agriculture: The rapid use of ICT and technology by youth is evident worldwide and the Pacific is no different. Mobile phones present a simple way to engage youth and agriculture needs to further leverage this. The SPC Survey on youth showed that all interviewees owned a mobile phone. Further, most youth farmers (86 percent) used their mobile phones to call and receive calls. None of the survey respondents accessed agricultural information using their mobile phones or were simply not aware that this was possible. There were also infrastructure and data limitations on phone usage including electricity and mobile coverage;

iv. Evidence base on youth participation in agriculture: There is a need to have a better understanding of who in a family or village takes up farming, how it relates to education and what are the motivating factors for young farmers so that government programs can better support and encourage them.

d. [Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme \(PRPRS\)](#). The objective of the proposed Scheme is to strengthen the capacity in the Pacific region to make informed decisions on pesticide registration, through pooling of available expertise on pesticides. Well informed decision-making will result in effective and high-quality pesticide products being registered for use, and a reduction of pesticide risks for human health and the environment. Endorsement of the PRPRS is the first step in establishing analysis facilities at SPC.

These were endorsed at a preliminary session of the HOAFS which included 16 national representatives.

The strategies will be taken forward via national processes to seek Ministerial endorsement.



## WHAT'S NEW IN AGRICULTURE POLICY?

Vanuatu Minister of Agriculture the Hon Matai Seremaiah Nawalu launches the Pacific agricultural policy compendium. Director General of MALFFB Vanuatu, Mr Benjamin Shing assists him.

At the Pacific Week of Agriculture, the Vanuatu Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Forests, Fisheries and Biosecurity, the Hon. Matai Seremaiah Nawalu launched the "Compendium of Agriculture and Forestry Priorities in the Pacific".

The compendium, published by the EU-supported Pacific Agriculture Policy Project of SPC, sets out the priorities for fifteen countries, maps their policy remit and the common sector priorities across the Pacific region. This enables industry representatives and donors to easily see what government priorities are for developing the sector.

The Minister noted "This compendium is significant because it provides an evidence base for regional collaboration and cooperation in the sector so that collectively we meet food security, nutrition and economic development challenges."

Co-author of the compendium, Mr Vili Caniogo from SPC, commented that the compendium is a convenient reference for policy-makers to refer to, providing an overall summary of policies stored in the Agriculture Policy Bank, an online resource hosted by SPC.

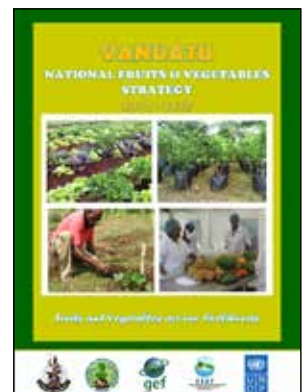
Of course, policy is only as good as its implementation and this remains the challenge for all countries. There has been a general shift in the course of the PAPP project from policies which are uncoded and aspirational, to ones which are fully coded and prioritised. No country ever has enough money to go around, so the importance of this detailed policy is in its use as a negotiating tool to elevate agriculture and forestry sector priorities within the overall national agenda.

There have been some clear improvements in budgets for the agriculture sector in at least Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. There are various reasons for these improvements, but in all cases the plans have documented the need for increased funding and increased the evidence available for increased appropriations, either from central governments or donors.

Vanuatu Minister of Agriculture the Hon Matai Seremaiah Nawalu launches the Pacific agricultural policy compendium. Director General of MALFFB Vanuatu, Mr Benjamin Shing assists him.

### New policies

Vanuatu recently launched its **National Fruits and Vegetables Strategy 2017-2027** as a new commodity strategy within the Agriculture Sector. This builds on the evidence for targeting domestic tourism markets for agricultural commodities, particularly onions, potatoes, carrots, capsicums, tomatoes and oranges. Substantial work is needed to establish baselines for the targets set by the strategy.



PAPP team leader Vili Caniogo, was recently invited to the Cook Islands for discussions about their new Agriculture Sector Policy (2016 – 2020) which is close to finalisation.

In Fiji, work is underway on the development of the development of a **Forest and Rural Fire Management Strategy for Fiji**, which will address control and management of fires in rural areas of Fiji, and mechanisms of coordination between agencies to fight fires and improve public awareness and enforcement. A two-day workshop was held in Sigatoka, Fiji from 23-24 November, 2017. The workshop was opened by Fiji's Climate Champion and Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, National Disaster Management and Meteorological Services, Hon. Inia Seruiratu. Consultation on the draft strategy will happen in the first quarter of 2018.



# PAIS - INFO FOR CROP RESEARCHERS & GROWERS

Imagine being able to go to one place to find agricultural information. Imagine being able to find, and in many cases download extension leaflets, scientific papers, journal articles and videos. Imagine being able to learn more about the various projects and programmes in the region, both those past and those still ongoing. Imagine being able to go to this one place where others interested in the same things as you are able to meet, talk, discuss and share their experiences, and generally help each other out. Well, there's no need to imagine this any longer, because now it exists.

