

## PACIFIC AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY POLICY NETWORK (PAFPNet)

### YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE ESSAY, NEWS, ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

#### **Application Form**

Applications should be accompanied by this form and addressed to Ms Miriama Kunawave, PAFPNet Secretariat, Land Resources Division, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Private Mail Bag, Suva to arrive no later than 22 October, 2010. Communication will be limited to winners only or those requesting the return of original materials. Applications may alternatively be submitted by Fax (No. +679 338 6326), hand delivered to the SPC Suva office or emailed to [lrhelpdesk@spc.int](mailto:lrhelpdesk@spc.int). Please call +679 3370733 – ext 35344 for further details.

#### **Contact details**

Name	TIMOTHY MASSING
Age	20
Sex	F <input checked="" type="radio"/> M
Tel/fax	+678 5636434
Email	S11067565@student.usp.ac.fi
Country	Vanuatu
School or Organisation and position (if applicable)	USP EMALUS CAMPUS Student

B) Choose two challenges related to agriculture or rural development in your community or country and describe how you think they should be addressed.

## Youth in Agriculture

The Republic of Vanuatu is comprised of over 80 islands stretching over a large sea area from the Banks and Torres group in the North to tiny Hunter Island in the south. The land and the sea are the nation's major resources. There are few minerals, and little potential for industrialization, and so agriculture provides the basis for subsistence activities and livelihood security for 82% of the population which lives in rural areas. Around 80% of agricultural production is by smallholder producers. Agriculture becomes not only a source of production, but an engine for economic growth and development.

Now that we are independent, our most difficult challenge is to ensure that youths are given the chance to contribute fully in agricultural developments, or to share in the benefits agriculture brings. Agriculture's performance raises questions as to whether agricultural policies are addressing the need of this sector to provide food and cash income, non-formal training opportunities for youths, and also employment, primarily self-employment. Many school leavers do not have adequate or appropriate skills to secure one of the few waged jobs available, and neither do they have the skills for agricultural work. Today in Vanuatu, an estimated 70% of youth commencing a life of subsistence farming have only a primary school education, and they will have little opportunity to upgrade their skills because of the limited number of non-formal training opportunities in rural areas. However, traditional and cultural education for youth is one of the major roles played by parents in village communities today. Some of these roles included gardening and rearing of animals. Young people, who do not go to school, can learn these traditional farming skills from their parents. Many ni-Vanuatu youth face a future of unemployment and underemployment, and will not have the chance to experience the discipline and dignity which work brings. Similarly, women do not have access to agricultural training and support services, despite their extensive agricultural work. They are excluded from discussions and access to land; they are regarded as not skillful. Their participation is limited, and what is more, women are not learning or developing their management and negotiating skills.

Further, our second challenge is to ensure that policies are designed to make the most of the opportunities in providing measures to upgrade technology in farming, raise productivity, and in establishing marketing and distribution channels throughout the country. Like many developing nation's whose resources are scarce, Vanuatu depends heavily on limited number of cash crops. And just like any other country, Vanuatu would like to be self-sufficient in its economy and we are determined to use our resources—both on land, and in the sea—to achieve this. However, recent economic data shows the growing concern that; agriculture developments have not brought the promised improvements in the quality of people's lives. The government's resources of finance have not been evenly spread throughout the islands and many farmers are experiencing real hardship and feelings of helplessness as they find that they do not have the benefits and resources that will enable them to meet their farming needs. National policies have not supported subsistence farming and have ignored agriculture's wider contribution to the economy. Reviews show that very little has been done to help farmers in rural areas. Land and shipping transport are also very costly since the main islands are quite isolated from each other. Volatility of global markets for primary commodities and poor prices of crops has also affect farmers. These matters are particularly serious, given that agriculture is the only source of livelihood for over 80% of the population living in rural areas, and agriculture is needed not only to supply food and income, but as a means of employment.

In addressing these challenges, firstly, youth must be given the chance to participate fully in agricultural developments, and to share in its benefits. Access to land is essential for the youth, especially in highly populated areas. Opportunities must be made for youth to be included in decision-making forums concerning agricultural developments. Also, improving the quality and broadening the curriculum of formal schooling to match the social and economic realities of life in Vanuatu today must be a first concern, as is the expansion of non-formal training programmes so that youth can upgrade their skills in line with changing markets. Rural training centres must be established in all six provinces. The training centres would play a central role in project related training and at the same time, to support opportunities where youth can use and develop their skills, and where they can express their opinions, knowing that their views will be taken into account. Any form of development is not easy, so positive steps must be taken now in the field of both youth and women. Appropriate funds must be found and administrative structure and infra-structure must be designed and put to work, and planned now to help our youth and women. Also the agriculture industry must work with government agencies and other organizations to help provide farmers with tools and resources to make farming more sustainable. Farmers must be supported by education and certification programs that ensure they apply agricultural with care. Such education and research programmes will help farmers look into better, high yielding varieties of crops, improved husbandry methods, and improved processing and storage. The government will also have to look closely at raising the standard of ships for the improvement of shipping transport. Further development of roads into the interior of the larger islands must be done to encourage agricultural development. Finally, government systems must always learn to play the 'supporting' role for farmers in rural areas, by providing administrative, financial and management training, and support as appropriate.

There is no doubt that we shall remain an agricultural nation in the foreseeable future but we must diversify our economy. Our population is growing at a rapid rate, getting younger and more demanding through education. The urban sector can't absorb unemployment so life in the outer islands must be made more attractive through agriculture. Knowing this, the agricultural must expand its activities and develop its infrastructure in rural areas to be of greater assistance to our farmers and youth, without jobs and lacking adequate and needed skills for the task of national development. We will do more to diversify our production and improve the quality of our produce for export. We look forward to increasing cash crop production—cocoa, coconut, coffee, kava, beef—while maintaining and improving our own traditional systems because of the advantages they provide, such as better utilization of soil nutrients, control of pests and diseases, maintenance of fertility, and so on. We will face new challenges and business opportunities, so we must be well equipped through training and know-how to play our role in the ever changing business world. Agriculture is and will continue to be the back bone of this country in which our economy, our welfare and our very being depend on.