

OVERVIEW OF **THREE AGRITOURISM EVENTS** IN THE PACIFIC



EUROPEAN UNION



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Communauté
du Pacifique

South Pacific Tourism
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USP
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE
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OVERVIEW OF
THREE AGRITOURISM EVENTS
IN THE PACIFIC



Pacific
Community

Communauté
du Pacifique

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Promoting the links between agriculture and tourism will contribute to improved economic opportunities and enhance sustainable development.

The total value of tourism in the Pacific region is forecast to double to USD 4 billion by 2019, but up to 80 per cent of the food offered by the tourism industry is imported from outside the region because of the need for reliable supplies of good quality products. Reducing this percentage can be achieved by improving the links between farmers and the tourism sector.

This booklet was written to inform stakeholders in both the agriculture and tourism sectors about recent agritourism events and to inspire them in their efforts to increase the use of local products for the tourism sector and provide what buyers want in terms of consistency, quality, supply, presentation and other desirable features. Achieving this outcome will benefit farmers, the tourism trade and, ultimately, the national economy.

The initial idea for the recent agritourism events evolved from a regional culinary workshop held in Fiji in 2014, at which the importance of upscaling chefs' culinary skills was highlighted, in particular the need to better link local produce and flavours with contemporary cuisines and culinary tourism marketing.

Three agritourism events followed. This booklet briefly describes them and then presents a summary of the issues, findings and discussions that were held. This is followed by a practical section on how to host a buyers-sellers mart – a feature of all three events – and then a useful list of many Pacific agricultural enterprises and personnel involved in agritourism. Finally, some case studies are provided: examples of what can be achieved.

Among the issues discussed are the challenges faced by farmers and buyers, organic farming, educating farmers and other stakeholders, farming as a business, intermediary suppliers (middlemen) and the need for research and data to inform future planning.

The series of agritourism events was based on research and overseas culinary tourism success stories, such as from the Caribbean region, which had strong representation at the regional event held in Fiji, to encourage more knowledge sharing across the African, Caribbean and Pacific States.

Each of the events was a joint effort supported by partnerships with the European Union (EU) funded Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP) implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC) Land Resources Division (LRD) and part of a broader EU partnership under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF 10) with the African, Caribbean and Pacific States; the EU-funded Pacific Regional Capacity Building Programme implemented by the South Pacific Tourism Organisation and the University of the South Pacific. Central to the success of these partnerships, was the high level of engagement and leadership from each country's government ministries and key organisations including:

- in Samoa, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Samoa Tourism Authority;
- in Tonga, the Ministry of Commerce, Tourism and Labour, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Forests and Fisheries, the Tonga Ahopanilolo Technical Institute (supporting trainee chefs) and other partners; and
- in Fiji, the Ministries of Agriculture, Finance and Public Enterprises, and the Public Service Commission and other partners, which jointly hosted the regional event.



Finally, a pivotal role at the agritourism events was played by celebrity chefs. Each agritourism event included a culinary workshop supported by international and local celebrity chefs, in particular Chef Colin Chung, Robert Oliver and Shalesh Naidu, who led discussions at all three workshops.



80%

of food offered by
the tourism industry
is imported from
outside the region

2.0

SUMMARY OF AGRITOURISM EVENTS

An overview of the three week-long agritourism events follows, starting with the one held in Samoa in November 2014, then the Tongan event, and lastly the regional event hosted by Fiji in 2015. The events involved different sessions and participants, but the following activities were held in all three.

- **Farmers' workshop** – a workshop lasting two or three days to provide farmers with information, case studies and technical advice on statistics, supply chain, quality management systems, etc. and how best to link with the tourism sector.
- **Culinary training workshop** – local chefs nominated to attend this workshop were joined by overseas celebrity chefs and local personalities to learn about their important role in developing culinary tourism in the Pacific, and how to improve the links between the agriculture and tourism sectors. The workshop included field visits to markets, local farms and produce suppliers; presentations about the research and the potential for improving culinary tourism in the Pacific; and in-kitchen sessions on the theory and practice of devising menus that reflect contemporary Pacific cuisine.
- **Buyers-sellers' mart** – farmers (sellers) and chefs (buyers) meet in a setting similar to speed dating. Each farmer talks with each chef for ten minutes to quickly get to know each other, exchange ideas and discuss any direct supply opportunities. At a given signal, they move to the next person with whom they speak for ten minutes, and this continues until each of the estimated 20 farmers and 20 chefs have met each other.
- **Gala dinner** – At the end of the event, the farmers and chefs unite at a final dinner. Chefs use local produce and their new-found information about contemporary Pacific cuisine to prepare and serve a meal to the farmers, government officials, advisors and other guests, who experience local foods reinvigorated in a modern menu.

2.1

SAMOA – LINKING AGRICULTURE TO TOURISM



The week-long Linking Agriculture to Tourism event in Samoa was held from 10–14 November 2014. The farmers' workshop attracted about 30 farmers to the Nu'u Research Centre on 10 November 2014. It focused on the need to provide consistent quality and quantity in a timely manner. Delegates also discussed the need to clearly document and interpret crop calendars, so that buyers can arrange alternative supply avenues during off-season periods, and hence maintain a sustainable relationship of integrity.

Other parts of the event were the Samoa culinary training workshop, 12–14 November, and the buyers-sellers' mart that brought the farmers and chefs together to discuss potential direct-supply opportunities and challenges.

SAMOA

FIJI

TONGA



2.2

TONGA – TONGA FARMER HOTELIER MART AND CULINARY WEEK



The Tonga Farmer Hotelier Mart and Culinary Week was held on 20–24 April 2015 in Tonga. The aim was to improve direct-supply opportunities for local farmers to local restaurants. The week began with a Tonga farmers' workshop about supplying restaurant-standard produce, then progressed to a public seminar on the second day hosted by the Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy (PAFPNet). This was followed by a three-day culinary training workshop. Several field trips for both chefs and farmers were conducted during the workshop, including trips to local markets and farms, such as the Nishi Trading farm that exports its produce, and also to trial nursery and organic farm sites.

Linking these events was the buyers-sellers' mart, where farmers and chefs met to network and discuss direct-supply opportunities. The participants gathered again at the end of the week for the gala dinner, which was attended by more than 80 people.

