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From Eriko Hibi



Over the course of 2017 we trust that these monthly newsletters have kept you informed of the some of the efforts of FAO and our partners in the Pacific region. To keep you up to date with our work this year and previous years, past issues of the newsletter can be downloaded from [here](#).

On behalf of all my colleagues in SAP, may I wish you all the best for the holiday season.

We look forward to continuing to work with our partners in the Pacific region in 2018.

**Eriko Hibi**

FAO Subregional Coordinator for the Pacific Islands

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## Five-year review brings employees closer and shares knowledge among Pacific colleagues

The week of 27 November witnessed four days of intense review of FAO's five-year programme 2013 to 2017 for 14 Pacific Island countries, lessons learnt, success stories and challenges for the next five-year plan that will start in 2018, not to mention an end of year party that included an unforgettable group communication activity and Hula dancing.



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Over 40 colleagues gathered at the office in Apia, including National Programme Officers and Assistant FAO Representatives, together with visitors from RAP and the FAO/IAEA Joint Programme on Nuclear techniques in food and agriculture.

The meeting considered the way forward for the next five-year plan (CPF 2018-2022) that was approved by countries during the Joint FAO/SPC Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries Meeting that took place during the Pacific Week of Agriculture last October. It heard a presentation on Procurement procedures from visiting colleague from the FAO country office in Mozambique, Martin Boben, as well as receiving guidance from Administrative Assistant Phavinee Tithipan visiting from the Asia-Pacific Regional Office in Bangkok on key administrative systems.

"This was a very positive meeting, the group is very close and I learnt such a lot," said Lee Heng who also gave two presentations on the work of the FAO/IAEA Joint Programme. The group heard that the joint programme, was founded in 1957 and employs over 2300 staff at its offices in Vienna.

While relatively few Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are working with the joint programme, there is huge potential in areas such as food safety; water resource assessment and eradicating plant and animal pests like the fruit fly. Pacific SIDS that are currently working with the joint FAO/IAEA programme are Fiji, Palau and Vanuatu.

Among some of the success stories mentioned was the successful implementation in Fiji of Electronic Monitoring of Fishing Vessels (EMS), supported by FAO under a global Global Environmental Facility (GEF) project. The project focuses on sustainable management of tuna fisheries and biodiversity conservation in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) or the high seas. Fifty longline vessels received the EMS devices which allows data from the boats to be relayed directly to land.

FAO has also provided support to fisheries' communities by providing sea safety equipment as part of efforts to assist small-scale fishers in post-cyclone recovery.

Another first in Fiji, has been FAO support for a prefeasibility study on agricultural insurance for farmers in Fiji. FAO is now assisting the government to have a product ready to roll out by early 2018, and would represent the first such scheme offered in the Pacific Islands. Extremely encouraging in this regard has been the government's announcement in its 2017-18 national budget that it is making a separate allocation for the agriculture insurance scheme.

In Niue, fruit tree planting, improved nutrition in schools with local producers supplying salads for school lunches and a popular "Eat local" campaign were launched under the current five-year plan.

In the Cook Islands, activities aimed at strengthening local capacity to develop food value chains has included production of a farm management manual; the successful implementation of a workshop on hydroponics and an accompanying manual currently in production as well as setting up a food processing facility managed by the Ministry of Agriculture that will be available to everyone in the community to use at a minimal charge, as a way of helping to assure the facility's sustainability.

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## Ecosystem Services: An integrated approach to making a difference in agriculture

In Tonga, four community project sites have been busy learning about how to adopt integrated farming systems based on the ecosystem services in their agricultural landscape since the introduction of the Ridge to Reef (R2R) FAO Integrated Lands and Agroecosystem Management System (ILAMS) to Tonga project. 4 community project sites have been busy learning about how to adopt integrated farming systems based on the ecosystem services in their agricultural landscape.



The ILAMS project aims 'to strengthen the resilience of communities by enhancing land tenure systems, improving forest management, and piloting integrated agro-ecosystem approaches to rehabilitate degraded landscapes.'

Four threats were identified to help shape the ILAMS plan in addressing challenges at the community level. These are, free roaming livestock given the significant damage to crops and land degradation, the intensive production of export crops which increase the use of agrochemicals, the loss of ecosystem services in forest areas due to clearance for subsistence and smaller scale commercial agriculture and lastly the alteration of traditional fallow systems resulting in degradation of soil nutrient status.

ILAMS is unique in its makeup given the holistic approach to addressing the above threats by encouraging and engaging communities in the management of their agro-ecosystems.

