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# Cycle-5 taro breeding lines now available from SPC

**E**xciting new Cycle-5 taro lines now available from the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) are the result of the efforts of the Samoa-based Taro Improvement Programme (TIP). TIP is a participatory varietal selection and breeding programme that was initiated by the AusAID-funded Taro Genetic Resources: Conservation and Utilisation (TaroGen) project. Since the completion of that project, the programme has been successfully managed by Tolo Iosefa, the TIP Coordinator. TIP is a collaborative venture with SPC, USP and Samoa's Ministry of Agriculture.

The Cycle-5 lines are particularly interesting as they are the first crosses between taro from the Pacific and taro from southeast Asia, which was made available through the EU-funded TANSO (Taro Network for Southeast Asia and Oceania) project. There has been excellent feedback on these taros from Samoa, and now thanks to the collaboration between USP and SPC, and the facilities and expertise made available by CePaCT, the lines are in tissue culture, have been tested for viruses and are available for trial by the region.



Cycle-5 taro lines are the result of crosses between taro from the Pacific and taro from southeast Asia, which was made available through the EU-funded TANSO (Taro Network for Southeast Asia and Oceania) project.

## TIP breeding programme

The first cycle of breeding (Cycle 1) in 1996, combined Micronesian varieties, Talo Niue, Alafua Sunrise, taro from the Philippines, and some Samoan lines. With the second cycle, varieties from Palau were included and combined with the progeny from Cycle-1.

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## New Taro Lines Now Available from SPC...from pg 1

For Cycle-3, Talo Niue (re-introduced as pollen donor) was cross pollinated with P-10. At this point, an examination of the genealogy of the top clones from the crosses showed no traits from the popular Talo Niue. This was probably due to susceptibility to taro leaf blight (TLB) of lines with a Niue parent. However, in spite of this observation, several susceptible lines were included in later crosses because Talo Niue remains the top variety of choice for both domestic and export markets.

Cycle-4 consisted of crossing Cycle-3 lines. Subsequent field observation recorded uniformity of growth and plant colour, indicating that the breeding programme had reached a ceiling. With no further input of diversity, the breeding programme would no longer be viable. For Cycle-5, TANSO lines from SPC were introduced to avoid inbreeding depression by breaking the barrier of narrow genetic diversity. The TANSO lines introduced a broad genetic base (diversity) with possibilities of good disease resistance, desirable eating qualities and possibly some positive traits for managing climate change, such as drought tolerance. Field observations received from all over Samoa noted huge diversity. Recordings ranged from taro plants that were dwarf, weak and TLB-susceptible to plants that were large (over 2 m), aggressive and highly

tolerant to TLB, from dark sickly plants to handsomely coloured plants, from single shoots to multiple shoots – some up to 50 shoots and thus threatening invasiveness, and from plants yielding no corms to plants producing consumer preferred corms.

Cycle-5 lines have been planted and evaluated by TIP farmers and have now spread all over the islands. These taro lines are a smorgasbord of genetic diversity with different shapes, vigour and colour. Farmers have named the C5-clones talo lautaamu (leaves like **taamu**, *Alocasia* sp.) or laui'ila (shiny leaves). Some lines produce yellow corms (characteristic of varieties from Malaysia). However, the feedback on taste from TIP farmers is that many still long for the real taste of Taro Niue.

Cycle-5 has provided the opportunity to backcross to Niue, with Cycle-6 using first generation Niue BC and Niue BCF1, and Cycle-7 using Niue BC-1.

The search for the Holy Grail of taro, taro with Niue traits, continues for Mr Tolo Iosefa and his highly successful participatory taro improvement programme (TIP).

*For more information on the new taro lines, please contact LRD Curator Valerie Tuia: [valeriet@spc.int](mailto:valeriet@spc.int), or [lrhelpdesk@spc.int](mailto:lrhelpdesk@spc.int).*



## CePaCT establishes 'climate-ready' collection of crops

The SPC Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) is establishing a "climate-ready" collection consisting of crops and varieties with traits, such as salt and drought tolerance to help the farmers of the region better manage climate change. The recent events in Fiji, PNG, RMI, FSM and the Solomon Islands show quite clearly that the region is already feeling the impacts of climate change and so there is an urgent need to put in place systems to ensure food and nutritional security is not severely affected. CePaCT has a number of varieties of sweet potatoes imported from the International Potato Centre (CIP) in Peru which have been shown to have salt and drought tolerance. At the same time we also have identified a group of banana varieties that have performed well in atoll conditions through our collaboration with FAO in providing a range of banana varieties to Kiribati.

We feel it is important that these crops/varieties are made available to SPC member countries for evaluation and eventual use by farmers.

For information on those varieties, please let us know which varieties you would like us to provide. If you are interested in other crops such as taros, yams and cassava or need further information, please contact Dr. Mary Taylor (Genetic Resources Coordinator/ CePaCT Manager) [maryt@spc.int](mailto:maryt@spc.int) and/or Valerie Tuia (CePaCT Curator) [valeriet@spc.int](mailto:valeriet@spc.int)



### C-5 lines available from CePaCT

No.	CePaCT CODE	VARIETY	ORIGIN
1	BL/SM 77	Upolu	Samoa
2	BL/SM 91	Namu'a	Samoa
3	BL/SM 92	Silipisa	Samoa
4	BL/SM 97	Gagasavea	Samoa
5	BL/SM 104	Tolo-gataua	Samoa
6	BL/SM 111	Pauni	Samoa
7	BL/SM 114	Salelologa	Samoa
8	BL/SM 115	Malaela	Samoa
9	BL/SM 116	Manu	Samoa
10	BL/SM 120	Manono	Samoa
11	BL/SM 128	Nu'utele 2	Samoa



## Pacific Organic Standard presented at New Caledonia's first organic market

In the last week of March, SPC/LRD participated in the “Week without Pesticides” organised in Noumea, New Caledonia’s capital, by the environmental umbrella organisation “Ensemble pour la planète” (together for the planet). The NGO wanted to draw attention to the effects agrochemicals can have on human health and the environment and the need to act responsibly in using them. Among a number of activities organised during the week was New Caledonia’s first ever organic market. The two-day market, held on the last weekend of March, was an ideal occasion for SPC to

present the Pacific Organic Standard and its activities in the organic sector, to the New Caledonian public, producers and consumers alike. The market attracted crowds of people and had a wide variety of stands. Producers and producer associations (*photo below*) displayed fresh fruits, vegetables and staples, products from the sea, jams and pickles, essential oils, cosmetics, honey and beeswax products, traditional foods, vanilla, local crafts, endemic plants and organic farming inputs. As there is no organic certification in the country, the participation of producers was based

on trust – trust that agrochemicals were not used in the production process and that organic products were used in manufactured items. For example, a producer from Lifou used organically certified sugar to produce a range of delicious jams that were available for tasting and buying.

SPC/LRD combined with the Chamber of Agriculture and the producers’ association, Arbofruits, to set up an information stand. The stand featured the Pacific Organic Standard, highlighting that it is a truly Pacific document that reflects the cultures, traditions, physical and geographical circumstances of the diverse peoples, ecosystems and natural resources of the region. It was explained that the Standard, which encompasses organic principles accepted world-wide, supports sustainable production systems and consumer protection and seeks to enhance the image of the unique



traditional agricultural systems practiced in the Pacific.

There was a lot of interest in organic certification and labeling, especially in the brand “Organic Pasifika”, which is currently being developed by the Regional Organic Task Force with support from LRD. Work on creation of a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for the certification of organic products for the local market was also presented at the stand. The occasion was used not only to inform producers and consumers, but also to recruit people interested in getting involved. The systems are locally focused quality assurance systems to certify organic producers. Their mode of operation is defined through active dialogue and participation of producers and consumers in search of the same outcome – quality products at a fair price. PGS are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.

