

PAPP Activities – October 2016

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(1) Caribbean-Pacific exchange to strengthen capacity for crop researchers and extension officers

Eight Pacific Island researchers and extension officers (five male and three female) from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Vanuatu and the Pacific Community (SPC) participated in a learning exchange to the Caribbean islands of Jamaica and Trinidad covering a wide range of activities from new and innovative technology in research and development, farming practices and knowledge shared by farmers and extension officers and communication and support between farmers, extension officers and researchers.

The exchange was supported by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA), the Caribbean Agriculture Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and SPC through the European Union supported Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP).

The exchange is the third of a series of ‘south-south’ initiatives for knowledge sharing and learning across the two regions.

It follows two previous attachments by Caribbean researchers and extension officers with SPC’s Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) in Suva, Fiji in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

Key learning outcomes from the exchange included the need for the Pacific to elevate the status of research throughout the full value chain for common crops. Participants were exposed to a coordinated approach across the Caribbean, with income generation for farmers a key consideration both at the research level as well as throughout value adding and also clear linkages between research and educational institutions, and effective public-private partnerships in the Agriculture sector. It was also noted that youth innovation was evident with a clearer enabling environment with regard to access to finance, agripreneurial opportunities and more specialised fields of study at the tertiary level. Holistically, farmers were being involved in research decisions which supported the full value chain for the crops highlighted in the exchange (specifically yams, sweet potatoes, cassava and cocoa).

Some aspects of knowledge shared between Pacific participants and their Caribbean counterparts, who would form future opportunities for further exchanges/collaboration across the regions included the use of traditional knowledge around pests and diseases in the Pacific, a clear focus in the Pacific on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) and Disaster Resilience Management (DRM). For the Pacific participants, technical aspects of the exchange highlighted as beneficial knowledge for the Pacific context included the alternative methods of tissue culture propagation, DNA fingerprinting in its determination of relationships within crops species and decreased replication of common crop varieties across both regions (indirectly responding to CSA and DRM challenges).

The exchange also included knowledge capturing/sharing techniques and the development of a template to facilitate an overall impact narrative from the exchange. This will result in a series of publications capturing the scientific, as well as the knowledge captured and its application at the national and regional level in the Pacific.

(2) The International Conference of Agricultural Statisticians (ICAS)

This activity was undertaken to strengthen SPC's capacity to provide technical assistance for the collection, dissemination and use of agricultural statistics for evidence-based agricultural policy in the Pacific. This was done through training on methodologies for agricultural censuses and surveys as well as engagement in the International Conference of Agricultural Statistics (ICAS) which was focused on agricultural statistics for meeting demands under the Sustainable Development Goals. The activity also provided an opportunity to strengthen relationships with PAPP partners in the development of the Pacific Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Fishery Statistics and build new relationships.

ICAS is held every three years and this year from 19 – 31 October in Rome, Italy brought together senior agricultural statisticians from developed and developing countries to discuss recent trends in agricultural statistics. This year's meeting focused on modernisation of agricultural statistics in support of the sustainable development agenda i.e. the Sustainable Development Goals. The conference was conducted over 3 days and included 500 participants and hundreds of different presentations. PAPP's Agricultural Statistician attended talks on areas of work directly relevant to the delivery of the PAPP agricultural statistics work stream specifically:

- The development of integrated surveys for agricultural statistics collection
- Latest developments in the world census of agriculture
- Data cleaning and dissemination platforms
- Statistics on food security and nutrition

Next steps will be consolidating and acting on some of the decisions from the side meetings. This will include the organisation of 2 events in 2017 on agricultural statistics. One south-south cooperation on agricultural census and a second workshop done in partnership with FAO and the Global Strategy on integrated agricultural statistical collection in the Pacific.