The four project sites are located in Haveluliku-Tongatapu, Mangia-Vava'u, Pukotala-Ha'apai and Ta'anga-'Eua. The two demonstration sites are the Hango Agricultural School in 'Eua and Tupou College Toloa in Tongatapu.

Household surveys were completed in each of the community sites to get a better sense of current farming systems and the status of existing agro-ecosystems as the first step in planning how best to proceed with engaging families to 'mobilize public, and community support to adoption of sustainable integrated ecosystem-based approaches to agriculture for sustainable economic and livelihood development.' The ILAMS plan will be specific to each community site with the guiding principle of

ensuring the agro-ecosystem at the center.

There has been major progress in the upgrade of nurseries in 'Eua and Tongatapu to strengthen mechanisms for supply of seeds and planting materials and as ILAMS project continues to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders in creating an enabling environment for sustainable farming. The Project Field Officer for Tongatapu, Mr. Sione Tuifio Hui, has been engaging with the Haveluliku village community through education on alternative pig feed. This was identified as a key challenge for households in maintaining regular feed for their penned pigs hence why majority were allowed to roam freely.

Endive has been identified to be a good source of protein in pig feed. Through working together with Chinese farmers at Tupou College, Tuifio has been able to harvest endive seedlings to be transplanted to Haveluliku. Moringa trees is also another identified plant that has been found in different parts of the island and the communities are being encouraged to incorporate them into their agro-ecosystems to also provide feed.

An exciting new development for Haveluliku is 1 of the local farmers, Li'ekina Naufahu, volunteering his own plot of land to be used as an 'endive farm'. They have ploughed part of his land in preparation for this project and we anticipate the success of this experiment as this in turn will encourage others in the village to transplant endive from Li'ekina to be planted again in their own tax allotments.

While ground activities are ongoing, the ILAMS Land Administration System Specialist, Richard Kautoke and his team at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) have been hard at work customizing the system for Tonga which would guide land use on the island. The operational with spatial functionality of SOLA (Solutions for Open Lands Administration) will be utilized to recommend allowable land uses, monitor land use changes over time and clarify tenure.

There is currently a review in place of existing policies and legislative frameworks related to creating an enabling environment for adopting integrated land and agro-ecosystems management farming systems. This work is led by the Ministry of Land Survey and Natural Resources (MLSNR) with support of an international consultant.

Although there has been significant progress, the ILAMS project is not without its challenges. Understandably, moving to an integrated approach can be difficult for Tongan communities who have set traditional ways of farming.

Tongan communities are set in their traditional ways of farming so the thought of making changes especially an integrated approach can be difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, households are now more aware of what's at stake and that they stand to gain more from adopting new ways of caring for the ecosystem rather than to continue on the same path and expect different results.

Through strengthened partnerships, ILAMS is set to work on building stronger relations and communications on all levels of governance to ensure shared learning and information along the way in working towards more resilient communities for Tonga.

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## FAO donates marine safety grab bags to Silana fisherwomen

FAO donated three Marine Safety Grab Bags to improve the safety at sea for the fisherwomen of Silana Village, Tailevu. Local fishermen and women venture out to sea in small, uncovered vessels day and night to earn a living, and feed their communities.

The FAO initiative identifies the importance of fishing for local livelihoods and diets. It also recognises that fishing is the most dangerous of all occupations, with an estimated 24,000 fatalities (ILO 1999), worldwide.



Silana Village is one of the 40 coastal communities that are receiving Marine Safety Grab Bags from FAO, to be used by local, small commercial fishing enterprises registered with the Ministry of Fisheries.

“The recipient licensed ‘in-shore’ commercial fishing groups have been identified by Ministry of Fisheries officers. The Turaga-ni-Koro of each village receiving the Grab Bags will ensure that all licenced fishermen in the community have access to the bag and its contents,” said Mr Apisai Sesewa, FAO Fisheries Consultant.

Mr Sesewa said that each bag contains a personal locator beacon, a strobe light, a signaling mirror and whistle, a rescue laser and sea rescue streamer, a handheld marine VHF radio, a sea anchor, three manually inflatable life jackets, a directional compass, a first aid kit and two thermal emergency blankets.

He said the Pacific Community (SPC) supports the programme, and has conducted training for the Fisheries officers in the use of the bag’s contents. The Fisheries officers will assist in the distribution and training the local fishermen and women in the use of the Marine Safety Grab Bags.

“The Fisheries officers will continue to liaise with FAO about the ongoing implementation of the programme,” he said.

Silana Village Headman, Mr Savenaca Seru, said that the people in his village were still traumatised after Cyclone Winston and only fished close to shore.

