



TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS IN THE PACIFIC

ABOUT CTA

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). Its mission is to advance food security, resilience and inclusive economic growth in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific through innovations in sustainable agriculture.

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TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS IN THE PACIFIC
STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Linking agriculture, tourism and local markets to build a healthy, food-secure future for the Pacific

COORDINATED BY

Stéphane Gambier, CTA
Jenessi Matturi, Sierra Leone
Paul Neate, United Kingdom

WRITTEN BY

Charlie Pye-Smith, United Kingdom

CONCEPT DESIGN

Stéphanie Leroy, France

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Flame Design, South Africa

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It gave me great pleasure to open the 2nd Pacific Agribusiness Forum, held in Apia, Samoa, in August 2016. The forum focused on linking the agri-food sector to local markets with the aim of enhancing economic growth and improving food and nutritional security. This is a topic of great importance not only to my country, but to all other island nations in the Pacific region. In the not-so-distant past, Samoa was self-sufficient in food and

our people had a balanced diet. We thrived on a diet of fish, root crops, fresh fruit and vegetables. Unfortunately, our food security has been drastically eroded in recent decades by a combination of factors, including urbanisation and a growing reliance on imports of cheap food of low nutritional value. A similar story can be told for the rest of the Pacific. As a result, the region is now plagued by an epidemic of non-communicable diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and cancers linked to eating too much of the wrong things.

Food is a gateway to all cultures, and islands like Samoa are blessed with an abundance of fertile soils, fresh water and marine resources. To improve the health of our local population, as well as the health of our economy, we need to bring about a transformation in our farming systems and in the way we eat. The Agribusiness Forum has helped to show a way forward, and I welcome this short report about its activities.

*Hon Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi
Office of the Prime Minister, Samoa*

FOREWORD

People involved in the food industry – whether as farmers, processors or distributors – face many challenges in small island developing states. In both the Pacific and the Caribbean, the costs of production tend to be high and markets are small. Transport is often expensive and unreliable, and the islands are frequently subject to climatic shocks.

Many islands import most of their food, much of which is calorie-dense and of low nutritional value. It may be cheaper than local produce, but a diet based on imported food is leading to a whole range of health problems. All too often, nutritious indigenous

foods are ignored by local populations, as they are seen as ‘poor people’s food’.

Tourism has been rapidly expanding in both regions, yet there is a disconnect between the tourist market and local producers. Indeed, 70% of the food used in the tourist industry in the Pacific is imported. As this booklet shows, creating closer links between tourism and agriculture – agritourism – can help to reduce the food import bill and at the same time boost local food production, and therefore the incomes of island farmers. With support from the intra-ACP Agricultural Policy Programme

funded by the European Union, CTA has been actively promoting links between the two regions and encouraging them to share their knowledge and experience. On the one hand, CTA has provided policy support which has brought together government ministries with the private sector to promote agritourism. CTA also played a key role in establishing the Chefs for Development Initiative, which is creating closer links between the hospitality industry and local farmers. Over time, these endeavours will help to generate income and employment across the value chain.

*Michael Hailu
Director, CTA*

TACKLING THE PACIFIC HEALTH CRISIS

“When I was young, we didn’t have obesity problems like we do now in Tonga,” recalls Sione Teisina Fuko, a retired Member of Parliament and the owner of a seafood restaurant. “We ate fish, fresh fruit and vegetables and the population was much healthier. You couldn’t buy mutton flaps and American chickens and all the other imported food people consume now.”

You will hear a similar story wherever you go in the Pacific. The islands have among the highest obesity rates in the world and recent decades have seen a dramatic increase in type 2 diabetes, heart disease, strokes and other problems related to eating too much of the wrong things. A rapid scan on food and nutritional security in , commissioned by CTA and carried out in 2015, found that just 15% of the Samoan population between the age of 16 and 64 had a normal Body Mass Index (BMI). The vast majority were obese. Today, 70% of deaths in Samoa are caused by non-communicable – and mostly diet-related – diseases. Children and women are frequently the worst affected by poor diet, with 61% of children under the age of one and 44% of pregnant women suffering from anaemia, compared with only 4% of adult men.

Fatty turkey tails, chickens raised in intensive industrial units and sugary drinks have replaced fish, tubers and leafy green vegetables as dietary staples for many Pacific islanders, especially in urban areas. The Samoa Rapid Scan found that 35% of people eat no fruit at all, even though the island’s soils and climate are perfect for growing fruit. As the consumption of cheap, calorie-dense food has risen – imported food now accounts for around 56% of household expenditure in Samoa – home-grown production has declined, with the value-added contribution of



Farmers like Sauvao Ioane of Samoa can provide fresh, healthy food to local markets, yet most of the food on the island is imported from abroad.
Photo credit: Charlie Pye-Smith/CTA

agriculture to gross domestic product (GDP) in Pacific island countries falling from 19% to 14% over the last 15 years. “The cost of inaction – of doing nothing about the health crisis – is much greater than the cost of action,” said lead author of the Samoa Nutrition Rapid Scan, Desmond Lee-Hang, when he presented his findings at the 2nd Pacific Agribusiness Forum, held in Samoa in August 2016. If the Pacific islands are to successfully tackle the current health crisis, there is an urgent need to promote healthy food and reduce the import bill by encouraging local production. And if this is to happen, there must be greater collaboration between ministries responsible for health, agriculture and tourism.