2.3

REGIONAL EVENT (FIJI) – PACIFIC COMMUNITY AGRITOURISM WEEK



The inaugural regional event, the Pacific Community Agritourism Week, was held from 29 June to 3 July 2015. It was hosted by Fiji, where tourism and agriculture are well established and prospering. The event focused on building closer links between agriculture and tourism and was attended by more than a hundred participants, most of whom were from the Pacific region. Representatives from African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States also attended. Farmers, tourism operators, policymakers, private sector operators and agritourism promoters shared ideas on using more local products in the tourism industry. The week's events, some of which ran concurrently, included a regional farmers' knowledge exchange workshop, a forum on elevating the importance of connecting agriculture to tourism, an agribusiness forum on linking the agrifood sector to the tourism-related market, a Pacific culinary training workshop, and an Intra ACP-Pacific Agricultural Policy Project Steering Committee Workshop.

Other practical activities were an agrifood display; a buyers-sellers' mart, uniting 20 chefs and 20 farmers from different Pacific Island countries; field visits for chefs and farmers; and a gala dinner, showcasing local Pacific produce.

3.0

SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1

KEY FINDINGS – SAMOA, TONGA AND FIJI EVENTS

Following is a summary of the issues, key findings and discussions from the three agritourism events, with a focus on the farmers' workshops, culinary training workshops and buyers-sellers' marts. The summary also includes common findings from other activities held and some suggested national and regional interventions.



LINKING AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM

- a. Promoting the links between agriculture and tourism can contribute to improved economic opportunities, build resilience to adverse effects of climate change in rural communities and enhance sustainable development. Data indicate that there are significant, multi-million dollar opportunities for profits and savings across the agriculture and tourism sectors if they work more closely together.
- b. Agribusiness offers a very good foundation for employment and economic development. More success stories and positive role models should be widely promoted to build public awareness of the opportunities for employment and income-generation, especially for young people and business investors.
- c. Agribusiness is not limited to horticultural produce, which often takes the focus at events such as the agritourism series. Livestock and seafood produce also account for much of the food imports to the Pacific that could be replaced with local products. In Tonga, chefs repeatedly discussed how livestock, rather than vegetables and horticultural produce, is a key target area for the reduction of imports for tourism.
- d. Improved quality and consistency of data are needed from governments, hotels and other stakeholders to assist with agritourism analysis and planning. The recent study on agriculture and tourism links in the Pacific region was discussed at the Samoa event¹. It investigates examples of positive links which may exist and highlights some of the challenges, in particular knowledge gaps and the need to better document, analyse and improve current approaches to promote these links.

¹ *Agriculture and tourism linkages in Pacific Island countries - Study to assess constraints, potentials (to) increase the understanding of policy and institutional arrangements needed to exchange synergies* (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) January 2012)



EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

- e. More education is essential so that farmers understand how to better meet the needs of the tourism sector, while chefs and tourism business owners need to better understand the value of culinary tourism.
- f. Institutions that build capacity in tourism and hospitality could help to drive agritourism, particularly the use of more local food and products in the visitor industry (and through the use of more local case studies, including south-south examples from the Caribbean).
- g. Intermediary suppliers or middlemen, such as Samoa's Women in Business Development Inc. and Fiji's Farm Boy, as well as some teaching institutions such as the University of the South Pacific, include chef education as part of their strategic approach to developing local supply and demand. They have initiatives to help improve chefs' culinary skills and educate chefs on using local produce to prepare traditional dishes as well as in contemporary Pacific cuisine, and the opportunities for so doing.



BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- h. Hotels, resorts and restaurants are businesses, so farmers need to operate their farms as businesses and follow business principles, such as customer service, quality control, and consistency and reliability of supply.
- i. Many Pacific-based exporters and agricultural entrepreneurs focus on increasing their exports, but there was agreement at the agritourism events on opportunities to focus more on replacing food imports with local produce in the tourism sector.
- j. Exporters also agreed on the logic of creating partnerships and collaborating across countries in order to create an internationally renowned Pacific supply-source. This can be done by aggregating local capacities, thereby being able to provide more consistent volumes and seasonal crops, in order to compete with importers. For example, if a temporary supply shortage occurs in one country because of a cyclone, then another Pacific country can temporarily assist, so the client remains loyal to Pacific suppliers and does not look beyond the region.
- k. There was significant discussion about the role of the middleman or intermediary supplier (the business conduit between the hotel and the farmers), whether private sector or cooperative. The middleman model can aggregate local suppliers – up to 1000 farmers per middleman – and facilitate business between smallholders and large resorts. Farmers' concerns about poor farm-gate prices versus the final sales price were offset by the intermediary suppliers' explanation of the financial risk they absorb to provide a consistent, top quality service to clients.



- l. The need to investigate ways to increase direct business transactions with chefs and farmers, such as with database linkages or initiatives like the buyers-sellers' mart, was expressed. At the buyers-sellers' mart a number of chefs arranged transactions with farmers to supply local foods for their tourism business and discussed opportunities to progress or expand these transactions.
- m. Import substitution remains a challenge in small island countries, where there are fewer and ageing farmers. Youth are not attracted to farming – some youth associate farming with punishment, as weeding the compound is often used in Pacific Island schools for rule-breakers. This may change as the agritourism sector builds a stronger profile as a business.
- n. Business challenges faced by farmers striving to achieve the consistent quality and supply required by clients include: transport (domestic and export), weather (droughts, excessive rain/floods), production consistency across all farms (off season, inconsistent supply and quality of supply), seeds (availability and suitable varieties for Pacific climates), market access (tariff/non-tariff barriers, e.g. biosecurity, political pressures), logistics and infrastructure (i.e. transportation on bumpy roads causes loss), and technical support and research.

SPOTLIGHT ON HOTELIERS AND CHEFS

- o. Culinary tourism is a growth market largely untapped in the Pacific, but it could be developed by ensuring that:
 - hotel managers and chefs are familiar with local markets and suppliers and understand the value and range of fresh and local produce – on the field market visits, chefs from Samoa and Cook Islands were surprised at the range of produce being grown in Fiji that could be grown in their own countries, given similar tropical conditions;
 - tourism stakeholders and staff, especially chefs, understand the socio-economic benefits of sourcing more produce locally (financial benefits for farmers and savings for tourism businesses that buy locally rather than importing); and
 - chefs, especially those employed from overseas, better exploit the growing culinary tourism market with contemporary Pacific cuisine on menus, and this includes a greater awareness of what can be grown in the Pacific.
- p. Chefs can utilise the strong opportunity to source more produce locally and, if this is not available in their country, encourage local growers or source imports from within the region rather than from further afield such as from Australia, New Zealand or Asia. This would also encourage more local farmers to collaborate across countries to locally bridge supply shortfalls for volume, quality or seasonality.
- q. The celebrity chef-led sessions on adapting local produce and Pacific cuisine for international visitors generated significant interest amongst the delegate chefs who plan to replicate similar approaches in their commercial kitchens.