There was also great interest in the practical guidelines on

(...cont'd on page 4)





sustainable agricultural techniques developed under the DSAP project, including those on preparing plant-based pesticides (derris and neem), drip irrigation systems, compost and fish fertilizer.

Work by SPC/MRD in Lifou on the production of organic fertilizer and animal feed from fish waste was presented through samples and a comic series. People were surprised that the product did not smell! The media attention, the overwhelming response from the public, and official distribution of the Pacific Organic Standard to political and administrative authorities meant that not only is the Standard now well and truly launched in New Caledonia, but hopefully that this was only the first of many organic markets where people will be able to choose from a wide range of verified and certified locally produced products.

Article submitted by Judith van Eijnatten, [judithv@spc.int](mailto:judithv@spc.int).



Early European explorers including Captain Cook wrote admiringly of the beauty of communities across the Pacific that used coconut oil as an integral part of their daily lives.

## FACT project to promote virgin coconut oil production

ONE might wonder why after so many years of its existence, promotion of virgin coconut oil (VCO) is needed. In fact, it's necessary to highlight the value of VCO against strong lobbying from competing vegetable oil producers.

VCO is extracted directly from fresh coconut meat without the use of high temperatures (above 70°C) or chemicals. Minimal or low heat is used to dry the meat before the oil is extracted by pressing. Alternatively, the undried meat can also be pressed first. The mixture of oil and water

that is obtained is allowed to separate to produce the virgin oil.

This oil retains the characteristic scent and taste of coconut and is suitable for human consumption without any further processing. It is a vastly superior product for eating and cooking compared to coconut oil made conventionally from mechanical pressing of copra.

According to naturopath, Dr Bruce Fife, author of *The Healing Miracles of Coconut Oil*, coconut oil is the healthiest oil on earth. His bold statement is backed by modern research on VCO. Once wrongly



accused of increasing cholesterol levels, coconut oil is now being used by doctors to treat a variety of ailments.

The increasing health consciousness of the general public and the quest for an ever-better lifestyle have provided a window of opportunity for Pacific VCO producers, who have been selected to receive support from SPC through the EU-funded FACT (Facilitating Agricultural Commodity Trade in the Pacific) project.

### Traditional uses of coconut oil

For most of the 3500 years of the documented historical use of coconut as a food and pharmaceutical, the news was all good. The coconut palm was seen as a sustainable resource with the harvested materials influencing every aspect of the lives of tropical communities. Most important was its fruit, providing coconut flesh, water, milk and oil.

Coconut oil is used prolifically in tropical regions around the world: throughout the Pacific Islands, Asia, Africa, Central and South America. Its uses by Ayurvedic medicine in relation to the mind, body and spirit were documented in Sanskrit from 1500 BC. Early European explorers including Captain Cook wrote admiringly of the beauty of communities across the Pacific that used coconut oil as an integral part of their daily lives. During World War II,



The equipment used for extracting fresh coconut oil, minimal or low heat is used to dry the meat before the oil is extracted by pressing.



A bucket of virgin coconut oil, produced by one family in a village in Samoa under a programme operated by the Samoa Women in Business Inc.,

the water from young green coconuts was successfully used as a substitute for saline drips, saving the lives of many allied soldiers. After the war, coconut oil was sold in England as “margarine” and in the USA as “coconut butter”.

### Changing opinions

Opinions about dietary fat consumption began changing in 1954. In the USA, where coronary heart disease was becoming the primary cause of mortality in the adult population, the researcher David Kritchevsky published two academic papers. The first described the effects of feeding cholesterol to rabbits and indicated that this might lead to the formation of blocked arteries and thus contribute to heart disease. In his second paper, he described the beneficial effects of consuming polyunsaturated fatty acids from the oil of corn, soybeans, safflower and sunflower seeds in lowering, at least temporarily, cholesterol in the blood. The well-oiled marketing machinery funded by the soybean and corn industry and supported by the American Heart Association swung into action, calling for the substitution of saturated fats in the

American diet with polyunsaturated oils.

Even small island nations in the South Pacific were persuaded to change centuries of dietary tradition, switching from using tropical oils to importing polyunsaturated fats. Today, heart disease is still on the increase and obesity is a major social problem worldwide that has governments worried about the health-care costs of future generations.

However, more recent research is starting to show that dietary changes based on the evidence presented by Kritchevsky and other supporters were at the very least premature. Only time will tell whether the greatest injustice of this movement has been the bundling together of all saturated fats, whether from meat, dairy or vegetable sources, under one umbrella.

As a result, some of nature’s most amazing resources, tropical oils, and especially coconut oil with all its functional, nutritional and pharmaceutical possibilities, have been lost to modern medicine for decades. Although it is saturated, coconut oil is structurally, pharmaceutically and behaviourally different from any other natural oil or fat.

The latest research has modified many of the theories of the recent past, showing interactions between diet and health are more complex than originally thought. More importantly however, the research findings described below make a strong case for the re-evaluation of coconut oil, not only as a legitimate part of our daily diet, but also as a natural anti-viral and anti-bacterial remedy for the future.

### Properties and therapeutic uses of coconut oil

Coconut oil is now known to contain a unique form of saturated fat that may help in preventing heart disease, stroke, and hardening of the arteries. The saturated fat in coconut oil is unlike the fat found in meat or other vegetable fats. It is identical to a special group of fats found in human breast milk that have been shown to

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# Plant protection services for Solomon Islands

The diamondback moth (DBM), *Plutella xylostella* and the large cabbage moth (LCM), *Crociodomia pavonana* are pests of cabbage and are major production problems for farmers in Solomon Islands. Field visits to cabbage farms found no presence of the natural enemies of DBM, *Cotesia plutellae*, *Oomyzus sokolowskii* or *Diadegma semiclausum*. A field monitoring study is needed to find out the seasonality and abundance of the pests and the availability of natural enemies.

These were the main conclusions of a recent visit to Solomon Islands of Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) Entomologist Mr Sada N. Lal as part of a joint project of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), SPC, and the Improving Plant Protection Services in Solomon Islands Project (IPPSI).

In planning the field visit Mr Lal met with Mr Jimmi Salea, Director of Research; plant protection staff; and Dr Ravindra Chandra Joshi, Coordinator of the small gardens project of the Asian

Vegetable Research and Development Centre, based in Solomon Islands.

PhD student Maclean Vagalo is studying the control of the pest beetle, *Nisotra basselae* on *sliperi kapis*, or *bele*. He is comparing treatments including the use of chemicals, plant-derived pesticides and integrated pest management (IPM) practices. Preliminary observations found that *N. basselae* had a strong preference for light, as plants in the open field were more heavily infested than plants in the shade.

The SPC Entomologist also visited five taro plots as part of the visit. He was accompanied by plant protection staff and used the opportunity for field training on identification of taro pests and their natural enemies. It was noted that all the plots had taro beetle but at varying levels of infestation. Mrs Rosa Poru, a farmer from Sopapera, had a large plot of taro of the commercial variety from Papua New Guinea (PNG). She said that taro returns are very good in the local market despite the taro beetle

problem. She was willing to implement the recommendations for the control of the taro beetle. The taro field had very light infestations of taro hopper, aphids, armyworm, hornworm, and some other minor pests. However, there was an abundance of natural enemies including the ladybird beetle *Coccinella transversalis*, the syrphid fly (an aphid predator), *Cyrtohinus fulvus* (a taro hopper predator) as well as other predatory beetles and wasps. The presence of natural enemies was indicated to staff and specimens were collected for future reference.

Further field experiments are suggested to test new and selective insecticides. Insecticides containing *Baccillus thuringiensis* (Bt) include Delfin and Xentari, as well as the new insecticide Prevathon. Plant-derived pesticides, derris and neem are to be included as well. It is recommended that formulations of Bt and new selective insecticides such as Prevathon should be registered so that they are available to farmers who want to use these insecticides.

