

POETcom  
Pacific Organic & Ethical Trade Community

2016  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



This Annual Report was published on behalf of the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community by the Pacific Community through assistance from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) through the Capacity Building for Resilient Agriculture in the Pacific Project.

POETCom would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of the Pacific Community (SPC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Office in Fiji, the Sustainable Development Goals Fund (SDG-Fund), and IFAD.



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.



2016  
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# ABOUT US



## POETCom vision

Organics and ethical trade are the key contributors to sustaining our culture and communities, and improving farmers' livelihoods, people's health and the environment in the Pacific Islands region.



## POETCom mission

To grow the organic and ethical trade movement and contribute to a productive, resilient, sustainable and healthy Pacific Islands region through coordination, information sharing, networking, capacity building and the establishment of a regional certification scheme.



## Acknowledgements

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POETCom would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support of SPC and the European Union Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (EU-PAPP).



## About this report

This annual report covers the 2016 calendar year and highlights the activities and achievements of the POETCom Secretariat and membership with a focus on youth. While it is not possible to cover all member activities and achievements, the aim is to call attention to the diverse range of activities undertaken by POETCom's membership that contribute to the achievements of the organisation's vision, mission and goals.



## About the photos

The photos in this review reflect the rich heritage and centrality of natural resources to Pacific Islanders, and the strides that are being made through organic and ethical practices to sustain it. The importance of youth engagement in farming is especially portrayed in this report.



## Our positions

POETCom has established positions on the importance of organic agriculture for fulfilling global Sustainable Development Goals that range from zero hunger, good health and human wellbeing, clean water and sanitation, sustainable cities and communities, and climate action, through to responsible consumption and production. Position papers are available on our website:

[www.organicpasifika.com](http://www.organicpasifika.com)



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# WE WORK WITH PEOPLE AND NATURE

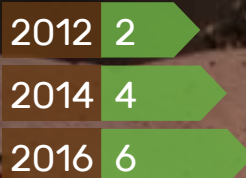
The Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) is a not-for-profit membership organisation.

Membership currently spans 15 countries and territories of the Pacific Islands region and abroad, including farmers' support organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector and research institutions.

Through partnerships and spirited engagement we share information, coordinate and support networking, build capacity and have established a regional certification scheme in order to grow the organic and ethical trade movement, and contribute to a productive, resilient, sustainable and healthy Pacific Islands region.

## PACIFIC ORGANICS IN NUMBERS

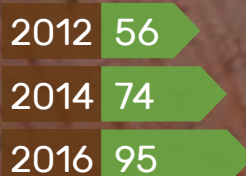
### APPROVED ORGANIC PGS



### GROWERS CERTIFIED\*



### ORGANIC CERTIFICATION LICENSEES



### HECTARES UNDER ORGANIC PRODUCTION\*



\*Growth appears to have slowed due too: 1- reliable/complete data in early years was hard to obtain and was under reported. 2 - since 2015 there have been many groups and growers that have entered the certification process (+2000) but have not yet achieved full certification.

Data provided by accredited certifying bodies and POETCom's PGS reports



# OUR REACH

The POETCom Secretariat is housed within the Pacific Community based in Suva, Fiji. The Secretariat implements the Strategic Plan 2013–2017 in the regional island countries in partnership with focal points and members based in these countries. Work areas cover engaging farmers to build resilient farming systems through organic agriculture, which enable farmers to trade with access to both domestic and export markets and improve the wellbeing of people and communities by promoting ethical labour and social justice principles. It also oversees the operation of the regional Organic Guarantee Scheme based on the **Pacific Organic Standard**.



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR PACIFIC HIGH LEVEL ORGANICS GROUP

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Bringing youth back into agriculture demands our urgent attention because they are critical for the future of the region's food and nutritional security.

Our rural farming areas are losing young people by the dozen as they head for towns and cities to find work, which leaves only a small number of youth behind. Who will grow our food?

We are already facing the harsh impacts of climate change and burdened by the loss of our productive populations through non-communicable diseases that are caused in part by a heavy reliance on imported foods and sedentary lifestyles. Youth unemployment is at an all-time high, which exacerbates socio-economic problems. We have an ageing farming population and this undermines all our island economies.

“ THE SOLUTION IS TO KEEP OUR YOUTH ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE AND THE KIND OF AGRICULTURE THAT OFFERS SOLUTIONS FOR RESOLVING OUR DILEMMA IS ORGANIC AGRICULTURE. ”



The solution is to keep our youth engaged in agriculture – and the kind of agriculture that offers solutions for resolving our dilemma is organic agriculture. It builds a concrete foundation for climate resilience of food production systems and agriculture value chains. It also creates niche market opportunities that offer real promise and attract youth to agriculture because of the higher earnings to be made. Blending traditional farming with the innovations of communications technology and the internet makes farming up-to-date and not a vocation that is struggling to find its place in our modern era.