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Agriculture has always faced challenges in small island states. The costs of production tend to be high and transport is often expensive and unreliable. Many islands suffer from a lack of processing facilities and frequent climatic shocks mean that farming can be a risky business. As it is difficult to achieve economies of scale, local producers find it hard to compete with cheap imports. “Small island economies are never going to be major food producers, capable of competing with neighbouring countries like Australia, or the United States or Mexico,” says Isolina Boto, manager of CTA’s Brussels office and project leader on agribusiness, “but they could focus on producing high-quality food for niche markets, and they could significantly increase supplies of local food, especially to the tourist industry.”

Tourism has been one of the few sectors to expand in the Pacific during recent years and it is the mainstay of the economy in countries like the Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu. In the region as a whole, the number of foreign visitors increased from 1.6 million to 1.9 million between 2011 and 2015; tourist arrivals are expected to reach 3 million by 2040, according to the World Bank. The current value of tourism in the Pacific is US\$3.3 billion a year, with the industry providing direct employment to over 60,000 people.

It is estimated that 70% of the food used by the tourist industry in the Pacific is imported. In Fiji, 56 cents out of every tourist dollar spent goes on imported goods and services, most related to food. This means that tourists are frequently accompanied on their flights to the Pacific islands by the food which they eat during their vacation. Surveys suggest that instead of eating dishes they are familiar with at home – the standard fare in most tourist resorts – many would like to sample more adventurous, Pacific-influenced

menus made with local meat, vegetables and fruit. However, for this to happen, farmers must adhere to high standards of production and the produce must be of good quality.

Creating closer links between tourism and agriculture could do much to reduce the import bill and boost local food production. One of the leading advocates of this approach is chef Robert Oliver, whose books and cookery programmes have done much to popularise Pacific cuisine. “No one should be sick in a region like this,” he says. “The Pacific has an abundance of fish, fresh vegetables and fruit, and by sourcing food from local farmers, we chefs can have a significant influence. Where the cuisine goes, agriculture will follow.” Of course, satisfying the appetites of tourists is not the same as improving the diet of the local population. However, by providing a market for farmers and encouraging greater home-grown production, the tourist industry could help to establish value chains which benefit local communities.

Agritourism – linking agribusiness to tourist markets – cannot solve the Pacific health crisis on its own; but it can encourage the production of healthy, home-grown food. The stories told in the pages which follow describe the beginnings of a movement which could transform the health and welfare of Pacific islanders.

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Fresh vegetables in the market at Apia, the Samoan capital. Encouraging local people to eat this sort of food – rather than calorie-dense, fatty imports – has become a priority for many Pacific governments.
Photo credit: Charlie Pye-Smith/CTA

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We are promoting healthy food as we want to do something to counter all the health problems you see in Tonga today

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Islands like Tonga are blessed with an abundance of fish.
Photo credit: Jeremy Hoare / Alamy Stock Photo

Story 1: Encouraging healthy eating in Tonga

Sione Teisana Fuko served as a Member of Parliament in the Kingdom of Tonga for over a quarter of a century; his wife Seketi worked for the customs department. “When we retired in 2010, my son suggested that we revive our family fishing business, which had been allowed to run down,” says Sione. The business now has three boats and the Fuko family exports red snappers to the United States and tuna to Japan.

Around 20% of the fish they land is bycatch, which is not required by the export market. At first, Seketi sold

these fish in the local market. “But then she came up with this brilliant idea of starting a small restaurant,” recalls Sione. 12 Seafood Restaurant, which occupies a seafront warehouse in Nuku’alofa, opened in 2013. It serves a range of dishes, including raw fish with coconut milk and spices, fish salad with mangoes and coconuts, and an old family favourite, fish in a sauce with tapioca, sweet potatoes and green bananas. The restaurant serves up to 150 customers a day. “We are promoting healthy food as we want to do something to counter

all the health problems you see in Tonga today,” says Seketi. The only drinks served in the restaurant are water and coconut milk. After they opened the restaurant, Sione decided it was time to change his own diet and he began eating fish and vegetables every day. His doctor had previously told that he might need heart surgery. “When I went back to see him later, he was amazed,” recalls Sione. “He asked: ‘What have you done?’ My new diet had made a big difference to my health.”

CHAPTER 1

CHEFS FOR DEVELOPMENT: KEY PLAYERS IN THE FOOD CHAIN



Chef Robert Oliver has done much to shape the debate in the Pacific. He believes that closer links between tourism and agriculture could reduce imports and boost local food production. Photo credit: David Reid/CTA

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Food is a gateway to our culture and we are blessed with an abundance of food and fertile soils

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“If there’s one thing that makes me really angry,” says Robert Oliver, “it’s being called a celebrity chef.” Flick through the pages of his much lauded Pacific cookbooks and you won’t find any photographs of Robert in action. Instead, there are numerous photographs of other chefs – all Pacific islanders – creating dishes with local ingredients. These, he believes, are the real celebrities of the Pacific food story.

Nevertheless, Robert has done more than any other chef to encourage hotels

and restaurants in the Pacific to recognise that it makes sense, both from a health and culinary point of view, to source food locally. “In the rest of the world, consumers may be embracing farmers’ markets and the idea that ‘local is better’,” he says, “but until recently the Pacific has been stuck in its ‘overseas is better’ psyche.” Hence the huge food import bill and shocking health statistics.

However, this is beginning to change and the message that local is better is

now being promoted by politicians, as well as by chefs and development agencies. Opening the 2nd Pacific Agribusiness Forum, held in Samoa in August 2016, Prime Minister Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi had this to say: “Food is a gateway to our culture and we are blessed with an abundance of food and fertile soils. Local food should be at the core of our food system, yet our food security has been eroded by urbanisation and a reliance on cheap imports of poor-quality food of low nutritional value.”