“We are so grateful to FAO for choosing our village. This is a blessing to us as we are trying to rebuild our lives. Our main source of income is whatever we can get from the sea and take to the Nausori market. I am so relieved, because I know this bag will protect our lives. If we are out at sea we are protected because of the quality of the stuff inside these bags,” said Mr Seru.

The Silana women own the village’s only fibreglass boat, but it is available for hire. The Grab Bags will also be used by the men of the village to conduct their Eco-tourist venture of dolphin watching.

Of the estimated 4 million vessels operating in the small scale fishing business, about 98% are under 24 metres. The uncovered vessels used by most Fijian fishermen are not much bigger, at 26 metres, with

16hp outboard motors.

“We hope the need never arises, but these bags save lives. Two Tuvaluan fishermen were rescued after they used the Personal Locator Beacon from their bag,” said Mr Sesewa.

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## Bringing farmers and buyers together in Vanuatu

The Government of Vanuatu and FAO are furthering their partnership to promote contract farming as a means to coordinate links between farmers and agribusiness firms.

A Contract Farming training workshop on – planning and implementing Contract Farming operations in Vanuatu was held from September 20 – 22 in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The training included a half day field visit.



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A total of 22 participants (including 10 from outer islands) from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development NGOs, private stakeholders, agribusiness, fishing and agriculture farmers and extension officers actively participated in this training workshop. Guest presenters Vila Central Hospital and Malapoa College were invited to share their food procurement/buy contract experience with the participants

FAO Agribusiness Consultant, Shukrullah Sherzard said. “Contract farming is one of the proven mechanisms that can be promoted to improve efficiency and inclusiveness in transforming food and agriculture systems.”

In simple terms, contract farming is an agreement which establishes conditions between a buyer and farmers for the production and marketing of a farm product or products.

Under contract farming, producers commit to the future delivery of farm products to a buyer under agreed specifications that can include prices, production technologies, quality characteristics and production delivery dates, among other mutually agreed conditions.

In theory, the agreement should be mutually beneficial to a buyers and farmers. It should promote agricultural production and guarantee a secure market for the products, thereby allowing farmers to earn increased revenue and buyers to obtain a return on their investments.

Sherzard further explained. “Through FAO projects we aim to improve the capacity of farmers to market a consistent supply of safe, quality food. One of the outputs of this project is to facilitate improved farmer linkages to market though the adoption of service contracts”.

At the last day of the workshop a half day field visit was organized to Vanuatu Direct (an agribusiness

company involved in Contract Farming operations in Vanuatu) the company share its real life experience of Contract Farming from Vanuatu with the participants.

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## Training Biosecurity Officers in Fiji to tackle biozoonotic diseases

Training for Biosecurity Officers to increase their capacity in tackling biozoonotic diseases was recently held in Suva, Fiji. The training workshop was held as part of a larger effort of BAF to effectively address the spread of zoonotic diseases not only endangering human and animal health but also having potentially grave economic consequences.

The spread of biozoonotic diseases, which can be harmful to both animals and humans, is a threat that the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) is taking very seriously.



Biosecurity Officers from across the country attended the training and covered topics such as animal disease surveillance, techniques for testing animals, GIS plotting, farm biosecurity and reporting. Mock scenarios on visiting farms and fill were also conducted.

The likelihood of outbreaks of diseases such as Leptospirosis, Brucellosis and Bovine Tuberculosis increases after cyclones and natural disasters with improper disposal of carcasses and debris and the uncontrolled movement of animals from farms.

Tuberculosis due to its zoonotic transmission is suspected to contribute to a significant number of the tuberculosis cases in Fiji.

This was a concern particularly in the wake of TC Winston which struck Fiji in February 2016.

Building the trust of farmers was identified as a vital link in helping farmers cooperate with BAF. In some cases farmers were unaware of the role of BAF itself therefore denying access of officers to their farms on surveillance missions.

The application of information technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS) to boost efforts to predict potential occurrence of diseases was also covered at the workshop. GIS has made a tremendous contribution to the development for the surveillance of animal diseases.

National Biosecurity Officers from around the country received training in the GIS as well as hands on experience with GPS/GIS equipment.

With financial assistance from Belgium, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have supported the strengthening the capacities of the Government technicians to put in place

biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases. FAO is also helping the authorities to prevent further risks, thereby increasing resilience to future crises.

Belgium remains a top donor to the FAO's Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities, which enables both to rapidly respond to a crisis, financing the immediate purchase of essential agricultural inputs and to quickly launch field activities to protect livelihoods and safeguard food security and nutrition.