(3) Supporting Community Agriculture through Shared Learnings

The workshop, Capacity Development Support for Agriculture Policy, Research and Extension Services through Applied Knowledge Management Tools and Approaches, was held from 17-21 October, in Pohnpei, FSM. There were 40 participants from FSM, Palau and the Marshall Islands that participated in the workshop. Out of 40 participants, only 6 females attended and participated. The workshop was led by the FSM Department of Resources and Development, Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC) through its European Union supported intra-ACP Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP) in collaboration with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA). The workshop was a result of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) joint partnership to support Agricultural policy processes, value chains and extension support through stronger knowledge management (KM) concepts, approaches and tools.

The workshop was a first of its kind in the Pacific. It assisted participants to better document and share agricultural knowledge by helping them write about 'real' examples in Pohsoain Village, Kitti Municipality, Pohnpei, which they visited during the workshop. Participants learnt then wrote about,

climate change-ready crops and research, coupled with their facilitation of a ‘live’ Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) process which they took part in with the villagers. The aim was to help the villagers better analyse and plan solutions for problems they usually face. A classic example that was prominently identified during this exercise was the water shortage they usually face that stopped most of their vegetable farming activities in the village.

Research is underway in Pohnpei, in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), to determine more climate-ready and disease tolerant crops that can be grown by local people to help improve food security. Pohnpei-based research projects are testing the resilience of varieties of cassava in different management practices and taro, against Taro Leaf Blight (TLB), through a participatory breeding process. SPC’s Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP) is involved in the research, supported by the College of Micronesia, the FSM and Pohnpei Agriculture Departments and other partners. Nine varieties of cassava and 11 varieties of taro are being collected and grown in plots in the Pohnpei agriculture field for this purpose. . This is the first time Pohnpei varieties of cassava and taro are collected and to be documented and, in addition, tested for their resilience against climatic stresses and other growing conditions alongside introduced varieties to identify resilient crop varieties that are best suited to Pohnpei, FSM and the North Pacific as a whole.

The PRA held in Pohsoain Village addressed the changing climate and how droughts are becoming more severe, which has prompted Pohsoain and other communities to improve food security and nutrition by growing more climate resilient crops including cassava, taro, yam and breadfruit, plus some sweet potato and banana varieties. To further support these farmers, is the basic reason the unique research for cassava and taro that is being conducted in Pohnpei to increase a diverse base of resilient crop varieties for future food and income security. Cassava has been identified as a drought tolerant crop ideal to improve food security for FSM communities struggling to grow crops in drier conditions.

Central to the research will be the encouraging of the participation of farmers, especially in the next stages that will involve selection and assessment of suitable varieties best suited to their situations as their contributions to the project.

Getting agriculturalists more involved in community support agriculture and the better capture, documentation and sharing of information across farmers, agriculture officers and others, was highlighted during the knowledge management components of the workshop, especially given CSA is a key part of the national agriculture sector plans for FSM, Palau and the Marshall Islands.

At least 4 key stories were produced by participants during the workshop. The stories will be edited, published and then shared via PAFPNet mailing list, social media, PAFPNet portal and also uploaded on the new Agriculture Information System/PIRAS.

The practical experience built the capacity of learners on many skills on PRA process and tools to assess community vulnerability to climate change and variability and community awareness of climate change and knowledge management. The learning journey might be over in Pohnpei but not for the learners as they take home their experiences and to put to practice their new knowledge.

(4) Samoa Policy Bank Launch

Samoa launched its Agriculture Policy Bank - is essentially an ‘e-library’ which serves as a one-stop shop for information relating to the Pacific Island country’s agriculture policies and regulations, during the National Agriculture Week on the 13th of October.

The Agriculture Policy Banks are an initiative of the European Union (EU) supported Intra-ACP Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP), implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC), and are hosted on SPC's Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy Network (PAFPNet) portal <http://pafpnet.spc.int>

In launching the Policy Bank, Samoa's Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, the Hon. Laaulialemalietoa Leuatea Polataivao Fossie Von Schmidt, noted the importance of having these documents in one place and accessible to the public.

"The Policy Bank is an important tool to assist us in raising awareness and promoting our agriculture policy, particularly to the farmers. Now farmers have access to mobile phones and internet so they can access this information, and use them as a pathway for change – raising the status of farmers within the community, and also changing the mindset from old methods to new," he said.