Linking chefs to local farmers

A New Zealander by birth, Robert Oliver spent his teenage years in Fiji and Samoa, but his career as a chef took off on the other side of the world, first in America, then in the Caribbean. During the 1990s, he managed the menus of three resorts in Barbados and St Lucia. The executive director was eager to reduce dependence on food imports and this chimed with Robert's way of thinking. "I was fortunate as I was given time to develop proper relationships with local farmers," he recalls. "We made lots of mistakes at first, and I had to prove the case for local sourcing to both the hotels and the farmers." Initially it was a challenge getting farmers to provide reliable supplies and adhere to health and safety regulations, but the farm-to-table programme proved to be a resounding success. Over a three-year period, the share of food supplied to the hotel group by local farmers rose from around 20% to 70%.

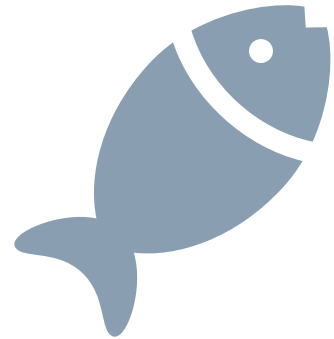
After a long spell in the United States and the Caribbean, Robert headed for the Pacific, where he embarked on a major new project which involved researching and writing a Pacific cookbook with tourist expert Dr Tracey Berno. *Me'a Kai – the Food and Flavours of the South Pacific* was voted 'Best Cookbook in the World 2010' at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in Paris. "I think the book and the award helped to validate the value of Pacific food and the quality of cuisine," says Robert.

The book also helped to propel Robert on a new journey. He returned to Samoa, where he met Sonja Hunter, Chief Executive Officer of the Samoa Tourism Authority. They had much in common, in terms of their love of the

island and the realisation that tourist resorts could – and should – rely more heavily on local food. With the support of the Prime Minister and Sonja, Robert and Tracy Berno set about researching and writing another cookbook. *Me'a'ai Samoa – Recipes and Stories from the Heart of Polynesia* showcased the best of Samoa's cuisine and featured many of the most talented chefs on the island. Sonja also introduced Robert to Women in Business Development Incorporated (WIBDI) and since then he has been helping them to refine their 'Farm to Table' programme, which is described in the next chapter.

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Following on from the success of his books, Robert began to speak at international conferences on the importance of creating closer links between tourist enterprises and local farmers. In 2013, CTA's Isolina Boto invited him to participate in the Caribbean Week of Agriculture, held in Guyana.



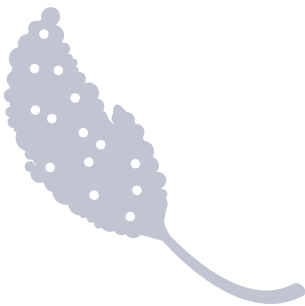
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We recognised that chefs were the missing link in the food value chain

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Many of the leading local chefs in islands like Samoa create dishes made entirely out of local ingredients, such as this banana-based dessert served in Joe Lam's Scalini restaurant
Photo credit: *David Reid/CTA*



Putting the finishing touches to a dish.
Photo credit: *David Reid/CTA*

“We recognised that chefs were the missing link in the food value chain, and in Guyana we began to talk about how they could work more closely with farmers,” recalls Isolina. The partnership with CTA led to the creation of the ‘Chefs for Development’ initiative, whose website, launched in 2016, acts as a community and storytelling portal for chefs and others involved in promoting local food, particularly in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

In 2015, CTA commissioned Robert Oliver and Tracy Berno to write a short book about the movement. *Chefs for Development – the Role of Chefs in Linking Agriculture to Tourism in the South Pacific* provides a portrait of six chefs. These include Dora Rossi, whose restaurant and role

in promoting local food feature in the next chapter, and two other chefs from Samoa. Lydia Sini To’omalatai, the owner of LitiaSini Beach Resort, rebuilt her resort after the 2009 tsunami had reduced it to little more than rubble. It is now one of the best places to eat locally inspired food on the island. The other Samoan chef is Jesse Lee, the owner of Palusami Restaurant. He is a keen supporter of the farm-to-table approach and sources as much of his food as possible from local farmers. The other chefs featured in the book – Kalara Vusoniwailala, Shailesh Naidu and Rainal Sahai – have done much to improve links between restaurants and farmers in Fiji.



Michael Hardy, executive chef at Tanoa Tusiltala Hotel, has been one of the leading lights of the Samoan Culinary Association, which has trained unemployed and unskilled young people to work in restaurants. In recent years he has expanded production in the hotel's vegetable garden.

Photo credit: *Charlie Pye-Smith/CTA*

Training a new generation of chefs

The South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) is a keen promoter of agritourism and as part of its work it organises and supports culinary workshops. By mid-2016, 162 chefs had been trained in three regional and four in-country workshops. "One of the things we have been trying to do is change the mindset of chefs, so that they work more closely with farmers and source as much of their produce locally as they can," explains Chris Cocker, chair of SPTO.

During the first two days of the 2nd Pacific Agribusiness Forum, SPTO sponsored a culinary workshop for 25 young chefs. This was held at the Australia-Pacific Technical College in Apia, the Samoan capital, and managed by Robert Oliver and the Hawaiian chef Colin Chung. "If you look at hotel menus in the Pacific, many are based on foreign ingredients, like English potatoes, cooked in the Western style," explained Colin during the workshop. "What we've been trying to do is educate chefs to use local foods, such as taro and other root crops, and make use of fresh food when it's in season."