The white peach scale (WPC) was not successfully raised in cages in the lab. The suggestion was made to raise it in potted live host plants that are initially placed outside the lab. Cassava is the recommended host plant. The potted host plants should then be brought inside the lab and placed inside the cages and covered with muslin cloth. WPC should then be introduced to the host plants to establish colonies. The parasitoids can then be reared on cassava cuttings infested with WPC inside the cages. Parasitoids can be introduced to Solomon Islands from Samoa.

During the visit, the SPC entomologist also spent time providing training on laboratory procedures for rearing insects and natural enemies. He also helped in sorting insect field collections and packing specimens for shipment for identification.

For more information, please contact SPC's Land Resources Division at [Irdhelpdesk@spc.int](mailto:Irdhelpdesk@spc.int).



# New regional programme to support adaptation to climate change

A new, four-year project on climate-change readiness is to be implemented in Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu. The project will focus on practical, long-term adaptation strategies in land management, agriculture and forestry. Senior officials from the environment, agriculture and forestry sectors of the three countries met in Suva in early February to set directions and identify outputs for the Pacific-German Regional Programme on Adaptation to Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region, as it will be known.

The Euro 4.2 million programme is being funded by the Federal Republic of Germany. German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the implementing agency, will work in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). The programme, which will be based with SPC's Land Resources Division in Suva, complements the Pacific Island Framework for Action on Climate Change, 2006–2015.

At the meeting, Fiji delegate, Mr Epeli Nasome, Director of the Fiji Department of Environment, highlighted the cross-cutting impact of climate change and the need to streamline climate change into the policies and plans of all sectors. Mr

'Aleki Sisifa, Director of SPC's Land Resources Division, supported his comments, stressing the added value to be gained from integrating possible interventions with other relevant activities being carried out in the project countries and by regional agencies.

The project will directly strengthen the capacity of SPC to respond to the needs of Pacific countries facing climate change challenges. Included in this capacity development will be improved communication and information tools to enable SPC to act as a hub for information exchange and advice on climate change issues relating to agriculture, forestry, and land management. Advice and services will cover the identification of resistant/resilient plant species for tree and crop production and the compilation of best practices for adaptation and mitigation in agriculture and forestry. The "information hub" will be linked to existing regional and international information portals and sites.

Support for Vanuatu and Tonga will include integrating climate change issues and adaptation strategies into land use policies and planning. This is an important step in building the resilience of local

farming communities to climate change, given that its impact will be intensified by poor land use practices and limited land use options. SPC has already taken steps to identify resilient crops, trees, and livestock and will be introducing these climate-change-ready technologies to farming communities.

In Fiji, programme support will focus on developing the knowledge and capacity required to participate in the international carbon market through REDD (reducing emissions through avoided deforestation and forest degradation). The feasibility of integrating REDD into the international carbon market is under review, but it is widely recognised that avoiding deforestation will be an important strategy in climate change mitigation and adaptation. It is anticipated that some agreement on the mechanism will be reached at the UNFCCC COP 15 (Conference of the Parties) in Copenhagen, December 2009. In the meantime, the programme will work with Fiji authorities to increase stakeholders' knowledge of carbon market processes and strengthen institutional capacity with the aim of creating an enabling environment for REDD mechanisms. The programme envisages the establishment of selected pilot sites where resource owners and users will be trained, thus enabling their active participation in the process.

Mr Russell Nari, Director General of Vanuatu's Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, emphasised the need to effectively coordinate activities and resources: "With so many projects going on right now we need to identify synergies in the countries and build on them. Projects need to be complementary of each other". Tonga and Fiji representatives agreed with him that coordination and integration of activities would be crucial to the long-term effectiveness of the project.

Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu will each hold national planning meetings to further define their project operating plans.

For more information, please contact [lrhelpdesk@spc.int](mailto:lrhelpdesk@spc.int)

## Climate - Ready Collection : *Banana for Distribution*

Banana varieties as listed - performed well in trials

No	VARIETY	ORIGIN
1	Daru	Bioversity, Belgium
2	Ducasse	DPI, Australia
3	Dwarf Cavendish	Bioversity, Belgium & DPI Australia
4	FHIA 01	Bioversity, Belgium & DPI Australia
5	FHIA 03	Bioversity, Belgium
6	FHIA 17	Bioversity, Belgium & DPI Australia
7	FHIA 23	Bioversity, Belgium & DPI Australia
8	FHIA 25	Bioversity, Belgium & DPI Australia
9	Namaha Khom	Bioversity, Belgium
10	Pisang Ceylan	Bioversity, Belgium & DPI Australia
11	Pisang Gajah Merah	DPI, Australia
12	Saba	DPI, Australia
13	Yangambi	DPI, Australia
14	Yangambi km 5	Bioversity, Belgium

FHIA - Fundacion Hondurena de Investigacion Agricola

DPI - Department of Primary Industries (Queensland, Australia)



# SPC helps NAQIA upgrade its ICT

As part of implementing BIF (Biosecurity Information Facility) in PICTs, the Biosecurity & Trade Facilitation Section of LRD assisted the National Agriculture Quarantine & Inspection Authority in Papua New Guinea to install a local area network (LAN) at its headquarters in Port Moresby.

The technical assistance included the purchase and installation of a new HP server (HP ML310 server with 660 GB SATA hard drive and 1.5 GB RAM) on a cost-sharing basis. As a result, NAQIA can now upgrade the PCs and other IT peripherals at its headquarters and offices in the National Capital District. It has also enabled the network to be extended to 28 users. Previously the network catered only for the finance section and had six users.

The new technology has allowed NAQIA to establish its own internet domain name, hosted by the local ISP, and staff now use email for internal and external communication.

Under PACREIP (Pacific Regional Economic Integration Programme), SPC also recruited Ms Madi Kwarara as BIF technician attached to NAQIA. Though there is as yet no IT section or unit within the organisation, SPC is assisting through the attachment agreement to provide these services.

Plans are now underway to set up a metropolitan area network to connect all NAQIA's Port Moresby offices to its headquarters. Future plans include implementing a wide area network to cover more than 20 NAQIA offices throughout PNG.

NAQIA managing director, Mr Andrew Yamanea, expressed his

appreciation for the continued support provided by SPC to NAQIA and said,

“Getting the IT system in place is long overdue. Given our capacity problem, NAQIA was unable to make progress. The introduction of the system means we can use email to communicate more easily and access the internet for information sources.”

## Pacific Bioenergy Workshop

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), with support from the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation (CTA), invited members of 14 Pacific Island Countries to attend the Pacific Regional Bioenergy Workshop in Fiji, from 17–20 November 2008.

Workshop participants, through working groups and in plenary discussions, sought to develop policy guidelines that would facilitate the growth of their bioenergy industries, while maintaining a balance between food security, energy security and agrobiodiversity.

***The evidence from the development of bioenergy industries overseas is that producing price competitive biofuels tends to rely on plantation agriculture, rather than smallholder farms.***

The development of biofuels may potentially help Pacific Island countries cope with rising oil prices, reduce countries' dependency on fossil fuels, provide reliable and clean sources of energy for rural electrification for outer island communities, and provide new sources of income to farmers. The evidence from the development of bioenergy industries overseas is that producing price competitive biofuels tends to rely on plantation agriculture, rather than smallholder farms. This therefore can have an impact on land tenure and needs to be addressed in a comprehensive land-use policy.

A main outcome of the workshop is a Pacific Island Biofuel Strategy Paper to assist policy makers assess biofuels from a multi-sector approach.

In their recommendations, Pacific Island country representatives called for regional support through SPC/SOPAC/FAO/IFAD in assessing the interaction between biofuel production and food prices in order to ensure food security. They also called for assistance in resource assessment at country level in addition to support to improvement of productivity of current feedstocks and the sustainable introduction of new feedstocks for biofuel production. In addition, it was felt that more training was needed on the use of participatory methods in negotiating land use plans with customary land owners to facilitate land use for biofuel purposes. Further country delegates identified the need to develop Regional Biofuel Standards and the ability to test biofuel quality in the region. Finally, the workshop participants requested SOPAC and SPC to continue its information dissemination through various web resources, email service such as the Pacific Biofuel Network and printed publications.