3.2

COMMON TOPICS OF INTEREST

The three week-long events had common discussion topics shared by farmers, chefs and other delegates as summarised below.

| TOPIC OF DISCUSSION | REGIONAL (FIJI) | |
|--|---|--|
| Farmers do not know what restaurants want, and vice versa. | There is a need to ensure that hotel managers and chefs are familiar with the local markets and the value of fresh and local produce, while farmers and suppliers need to improve their understanding of tourism's need for consistent supply and quality. | |
| Consistent quality is necessary. | The total value of tourism in the Pacific Island region is forecast to double to USD 4 billion by 2019. Up to 80 per cent of the food in the tourism industry is imported, because the hotels and airlines need reliable supplies of good quality products. This offers opportunities for farmers to increase the use of local foods for the tourism sector, if they provide what buyers want in terms of quality, supply, presentation and other desirable features. | |
| Seasonality and range of varieties in the Pacific should not be an impediment, if managed properly. | Government is supporting subsistence farmers as well as semi-commercial and commercial farmers, with off-season assistance. Discussions about middlemen and low farm-gate prices included comments about incentives for higher prices to farmers for off-season production. | |
| Reducing the high level of imported goods is a key objective driving agritourism and improved economic opportunities (especially for smallholders). | Import substitution remains a challenge in small island countries for many reasons. In particular, it is due to fewer and ageing farmers as youth are not attracted to farming. This may change as the agritourism sector builds a stronger profile as a business. | |
| Tourists choose travel destinations based largely on food – contemporary Pacific cuisine can capitalise on the lucrative culinary tourism market. | Food tourism is a growing segment of the visitor experience, with approx. 50% of tourists choosing travel destinations based on food and wine. The Pacific has an exotic and clean image that can be leveraged. The promotion of local food can be done in many ways, such as food festivals, cooking competitions using local ingredients, chefs using local foods in innovative ways, books and videos, and training institutions promoting local foods in their courses. | |
| Local people and Pacific nationals returning home are a big market for contemporary local cuisine. | The gala dinner generated interest amongst national delegates, many of whom were tasting contemporary Pacific cuisine for the first time. This highlighted to local chefs and farms – through five-star food – the taste benefits of better linking the agriculture and tourism markets across the Pacific. | |
| Additional cultural values may need to be included in training young chefs, who are now one or two generations removed from traditional knowledge of local foods and cuisine. | A number of noted (senior) chefs are strong advocates of Pacific flavours, local ingredients and menus. Establishing chefs' alliances and national chapters is one approach. They can share their experiences through knowledge platforms, and put up their content as part of a wider regional promotion. | |

| | TONGA | SAMOA |
|--|--|--|
| | <p>“Farmers don’t know what restaurants want, and restaurants don’t know what farmers have” was one comment from the Tonga buyers-sellers’ mart, which helped them get an insight.</p> | <p>The need to know what your buyer wants can never be overstated. In the hospitality industry, connecting to chefs is important. Knowing what farmers can offer and what is in season can generate contemporary dishes using locally available produce.</p> |
| | <p>Chefs will not compromise quality or supply reliability – they would prefer to import. To arrange direct-supply, chefs need Tongan farmers to adapt their traditional farming practices – in particular their seasonality of crops and general preference for root crops – and provide lettuce, herbs, spices and other varieties of produce all-year round (non seasonal). Chefs commented on farmers’ ‘poor commitment’ to change.</p> | <p>The workshop participants agreed there is a need to provide the three important factors in markets: quality, quantity and consistency.</p> |
| | <p>Tonga is in the tropics and has high quality, nutrient rich soil that grows almost anything, but there is a need to manage factors such as seeds and dry season irrigation. For example, local Chinese market gardeners grow strawberries, but they are low quality. This is largely due to the seeds being sourced from the non-tropical climate of New Zealand, so it is better to source the seeds from Thailand, where they use Spanish seeds to breed more tropical varieties of strawberry.</p> | <p>For off-season supplies, the workshop participants noted that it is important to communicate to buyers that higher price trends for such produce are due to higher input costs, so buyers can be aware of the reasons for these price variations.</p> |
| | <p>In Tongatapu, chefs have a low level of reliance on foreign imports, except for livestock and select seafood. Chinese market gardeners rather than indigenous Tongan nationals are supplying restaurants. Participating chefs discussed how it would be ideal to source from both Chinese and Tongan farmers (so long as Tongan farmers provide the quality, consistency, excellent value and all-year supply that Chinese market gardeners provide).</p> | <p>Critical in marketing agricultural produce, the workshop concluded that buyers of agricultural produce will move to other, more consistent producers overseas if local producers do not provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ top quality produce; ➤ the required quantity ; and ➤ consistency of supply in a timely manner. |
| | <p>Interestingly, in Tonga, latest data indicate that most visitor arrivals are returning Tongan nationals rather than overseas tourists. Therefore, appealing to Tongan nationals may be more of a priority for tourism menus. A global survey has revealed that tourists choose travel destinations based largely on food (number 3 priority), yet the region has not really valued its chefs or farmers. Also, often there is a misconception that overseas foods are better than local foods, and locals need to re-think and remove that.</p> | <p>Findings from the recent study on agriculture and tourism links in Pacific Island countries were discussed at the Samoa event, in particular examples of possible positive links and the need to better document, analyse and improve current approaches to promoting these links.</p> |
| | <p>More than 50% of visitor arrivals (tourists) are Tongan nationals visiting, and not international visitors. This challenges the current thinking in restaurants, that menus need to be almost entirely western, and raises the question of whether the new approach to create fusion between traditional and contemporary cuisine to appeal to the palangi tourist also appeals to Tongan nationals.</p> | <p>Celebrity chef Colin Chung presented on the buyers’ (chefs’) perspective at the Samoan and regional (Fiji) events, with a focus on the dual challenge of educating farmers and chefs about the value of using more local foods and contemporary Pacific menus. There are many markets for contemporary Pacific cuisine.</p> |
| | <p>Young chefs are largely unaware of, and unmotivated by, traditional cuisine. Being unaware of their own cultural foods and traditional preparation methods and so educating them about modern Pacific cuisine includes going back to learning about grandma’s cooking. Some young chefs said that local food is not good enough for the restaurant menu, but this view changed after education about the value of traditional foods.</p> | <p>Knowing what farmers can offer can generate contemporary cooking chefs, especially produce available in season so these contemporary dishes contain locally available produce.</p> |