The conclusion of the workshop was a gala dinner for 140 guests, most of whom were delegates attending the

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Culinary workshops have helped to encourage closer links between agriculture and tourism

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Agribusiness Forum. Each of the 20 or so dishes used local produce. The salads were made with breadfruit, long beans, taro leaves, pumpkin, octopus and coconut. The entrées included local beef short ribs with taro leaves, grilled slipper lobsters with lime butter, poached ginger chicken and Samoan fried rice. The dinner was a far cry from the sort of meals served by many of the expatriate chefs in the Pacific, which tend to be a mishmash of European, Chinese and Indian styles.

"I believe that the culinary workshops have helped to encourage closer links between agriculture and tourism," says Chris Cocker. They have undoubtedly enhanced the skills and knowledge

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Young chefs nowadays have a better understanding about the importance of healthy eating than many chefs did in the past

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Culinary workshops organised by the South Pacific Tourism Organisation have provided training for over 160 Pacific chefs during recent years. These are some of the 25 young chefs trained during the 2nd Pacific Agribusiness Forum, held in Samoa in 2016.

Photo credit: *Charlie Pye-Smith/CTA*

of young men and women coming into the industry and helped to develop a network of culinary contacts interested in using local produce. During the Samoan Agribusiness Forum, Robert Oliver professed that he had been “blown away” by the activities of the Samoan Culinary Association (SCA). The SCA was founded in 2015 by a group of like-minded individuals, the leading lights being Joe Lam and Michael Hardy. Joe is the owner and head chef of Scalini’s restaurant, which serves a fusion of Samoan and Italian dishes; Michael is the executive chef at the Tanoa Tusiltala Hotel, which hosted the Agribusiness Forum.

By late 2015, 18 previously unemployed and unskilled young men and women had benefited from SCA’s grassroots cookery

traineeship scheme. The scheme places trainees in a working environment – 10 restaurants are now involved – where they develop the skill sets and knowledge required to work in a busy kitchen. The trainees also learn about first aid and health and safety. Although this has been done on a shoestring, without any donor funding, much has been achieved. Michael cites the case of one girl who came from a victim support shelter, unable to speak a word of English. Not only did she excel in the kitchen, she learnt to speak English. Another trainee is now in the chef school at the Australia-Pacific Technical College. In 2017, SCA plans to run three trainings, with 10 young men and women in each. “I think young chefs nowadays have a better understanding about the importance of healthy eating

than many chefs did in the past,” says Joe Lam. “I also think that they are more aware about the importance of trying to source their food locally.” However, this remains a major challenge. Joe sources local produce for his kitchen in Scalini’s whenever he can, but he often struggles to find reliable supplies. “To sustain a business like mine, I need to offer the same range of dishes all the time,” he says. “If you say on the menu that there are long beans in a dish, or shitake mushrooms, the customers expect long beans and shitake mushrooms. I can’t afford to have relationships with farmers or suppliers who aren’t reliable.” That is why changing the mindset of local farmers is just as important as changing the mindset of local chefs.

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We also recognise the need to diversify and we have begun supplying farmers with sandalwood and other trees, which they can intercrop with vegetables while the trees develop

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Tanna-based coffee grower, Johnny Willie, picks ripe coffee ‘cherries’.
Photo credit: MG Media (CC BY 2.0)

Story 2: Leading the way in Vanuatu

In March 2015, Tropical Cyclone Pam ripped through Vanuatu, with devastating consequences for the smallholder farmers who supply high-quality organic coffee beans to Tanna Coffee. The yield for 2015 should have been around 100 tonnes; damage caused by the cyclone reduced it to 8 tonnes. “We estimate that around 350,000 coffee plants were destroyed by the cyclone,” says Terry Adlington, owner of Tanna Coffee, “and this had a massive impact on the welfare of thousands of people.”

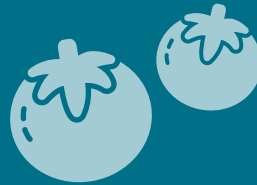
Approximately 70% of the company’s coffee is distributed locally; the rest

is exported. Originally owned by the government, Tanna Coffee was sold to private investors in the mid-1990s and it now plays a central role in the lives of over 500 smallholder farming families. It is currently helping them to rebuild their lives following the cyclone. Around 200 hectares of old coffee plantations are being re-established, and these will eventually produce 200 tonnes of coffee per year. “We also recognise the need to diversify and we have begun supplying farmers with sandalwood and other trees, which they can intercrop with vegetables while the trees develop,” explains Terry.

Tanna Coffee runs guided tours – much praised on TripAdvisor – at its roasting factory in the capital, Port Vila. It also sells coffee to airlines serving Vanuatu. However, Terry feels that other enterprises should be doing far more to reach the burgeoning tourist market. “We should be supplying beef, oils and vegetables in much greater quantities to restaurants and shops and cruise ships,” he says. “There is a huge market out there if you do it properly.”

CHAPTER 2

FROM FARM TO TABLE



Chef Dora Rossi sources some 60% of all the fresh produce which she uses at Paddles restaurant in Apia through Women in Business Development Incorporated (WIBDI).
Photo credit: *David Reid/CTA*

“I have always been a firm believer in using local food, because it makes business sense and it’s a way to help your community,” says Dora Rossi. In 2006, she returned to Samoa, after long spells in Italy and New Zealand, to manage Paddles, the Rossi’s family restaurant overlooking the harbour in Apia. “In those days, we found it very difficult to get local supplies of fresh food,” she recalls. “We could get meat locally, but it wasn’t of consistent quality and there wasn’t a reliable supply. We also had to import a lot of fresh vegetables.”

Now, 10 years on, the situation is very different. She gets most of her meat locally and she believes farmers in Samoa have a much better

understanding of the importance of supplying high-quality vegetables and fruit on a regular basis. Some 60% of all her fresh produce is supplied through Women in Business Development Incorporated (WIBDI), a non-governmental organisation whose ‘Farm to Table’ programme links organic farmers to chefs like Dora. “I love supporting WIBDI, because they’ve done so much to help local farmers,” she says.