The workshop participants called for a follow-up meeting in 2009 to assess regional progress and share experiences of the development of sustainable bioenergy policies and projects in the Pacific.

*For more information, please contact the LRD helpdesk on [lrhelpdesk@spc.int](mailto:lrhelpdesk@spc.int).*





Maio Tebania of Kiribati (l), discuss draft extension leaflets with farmers of Vaivinaqiri, as course instructor, Professor Anthony Youdeowei (middle) looks on. Feedback from farmers is critical in the production of extension materials.

## Better communication between extension workers and farmers

There is strong demand in the Pacific for simple technical information for the agricultural sector. Too often, information comes in scientific research reports or technical bulletins that cannot be directly used by extension agents. To meet the needs of target groups, usually farmers, the information will probably have to be restructured, rewritten and simplified. However, few extension agents or researchers know how to do this well. To address the gap, a workshop to improve information workers' skills in developing agricultural extension materials was held at Novotel Nadi, 14–25 April 2009. Seventeen Pacific Islanders from ministries of agriculture, the private sector and regional agricultural institutions took part in the training. The course, called Production of Agricultural Extension Materials, was organised in collaboration between SPC LRD and its international partner, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA).

The workshop was aimed at building on the practical communication skills of agricultural extension agents by enhancing their ability to write and produce extension materials for field staff and farmers. Effective technology transfer depends on good communication between extension officers and farmers – without it, efforts at knowledge generation are wasted. The use of various media in technology transfer is critical, especially as budget constraints limit the reach of field officers.

In his opening remarks at the workshop, Dr Richard Beyer, Permanent Secretary for Fiji's Ministry of Primary Industries, repeated the call for simple, well-illustrated extension materials for farmers. Dr Beyer also noted that valuable research information tied up in annual reports and research papers needed to be translated into extension information for wider use. As an example, he mentioned government policies in place to promote export crops, particularly since heavy floods damaged much of

Fiji's productive farmland in the Sigatoka Valley.

CTA workshop coordinator, Mr Rodger Obubo, commented on the value of developing the ability of extension and information staff to produce effective extension publications. He said technology transfer is critical for progress in agriculture, and production of good extension materials facilitates communication of technology to end-users. CTA is mandated to assist ACP countries with developing and communicating agricultural technology and capacity building in communications technology.

Professor Anthony Youdeowei, of the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, was the course presenter. He started each day with a 'thought for the day' (for example, 'Our Lord gave us two ends, one to SIT and the other to THINK. Our level of success in life depends on the extent to which we use each end'). Professor Youdeowei has had an illustrious career. He is an

(...cont'd on page 10)

## EXTENSION PUBLICATION WORKSHOP

international consultant in integrated pest management, agricultural education training and scientific communication and is currently director of training and communications for the West Africa Rice Development Association.

The course focused on how to identify good sources of agricultural information and the skills needed to develop materials in formats appropriate for rural farming communities. One of the major concepts promoted during the training was *farmer participation*, especially in relation to:

- the choice of extension materials to be produced, based on farmers' identified technology needs and preferences for the way in which they receive information;
- reviews critiquing the extension materials produced; and
- the process of field evaluation of the extension materials.

Involving farmers in these activities ensures that the extension materials produced are not only truly relevant to their needs, but also that they have some ownership of the exercise and the materials. The information is then more likely to be readily accepted and used successfully.

### Visit to village community of Vaivinaqiri

Fiji participants and SPC workshop facilitators organised a visit to a rural farming community just outside Nadi to conduct a situational needs assessment and administer a diagnostic survey for extension information. The visitors were treated to a traditional Fijian kava ceremony (*sevusevu*) hosted by the head of the village community. Twenty farmers from the village were divided into three groups – men, women and youth. Participants were also divided into three groups and allocated to each village group to carry out the survey.

Results of the participatory exercise to identify extension information requirements of farmers of Vaivinaqiri community recorded watermelon as a cash crop especially lacking in production information, including pest and disease management. Another vegetable, long bean, was also identified. Both are economically important crops that provide a means of income for farming families, helping them meet their financial obligations.

The farming community also plants staple crops such as cassava and sweet potato, but have serious problems in getting water, not only for household use but for irrigation.

Vaivinaqiri village is located in a hilly area and farm lands were previously under sugar cane production.

For more information, please contact [Irdhelpdesk@spc.int](mailto:Irdhelpdesk@spc.int).



Workshop facilitator, Ms Bernie Masianini (back, left), provided guidelines on cultural protocols to consider when developing extension materials.



Savusavu based extension officer, Ms Tepola Seniloli in discussions with village youth on their needs for extension information. Farmers said they prefer leaflets to receive extension information.



Workshop participants work with villagers to identify information needs.



CTA Training Programmes Manager, Rodger Obubo (l) presenting Michael Ronoramahava his workshop certificate.

# Call for stronger Pacific representation at international forest forum

**F**orests and trees are vital to Pacific Island environments and the livelihoods of many people. But growing populations, climate change, and unsustainable agriculture and forestry practices are putting increasing pressure on these resources.

As well as implementing national activities to support sustainable management of their forests and trees, Pacific Island countries and territories need to participate effectively in the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), in particular to stay current on international forest policy processes and negotiations and to put forward issues on which they require the support of the international community.

Several workshops held in the region since 2000 indicated that, in general, countries lacked knowledge of international forestry processes and there was little participation by Pacific forestry experts.

As a result, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) with the support of GTZ (German Technical Cooperation) organised a 3-day training workshop on international forest policy processes to help participating countries prepare for the UNFF6 negotiations in 2006. Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu took part in the workshop.

SPC was accredited as an observer with UNFF in 2006 and participated in both the sixth and seventh sessions, providing support to member countries.

The eighth session of UNFF was held in April 2009 with the overall themes of:

- Forests in a changing environment, and
- Methods of implementing sustainable forest management

In preparation for UNFF8, SPC with support from GTZ organised a four-day workshop for selected Pacific island countries and held in Fiji.

Senior policy officers from forestry departments and stakeholders met to enhance their understanding of UNFF's Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Forests and Multi-Year Programme of Work 2007–2015. Officers also discussed strategies for presenting a united Pacific voice at UNFF8.

The workshop was held from 9 to 12 March 2009 at Nomads Skylodge, Nadi, Fiji. ■

*For more information, please contact [lrhelpdesk@spc.int](mailto:lrhelpdesk@spc.int)*

## Statement by SPC to the 8th session of the UN Forum on Forests, 2009

**P**acific Island Countries have been making every effort to manage their forests sustainably but in spite of all those efforts the region is now facing a major threat from the impact of climate change and other unsustainable forest practices taking place on a global scale.

SPC is glad to note that the recently negotiated NLBI (Non-legally binding instruments) is giving new emphasis on regional involvement, providing us an opportunity to influence the shaping of the Forum's work programme to take account of regional needs and aspirations.

In relation to finance and other means of implementation, we support both proposals of Secretary General to establish a dedicated global SFM fund and a facilitative mechanism.

Our support for the Fund is based on the following:

- without a dedicated fund, ODA (Official Development

Assistance) flows for SFM (sustainable forest management) are limited since aid-seeking governments do not consider SFM as a priority area for ODA funding; and

- even if in the short term the flow of resources to the Fund may be limited by the current global financial situation, setting up the framework at UNFF8 is useful since the next session of the Forum will not be taking place until 2011.

