



Agriculture

Taro breeding (Fiji)

Problem addressed

Taro is one of the top export commodities in Fiji, with New Zealand, Australia and the United States as major buyers. Currently, taro production in Fiji is not affected by disease, but there is a risk disease might be introduced from other countries, where it significantly affects production. Therefore, there is a need to develop disease-resistant and tolerant varieties to make farmers more resilient



Solution

Breeding to build resistance to taro leaf blight and broaden the genetic diversity of taro is an important part of a contingency plan for Fiji in case the disease is introduced to Fiji in the near future. The new varieties were developed to be appetizing, of good quality and climate ready



Innovations and features

Fiji has introduced tolerant cultivars from Southeast Asia and breeding lines from around the Pacific (Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Hawaii) and crossed them with selected local varieties to develop promising lines.

The climate readiness features include tolerance to dry spells and waterlogging.

Taro diseases are not present in Fiji, so varieties are sent to other countries for exposure and assessment.

An alternative strategy consists of introducing tolerant varieties from abroad and releasing them to farmers after testing and evaluation.

The Ministry has an ongoing training programme for farmers to raise awareness of pests and diseases.



Evidence and viability

- Three taro varieties were released to Fiji farmers from 2018 - 2021. These releases have enabled Fijian taro farmers to access tolerant varieties, multiply them, and share with other farmers.
- During the release of the varieties an estimated 500 farmers were each provided with 20 - 30 suckers for further multiplication.
- An estimated 1 000 to 1 500 farmers have benefited within the past three years through sharing of these varieties.
- Malaysia is interested in the taro varieties developed in Fiji.

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