| TOPIC OF DISCUSSION | REGIONAL (FIJI) | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>The benefits of organic (or chemical free) farming</p> | <p>Many speakers at the farmers' workshop, the forum and other sessions at the regional event discussed the benefits of organic farming in creating a comparative advantage for the Pacific agritourism sector. They also discussed the challenges, such as the cost of certification and the complexity of maintaining certification. Some examples: Samoa's WIBDI has 600 certified organic farms; Solomon Islands' Kastom Garden rural training centre promotes organic farming in surrounding communities through awareness programmes and visits; Musket Cove in Fiji created an organic farm in 2002 for its own needs as well as for sale, and some of its produce carries the resort brand.</p> | |
| <p>Run the farm as a business.</p> | <p>Hotels, resorts and restaurants are businesses so farmers need to operate their farms as businesses and follow business principles, such as customer service, quality control, and consistency and reliability of supply.</p> | |
| <p>Individual suppliers versus cooperatives or middlemen</p> | <p>There was significant discussion about the role of the middleman or intermediary supplier (the business conduit between the hotel and the farmers) and how intermediaries are becoming increasingly popular whether private sector (i.e. Farmboy, Fiji) or cooperative (i.e. Women in Business Development Inc., Samoa). There was concern that farmers receive poor farm-gate prices versus the final sales price that intermediaries receive. This generated much discussion about business practices and the risks absorbed by the intermediaries to support the farmers and provide a consistent, top quality service to clients. In fact, the tourism sector may potentially use more intermediary supplier services to facilitate more access to local produce from smallholders. Intermediary suppliers such as WIBDI and Farmboy, as well as the University of the South Pacific (USP), promote tourism demand by providing chef education on (a) the value of culinary tourism, and (b) the use of more local foods on menus.</p> | |
| <p>Financing challenges</p> | <p>It can be difficult for smallholder farmers to access finance: (a) because farmers often cannot meet the equity requirements (most of the land in the Pacific is owned customarily and cannot be secured or mortgaged for loans); and (b) tourism businesses often have a 30-day invoice payment period for which farmers cannot afford to wait.</p> | |
| <p>Chefs require farmers to change traditional practices and/or crops to meet tourism market demand needs.</p> | <p>Nishi Trading has created the Nishi Foundation, whereby it brings in students, volunteers, and experts to support and train core staff in new thinking and approaches. For example, staff are invited to grow their own produce in a company-provided organic farm plot as part of a hands-on voluntary training exercise in changing farming approaches (and staff keep the profits from produce sales).</p> | |

| | TONGA | SAMOA |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>There is a preference for chemical-free produce by chefs, largely as a result of education at the workshop. However, there is a reluctance to pay a premium for organic produce. More chef education will result in more demand for organic produce, but unlikely premiums are required by farmers to undertake organic farming techniques. Chef Robert Oliver explained to the chefs in Tonga that in Samoa there are many certified organic farms, and the restaurants will pay a premium while the local market does not.</p> <p>With non-communicable diseases a big issue for Tonga, there was much discussion about the health benefits of organics – to the soil and to people.</p> | <p>The Women In Business Development Inc. (WIBDI) cooperative sources supplies from 600 certified organic farms in Samoa. Small organic family farms, with an emphasis on youth, are at the heart of WIBDI's Organic Farm to Table programme that connects smallholders to the tourism industry via hotels and restaurants. The programme is now expanding to include Farm to Home Table and Farm to Overseas Table.</p> <p>Central to WIBDI's success is its local production and highly successful exports of virgin coconut oil supplies, including to The Body Shop.</p> |
| | <p>To supply restaurants, resorts and others with a stake in tourism, farmers need to adopt a business approach and not a farming approach. This includes addressing broader issues such as financial management, supply guarantees and customer service.</p> | <p>The workshop pointed out to farmers the need, as good business sense, to know production factors such as percentage losses and percentage marketable quality. This will enable farmers to target the quantity of top quality produce that is needed to sustain consistent supply to buyers – and buyers will know in advance when to arrange alternative supply.</p> <p>Integrity is key to successful seller-buyer relationships.</p> |
| | <p>In Tonga, the Fiji case study of the Sigatoka participatory guarantee system (PGS) showed how farmers supply tomatoes direct to resorts. PGS encourages farms to run as businesses to successfully direct-supply resorts, and contractual arrangements to provide consistent quality so that, if a farm lacks supply, it can seek replacements.</p> | <p>The workshop participants acknowledged that working together, linking and agreeing on strategies is a good start. Knowing the logistics of the market demand can efficiently and effectively spread out production of various commodities, so that unnecessary flooding and price drops can be avoided.</p> <p>There was discussion about creating a Samoa farmers' association.</p> |
| | <p>The Sigatoka participatory guarantee system (PGS) takes a business approach to financial management and book keeping. For cashflow, many resorts have a 30-day invoice period (so farmers are unpaid for 30 days). PGS encourages farmers to grow other crops for sale at markets to earn cash while invoices are pending.</p> | <p>[As discussed at the regional event in Fiji, Samoa WIBDI takes a holistic approach with its farmers, including providing financial literacy training and other business acumen skills as part of their work with local smallholders who supply produce for exports.]</p> |
| | <p>At the Tonga's buyers-sellers' mart, one farmer resolved to change his farming approach after feedback from the chefs. He will grow more varieties of produce (fewer root crops and more lettuce, tomatoes, etc.), try growing his crops all year round (non-seasonal), and try chemical-free farming to meet restaurant needs. Another farmer said the event made him think about the opportunity to deal directly with the restaurants but he was still only considering selling seasonal yams, which chefs had explained they did not really need.</p> | <p>Samoa farmers are mostly small farmers, and there was a lot of support for the suggestion that a farmers' association be formed. This would constitute a change from farmers working individually to working in coordinated groups. Marketing of produce that can compete with overseas suppliers in meeting the quality, quantity and consistency demanded by tourism would then be more cost-effective.</p> |

| TOPIC OF DISCUSSION | REGIONAL (FIJI) | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Inconsistent supply of agricultural inputs such as pesticides and seeds, plus infrastructure</p> | <p>Transport is a significant issue for farmers in delivering to domestic markets. Poor roads cause significant losses through produce damage. Also, the high cost of sea and air freight is prohibitive for many exporters.</p> | |
| <p>Good governance within the agriculture sector and better linking of the tourism and agriculture sectors</p> | <p>Data indicate significant, multi-million dollar opportunities for profits and savings across the agriculture and tourism sectors if they work more closely together.</p> | |
| <p>More support is needed from government and support agencies in terms of information sharing and advice</p> | <p>There is a need to urge government ministries and other stakeholders to make it easier to access information, i.e. there needs to be more public awareness on what information is available and how to access it.</p> | |
| <p>Data collection, database systems, sharing data, and crop calendars</p> | <p>Data collection and retrieval needs improvement. Various parties collect data but the information is not shared or easily available. Another issue is that the right type of data are not being collected, leaving big gaps in knowledge. A new database in Cook Islands, Aglntel, tries to address this problem by collecting highly disaggregated data that are far more detailed and useful to different people along the value chains.</p> | |