SPC wants to reiterate the region's vulnerability to impacts of climate change and that we welcome the ongoing work at UNFCCC (United Nations Framework on the Convention on Climate Change) and other fora to address the issue including the consideration of REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) as an important mitigation mechanism in developing countries. However, we need to recognise that it should not be seen as an alternative to SFM but rather a component of it. Similarly, REDD financing should not be seen as an alternative to financing for SFM: forests provide a wider range of goods and services than carbon and needs to be recognised so.

On the development of a facilitative mechanism it is important to ensure a) both existing and future funding be targeted to countries' needs, and b) processes for acquiring funding are appropriate to country situations and capacities to facilitate easier access

SPC recognises the establishment of the CPF (Collaborative Partnership on Forests) as one of the very innovative mechanisms that has emerged from the UNFF process. In this regard, we request members of the CPF to make further effort to expand the use of the joint questionnaire mechanism to reduce the reporting burden especially on smaller developing countries. ■

## VIRGIN COCONUT OIL...from pg 5

improve digestion, strengthen the immune system, and protect against bacterial, viral, and fungal infections. Some clinical studies have in fact shown that coconut oil has anti-microbial and anti-viral properties.

Fats derived from coconut oil, are now used in some hospital IV formulations and commercial baby formulas. They are also used in sports drinks to boost energy and enhance athletic performance.

There are claims that the medium-chain fatty acids found in coconut oil can speed up the body's metabolism, burning more calories and promoting weight loss. Most commercial coconut oils are refined, bleached, and deodorised (RBD). While these RBD oils do in many cases maintain the beneficial chemical structures of the medium chain fatty acids, they also contain chemicals used in processing.

### Boosting Pacific VCO production

SPC is supporting VCO production in Pacific Island countries through its FACT project. Given huge global demand and the abundance of coconut trees in the region, VCO could make a valuable contribution to Pacific Island economies. However, considerable work on production, packaging, labelling and marketing is needed first and FACT will assist producers with the expertise required.

A few countries in the Pacific, including Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga, are already producing VCO commercially, but only in small volumes.

In Fiji, two extraction methods are used. One is based on direct micro expeller (DME) technology, which was introduced to Vanua Levu in 1994 by Dan Etherington of Kokonut Pacific. However, since the initial introduction of the technology, little has been done to create awareness amongst communities on its operation and management and production has been static.

Tinytech extraction technology was introduced to Fiji from India at almost the same time. It is mostly used for producing VCO in bulk for soap and aromatic oil manufacturers,

(...cont'd to next column)



## Launch of regional trade statistics database

LRD, in collaboration with the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), hosted the second in a series of training sessions to assist Pacific Island countries to improve their reporting of import and export information. The workshop, held from 25 to 27 February 2009, brought together representatives of seven national statistics offices to identify problems with trade statistics in the region and demonstrate techniques for improving the quality of that information. In addition, it saw the launch of the Pacific regional trade statistics database, which can be accessed via the SPC website.

The Pacific Plan highlights the potential for regional collaboration in

while DME technology is used to produce bottled VCO (especially edible oil) targeting the tourism and domestic markets.

In Samoa, the NGO, Women in Business Development Incorporated, took the initiative in developing the virgin coconut oil industry. Established in 1991, its aim is to help Samoan women and youth develop sustainable livelihoods. From humble beginnings, Women in Business has thrived and is now active in around 90 villages across Samoa, supporting a range of income-generating activities in addition to coconut oil production.

Article submitted by Vinesh Prasad, FACT Information, Communication and Technology Assistant.

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'upgrading and extending country and regional statistical information systems and databases across all sectors'. The production and dissemination of reliable statistical information is an essential enabling tool for policy makers. In particular, the possession of reliable trade statistics is a critical precondition for the negotiation of trade agreements and for analyzing national food security trends. Most Pacific Island countries are highly dependent on food imports to meet the needs of their growing populations, but at the same time, the export of agricultural and fisheries commodities is a major foreign revenue earner. Therefore, trade in primary and processed food commodities is a key factor when considering food security and economic growth in the region.

The launch of the database means that policy makers now have access to fully searchable sets of statistics for nine Pacific countries, with room for more.

SPC and FAO began working on trade data with national statistics offices throughout the Pacific in December 2006. SPC is continuing to work with these offices to help improve their trade statistics and to provide analytical support. LRD recently welcomed a full-time statistical officer to its staff to drive this project forward over the next two years.

For more information, please contact the LRD helpdesk [lrhelpdesk@spc.int](mailto:lrhelpdesk@spc.int)





*Tokelau swimming pigs.....the virus itself has not been found in pigs to date and the Influenza A Virus (H1N1) that is causing this disease is made up of genetic materials derived from influenza viruses found in birds, humans and pigs.*

## Pig industry gets a bad rap from influenza scare

The pig industry could be the unwitting victim of the current "Swine influenza" outbreak that is currently at the centre of world attention.

LRD Animal Health and Production, Dr. Ken Cokanasiga said that the Influenza A Virus (H1N1) that is causing the disease has not been found in pigs to date. "What is misleading at the moment is the name given to this disease," Dr. Cokanasiga said.

"The virus itself has not been found in pigs to date and the Influenza A Virus (H1N1) that is causing this disease is made up of genetic materials derived from influenza viruses found in birds, humans and pigs. Hence, the name of the disease may be inappropriate". His view is supported by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) who said that the pathogen was "not a classic human virus ... but a virus that includes (in) its characteristics swine, avian and human virus components".

The OIE went on to say that that the "virus has not been isolated in animals to date and therefore it is not justified to name this disease swine influenza".

"Given there is no case of infection in animals confirmed in the zones where cases of human infection have been detected, it is not

necessary to introduce specific measures for international trade in swine or their products nor to consider that consumers of pork products are at risk of infection', the OIE statement said.

Dr. Cokanasiga, who is a former Director of the Ministry of Primary Industries' Animal Health & Production Division and a qualified veterinarian said that the epidemiology of the disease in pigs is still been investigated.

He stated that current knowledge of the transmission of the disease to humans is not linked to any exposure to infected pigs.

"The OIE has also said that no pigs in Mexico or elsewhere had been found with the disease. Hence the precise origin of the virus is still unknown as of this moment.

OIE reaffirms that pork consumption has not been implicated in any transmission to humans" Dr. Cokanasiga said.

Dr. Cokanasiga pointed out that WHO has also informed that swine flu has not been shown to be transmissible to people through eating properly handled and prepared pork or other products derived from pigs. The Flu virus is actually killed by cooking temperatures of 70 degrees centigrade (160 degrees Fahrenheit) or more.

"WHO has also declared this situation to be an event of international concern. It has now also raised the level of influenza pandemic alert to Phase 4. Our colleagues from SPC Public Health and WHO are working very closely with all countries in the region, preparing countries for possible incursions of the disease, and provide up to date information and technical advice."

Dr. Cokanasiga noted that some countries have started banning the import of live pigs and pork products from infected countries, eg. China has banned imports from Mexico and three U.S. States, Russia has banned imports from North and Latin America.

He stresses that in light of the international concern over the current influenza, veterinary and animal health services also need to continue their efforts aimed at strengthening preparations for possible avian influenza incursions.

The efforts he said, should be directed at establishing capacities, infrastructures, procedures etc for this will also be very useful in preparing countries for any possible exotic disease incursions.

In addition, the veterinary services should continue to strengthen their disease surveillance systems, strengthen on farm biosecurity, are vigilant with border control, the monitoring of incoming goods, cargo and passengers (especially from infected countries), and the practice of good personal hygiene. ■

Source: [http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/page\\_14864.shtml](http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/page_14864.shtml) - by Nacanieli Takele



# Animal disease reporting systems needed to support trade

**EU** trade restrictions on the export of ornamental fish and molluscs (clams) from the Pacific region are an issue for a number of Pacific island countries. The restrictions, which were introduced in January 2009, were imposed due to lack of animal disease reporting systems. To facilitate the resumption of trade, SPC is providing technical assistance to affected countries to help them establish systems for disease information management and international disease reporting that satisfy EU requirements.

