

Kava Side Event: Kava defined as Food!

Date: Monday 19th September 2016

Venue: Le Lagon Farea Pasifika

Time: 5.00pm to 7.00pm

Presenter: Our Kava Expert, Dr. Vincent Lebot

Kava is defined by the plant species *Piper methysticum* consisting of known noble kava varieties and the traditional and ceremonial food beverage obtained by cold water extraction of the plant's underground parts and basal stumps.

Kava (*Piper mythesticum*) is an important agricultural commodity for Pacific Island Countries, forming an integral part of cultural, economic and social life. It has been domesticated for around 3000 years, and is being traded within and outside of the region in important quantities and value.

The kava drink, has been consumed in Pacific Island Countries for centuries without any reported ill-effects on the liver, is made from a water extract of the root and/or rhizome of *Piper methysticum*. A recent WHO risk assessment concluded that "clinical trial of kava have not revealed hepatotoxicity as a problem¹ suggesting that "water extracts are devoid of toxic effects and recommending that "products should be developed from water-based suspensions of kava". The safety of water based kava drinks is supported by long-term ethno-pharmacological observations.

This presentation is to outline the technical background of Kava through scientific research work done on kava and answer any queries that one may have about kava.

¹ WHO (2007): Assessment of the risk of hepatotoxicity with kava products, p. 62