| TONGA | SAMOA |
|--|--|
| <p>The speakers from Tonga's Nishi Trading raised the need for better seeds and agricultural supplies as a key issue at the regional forum and the Tonga forum, as well as the challenges of poor infrastructure, especially road quality.</p> | <p>In Samoa, the workshop highlighted the issue of inconsistent supply of agricultural inputs such as pesticides and the related problem of ineffective pesticides. There is also a need for a consistent supply of good seeds suitable for the Pacific's climatic and environmental conditions. Good seeds supplied by locals are sometimes poorly packaged and stored and have no use-by dates.</p> |
| <p>Tonga's national farming body, the Growers Federation of Tonga (GrowFed) lacks central government funding, and therefore traction. GrowFed began with government funding which ceased after one year. It now sources funds from NZAID and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, suggesting that central government has a low prioritisation for farming in its annual budget, despite agriculture accounting for such a significant portion of the gross domestic product and livelihoods. This may suggest a national governance issue, further exacerbated by the sectoral corporate plans of tourism and agriculture failing to recognise each other, according to one speaker.</p> | <p>The proposed farmers' association would enable farmers to be better represented at the national level and give them a voice in government. It would also improve the management and coordination of farming, leading to better links with the tourism sector.</p> |
| <p>A presentation on quality and consistency of supply talked about the opportunity for better collaboration between MAFFF and farmers on the type of research and advice provided to farmers, i.e. more technical advice rather than simply sharing ideas and information.</p> | <p>Given issues such as lack of consistent supply of agricultural inputs, there is a need for Samoa MAF research to refocus on the sector needs and to respond appropriately.</p> |
| <p>Discussion about the creation of a database, one that is accessible by both farmers (sellers) and tourism operators (buyers). It should detail current market prices and availability, plus projections of which farmers are producing which crops and when they will be due for harvest. This can be supported by the Pacific Community and partners.</p> | <p>Participants produced crop calendars as part of the workshop, and as part of this process farmers agreed it is important to have an agreed market price for each commodity (variable and updated over the year). All should help each other – this is where the proposed farmers' association would be useful. Farmers should know what the market will bear and lower the price below the imported price where possible. Eventually build a trade mark of local quality for which buyers will be willing to pay extra.</p> |

4.0

HOW TO HOST A BUYERS-SELLERS' MART

4.1

OBJECTIVE

Each of the agritourism events consisted of a comprehensive programme of activities, including a buyers-sellers' mart. The objective of such a mart was two-fold.

- a. It ensured that at each event there was direct interaction between the farmers (sellers) and chefs (buyers) and an opportunity to arrange direct-supply transactions.
- b. It provided a trial run for farmers and chefs to replicate on their return home.

4.2

HOW IT WORKS

At each agritourism event, the buyers-sellers' mart brought together approximately 20 farmers (sellers) and 20 chefs (buyers) in an activity similar to speed dating. This requires each farmer to talk directly with each chef for ten minutes, during which they quickly got to know each other, exchanged ideas and discussed direct-supply opportunities before moving to the next chef and doing the same thing. This continued until each farmer had met each chef.

4.3

PREPARING A CROP CALENDAR

Central to the buyers-sellers' mart process was the farmers' use of their new crop calendars. The PAPP project held a session at each of the agritourism events to introduce farmers to the concept of a crop calendar and to assist each farmer prepare their own in readiness for the buyers-sellers' mart. The purpose of the crop calendar is to enable farmers to plan ahead what produce they will have available, and when, so that buyers can anticipate supplies and also seek alternative supplies in low or off-seasons. This creates consistency and reliability in supply, and gives advance notice of any shortfalls so buyers can plan in advance to ensure they have the supplies they need.



TABLE: Sample Farmer Crop Calendar 2015

| TYPE OF CROP | VOLUME OF PRODUCE (in kilograms/bundles etc. depending on the situation and product) | | | | |
|--------------|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | JAN | FEB | MAR | APRIL | MAY |
| TARO | 10,000 | 10,000 | 10,000 | 10,000 | 10,000 |
| GREEN PEPPER | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| LETTUCE | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 |
| TOMATO | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| SWEET POTATO | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 |



4.4

SHARED EXPERIENCES FROM THE THREE MARTS

Initial feedback from the Tongan buyers-sellers' mart was positive. One chef commented: *I've already made contact with the farmers to buy from them*, while a farmer commented: *It makes me want to go and plant more vegetables*. However, while there was positive sentiment and initial promises of direct-supply transactions, there were questions about how much follow-up there would actually be between the farmers and chefs after the event, when they would have to initiate their own contact. In addition, it was noted that the produce needs expressed by the chefs would require farmers to change their behaviour (i.e. plant different varieties of crops such as lettuce instead of root crops), but there was little recognition or expressed willingness by farmers to implement change or to truly capitalise on the tourism market and its need for a central market information system.

In Samoa, central to discussions about the mart was how integrity is key to successful seller-buyer relationships. For example, it is important for farmers to clearly document and relay seasonal crop calendars, so that buyers can arrange alternative supply avenues during low or off-season periods. It is also important to communicate clearly with buyers, telling them, for example, to expect higher prices during off-seasons due to higher input

costs. The feedback from Samoa attendees was very positive, but the question was asked whether these direct-supply arrangements with smallholders could be sustained long-term by the tourism sector or whether they would become too time-consuming and complicated, making the intervention of middlemen, or intermediary suppliers, the better solution to the need for a central market information system.

At the regional event hosted in Fiji, the buyers-sellers' mart attracted a different range of chefs and, in particular farmers, including a number of private-sector cooperatives, exporters and agribusiness entrepreneurs from many Pacific countries. Also, some of the attendees had previously attended the buyers-sellers' marts at the Samoan and Tongan agritourism events. As a result, the regional mart was less about farmers learning about the needs of chefs, and more about discussing complex issues, such as knowledge-sharing across countries and generating offline business discussions among agriculture exporters about uniting supplies across countries as 'one Pacific' in order to collectively combat imported foods.