A regional workshop on international reporting of animal diseases highlighted improved trade as one of the benefits of having an internationally recognised animal health status. The Nadi workshop (6–9 April, 2009) was attended by representatives from Pacific member countries. It also highlighted the ‘in-country’ benefits for animal health agencies of establishing and maintaining national disease surveillance and information management systems. Such systems enable early detection of disease outbreaks and through monitoring, reduce the impacts of endemic diseases.

The SPC-organised workshop was held in collaboration with the Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). OIE is recognised by the World Trade Organization as the standards setting body for animal health issues including disease reporting. SPC has signed a memorandum of understanding with OIE to promote the adoption of its standards in Pacific countries. Of SPC’s 22 Pacific Island member countries and territories, only Fiji Islands, New Caledonia, Vanuatu and the Federated States of Micronesia

are currently OIE members.

Compared to many other regions, the Pacific island region enjoys favourable animal health status, both for terrestrial and aquatic animals. However, many island countries do not have well-documented disease surveillance and information

beef export market because it does not have a system of documented surveillance to meet international requirements to demonstrate freedom from the disease. Dr Akiko Kamata of FAO, Rome, introduced participants to the trans-boundary animal disease information management system (TADInfo), an FAO



Mr Ben Jebara Karim, OIE Head of Animal Health Information Department, demonstrating the use of the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) to Mr Tiria Rere of the Cook Islands and Mr Bremner Adumur, Nauru quarantine officer.

management systems to underpin international disease reporting and the development of potential trade opportunities. ‘Mad cow’ disease provides a good example. Although it has never occurred in the Pacific Island region, a country such as Fiji is unable to develop a



OIE is recognised by the World Trade Organization as the standards setting body for animal health issues including disease reporting. SPC has signed a memorandum of understanding with OIE to promote the adoption of its standards in Pacific countries.

developed user-friendly database application that can be used as a national animal health information management system. TADinfo includes modules, such as field observations, abattoir observations, active surveillance, livestock populations and vaccination programmes, that can be used as required to record information. It also has a GIS (geographic information system) interface to enable disease information to be displayed via country maps. This enables trends in disease occurrence and spread to be analysed and control measures to be modified or adapted if required.

Sessions on international disease reporting and the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) were led by OIE information management specialists, Dr Karim Ben Jebara and Dr Daniel Chaisemartin. WAHIS is an online disease reporting system that countries can use to provide emergency notification to trading partners of significant disease outbreaks. The WAHIS system also enables half-yearly and annual animal health status reports to be submitted, providing valuable information for import risk assessments to facilitate safe international trade in animals and animal products.

Workshop participants completed numerous 'online' disease reporting exercises to familiarise themselves with the data entry and reporting features of the WAHIS application.

Dr Kenji Sakurai (OIE, Tokyo) described how countries go about joining OIE, and outlined the benefits and assistance that OIE gives its members. As a key outcome of the workshop, OIE has granted all SPC members access to the WAHIS disease reporting system. This will enable all countries and territories in the region, not just OIE members, to provide reports to OIE on their animal health status – a very significant achievement that will assist countries that wish to export ornamental fish to Europe to satisfy EU requirements. It may also lead to the development of other opportunities for exporting animals and animal products. SPC wishes to thank the OIE and FAO for their strong support of this important regional initiative.

*Article submitted by Dr Ian Peebles, LRD Animal Health Specialist. For more information, please contact the LRD helpdesk: lrdhelpdesk@spc.int.*

## Nutrition, diet and lifestyle - scaling up action in the Pacific

A sub-regional meeting to review national plans of action on nutrition and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) was attended by delegates from six participating countries – Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, PNG, Tonga and Tokelau. Three delegates from different sectors in each country participated in the workshop, which was held in Nadi, Fiji, 23–27 February 2009. They helped identify key elements for successful implementation of national plans of action, and also shared technical knowledge and experience on best practices from the Pacific and beyond to strengthen implementation of plans.

The workshop was jointly organised by the World Health Organisation (WHO), FAO, JICA, UNICEF, Fiji Ministry of Health and SPC's LRD.

Workshop sessions included overviews on food security, micronutrient deficiency, nutrition, food safety and NCDs. These were followed up by technical presentations on legislative intervention, food and nutrition policy, national dietary and physical activity guidelines, communication campaigns, advocacy, fortification, breastfeeding, and monitoring and evaluation.

Participants acknowledged that a workshop that brought several sectors together was very effective and that the concept should be continued to strengthen linkages between ministries of health, agriculture and education. Such meetings could also involve



*The meeting adopted a 'GO LOCAL' theme and promoted healthy traditional foods including their preparation.*

ministries of commerce, industry and trade, along with NGOs and the private sector to further support the scale-up of nutrition, diet and lifestyle interventions.

**Food concerns** – The meeting adopted a 'GO LOCAL' theme and promoted healthy traditional foods including their preparation. The benefits of organic products were also stressed.

Recognising the importance of food, nutrition and health, and the need to work together across sectors, participants welcomed the proposed Pacific food summit. Fiji requested support for organising its own national food summit in preparation for the regional summit.

Concern was expressed about the influx of food items of questionable quality, and the meeting recommended that countries

*(...cont'd on page 16)*

## NUTRITION, DIET.....from pg 15

work on setting standards for certification of food imports with support from regional organisations.

Delegates enjoyed the experience of having health profiling and apportioned lunches using local foods with caloric labelling and thought the trend should be encouraged at high-level meetings as it helped individuals make healthy choices.

### Encouraging physical activity –

The usefulness of pedometers in motivating individuals to boost physical activity and the value of community-based physical activity programmes were discussed. Countries were encouraged to consider requesting assistance from regional organisations on these issues.

**Communication** – Participants stressed the importance of effective communication and integrated marketing of healthy behavior and recommended that countries be assisted further with health promotion and social marketing of healthy behaviors to improve people's nutrition and help prevent NCDs.

**Follow-up action** – Each country made a commitment to carry out

*Recognising the importance of food, nutrition and health, and the need to work together across sectors, participants welcomed the proposed Pacific food summit.*

planned action with support from WHO, FAO, SPC, UNICEF and JICA. These organisations have agreed to support countries both technically and financially in scaling up action on nutrition, diet and lifestyle according to the plans that were developed.

SPC's LRD in partnership with JICA will support follow-up activities for Fiji in the areas of micronutrient supplementation, healthy boarding schools, and development of a nutrition action plan. ■

## Regional Organic Taskforce to strengthen partnerships

Following the 2<sup>nd</sup> Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services Meeting in 2006, SPC helped NGOs in various countries and territories to develop national capacity for organic farming.

One of the first actions was to establish the Pacific Regional Organic Task Force (ROTF). To get political support for the initiative, the task force in turn set up the High-Level Group (HLG), a group of four Pacific Island leaders chaired by the Prime Minister of Samoa.

In his keynote address to the most recent meeting of the ROTF in Nadi, Fiji (27 April to 1 May 2009), LRD Director 'Aleki Sisifa said,

"I would like to congratulate ROTF members for the active role you have played in nurturing, guiding and leading the development of organics in Pacific Island countries and territories thus far."

"I'd also like to acknowledge the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), which provided the needed support right from the start by giving financial and technical assistance for developing the Pacific Organic Standard."

He noted that the draft standard was approved by the HLG

during the annual meeting of Pacific Islands Forum leaders in Niue last year. The published standard was then launched two months later by the Samoan Prime Minister at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Conference of Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry in Apia, Samoa.

IFAD and IFOAM also supported the development of the Regional Organic Strategic Plan, which was completed and disseminated at the end of 2008.

"So to date we have made very good headway. I should also say that FAO has supported this work throughout, as has the EU-funded FACT project (Facilitation of Agricultural Commodity Trade) that SPC is implementing," Sisifa added.

