

**1. Regional workshop on ‘Developing Knowledge Management Capacity for Improved Agriculture Information, Research and Policy Banks in the Pacific**

Online Agriculture Policy Banks are ushering in a new era of access to information that is benefitting individual producers and promoting growth in the Pacific region’s agricultural sector. At a recent workshop in Suva, organised by SPC and CTA, Pcountries heard how Agriculture Policy Banks are already delivering significant benefits.

Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, who were among the first countries to trial and launch these Banks in the past six months, recounted that these Banks enabled them to communicate and transmit these documents easily to other government departments, business, farmers and development partners.

Mark Vurobaravu, who manages the Policy Bank at the Vanuatu Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock stated that “this Bank has already made our work easier engaging with stakeholders and has enabled us time to also start translating our documents to Bislama and French. All these are in the Bank and available to everyone”.

Representatives from 10 Pacific countries, including farmer organisations, regional development partners and private sector organisations gathered recently at SPC to help build Agricultural Policy Banks for their countries and to discuss and design mechanisms for stronger regional information exchange and national outreach.

Opening the workshop, Dr Audrey Aumua, Deputy Director General of SPC stated, “it was very positive to note that the important agriculture sector was leveraging on information and communication technology and knowledge management to help develop the important agricultural sector.”

The week culminated in a showcase of the new Policy Banks to various development partners, private sector representatives and Suva-based diplomatic missions.

Pacific countries will now focus on a number of agreed actions to further build the momentum of these knowledge management initiatives. These included the design of national outreach plans and initiatives to promote regional complementary work.

It is intended that this work will be presented to the SPC and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Ministers of Agriculture meeting at the first-ever Pacific Week of Agriculture in Vanuatu, scheduled for May 2017.

Also present were representatives from development agencies from Australia and New Zealand. The Deputy Chief of Mission for the Federated States of Micronesia, Wilson F. Waguk and H.E. Roving Ambassador Corporate Matai Kaukilakeba from the Fiji Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation were also present at the showcase.

The Deputy Head of Mission the French Embassy to Fiji, Jules Irrmann, who officiated at the showcase, stated that such portals encourage complementary efforts and the need for countries to work together to promote the agriculture sector.

*“Agriculture is a very important topic here. With the e-agriculture policy bank, I was very impressed with what I’ve seen so far. Each time you want to make a policy you can check what the other countries are doing,” Mr Irrmann stated.*

*“It is very important for the farmers to have direct access to those documents, instead of taking hours to transport to go to ministries and get the results – now they can have it on their mobile phone,” he added.*

SPC’s Agricultural Policy Adviser, Vili Caniogo, who is helping lead this work at SPC, stated that the Policy Banks not only provide easy public access to a range of information, but are a vital tool enabling further complementary work among regions. He stated that countries and development partners had talked about collaboration in the sector for a long time but often was hampered by the lack of a tool or a medium to facilitate this. He noted that a key aim of the Policy Banks was to provide a simple tool to facilitate this.

The Agriculture policy banks can be accessed via PAFPnet website:  
[www.spc.int/pafpnet](http://www.spc.int/pafpnet)

## **2. Vanuatu builds on its focus on Agritourism**

A significant impact of the Pacific APPs work on agritourism last year has been the adoption of countries like Vanuatu who are now building a stronger policy focus for agritourism. Tourism is an important sector for Vanuatu and for the region growing around 3.5 percent annually for the last 5 years. These are key domestic markets for farmers. Late last year, Vanuatu established a new agritourism committee – a

public-private partnership that will lead work. The Committee has already agreed to its first Annual WorkPlan. In May, CTA, PIPSO and SPC helped Vanuatu organise an Agritourism Policy Work as a key first step in formulating a new Agritourism Strategy. The objective of the Strategy would be to:

- promote linkages between the agrifood sector and the tourism industry to increase sustainable local sourcing through an agritourism policy in Vanuatu
- increase the understanding and awareness of the current deficiencies in the supply of produce along the value chain and the actions needed
- design inter-sectoral and inclusive policies which promote PPPs for improved local food use and consumption.

A major impact is that NZ is now interested in funding Agritourism work. The Strategy will now be formulated by a NZ funded consultant working closely with PAPP. It is expected that the Strategy will be completed by the end of year.

### **3. Pacific Donor Agriculture Round Table**

On 17 and 18 May 2016, a group of donors<sup>1</sup> with interest and investments in Pacific agriculture met in NZ to discuss a proposal to increase coordination in the sector, as well as share lessons learned on private sector development in Pacific agriculture.

The Meeting agreed that increasing coordination was worthwhile pursuing provided that the purpose, method and resources were clear and value-adding.

Meeting objective:

- Increased information and knowledge sharing on donor activities, research and best practice between donors and with PIC partners
- Increased coordination between donors, reduced duplication of similar activities and donors deliver complementary activities
- Roll out of regional/multi-country initiatives based on principles of a Pacific Agriculture Partnership agreed between donors, regional agencies and Pacific Island governments.

### **4. FIJI FARMERS GET REGISTERED THROUGH MOBILE TECHNOLOGY**

The Fiji Crop and Livestock Council (FCLC), the umbrella organisation for farmers in the Fijian crop, horticultural and livestock industry is embracing technology by using

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SMS platforms to register farmers throughout the country on its database. Last month, with the assistance of the European Union through various projects like SPC's Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) FCLC managed to register over 10,000 farmers over a period of six months.

The formal registration was important in that it provided a structure where information, market prices and extension advice could be easily exchanged.

Having farmers registered means that they can now access information such as:

- Agri Tips - a platform for FCLC or Partners to receive and answer questions regarding Crop or Livestock issues via SMS;
- Fiji Makete - a buyer-seller matchmaking platform;
- mPolling - a service where FCLC and Partners can send out polls to gather important information from farmers;
- mAlerts - an easy way to send information alerts to groups of people, particularly in emergency situations; and
- mPrices - a market information system used to gather and distribute price data for a range of commodities.

FCLC, with support from PAPP aims to continue supporting and implementing projects drawing on its strength from the private sector to ensure that the agriculture industry in Fiji continues to thrive. FCLC plans to empower over 60,000 small-scale farmers by 2018 to improve their livelihoods by accessing information and markets. The Council is working to bridge the information gap that many farmers face in accessing market prices, expert agricultural information and real-time data support.

## **5. Europe Day**

The Pacific Community (SPC) partnered with the European Delegation for the Pacific to host the Europe Day 2016 event.

European supported projects within the SPC took the lead in implementing, organizing and coordinating the event which targeted youth and students. A public exhibition was the highlight of the 3-day event.

## **6. Organic Tourism and Hospitality Standard Development – ongoing consultancy**

The consultancy is aimed at establishing a new organic standard for tourism operators in the Pacific based on the Pacific Organic Standard. This standard will mean that tourism operators will be able to procure fresh and value added products through a certified organic value chain and if compliant with other environmental and social standards will qualify to be certified to the Standard and use the “Organic Pasifika” mark in their branding and marketing.

## **7. Organic Policy Toolkit Development – ongoing consultancy**

Many governments do not have an explicit policy or strategy for the development of the organic sector, the purpose is to develop an online toolkit for government policy and decision makers to facilitate national policy development and promote the organic industry at national levels aligned with the Pacific Organic Guarantee Scheme and to facilitate development of regionally compatible national policies in line with the Framework for Regionalism.

The Toolkit will enable organic advocates and governments in their dialogue on support strategies for expanding organic agriculture and markets by providing templates, resources and guidance for developing policies supporting the organic sector.