WIBDI was established some 25 years ago with the aim of helping farmers find income streams, both domestically and internationally. Over the years, CTA has provided considerable support for WIBDI. For example, it helped the organisation to share its experiences

on agritourism and women entrepreneurs across Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and provided support for the organisation to develop its use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Outside the country, WIBDI is best known for its work with Samoa’s coconut farmers, who now supply 32 tonnes of virgin coconut oil each year to the Body Shop. WIBDI also works with around 1,000 family farms in Samoa, 667 of which have been certified as organic by the National Association of Sustainable Agriculture in Australia.

In 2003, WIBDI began supplying ‘organic baskets’ – a selection of fruits and vegetables in a basket made from palm leaves – to families in Apia. This was the equivalent of the small-scale box schemes which are now popular in many Western countries. Gradually, WIBDI began to focus more on linking smallholder farmers to restaurants and hotels. Drawing on the expertise of chef Robert Oliver, WIBDI launched its ‘Farm to Table’ programme in 2012. There are now 44 regular suppliers providing organic baskets to some 18 private customers and 14 restaurants and hotels.

“We were able to introduce Robert to many of the farmers who featured in his Samoan cookbook,” explains Alberta Vitale, who oversees the running of WIBDI’s production programme, “and he helped to connect us to chefs in Samoa. Robert gave chefs confidence in our supply systems.” He was also able to encourage other chefs, such as Dora Rossi, to provide advice to WIBDI’s staff and farmers. “Dora was really helpful,” recalls Alberta. “She tailored some of her dishes to the vegetables and fruits farmers were able to supply and she even introduced basil, which has become a new crop for some farmers.”

Linking farmers to the market

Among the farmers who regularly supply vegetables and fruit for the 'Farm to Table' programme is 62-year old Sauvao loane, who cultivates around 2.5 hectares of land in the village of Faleasiu. His seven children are all grown up now, but most still help out on the farm, and loane supplements his farm income by making leather belts. "We've been blessed by our involvement with the 'Farm to Table' programme and I've benefited from a lot of training from WIBDI," he says. Over the years, he has attended courses on budgets and finance, running a business and rearing organic chickens.

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We've been blessed by our involvement with the 'Farm to Table' programme

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Every week, staff from WIBDI come to collect his vegetables and fruit – at the time of our visit, he was supplying long beans, aubergine, pineapple, basil, coconut and banana – and work out which crops will be available on his farm the following week. The information they gather is electronically logged on an app, Skyeeye Connect, specially developed by a local company which WIBDI also

hired to map coconut plantations. WIBDI then sends an email, based on the latest information gathered from its suppliers, to all the 'Farm to Table' customers, providing details of the vegetables and fruits which will be available the following week, as well as quantities and prices. The customers can then place their order by email.

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday are sourcing days, when WIBDI staff visit farmers; deliveries are made on Wednesdays and Fridays. Although WIBDI is now making good use of ICTs like the Skyeeye Connect app, the staff still need to visit the farms in person. "Quality control is very important, and we have to make sure that farmers are providing what the market wants," says Alberta.

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Quality control is very important, and we have to make sure that farmers are providing what the market wants

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Samoan farmer Sauvao loane (right) provides food on a weekly basis for the 'Farm to Table' programme run by WIBDI. Vargas Rasch, WIBDI's senior organic officer, is a frequent visitor to Sauvao's farm.

Photo credit: Charlie Pye-Smith/CTA

Changing the way people think



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85% of restaurants and hotels in Samoa would like to source their food locally

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Kalais Stanley has spent time at both ends of the value chain: first, as a member of WIBDI staff involved with the ‘Farm to Table’ programme; now, as the owner and manager of Nourish, a new restaurant situated behind the Catholic Cathedral in Apia. “One of the things which WIBDI has been trying to do since the ‘Farm to Table’ programme began is change the mindset of local farmers,” she says. “Samoaan culture is very relaxed. Many people are happy to live from one day to the next, and many rely on the remittances sent by relatives working in Australia and New Zealand. You’ll find farming families with 100 acres [40 hectares] of land who only cultivate a few acres around the homestead, rather than making use of all the land they’ve got. WIBDI has been encouraging them to be more business-oriented.”

Kalais says she would like to source all her food locally – the Nourish motto is ‘local – organic – wellness’ – but that is easier said than done. She gets two deliveries of vegetables and fruit each week from WIBDI and two deliveries from a village and gardening group. She also buys some of her vegetables from local markets. However, she still needs to import ingredients for her dishes. She was hoping to get all her chickens locally, but she hasn’t been able to find a regular supply and she still buys chicken, as well as steak, from New Zealand.

Nevertheless, Kalais believes the local farmers now have a better understanding about what the market would like, in terms of regularity and quality of supply, than they had in the not-so-distant past. There’s no doubt that there is a demand for local food, with one survey suggesting that 85% of restaurants and hotels in Samoa

would like to source their food locally if farmers were able to guarantee regular supplies of high-quality produce.

Besides funding WIBDI’s ‘Farm to Table’ programme, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has supported a youth employment programme in Samoa. “At present, a lot of young people in the countryside aren’t interested in becoming farmers,” explains Vargas Rasch, WIBDI’s senior organic officer. “Under the UNDP youth employment programme, we’re trying to get young people to see that farming can be a good career path – it’s not just something for the rural poor. Our message to the young is: ‘your destiny is in your own hands.’” If young men and women see farming as a way of making a decent living, rather than as a subsistence activity, Vargas believes that this will help to increase agricultural productivity and ensure the success of the ‘Farm to Table’ programme.