Mr Sisifa said he firmly believed that the development of the organic sector would not have got this far without the commitment and passion of the task force and the financial and technical support of its partners, particularly IFAD, IFOAM and FAO.

Representatives from FAO and IFAD attended the meeting to discuss the next phase of organic development in the Pacific, including capacity building for national NGOs.

IFAD Sub-regional Coordinator for Pacific Island countries, Mr Siale Bain-Vete, said that he was pleased to be in Nadi to



Mr 'Aleki Sisifa (l), LRD Director looks over value-added agro-processing products produced by Nadi-based Nature's Way, with Managing Director Mr Sant Kumar pointing out the different items.



participate in the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Regional Organic Task Force.

“Regionally, we will work towards establishing a regional organic organisation and developing robust group certification schemes and internal national control systems,” said Siale.

“We in the Pacific continue to face ever greater challenges such as rising food prices, climate change, and unprecedented levels of poverty and food insecurity.”

“The most adversely affected are the poorest members of society and these people are predominantly rural dwellers,” Vete said.

He added that against such a backdrop, there is a need to reward the efforts of the people and communities who derive their livelihoods from agriculture and fisheries in the Pacific.

“This includes small farmers and fishers, who are among the most vulnerable groups.

Particularly exciting is the question of how we can ensure that smallholders in the Pacific will actually benefit from higher agricultural commodity prices and the emerging high-value niche for organic products.”

SPC will help in developing local and export markets and will work towards establishing a Pacific organic brand that will be recognised in the international arena as uniquely Pacific.

The supply side will also be strengthened through awareness raising to get buy-in from all stakeholders and by paying particular attention to post-farm produce quality, availability of locally produced and imported inputs, and supply consistency.

Interestingly, as indicated in the strategic plan, there are over 700,000 individual farms in the Pacific, but only about 1000, representing 16,000 ha, have been certified as organic. These farms produce beef, coconut oil, noni, taro, papaya, vanilla and other spices, coffee, cocoa, bananas and tamanu oil.

The regional taskforce plans to launch a website, and establish an information bulletin.



Official signing ceremony to mark the occasion of Australian government funding of over F\$1m towards flood rehabilitation work in Fiji. From left, Mr James Batley, Australian High Commissioner, Dr Richard Beyer, permanent secretary, Fiji Ministry of Primary Industries, and Mr 'Aleki Sisifa, Director, SPC Land Resources Division. (Photo: Information Unit, Fiji MPI)

## Flood-hit Fiji farmers to reap the benefits of Australian aid

Farmers affected by the January floods are to benefit from Australian government

funding of over F\$1m as part of Australia's overall assistance towards flood rehabilitation in Fiji. An official handing over ceremony of the aid relief funding was held at the offices of the Fiji Ministry of Primary Industries.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the Australian High Commissioner Mr James Batley said, “agriculture plays an important role in the livelihoods and food security of the people of Fiji.” Australia's funding will cover the supply of seedlings and planting materials, purchase of livestock drugs, resurfacing of some access roads, and research on food crop varieties. The assistance is intended to rebuild the livelihoods of those affected by the floods by helping farmers get back on track.

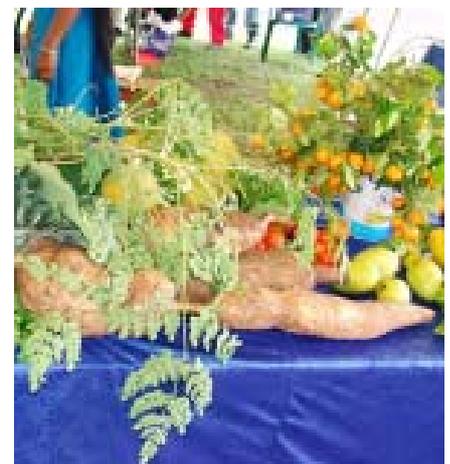
The permanent secretary for agriculture, Dr Richard Beyer said the flood assistance given by AusAID through the Secretariat of the Pacific Community would see a big harvest. This is just the kick-start Fiji needed and farmers and agriculture staff will be working together to move the project forward.

“This is a lottery win that we cannot afford to squander. We must

treat this as a bank deposit on which we as team agriculture Fiji must build,” Dr Beyer said.

Director of SPC Land Resources Division, Mr 'Aleki Sisifa said if all the seeds and seedlings and kumala cuttings are put to ground then the total value in harvested crops from that assistance alone is estimated to be more than F\$30m.

SPC has already begun work on purchasing seedlings and livestock drugs, and is working with Fiji MPI to distribute seedlings. It is anticipated that the assistance will benefit 3,500 affected farmers. 400,000 kumala cuttings have been distributed to 2,000 farmers already.



# Action plan developed for forest resources

The LRD Forests and Trees Programme has published a short version of the Forest Genetic Resources (FGR) Strategy and Action Plan for the Pacific titled, *Forest and Tree Genetic Resource Conservation, Management and Sustainable Use in Pacific Island Countries and Territories: Priorities, Strategies and Actions, 2007–2015*.

The action plan was discussed and finalised at a regional workshop, 'Development of a Pacific Regional Research and Development Agenda and Action Plan for Improved Governance in the Conservation, Management and Sustainable Utilisation of Forest Genetic Resources', held in Fiji in June 2007.

The workshop was organised by SPC with funding support from AusAID and GTZ (German Technical Cooperation).

Subsequently, the plan was endorsed at the combined regional meetings of Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services and Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry held in Apia last year.

The action plan forms the framework for planning and implementing the conservation, management and sustainable use of forest and tree genetic resources within the Pacific and maps out priorities for implementation over the next eight years. The results of earlier research and new knowledge are also incorporated.

This plan will provide a useful guide for Pacific Island countries and territories in developing and implementing their own policies and activities and thus contribute to the security and development of Pacific forest and tree genetic resources for present and future generations.

For more information, please contact [lrhelpdesk@spc.int](mailto:lrhelpdesk@spc.int)

## Role of media in the agricultural development of ACP countries

In ACP countries, the media are essential partners in agricultural and rural development. They form a strategic link in the chain of information dissemination, knowledge generation and use that brings together stakeholders to improve communication and inspire innovation. However, important challenges exist for strengthening the role of the media in agricultural and rural development. These include enabling better access to high quality information, effective partnerships among actors as well as understanding, appropriately intervening in development policy processes and building the institutional and organizational capacity of media groups.

Recognizing best practices among the media and strengthening the media's capacity to address the latest, dynamic issues facing ACP food and agricultural systems will be the focus of a special seminar convened by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) with its partners in Brussels, Belgium, October 12-16, 2009.

A Steering Committee of CTA and its partners recently convened to outline the Terms of Reference for the preparation of papers and presentations to the 2009 Seminar. Individuals or organizations will be invited to submit a paper that contributes to either:

- **Panel Sessions:** For each theme (see below), an introductory paper that addresses the topics/questions across ACP regions, and papers that discuss the thematic area from a regional perspective (Africa, Caribbean or Pacific), or
- **Parallel Sessions:** 2-3 papers/media presentations per parallel session that address the theme area with regional, national or local examples of media and agricultural and rural development issues (e.g. media and climate change, media and gender equality, etc.) or types of media such as rural radio, mobile phones or news services.

The seminar will bring together major players in the media and agriculture/rural development interface. They will include newspaper, radio and television journalists, researchers, representatives of media organisations, communication specialists working in public service and in development projects and policy makers from the six ACP regions (Central, Eastern, Southern and West Africa, Caribbean and Pacific).

The 2009 Seminar aims to contribute to:

- Formulating strategies to improve the media's ability to access and disseminate information on the core issues affecting the ACP agricultural sector
- Strengthening communication between the media and other actors involved in agricultural and rural development, and
- Identifying media support programmes.