The Agriculture Policy Bank was launched in front of up to a 100 (20% women) audience comprising farmers, youths, entrepreneurs, development partners and government officials, where the Minister thanked SPC and the European Union for the support provided in introducing the Agriculture Policy Bank to Samoa.

Included in the Policy Bank are summaries, translated into English and Samoan, of the new national Agriculture Sector Plan (2016-2020) which was launched in July 2016. The development of this ASP was supported by a partnership between SPC PAPP, UN FAO and the World Bank SACEP project; and PAPP continues to support MAF in adoption and awareness of the Sector Plan.

Visit the Samoa Agriculture Policy Bank (APB) <http://pafpnet.spc.int/policy-bank/countries/samoa> for the new ASP.

(5) Regional Agriculture Value Chain Financing Forum

The European Union (EU) supported SPC Intra-ACP Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP) Team Leader Vili Caniogo participated in the 'Regional Agri-Value Chain Financing Forum' that was held in Kingston, Jamaica from the 26-27 September. The Forum was attended by over 50 participants from 7 CARIFORUM countries, the Pacific Islands, and Canada.

The objectives of this two-Day Workshop were to:

1. Promote sharing and better understanding by financial institutions (FI) of innovative value chain financing arrangements that were already in operation and the experiences to date with these finance facilities;
2. Solicit interest by FIs with regard to improving access to finance for sustainable value chains and SME development;
3. Provide opportunity for selected SMEs to demonstrate/ highlight their financing needs to support their agricultural Value chains;
4. Promote more regular dialogue and between formal FIs and value chain actors.

Access to finance particularly credit is a constraint for many farmers in the Caribbean and Pacific regions. This well-documented subject and Workshop was aimed at facilitating further actions while taking stock of what has been working in some Caribbean and Pacific countries.

The Pacific APP will look to support the design of 1 or 2 pilot VC finance mechanisms in its extended phase. Fiji is an eligible pilot given the existing pieces already at play. Firstly RBF already chairs a national policy mechanism that has key MFIs involved. In addition, the Finance FI mechanism have

tested FI products (e.g. mobile money) that have been implemented regionally. Second, FCLC provides scale that is important to the viability of financial products. FCLC is already looking at an insurance product. Third, MBF is already testing and implementing a specific agrifinance credit product and this experience – and its stable of clients - provides valuable input in any design.

Recommendations are:

- (i) Explore feasibility of a Working Capital Fund through the RBF Financial Inclusion mechanism and other stakeholders to support 1-2 pilot value chain activity in Fiji;
- (ii) Design of an Access to AgriFinance Portal using Fiji plus 1 additional PIC as pilot;
- (iii) Collaborate with FAST with a view to listing Pacific SMEs on the Axis Match Making Database;
- (iv) Establish or work with a national mechanism starting with Fiji that focuses strategically on finance for agriculture and seek to design the interventions noted above.

(6) Integrated Reporting Information System (IRIS) Training

PAPP's Results Monitoring Officer was a member of a 12 Pacific Community (SPC) staff (9 women, 3 men) participating in an IRIS training in Noumea, New Caledonia. The training was conducted by SPC from the 12-16 of September.

The Integrated Reporting Information System (IRIS) is a reporting tool used by SPC to track project progress and reporting. The IRIS training was organised to provide hands-on experience to SPC's MEL/Reporting Officers on IRIS functions. The training was necessary given the level of reporting required from SPC, and the various reporting templates that inform SPC's reports to its partners, Member Countries, and donors.

The second part of the training focused on one-to-one discussions with focal points on Divisional requirements, reporting data, and discussions on how best to reflect Division's outputs. The Strategic, Planning, and Learning (SPL) updated focal points on SPC's reporting and strategic planning processes in the new organisation Strategic Plan, and plans for better coordination.

Next step will be evaluating the SPC Land Resources Division projects progress and reporting through IRIS.