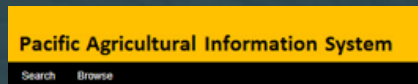
It has been a very long journey, with its origins back in 1985, but now the Pacific Agricultural Information System (PAIS) has been launched online.

From a technical point of view, the first database was set up in 2001, with the PNG National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) and the PNG Coffee Research Institute co-operating on a 'library catalogue database'. This database rapidly became less of a library catalogue and more a bibliographic database, in partnership with other organisations. And over the years, additional functionalities were added so that it was actually hard to say what it was, except a unique information resource initially for PNG, and then later including Solomon Islands.

Then last year, when SPC was looking to develop an e-platform for the Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services (PIRAS) – the rejuvenated regional extension network – it was shown the work that had been undertaken in PNG and the Solomons, and could see it had the potential to become that e-platform. And today, it is live.

PAIS Online comprises two integrated, but distinct components: Documents and Activities. The Documents component is essentially the huge bibliographic database (over 37,000 records) built up over the years by a small group of committed individuals working collaboratively. The Activities component, although first designed as a prototype in 2005, is now ready to capture and store information on all the projects and programmes undertaken in the region, past and present.

The two components together will answer the questions: who is doing what, where, why and how? It will also make available the documents associated



with this work, including reports, papers, technical manuals, videos, and extension materials of all kinds. And because PAIS is also an archival system, nothing will be lost once the project completes, as the too often the case nowadays.

Currently, there are seven organisations designated active PAIS Partners, in PNG, the Solomons, Fiji and Tonga. More are due to participate in the new year. The more PAIS Partners, and the more trained PAIS Operators, the greater will be the benefits to the region in being able to have a single place for agricultural information of all kinds.

But there's more: the application used to host the system can also facilitate better information and knowledge sharing by incorporating elements of social media, e.g. blogs, discussion forums, tagging, ranking and commenting. What is being explored right now is essentially a democratising of access to, sharing and use of information in the Pacific. There is no other similar resource, neither in the region nor beyond.

To give an example: Albert Fiu, Data Officer at CePaCT said that plans are being formulated to migrate the CePaCT data and information on its genetic collections to PAIS, and thereby integrate them with other resources so that the user has better access to information, and can make better informed management decisions. There are also proposals to set up other 'community pages' where projects, networks and 'circles of interest' can find a home. Backed by the PAIS databases and its various collections, the community space will host specialised interests, with tailored access to data and information held on PAIS as well as externally. And by encouraging the uploading and sharing of the community's resources, the wider community will also benefit.

PAIS Online is a work in progress, but it is ready to welcome you immediately. Go to [www.thepais.net](http://www.thepais.net).

The work on PAIS has been made possible under PIRAS by the EU-funded Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP), implemented by SPC.



## PACIFIC PESTS & PATHOGENS APP

This app gives extension staff and lead farmers all the information they need to treat the crop instantly. If there is no way of saving a crop, the steps should help to prevent the problem occurring in the future.

After choosing the crop of interest, a series of simple questions are asked narrowing down the choices until a match is possible by comparing thumbnail images. Each fact sheet is divided into sections on damage, biology and life cycle, and management.

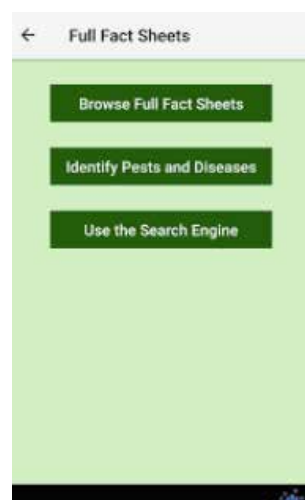
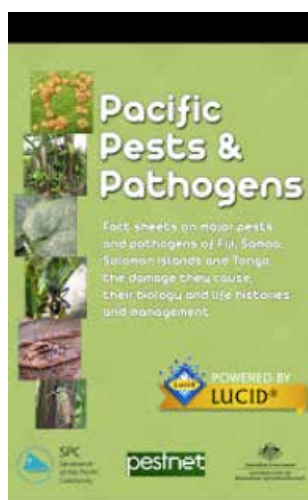
The new, free phone app assists farmers to diagnose and treat crop problems.

Version 6 of the App gives the option to either view Full Fact Sheets, or Mini Fact Sheets which contain a summary of the information in the full fact sheets. Version 6 of the app contains 350 fact sheets.

The app has been supported by ACIAR, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research) and developed by Identic Pty Ltd (<http://www.lucidcentral.org>).

The update contains 50 new fact sheets, many on pests and pathogens of Fiji, and others on pests not yet in the region, but spreading nearby; it also includes improved pest distribution data.

The app can be downloaded for free from iTunes or Play Store.







## WHAT'S COMING UP

DATE	EVENT	VENUE
5-9 February	Experience Capitalisation Workshop with CTA	Novotel, Lami, Suva, Fiji
27-28 February	Planners' Forum subcommittee meeting	Heilala Conference Room, SPC Narere, Suva FIJI
26-27 April	Regional Planners' Forum	Novotel, Nadi, Fiji

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

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

The Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP) has undertaken activities in the following three Key Result Areas (KRA):



### 1. Strengthened regional agricultural development strategy



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



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

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

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

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