

PAPP Activities – September 2016

1) Pacific to increase Policy Focus on Organic Development

The Pacific Islands region is setting a global benchmark by pioneering the world's first regional specific organic agriculture toolkit that is aimed at assisting governments to create national organic policies.

Pacific countries acknowledge that organic food provides a niche product for the region. This interest is validated by recent SPC (APP) Study of National Agriculture Sector Policies of Pacific countries which showed that 8 countries already documented an interest in organic food production in their national plans.

The Pacific Organic Toolkit will be piloted in Vanuatu and Fiji who have expressed early interest in designing national organic agriculture policies.

The toolkit has 3 main area or branches.

The first branch affords the user a treetop view of organic agriculture for soil health, its history, associated concepts and importance for global issues like sustainability, health and the wellbeing of the environment and people.

The second branch touches on creating the organic policy using guides and instruments like for instance a standard template for topics that should be addressed and a decision matrix for actions to take, 'push actions' like the provision of extension services to farmers and supporting research.

Similarly, push actions that create demand for organic products includes linking buyers with sellers, public education and the promotion of organic products.

The third branch addresses the development of governance systems like having a Participatory Guarantee System of organic certification and national organic sector organisations that represent the private sector and civil society. It includes as well identifying current unfriendly policies that create an uneven playing field for organic farming e.g. subsidising only the cost of chemical fertilisers and not organic farm inputs.

For more information:

1. Vanuatu Daily Post (Online):
http://dailypost.vu/news/pacific-leads-with-organic-policy-toolkit/article_071b3048-be70-593d-bdec-c2d5395906af.html
2. Fiji Times (Online)
<http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=371878>

2) Tonga hosts Pacific Breadfruit Roundtable

Following on PAPP focus on value chains for food staples, the PAPP supported Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network in partnership with Nishi Foundation, GroFed (Growers Federation of Tonga) and MORDI (Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation Tonga Trust) convened a Pacific Breadfruit Roundtable. This two-day consultative roundtable was held in Nuku'alofa, Tonga from September 15th - 16th, 2016. The event was attended by 50 participants from seven Pacific Island countries including farmers, farmer organisation representatives, research organisations, government partners and aid agencies.

The objective of this roundtable was to bring together PIFON members and other partners who are actively involved in breadfruit research and development in the Pacific to share experiences, get updated and work to synergize regional breadfruit activities. Discussions on the context for breadfruit development in the region as well as PIFON's Pacific Breadfruit and Seed Supply Programme (PBSP) were the focus subjects. The roundtable also included four technical sessions including: Breadfruit Varieties and Propagation, Breadfruit Production Systems, Fresh Exports of Breadfruit and Breadfruit Processing. Tonga and Fiji both current export breadfruit to New Zealand, Australia and other markets.

A key outcome from the roundtable meeting were detailed national work plans for each of the seven countries represented along with a series of inter-regional technical partnerships being established. PIFON is now seeking additional funding for its PBSP to help support the national activities identified. Proceedings from this roundtable will be released by PIFON in due course.

3) Survey Solutions Training

From 31 August to 12 September, PAPP's Agricultural Statistician was a member of a 10 SPC staff to participate on a Survey Solutions training in Noumea, New Caledonia. The training was conducted by World Bank on the advanced functionality of Software Solutions so that future national census and surveys supported by SDD (including agricultural surveys) can be conducted with CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing).

Survey solutions are a free software developed by the World Bank for conducting and managing household surveys using tablets and smart phones. It promises to revolutionise the way we conduct surveys in the Pacific. Vanuatu, Tonga and Fiji are already leading the way and will be using it for their upcoming national censuses.

The outcome of the training is increased capacity of SPC to provide support to countries wishing to conduct census and surveys using CAPI. This includes agricultural census and surveys. During the training draft questionnaires were developed of agricultural questions to be included in the SPC supported standardised Pacific Population and Housing Census and Household Income and Expenditure Surveys.

4) Rehabilitation of Vanuatu Root Crops

As a follow up of the initial TC PAM assessments a joint SPC/MALFFB team which included PAPP Supported GIS technician and Land Use technician was later despatched to conduct the first round of Landuse and Socio economic assessments on three islands in Vanuatu. The team conducted baseline assessments for Emae island which was carried out from the 25th – 29th July, 2016. This continued with the baseline assessment in Tanna and Aneityum from 21st August to 4th September, 2016. On the 15th of August the team visited Emae to strengthen community organisation and deliver vegetable seeds and nursery tools.

Community immediate needs were identified and this allowed SPC and MALFFB to plan and implement an integrated development approach.

The following activities have been identified as the immediate follow up actions:

- Finalise baseline survey reports (end of September).
- Establishment of nurseries (end of September).

- Training on nursery management and propagation (end of September).
- Supply of vegetable seeds and Nursery tools (end of September).
- Formation of Aneityum Farmers Association (end of September).
- Shipping of Yam planting materials (Emae & Aneityum) (mid-September).

5) The Second Pacific Agribusiness Forum

SPC PAPP a 'strategic partner' for the second Agribusiness Forum held in Samoa on the 30th of August, 2016, was invited as a panellist with the objective of sharing lessons learned during and activities carried out since inaugural Pacific Community Agritourism Week coordinated by SPC-PAPP in August 2015.

The inaugural Pacific Community Agritourism Week organised by SPC incorporated the first Pacific Agribusiness Forum. The larger regional "Pacific Agritourism Week" was held to elevate a stronger policy focus on linking the 2 sectors, building capacity of farmers and agrifood suppliers and exchanging knowledge and good practices.

The second Agribusiness Forum held in Samoa, is organised by PIPSO and CTA, with the theme 'Linking the agrifood sector to the local markets for economic growth and improved food and nutrition security.'

6) SPC regional taro breeding programme generates new hybrids

An ongoing breeding programme of taro, targeting climate resilient traits such as drought tolerance, has made positive progress in four countries: Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands and American Samoa. Over 5,000 new taro hybrids have been produced already by Cook Islands and Tonga, whilst Fiji and American Samoa are expected to harvest new seeds for germination in the screen house soon.

New hybrid seedlings resulted from crossing Samoan taro breeding lines provided by SPC Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) with local taro in each country. Using participatory breeding approaches, countries have to screen these hybrids to local conditions, targeting drought tolerance, taste and nutritional aspects.

The selected new lines from Tonga, Fiji and Cook Islands would then have to be re-evaluated in Samoa to test them for tolerance to taro leaf blight. This is important so that these countries are well prepared in advance should the taro leaf blight disease hit them.

One of the main aims of the breeding programme is to build the capacity of the countries to learn the principles and basic techniques of breeding, as well as having the capacity to establish their own breeding programmes. The successful taro model established in Samoa is being replicated in these countries and will eventually expand to other countries in the region.

There are few active breeding programmes in the Pacific region, not just for taro but for other crops as well. The region is facing many challenges with climate change – new pests and diseases, natural disasters – so there is a need to have more breeders to generate a new diversity of crops that will ensure there is enough food available during stressful times to feed our populations.

PAPP's supported Samoan Taro breeder Mr Moafanua Tolo Iosefa, based at the Nu'u Research Station in Apia, is the key person responsible for the success of this breeding programme. He is working closely with regional Directors of Research with the support of SPC.