“ It makes me want to go and plant more vegetables. ”

| | JUNE | JULY | AUG | SEPT | OCT | NOV | DEC |
|--|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 12,000 | 12,000 | 14,00 | 14,000 | 14,000 | 15,000 | 10,000 |
| | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 |
| | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 |

4.5

HOSTING YOUR OWN BUYERS-SELLERS MART

SPC-PAPP wants to encourage other organisations and governments to host national and regional buyers-sellers' marts, based on and using the templates and lessons learned from the initial three events hosted.

Following is an event checklist for a large buyers-sellers' mart with 5-20 farmers and chefs, but it can be used for one-on-one business meetings.



NOMINATING AND INVITING FARMERS AND CHEFS

Government partners

Establish a relationship with key government partners in agriculture and tourism, as these ministries will lead the nomination process to source and invite participants. Based on past events, it has proved important that government stakeholders 'own' the event, and be actively engaged in its management.

Memorandum of understanding

A memorandum of understanding between event organisers and government stakeholders is a formal expression of the understanding amongst stakeholders that the event is government-led. This will ensure genuine support from local agencies, farmers and chefs. (This is also a first step to possible future 'big picture' plans of working with key policy makers to ensure that the corporate plans of tourism and agriculture start to link more directly and, similarly, improve the development planning of central government.)

Selection criteria

Organisers need to ensure careful selection of farmer and chef participants, based on agreed criteria. One of these is for farmers to have already engaged in supplying markets. This ensures they have experience of operating as a business, supplying and meeting the demands of the tourism sector. Another criterion is that the nominee can represent several farmers or chefs and be able to pass on the knowledge and skills to them after the event.

Proposed nominees

Once government provides the list of nominees, this should be checked by the event organisers for details. For example, are the farmers from a range of produce suppliers, including livestock and fisheries? Are the chefs a mix of senior chefs or kitchen buyers – not junior chefs without influence on buying or menu selection?

Event date and location

The main challenge is ensuring that the farmers and chefs are available and can travel to the event. The mart may be conducted as a stand-alone event or, to simplify the logistics of travel and other arrangements, it may be simpler to find an existing or planned conference or forum (relating to agritourism), and then arrange for the buyers-sellers' mart to be included in the programme. Importantly, consider the time of the event – does it best suit busy chefs and farmers?

Optional – incentives for attendance

Past experience from buyers-sellers' marts indicates that people often do not attend on the day, although they accepted the invitation, so it may be worth considering incentives for attendance, such as the promise of complimentary lunch and field trips to places where they can see theory put into practice.

Invitation and RSVPs

Send the same number of invitations to the farmers and chefs, e.g. 20 to farmers and 20 to chefs. Importantly, keep track of the RSVPs (acceptances to attend the event), as it is essential that there is the same number of farmers as chefs at the event. This can be tricky to coordinate.

PREPARING THE VENUE

Venue requirements

The event logistics are simple: just people, chairs and tables. Most problematic is ensuring that all the people arrive and on time. In addition, if guest speakers are coming, audio-visual equipment has to be arranged.

Event timing

The event requires two or three hours, depending on the number of chefs and farmers. If there are, for example, seven chefs and seven farmers, it will take 70 minutes, using the speed dating time of ten minutes per meeting. Extra time is needed at the start of the event to organise people into pairs, and for a guest speaker, if there is one. Extra time may also be needed for farmers to prepare their crop calendar if they have not brought one, and for filling out the evaluation form at the end of the event (see below).

Audio visual equipment

Ensure that audio visual equipment, such as a microphone and overhead projector, is pre-tested prior to the event. Ideally request the venue's IT person to be available to assist.



EVENT PROGRAMME

Start time

Crop calendars

Farmers should bring their prepared crop calendar to discuss with chefs. If they do not, it may be necessary to have a preliminary farmer-only session (30–60 minutes) to assist them prepare their crop calendar, based on the SPC-PAPP template provided earlier.

Participant schedule

Prepare the schedule of (a) farmers and chefs attending, and (b) the ten-minute timeslots in which they will meet each other. This planning should include preparing the seating order for farmers (who remain seated, while chefs rotate), and possibly even number the ordering of the chairs that chefs rotate around. Like speed dating, preparation and speed are essential.

Guest speakers

A guest speaker (e.g. a government minister) may officially open the event. Other guest speakers may be invited, but past marts have proved successful by having more focus on the one-on-one networking and less on presentations. Allocate five to ten minutes for the guest speaker's presentation, and ask him or her to focus on farmer/market links, the opportunities to strengthen them, and the benefits this will bring.

Evaluation

Have evaluations prepared and allow a specific time (five to ten minutes) for participants to complete these evaluations and for organisers to collect them. Ensure the participants are given sufficient time and stress the importance of giving detailed feedback. Importantly, based on past experiences of agritourism events, the evaluation forms must be completed and collected on-site. Otherwise, participants are very unlikely to submit the forms.

Catering

Food and drinks are important as this is an agritourism event focusing on culinary tourism. Offer refreshments prior to or during the event, and close the event with a meal. This will double as a follow-up networking opportunity for participants who met during the mart. Make sure that some local foods are included in the menu (i.e. a mix of western and local cuisine). (A complimentary meal is also an incentive for people to attend.)

Planned follow-up after the event

Let participants know the exact schedule or expectations for post-event follow-up (see details on next page).





EVENT FOLLOW-UP

Planned follow-up

There has been extremely positive feedback from participants at the previous three buyers-sellers' marts, but what has happened since the event? Have their planned direct-supply transactions materialised? Consider whether there may be a 'next day' or 'end of conference' follow-up activity one or two days later, when the farmers and chefs meet again to firm up some direct supply arrangements. Or consider organising a follow-up activity two or three months later, to which the stakeholders are invited, or conduct follow-up by phone and/or email.

General follow-up

Based on evaluations from the previous marts, SPC has highlighted the post-event need to continue to encourage links between the tourism and agriculture sectors through further training and buyers-sellers' marts. This could potentially extend to one-on-one in-farm assistance in collaboration with local government partners, such as agriculture extension officers.

Current database follow-up

Already, following the initial Samoan event, SPC has started work on a market information system or database so that: (a) farmers know what stocks hotels need; and (b) hotels know what farmers are providing in terms of product, harvesting time and quantity.



5.0

FARMER PROFILES AND AGRITOURISM PERSONNEL



ILIANA MOTOTABUA

TAILEVU NORTH FLORICULTURE ASSOCIATION, FIJI

Tailevu North Floriculture Association is a woman's association with 30 grower members in Tailevu. The group produces different varieties of flowers, ginger and fern palm. It supplies the ready market in Suva, hotels and businesses, as well as conducting door to door sales. The total land area is 1.5 hectares.