The ‘Farm to Table’ programme is a development project and one of its main aims is to establish a business model for ventures like this. “Eventually, the programme should pay for itself and the plan is that WIBDI will gradually shift from being a donor-funded NGO to a social enterprise,” says Alberta Vitale.

By getting indigenous crops, such as taro, onto the menu in high-end tourist restaurants, ‘Farm to Table’ programmes are helping to make traditional foods – the nutritional mainstay of previous generations – more attractive in the eyes of young people born and brought up in Samoa. However, Robert Oliver suggests it would be naïve to think that agritourism alone can solve the nutritional crisis in the Pacific.

“With agritourism we are looking at the furniture, rather than the whole building,” he says. “We need to move beyond that to influence people’s minds and make them think differently about their health.” Instead of scaring them with statistics, and injunctions about what not to eat, he believes we should be emphasising the positive aspects of healthy eating. “What I’m going to be saying to people in the Pacific over the coming years is: ‘Eat what your grandmother used to cook.’” That means focusing on fish, fruit and vegetables and forsaking imports like mutton flaps, turkey tails and fizzy drinks.

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We’re trying to get young people to see that farming can be a good career path
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After Kalais Stanley left WIBDI she set up a new restaurant, Nourish. She sources as much produce as she can from local farmers, but she still has to rely on imported chicken and steak. Photo credit: Charlie Pye-Smith/CTA



Fiji produces some spectacular vegetables, such as these tomatoes. The Participant Guarantee System has helped link farmers with tourist resorts, creating new markets and boosting farmer incomes.

Photo credit: Karen & Ian Stewart / Alamy Stock Photo

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We estimate that the PGS pilot project has helped to reduce imports of tomatoes by 20%

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Story 3: Linking farmers to tourist markets in Fiji

For many years the government of Fiji has had a policy of replacing imported vegetables with locally grown products. Aspiration is one thing; success another. The country still imports large quantities of vegetables, especially tomatoes, much of which is destined for tourist resorts. A survey conducted in 2013 found that just 10% of farmers supply these markets. The failure to satisfy demand stems from the lack of reliable supplies, poor quality and erratic transport systems. Dramatic fluctuations in prices – which tend to be very low during peak harvest and high in the off-season – also mitigate against local farmers providing a regular supply to customers.

“Many projects have been established to improve value chains,” says Rob Erskine Smith, project leader of the Participant Guarantee System (PGS), “but 60 to 80% of these collapsed after donor support was withdrawn.” For the past three years, Rob has been managing a pilot project which offers a promising solution. Under the PGS, farmers and tourist resorts draw up a written contract under which it is agreed that the former will provide a constant supply at a fixed price and the latter will pay the contract price even when it could get cheaper, imported produce.

The project has significantly reduced imports and raised the incomes of

around 100 farmers producing tomatoes and kava, a member the pepper family, the roots of which are used in a mildly narcotic drink. “We estimate that the PGS pilot project has helped to reduce imports of tomatoes by 20%,” says Rob. Sales over a period of two and a half years amounted to Fj\$200,000 (€86,000). The success of the project is down to a number of factors: a written agreement between farmers and the resorts; an emphasis on self-funding and avoiding credit; comprehensive capacity building; organic production systems; good account keeping; and the provision of other income-generating activities, such as chicken businesses for women farmers.

Story 4: A new venture in the South Pacific

“We have a lot of problems with obesity and non-communicable diseases in Niue, and that’s all related to poor diet and lack of education,” says James Douglas, co-owner of Niue Fresh Hydroponics, which recently won the Island’s Best Business Award. Thanks to Niue Fresh, it is now much easier for the islanders – some 1,200 people scattered across 14 villages – to get a regular supply of home-grown fruit and vegetables.

A raised coral atoll, Niue lacks suitable soils for traditional farming. A range of other challenges also face anybody trying to produce food,

including frequent cyclones and periods of extreme heat and heavy rain. Hydroponics, a system which involves growing plants in a medium like coir or vermiculite and adding nutrients, is one way of overcoming these challenges. The growing medium, together with seeds and other inputs, is imported from New Zealand, and if a cyclone is forecast, the whole system can be dismantled and packed away.

Niue Fresh began in a small way, conducting trials on lettuces and other crops. “We’ve worked out what works best, and we now grow a wide range of crops, including tomato,

cucumber, lettuce, pumpkin, capsicum, eggplant and cabbage,” says James. At present, 95% of the food grown by Niue Fresh is sold in local markets and restaurants. James’s colleague Mark Blumsky recently held talks with importers, supermarkets and chefs in New Zealand about the possibility of supplying herbs during the winter months. “Their positive response – they were virtually ripping our arm off – has given us confidence to move to the next step of getting our biosecurity departments to sort out the paperwork,” says James.

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At present, 95% of the food grown by Niue Fresh is sold in local markets and restaurants

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Hydroponics offers soil-poor Niue a way to produce fresh vegetables for local consumption and export.

Photo credit: *ponsulak kunsub / Alamy Stock Photo*

CHAPTER 3

POLICIES TO LINK AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM IN VANUATU



Government officials and members of the private sector in the Pacific have learnt about the Caribbean's agri-tourism experience by attending meetings organised by CTA. They have seen how sympathetic policies can help farmers like Joanna Waterman of Barbados to supply high-end hotels and restaurants.