Introductory papers will position the Seminar in the overall context of agricultural and rural development and media in the ACP countries. These analytical papers will deal with three areas that will include:

- i. Role of media in recent assessments and strategies for agricultural and rural development.*
- ii. Media and agricultural financing.*
- iii. Capacity development of the media*

Together, these three keynote papers will contribute to the e-discussions and to the further sharing of experience and recommendations within the four theme areas of the seminar:

1. Media coverage of agricultural and rural development issues
2. Communication between media and other agricultural and rural development players.
3. Contribution of the media in agricultural policy, programming and knowledge management
4. Media not well equipped to address issues of agricultural and rural development

**Further Information :** visit the seminar website: <http://annualseminar2009.cta.int>



## LRD new staff arrivals and departures...from back pg

trained paravets capable of carrying out national animal disease management activities.

The programme has been offered to Pacific Island countries and territories since a pilot programme was successfully implemented in Samoa in 2004. It involves collaboration between several organisations, including SPC, Agricultural Development in the American Pacific (ADAP) and the University of the South Pacific (USP).

LRD extends a warm welcome to Dr Dalfovo.

### Tim Martyn - LRD economist

Tim Martyn has a master's degree in development studies from the London School of Economics. He is an alumni of the University of Melbourne, where he was awarded a double honours degree in public policy and management. Tim completed a thesis

looking at the impact of regional and bilateral trade agreements on developing country participants.



Tim's background in international trade and trade policy landed him a job with the Australian Dairy Corporation, where he worked on the bilateral trade agreements between Australia and the United States of America, and between Australia and Thailand. He worked at a social policy organisation called the Ignatius Centre for Social Policy and Research, helping map the distribution and concentration of social disadvantage in Australia. After moving to the UK to complete his master's degree, Tim was subsequently hired by the UK Department for International Development, where he worked in their trade policy unit. Tim took the lead on intellectual property, helping develop UK's aid for trade strategy and working with 14 different African

producers looking to increase the value of their exports. Over the years he has also completed a number of internships including with the Asia Pacific Economic Community, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the lobby group, Global Trade Watch.

Tim joined SPC in October 2008 on a two-year economics fellowship, which is co-sponsored by the UK Department for International Development and AusAID. He is currently an economist in the LRD policy team, where he is focusing on trade facilitation, renewable energy and food security – a role that allows him to work across a number of teams and projects.

### Angeline Goundar – LRD Biosecurity Information Facility Technician

LRD bids *ni sa moce* to Ms Angeline Goundar who joined Land Resources Division in 2006. Angeline has been very active in developing the biosecurity information facility (BIF). The operational manual, which describes procedures that national border officers can use to identify specific areas of operation at points of entry, has been put into a content management system. Following the recommended steps in the manual improves the effectiveness of border control operations and increases the efficiency of inspections and clearances. Angeline was responsible for developing the database component of the BIF, using the Samoa Quarantine Information Database (SQUID) as the basic template. She also helped train national biosecurity staff to use the phytosanitary evaluation tool (PCE), which aims to assist PICT National Plant Protection Organisations to evaluate their capacity to implement international phytosanitary measures, thus facilitating trade and improving delivery of phytosanitary services.



### Marita Manley - LRD Agriculture and Forestry Policy Adviser

The Land Resources Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) has appointed a new adviser to the Land Management and Resources Policy team. Marita Manley is originally from the UK but is not new to SPC having worked for two years as a resource economist in LRD before taking on this new role.

Marita will be responsible for assisting PICTs to review and develop agriculture and forestry policies and strategic plans at the national level, develop regional policy briefs and to lead in strengthening the

Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy Network (PAFPNet).

She will also be assisting with the implementation of the new Pacific-German regional programme Adaptation to Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region (ACCPIR) which will assist in strengthening the climate change advisory capacity of LRD in the land, agriculture and forestry sectors. It will also assist Tonga and Vanuatu to integrate climate change issues into land use planning processes and Fiji in accessing carbon finance for avoided deforestation.

Prior to joining SPC Marita worked for four years as an economist for the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for the UK Government contributing to the development of climate change mitigation policies and analysing the impacts of climate change and agriculture policy alternatives. She holds a BA (Hon) in Economics from Cambridge University and an MSc in Environmental and Resource Economics from University College London (UCL).

LRD welcomes Marita Manley back in her new role.



## 6th meeting of the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation (PPPO) and 14th meeting of the Regional Technical Meeting for Plant Protection (RTMPP), 29 June - 3 July, 2009, Port Moresby, PNG

This triennial joint meeting of the two peak regional consultative bodies, and National Plant Protection Organisations and agriculture research organisations engaged in plant protection in the Pacific Community, will provide a forum to discuss and exchange technical knowledge on plant health and plant biosecurity. The meeting is a constitutional requirement of the PPPO as stipulated under the provisions of the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation Constitution (amended 2006).

SPC's LRD acts as the PPPO Secretariat and will brief members on achievements and services delivered to countries. In turn, members will advise the Secretariat on matters relating to plant health,

plant biosecurity and international trade in plants and products and help set the agenda on these issues for the next 3 years.

The PPPO is tasked with coordinating harmonisation of phytosanitary measures and fostering co-operation in plant protection services and other phytosanitary matters between members and countries, and with organisations outside the Pacific region. It acts on behalf of members to develop contacts with global and regional organisations that have authority in such matters and to provide input when required.

*For more information, please contact [lrldesktop@spc.int](mailto:lrldesktop@spc.int).*

## Re-examining Pacific extension services in challenging times

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Pacific Extension Summit will be held from 18 to 22 May in Nadi, Fiji. The theme for the summit is 'Transforming extension and outreach in the Pacific for sustainable development'.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Extension Summit in Tonga in 2005 established the Pacific Island Extension Network. Once again, this forum will invite the participation of leaders, researchers and practitioners in agriculture and forestry to critically look at the strengths and weaknesses of Pacific extension and outreach, and examine opportunities for addressing the challenges of climate change and food security in a changing social, economic and political environment.

Sessions during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pacific Extension Summit will discuss establishing a policy on extension and outreach, the changing role of these services in the current environment (financial crisis, food price rises, climate change), and their role in sustainable development.

Other areas to be covered include regional and international trade, engaging youth in the agriculture and forestry sector, the potential of private-public sector partnerships, capacity building for extension and outreach service providers, and the role of networks and ICT in extension and outreach in the Pacific.

The summit promises to be intellectually stimulating for participants, with a programme format that features keynote presentations from a range of disciplines, plenary sessions, group forums and field visits. It will also provide a dynamic forum for people from different areas and backgrounds to come together and engage in discussion and planning to transform the development and delivery of extension and outreach for Pacific Island people.

The Pacific Extension Summit is being organised by SPC Land Resources Division.

*For more information, please contact: [lrldesktop@spc.int](mailto:lrldesktop@spc.int).*

## LRD new staff arrivals, departures

### **Dr Nancy Dalfovo, LRD Animal Health Officer, Training and Development**

LRD has a new technical officer recruited under the Animal Health and Production thematic team. She is Dr Nancy Dalfovo from New Caledonia. She will be the new Animal Health Officer, Training and Development responsible for developing animal health training materials, liaise with relevant national and regional training institutions for the delivery of the paravet



training modules, review the paravet curriculum in consultation with relevant stakeholders, and assist to conduct AHP training sessions, workshops and meetings.

Dr Dalfovo was in charge of animal quarantine services in New Caledonia before joining SPC. She previously worked in Vietnam for the non-governmental organisation (NGO) *Vétérinaires Sans Frontières* and was in charge of paravet training and setting up an experimental epidemiological survey network. She has extensive veterinary experience, having worked for four years as the resident vet for the Northern Province in New Caledonia.

The Paravet Training Programme is designed for people who work with animals but have no formal training in animal health or animal production, particularly extension officers involved in providing services to farmers in the field. The aim is that graduates will return home and carry out training sessions within their government ministries, thus increasing the reach of the programme in producing

*(...cont'd on page 19)*