MANASA MALE

KILIAFI ENTERPRISES (IKSA FARMER), FIJI

Manasa has 35 acres of farm land of which 15 acres are used for root crops and vegetables. There are also two sheds of chicken layers, two sheds of meat birds, and one piggery. He intends to do fish farming in future. Manasa supplies hotels in Raki Raki, roadside markets and the Suva Municipal Market weekly.



ZARINE KHAN

BEEF AND DAIRY FARMER, FIJI

Based in Nadi, Zarine operates a beef and dairy farm and has also recently moved into cash cropping.



PRAVEEN PRASAD

PRAVEEN'S FARM, FIJI

Praveen operates from nine acres of freehold land and has been farming for the past 25 years. He grows Chinese cabbage on two acres, English cabbage on two acres, tomatoes on half an acre, beans on half an acre and pawpaw on two acres.



NEMANI SUSU

FARMER – PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FIJI (PCDF), FIJI

Based at Nadarivatu Government Station, PCDF is implementing the PHVA (Partnership in High Value Agriculture project) funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development and targeting smallholders to improve their livelihoods, especially with high value vegetables grown off-season. Members’ farm sizes range from quarter-acre to two acres. PCDF is also supported by the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network.



LUSIA GASAU

RANADI PLANTATION PARTNERSHIP (RPP), FIJI

Proudly farming for over 40 years, RPP is Fiji’s largest organic ginger farm (and the first farm internationally to export ginger to Australia). It produces organic certified ginger, turmeric, coconuts (main crop) and a wide range of fruit, legumes and spices. It includes a packhouse with cleaning, packing, freezing capabilities to develop a range of value-added products and an eco-tourism project.



MAKARETA TAWA

FRIEND, FIJI

FRIEND was founded in 2001 to work with marginalised communities in underserved areas of Fiji for their social and economic development, working towards poverty alleviation. FRIEND is a non-governmental organisation with its headquarters in Lautoka, and an office in Labasa, in the northern part of Fiji.



SAVENACA CUQUA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (MOA) – CROP AGRONOMIST AND PRINCIPAL RESEARCH OFFICER, FIJI

As head of the Agronomy Section of the MOA Research Division, Savenaca oversees research activities on root crops, tree crops, agricultural mechanisation, tissue culture and plant genetic resources. The section also explores ways of linking farmers to tourist/ hotel markets to maximise the value chain analysis of important commodities in Fiji.



LUPE LOMANI

KOROILOLOLO YOUTH – THE MILLIONAIRES’ CLUB, FIJI

Koroilololo Youth Club is an active farmers club located in Kadavu, and has just turned one year old. It is a youth development club that works with 35 young men and ten young women towards creating wealth and developing the rural community. The club started with taro and kava crops and has plans to diversify into vegetables, fisheries and floriculture.



SATENDRA KUMAR

EXPORT AND DOMESTIC FARMER, FIJI

Satendra farms 18 acres: ten acres of sugarcane and eight acres of rotational vegetables and fruits, selling to exporters, middlemen (suppliers to tourism sector), and domestic markets.



JAGDISH KUMAR

REGISTERED COOPERATIVE OPERATOR, FIJI

Jagdish’s registered cooperative has been operating for six years with 14 commercial farming members. He is based on a six-acre farm that produces high value vegetables most of the year, including tomatoes, English cabbage, purple English cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, capsicum, watermelon, pumpkin and beans.



PUSKAR CHARAN

CANE COAST VEGETABLE FARMERS’ COOPERATIVE, FIJI

For 45 years, Puskar has been farming sugarcane and vegetables: pawpaw on three acres, capsicum on one acre, lettuce on 1000 m², red chilli on 1000 m² and watermelon on half an acre.



PRANEET PRASAD

FARMER, FIJI

In 2014 Praneet received the Youngest Farmer of the Year Award (western) and also the Best Farmer of the Year 2014 recognised by SPC (IKSA). He has also received irrigation assistance from SPC (IKSA): a rotavator and a waterpump. On his 2 ¾ acre farm he grows vegetables, including cowpea, chilli, long bean, eggplant, English cabbage, cauliflower, rosella and rourou.



VINAY SAMI KUMAR

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (MOA), FIJI

MOA's research is focused on root crops, fruit, vegetables and other agriculture products. Based in Lautoka, Vinay's office promotes links between farmers and buyers, and provides technical advice.



KAMLESH PRASAD

FARM BOY, FIJI

A grower, buyer and distributor of produce to local and international markets, Farm Boy is a family-owned company based in Nadi, with a warehouse and farm and an off-site outlet at the local Namaka market. The company supplies small-scale fresh produce to local resorts and has begun value-added processing of frozen produce, with plans to expand to chips, juice and other products.



MARIA LINIBI

FARMER - WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (WIADF), PAPUA NEW GUINEA

WiADF network of farmers is mostly women who want to have their voices heard and provide better service delivery to address market issues. The foundation is well established, with a network of over 140 registered groups throughout the country.



REUBEN MOLI

KASTOM GARDEN - ASIA PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (APSD), SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Kastom Garden rural training centre was established in 2005 (similar to TuTu training centre in Fiji) with a focus on organic education. By 2014, as demand increased, it introduced training in other trade skills (though all students must include agriculture as part of their studies).



ROSIVELA DRESU

CROPS OFFICE - FIJI CROPS AND LIVESTOCK COUNCIL (FCLC), FIJI

FCLC aims to provide services to all farmers in Fiji by development of capacity awareness and delivery of services on a sustainable basis. It forms farmers' associations according to their different commodities.



PIO BOSCO

SPC-IKSA FIELD TECHNICIAN, FIJI

Pio assists sugarcane farmers in the sugar belt to improve their cash crop farming, supplement their sugar cane income and improve their living standards.



SUELA COOK

ORGANIC FARMER, SAMOA

Suela is an organic farmer and part of Samoa Farmers Association, whose mission is to provide smallholders and village-based farmers with opportunities and skills to increase incomes and food security derived from farming.



MINORU NISHI

NISHI TRADING, FARMER AND ENTREPRENEUR, TONGA

Nishi Trading is a Tongan family-owned company, operating for over 40 years. It began as a commercial farm for exports and imports and diversified into a farming supplies store, a quarry, a pest management service, an agriculture training centre accredited by the Tonga National Quality and Accreditation Board, and a foundation for community support. It has also built Tonga's first international standard food processing plant.