Photo credit: *Charlie Pye-Smith/CTA*

Delegates at the 1st Pacific Agribusiness Forum, held in Fiji in July 2015, concluded that there was an urgent need for island governments to encourage closer links between agriculture and tourism. The forum recommended that a pilot project should focus on establishing an agritourism policy for Vanuatu. This would involve two activities. Representatives of government and

the private sector would benefit from a learning visit to the Caribbean and a workshop would be held in Vanuatu to launch a policy dialogue. As a result of these activities – the Caribbean visit took place in November 2015 and the workshop was held in May 2016 – Vanuatu became the first Pacific island to draw up an agritourism policy.

“Before the policy workshop, you never saw the ministries responsible for tourism and agriculture working together,” says Kathy Garleo from the Vanuatu Department of Tourism. “The workshop helped to change that, and there is now much closer collaboration between ministries, and between government and the private sector.”

During recent years, the Pacific has benefited from the agritourism experiences in the Caribbean. One of the key players in the process of knowledge transfer has been Ena Harvey, an expert on agritourism based in Barbados with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). “The Vanuatu policy dialogue was a direct result of discussions in Fiji,” she says, “but the conversation about Pacific agritourism began much earlier, when a team from the Pacific attended the Caribbean Week of Agriculture in Guyana in 2013.”

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CTA has helped to organise and support a cascade of studies and agribusiness forums

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CTA, a long-term supporter of the annual Caribbean Week of Agriculture, invited a range of Pacific stakeholders to the Guyana meeting. They included ministers of agriculture from Samoa and Tonga, representatives of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, chef Robert Oliver and Adimaimalaga Tafunai, the executive director of Women in Business Development Incorporated, a Samoan organisation which works with local organic farmers. “The Pacific contingent were able to fully participate in a CTA-IICA agritourism meeting and in the deliberations of the Caribbean Ministers of Agriculture and they were very impressed,” recalls Ena. “At the time, nothing like that existed in their region.”

Since then, CTA has helped to organise and support a cascade of studies and agribusiness forums which have enabled key players in the Pacific to learn from the agritourism experience in the



Supplying the growing tourism market holds promise for boosting farmer incomes and reducing food imports in Vanuatu. In 2016, Vanuatu became the first Pacific island nation to draw up an agritourism policy linking the two sectors.

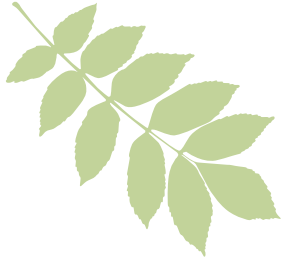
Photo credit: : Bernard Oh (CC BY-ND 2.0)

Caribbean. In 2014, Vanuatu’s Minister of Agriculture and a team of his staff attended the Caribbean Week of Agriculture in Suriname. The following year, ministers from several Pacific countries attended the 2nd Caribbean Agribusiness Forum, held in Barbados. CTA also provided support for chefs Robert Oliver and Dora Rossi to attend, as well as a team from Vanuatu. There was a special side event for Pacific delegates and it was agreed that Vanuatu would host the 1st Pacific Week of Agriculture in May 2017.

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Vanuatu became the first Pacific island to draw up an agritourism policy

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Half of all the vegetables consumed in the hotels and restaurants in Port Vila in 2014 were imported

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Mereia Volavola, Chief Executive Officer of PIPSO, believes there has been a marked improvement in the dialogue between the private sector and governments in recent years. She is also encouraged by better collaboration between government ministries. Photo credit: Charlie Pye-Smith/CTA

A new way of making policy

Prior to the Vanuatu policy workshop in May 2016, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) funded a survey of the country's tourist industry. One of its aims was to provide evidence that would enable the government to improve the management of the tourist sector and reduce dependence on imported food. Revenues from tourism currently account for around 28% of gross national product in Vanuatu. At present, around 100,000 tourists arrive by air each year and a further 250,000 people come on cruise tours. The government has set an ambitious target of increasing air arrivals to 150,000 and cruise ship arrivals to 1 million by 2020. In 2015, tourists arriving by air injected US\$150 million into the economy – the average tourist spent US\$171 a day – with most passing their time on the main island. Just 15% of travellers visited the islands of Tanna and Santo and less than 2% visited the outer islands. However, 85% of those interviewed said they would like to visit the outer islands on future visits.

The IFC study revealed that tourist enterprises in the capital, Port Vila, paid US\$15.6 million for fresh produce in 2014. Of this, 54% was spent on imported items. Half of all the vegetables consumed in the hotels and restaurants was imported, as was a third of the fruit and two-thirds of the meat, dairy products and seafood. There is clearly significant potential for local farmers to produce more food for the tourist market.

The CTA-supported Vanuatu policy workshop recognised that increasing the supply of high-quality local food, and encouraging consistent and

reliable production, presents a significant challenge and needs to be achieved with a minimal negative impact on local cultures and communities. It was agreed that the initial focus should be on a limited number of producers and products, such as potatoes, poultry and beef, where demand is high and there is capacity for expansion, as well as agritourism centres.

As part of the policy process, and following CTA's initial support, New Zealand Aid agreed to support the development of an Agritourism Strategy Action Plan. This task was entrusted to Ross Hopkins of TRIP Consultants. The Action Plan's strategic goal is to enhance economic growth by improving the links between the productive sectors and tourism. "Governments have often been very good at making policies, but not so good at translating policies into action," says Ross. "Developing agritourism will require a multi-sectoral approach, and the creation of close working relationships between ministries and departments."

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Developing agritourism will require a multi-sectoral approach

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The Fiji agribusiness forum and policy workshop had an immediate impact. As a first step towards creating a favourable agritourism policy, the Vanuatu government established a steering committee across the Ministries of Agriculture, Trade, Tourism and Health. The government also stipulated that all public offices and departments should source their food locally for any functions where meals are served. Vanuatu organised the first agritourism week in November 2016. An annual event led by the government and the private sector, this showcased the very best products in the country.