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## Cattle and Sheep Integrated Production and Management Project officially launched

The Cattle and Sheep integrated production and management Project for Tonga was recently launched by the Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries (MAFFF) Hon Semisi Fakahau. The launch was followed an inception workshop which was held at Davina House.



Aimed to improve productivity of sheep and cattle for household food security, food nutrition, fighting against NCDs and maintaining sustainable livelihoods for Tonga, the project is expected to be completed in three years and has a total budget of US\$294,000.

The project will be managed and implemented by MAFFF Livestock Division in collaboration with Tonga National Livestock Development Council (TNLDC) with FAO providing technical assistance under its Technical Co-operation Programme (TCP).

Speaking to more than 20 participants Hon. Fakahau stressed the importance of the cattle and sheep industry to Tonga with regards to traditional and cultural needs.

“The cattle and sheep industry are both very important in the country because of the population needs for nutritious and healthy food, traditional and cultural needs and combating the increase of Non-communicable diseases which His Majesty King Tupou VI emphasized in the opening of the NCD workshop for the Pacific Islands in June of last year in Nuku’alofa.”

He stated that livestock industry in Tonga is fragmented and undeveloped due to limited access to quality pastures and feeds, uncontrolled poor breeding, stocking animal of low productive potential, late weaning, poor husbandry and seasonal lack of feed.

Hon Fakahau said livestock industry is a very small sector in the overall agricultural economy of Tonga but it has a significant contribution to rural development and diet of the population.

He told participants that he wants this project to reach out to all lives of farmers including those in the rural areas because livestock programs are not accessible to many households in most communities.

Facilitator of the workshop, Senior Animal Health and Production Officer from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Office in Bangkok Thailand Dr. Katinka de Balogh said that since most animal in Tonga comes from a relatively small number of original number of animals, this project is timely as it will introduce new genetic materials.

Dr. Balogh said there are three major outputs of the Project: Output 1, strengthening of the capacity of MAFFF Livestock Division support for improved cattle and sheep production and productivity; Output 2 strengthening of the capacity of cattle and sheep farmers to increase productivity; and Output 3 development of dissemination of good cattle and sheep management practices.

The project's inception workshop was designed to ensure that there is a common understanding of the project's objectives and outputs and the roles and responsibilities among all partners. The meeting and workshop will also agree and finalize a detailed project implementation plan for the next 24 months.

Present at the occasion were FAO representative Mr. Pau Likiliki, FAO Consultant Dr. Sioisifa Fifita, FAO SAP Officer Dr. Viliami Fakava, Former CEO for MAFFF Ms. Losaline Ma'asi, Head of Livestock Division Ms. 'Ana Pifeleti, National Project Coordinator Dr Viliami Taufa, National Consultant Mr. Toifalefahi Moala, farmers, officers from the Livestock Division and representatives from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and Hango School of Agriculture.

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## FAO show interest in products developed by the University of the South Pacific

A team from FAO, led by Sub-Regional Coordinator, Eriko Hibi visited the Food Technology Laboratory at the University of the South Pacific (USP) recently.

During the visit, a variety of food products which were on display during the Open Day celebration held earlier this year were shown to the team by Food Technology Consultant, Prof. Lutgarda S. Palomar. Prof Palomar gave explanations on some of the products such as, the gluten-free flour, starch from breadfruit, cassava, sweet potato, powder from pumpkin, basil, moringa, oregano.

These products that have been used in science-based production of ready mix pan cake, cookies (chocolate chip, oat cookies, etc.). They can also be used as an enricher, thickener, color and flavor enhancers of other food products.

FAO enquired about the possibility of collaborative projects including research undertakings such as packaging, process optimization and trial marketing. They explored the prospect being able to extend the technologies to other Pacific Island Countries with FAO as partners.



A number of food products that have been developed from ripe breadfruit alone or in combination with sweet potato and lemon grass include a juice or a drink (called QUENCH), marmalade, jam, ketchup, dip, pickles, home-made honey or syrup. USP is proud to proclaim that these products that come mainly from ripe breadfruit have natural colour and flavour without any preservative or NASA (No Artificial Sub-stance Added).

This research laboratory which was just recently established at SAFT is internationally compliant.

USP is committed to have Food Technology as a core component to complete SAFT's academic mandate. The initial challenge faced by Prof. Palomar, was to look for indigenous raw materials in the development of food products using minimal processing equipment. New types of chips obtained from cassava and/or breadfruit were the first food products made.

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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!



From the FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands



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