ELISABETA WAQA

KOROILOLOLO YOUTH - THE MILLIONAIRES' CLUB, FIJI

Elisabeta is a USP student studying for a major in agriculture and accounting. She is also a member of the Koroilololo Youth - The Millionaires' Club.



KALAIS STANLEY

WIBDI, SAMOA

Women in Business Development Inc (WIBDI) is dedicated to strengthening village economies in Samoa in ways that honour indigenous tradition, use traditional and modern technology, and promote fair trade. It empowers and equips rural families to cultivate sustainable businesses that maximise farm-based resources.



RACHEL VAREA

FIJI CROPS AND LIVESTOCK COUNCIL (FCLC), FIJI

As Commodity Coordinator for the FCLC Rachel works with the Ministry of Primary Industries, the private sector and other stakeholders to address concerns affecting the agricultural industry. A key objective is to represent the needs of farmers to government and stakeholders, and raise the profile of Fiji's farmers involved with crops and livestock production.



ELENOA TAMANI-FULI

SPC-PAPP, FIJI

Elenoa coordinates agritourism activities on behalf of The Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (PAPP), in particular national and regional farmer training. PAPP aims to increase the capacity of Pacific regional organisations to address the development needs of smallholder agriculture by improving links between small- and medium-sized farmers and markets.



LUKE BERRELL

AGRICULTURE CONSULTANT, TONGA AND AUSTRALIA

Luke is a consultant who recently project-managed the development of Tonga's packhouse, believed to be the largest in the Pacific. He was a guest speaker at the agritourism events, providing insights on post-harvest gains and losses.



6.0 CASE STUDIES

FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS, YEARS OF HARD WORK PAY OFF.

MICHAEL JOE

MANAGING DIRECTOR, JOE'S FARM PRODUCE – FIJI

Michael Joe laughs about his degree in life and says, “I never got my degree from university but I learned it all from experience.” But after 34 years in agriculture, and 24 years running Joe’s Farm Produce, he still toils on the farm seven days a week, proving that his extraordinary agri-business success is due to hard work, research and development, and staff training. “To be a successful farmer you have to have a passion. You have to set your mind to the job.”

Since 1981, Joe’s Farm in Fiji has become an integrated commercial farm that supplies farm fresh produce. It is a large scale business, with just one of its sites – the company’s hydroponic greenhouse in the remote highlands off Lautoka – producing 4000 head of lettuce per week. Joe’s Farm supplies produce to most of Fiji’s resorts as well as supermarkets, retailers, restaurants and fast-food outlets, vessels, and the aviation industry. Key achievements include large food supply contracts, including a 25-year government contract, and numerous business awards.

KAMLESH PRASAD

OWNER, FARM BOY – FIJI

Farm Boy started as a small business on the front verandah of Kamlesh Prasad’s house. Kamlesh grew up in a small farming community, finished school, and then acquired a trade certificate in motor vehicle repairs before becoming a full-time cane farmer. Within five years he won the Sugarcane Farmer of the Year award in 1992. Despite his hard work, the challenges of the declining sugar industry broke him, so with just a few cents in his pocket he starting farming vegetables and selling them on the roadside.

Nowadays, Farm Boy sources produce from more than 1000 growers directly or indirectly to meet the consistent volume and quality demanded by his customers. They include hotels in Denarau, the Yasawas and Mamanucas, as well as visiting yachts, super yachts and local restaurants. Business is also expanding into value-added packaged goods, such as pre-cooked frozen spinach, frozen banana, and over-ripe fresh mango used for frozen pulp for easy use by chefs.

He still has a market stall in Nadi – never forgetting his small beginnings.



WOMEN IN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INC. (WIBDI) – SAMOA

WIBDI services 600 certified, small organic family farms in more than 180 villages across Samoa, with the aim of assisting rural families to cultivate sustainable businesses that maximise farm-based resources. After significant success in virgin coconut oil, with international customers including The Body Shop, WIBDI is expanding into other programmes, such as Farm to Table that started in 2013 with five restaurants and 20 farmers, and now involves more than 20 restaurants and 60 farming families.

WIBDI believes there is a big opportunity to better connect smallholders to the tourism industry, based on a 2009 FAO Samoa survey finding 85 per cent of local hotels and restaurants would use local produce if supply and quality were consistent.

MINORU NISHI

MANAGING DIRECTOR, NISHI TRADING – TONGA

Nishi Trading is a family-owned Tongan business operating for more than 20 years, which is expanding into food processing having recently built Tonga's first international standard HACCP certified, food processing and manufacturing facility in partnership with the SPC-managed project IACT (Increasing Agricultural Commodity Trade). About 30 years ago Minoru and his father first started growing squash, expanding to small-scale exports and using the earnings to grow the business that now exports a variety of produce to international markets, and also operates a retail store, quarry, pest management business.

Minoru has many plans and aspirations, but one is a vision for farmers to work together to improve capacity and agri-business opportunities, whether local or through multi-country partnerships, in order to develop a united Pacific brand to compete against markets in New Zealand, Asia and elsewhere. "We are too small in the Pacific to see each other as competitors; we need to work more closely together."

MARIA LINIBI

PAPUA NEW GUINEA WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE (PNGWiADF) – PAPUA NEW GUINEA

After being retrenched from her office job, Maria Linibi went back to her husband's village where, unsure what to do, she decided to become a farmer, simply because "my father was a farmer".

Maria now manages Papua New Guinea Women in Agriculture (PNGWiADF) with more than 20,000 members, mostly women, who supply local markets. She began PNGWiADF to help local women in agriculture, and with a focus on providing them with better access to farming services given that "85% of farming in PNG is being done by women". Targeting women also means training is best done in the evening when women are free after "feeding their husbands during the day".

Among the many challenges PNGWiADF faces is providing information to women in a nation where 800 languages are spoken. There are also market issues, including packaging, few roads and rugged terrain. However, demand is not a problem; there is no shortage of local customers, such as the many local mines.

PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS)

SIGATOKA – FIJI

The participatory guarantee system (PGS) in Sigatoka, Fiji, clusters the resources of many local smallholders to provide consistently high quality tomatoes to international resorts on Fiji's Coral Coast. PGS farmers are grouped into legal companies rather than cooperatives, with a focus on a quality assurance system. This is largely why it took the Sigatoka PGS two years to get farmers organised into groups and consistently supply top quality produce to the resorts.

Challenges include: seasonality versus the need for consistent supply; the need for farmers to operate as business people, legally bound to their companies; and cashflow issues, as hotels often pay invoices after 30 days so farmers need to produce other cash crops for quick sale at market while the high-end produce invoices are pending.