Chris Addison, CTA's Regional Coordinator for the Pacific, believes that the Vanuatu workshop and various other processes in the Pacific – including the quick scans on food and nutritional security and subsequent 'writeshops' – have helped to develop a new way of making policy.

"Traditionally, policy-making is very top-down, with government departments leading the process," he says. "This was very different. The Vanuatu policy workshop involved people from government, the private sector, civil society and the donor community collaborating to shape policy." Chris points out that even if farmers in Vanuatu were to supply just a fraction more of the food consumed on cruise ships, this would make a significant difference to their productivity and incomes.

Apart from increasing the sale of locally produced food to the tourist market and reducing the food import bill, Vanuatu's agritourism policy seeks to create an enabling environment which will encourage the private sector to increase the

production of small-scale value-added products, such as soaps, oils and handicrafts, and encourage the expansion of agritourism facilities. This will translate into direct economic benefits, leading to job creation and better market access for those producing value-added products.

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Vanuatu's agritourism policy seeks to create an enabling environment

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Carolyn Ernst, a former cattle farmer in Vanuatu and owner of the Yo Ku Farm tourist attraction, believes that collaboration between the government and private sector is essential if there is to be a thriving agritourism industry. "The private sector can't do everything on its own, and nor can the government," she says. "So we need to work together whenever we can." The new agritourism policy should ensure that this happens.

Mereia Volavola, Chief Executive Officer of the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO), agrees. "Since PIPSO was set up in 2007, we have

helped to build the capacity of national private sector organisations and seen a marked improvement in the dialogue between the private sector and governments," says Mereia. "We are also beginning to see better collaboration between government ministries, and I think the Vanuatu policy process has been a significant achievement in this regard."

At a Brussels Development Briefing on 'Agribusiness Development and Tourism Markets in Small Island Developing States,' held in September 2016, Howard Aru, Vanuatu's Director-General of Agriculture, was able to share the country's progress in establishing an agritourism policy. Having witnessed the success of Vanuatu's policy dialogue, other countries, including Samoa and the Solomon Islands, have asked CTA to provide them with similar support. National workshops are now being planned to identify key areas for developing policy, and consultants will be hired to explore how to scale up public-private partnerships in the agritourism sector.

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The private sector can't do everything on its own, and nor can the government

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Story 5: Making the most of the ‘Tree of Life’

Samoans have been using coconut trees since time immemorial. Coconut oil is rich in nutrients and one of the healthiest of cooking oils. It also has many cosmetic properties and is used in over 30 products sold by the Body Shop, a British company owned by L’Oréal. In 2007, the Body Shop approached Women in Business Development Incorporated (WIBDI), a non-governmental organisation whose mission is to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, with a view to sourcing coconut oil from Samoa. By 2016, some 200 Samoan families were supplying the Body Shop with 32 tonnes of extra virgin coconut oil a year.

“We focus on smallholder farmers, but we also need sufficient volume, so we work with semi-commercial farmers as well,” explains WIBDI’s Alberta Vitale. There are now five processing sites, each based at one of the larger farms. It would be hard to imagine a more environmentally friendly system of production. The farms are organically certified and every bit of the coconut is put to use, including the shells, which are transformed into charcoal. Besides producing extra virgin oil, the processing sites manufacture coconut oil soap.

Earth Oil, a supplier of oils to the cosmetics industry, handles the logistics and testing, while WIBDI

is responsible for all aspects of training and the financial transactions with the Body Shop. The premium paid for the oil – coconut oil can be bought more cheaply from non-organic sources elsewhere – is retained by WIBDI and used to fund other projects related to coconut oil production. The project has created a new market for farmers, increased farm incomes and helped reduce reliance on foreign remittances, which currently account for some 25% of the country’s GDP. This is an excellent example of a well-organised, long-term, village business success story.



Drying shredded coconut prior to making virgin oil at a WIBDI processing site.
Photo credit: Charlie Pye-Smith/CTA

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Taro is an important crop in Fiji. Some 10,000 farmers across Fiji deliver taro to Ben's Trading's collection centres.

Photo credit: *Charlie Pye-Smith/CTA*

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Ben's Trading has won Fiji's 'Exporter of the year – agriculture' award for the past 10 years

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Story 6: Trading on success in Fiji

In a period of just over a decade, Ben's Trading has gone from being a small backyard enterprise to a major export business. Specialising in taro, the company was established by Peni and Maria Moi in 2002. In 2012, it benefited from training, provided by the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program, on how to boost exports. This included advice on food safety principles, training for office and factory staff and training in auditing. The company subsequently achieved Hazardous Analysis and Critical Control Points

(HACCP) certification, which enabled it to rapidly increase its exports to supermarket chains in Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

Today, some 10,000 farmers in Fiji, many living in remote areas, deliver taro to the company's satellite collection centres. The deliveries are inspected and sorted and farmers are paid straight away. A fleet of some 30 lorries links the satellite collection centres to the company's main collection centre, where the crops are processed for export.

When taro is in short supply, Ben's Trading expects its farmers to supply it with what they have. Loyalty is a two-way street. During times of glut, the company continues to buy from its farmers, even when others are refusing to do business with them. It also takes good care of the 200 workers in its processing sites – many are women from difficult backgrounds – and provides them with transport between home and work. Ben's Trading has won Fiji's 'Exporter of the year – agriculture' award for the past 10 years.

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Stories
from the field

TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS **IN THE PACIFIC**



**Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural
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P.O. Box 380
6700 AJ Wageningen
The Netherlands
www.cta.int