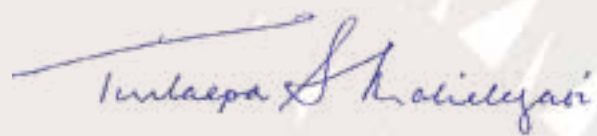
But we must first start with dispelling the ideas that farming is just for the older generations, is dirty and consists of hard work with little returns. Leaders must promote farming as a good career opportunity and not a fall-back option. Our children must be shown from an early age – through training courses and the advice they receive from their parents – that farming is valuable.

POETCom's projects are focussed on strengthening youth participation in farming, particularly by involving them in value chains. These can be replicated across the Pacific Islands and create a greater attraction of youth to farming. But youth must also be given a voice and be engaged in formulating agricultural policies, given access to land and capital, supported through continuing guidance and extension work, and empowered with entrepreneurial skills.

I urge all Pacific leaders to give this problem serious attention in order to avoid a situation where we struggle with the food and nutritional security for our people.

I must commend POETCom for its clear, strategic direction for engaging youth in sustainable agriculture.

Best wishes and more achievements in 2017.



**Honourable Tuilaepa Lupesoliai sailele Malielegaoi**  
Prime Minister

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR LAND RESOURCES DIVISION

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Involving young people in agriculture is at the heart and soul of a strategy that was first launched at a regional meeting of Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (HOAFS) in 2010.

The Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy was formalised in 2011 and aims to transform youth engagement in agriculture and agri-preneurship in order to provide career paths. Addressing agriculture as a means of livelihood helps with poverty alleviation, retention of youth

in rural and farming areas, reduces stresses on urban areas caused by the influx of the rural population, and protects all of our food and nutrition security.

It has been a great pleasure to support the work of POETCom because of a clear focus that the organisation has taken in terms of engaging with youth in agriculture. I am particularly happy to note the engagement of youth in organic crop and value chain production and and the linkages they are establishing with niche market

**“ USING ORGANIC AGRICULTURE, IN COMBINATION WITH OTHER CLIMATE SMART AND CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE TOOLS AND INNOVATIONS WOULD BE ONE OF THE SOLUTIONS TO ENSURE PRODUCTION LEVELS CAN BE RESTORED SUSTAINABLY. ”**



opportunities and the tourism sectors. This is in fact inspired by the creation of the Farm to Table project.

The Centre for Technical Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), a strong partner of the Pacific Community supported the Youth Leading Learning and Resilient Agriculture Value Chains project (YLLP), which involves young people using Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and the World Wide Web in the course of their farming to promote awareness with peers and, to establish linkages with the wider Pacific Islands community about the benefits of organic agriculture.

I personally firmly believe in the benefits of organic agriculture for the environment and the economic potential it keeps in stock for vulnerable communities as well as a sound pathway to better adapt to and mitigate the effects of Climate Change..

Our livelihoods are characterised by rapid population growth and currently threatened by the effects of Climate Change on our ecosystems and on the potential to produce food sustainably. Food production intensification is often seen as the only way to feed our nations; However, with declining soil fertility; yields and production levels have been dropping over the years. Using organic agriculture, in combination with other climate smart and conservation agriculture tools and innovations would be one of the solutions to ensure production levels can be restored sustainably.

SPC has proudly witnessed the achievements of POETCom and the award-winning players that they work with. It has complete faith that they will continue to strengthen their network and deliver a great impact on agriculture by making it a lucrative choice for our youth. Ultimately, it is all about the food and nutritional security of Pacific people with POETCom being a critical catalyst.

We look forward to sharing in POETCom's future successes and a productive 2017.



**Jan Helsen**  
Director – Land Resources Division  
Pacific Community

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR POETCOM ADVISORY BOARD

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It is my pleasure to present POETCom's 2016 Annual Report.

The report provides an update of the organisation and members' activities, outputs and achievements as aligned with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan 2013–2017, along with a special focus on young people's achievements.

With the challenges, successes, impacts and outcomes, 2016 can only be described as a year of achievement as POETCom made real strides in promoting organic agriculture through its four thematic areas: mindset, production and environment, value chains and sustainability.

**“ 2016 CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT AS POETCom MADE REAL STRIDES IN PROMOTING ORGANIC AGRICULTURE THROUGH ITS FOUR THEMATIC AREAS: MINDSET, PRODUCTION AND ENVIRONMENT, VALUE CHAINS AND SUSTAINABILITY. ”**



We witnessed the launch of major projects like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported Farm to Table project in Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa and the training of youth from Niue to Cook Islands in organic agriculture where the knowledge gained is promoted on social media through the CTA -YLLP and implemented through the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Capacity Building for Resilient Agriculture in the Pacific (CBRAP) project.

This report highlights and celebrates these achievements, particularly the greater push for getting our youth actively participating in agriculture. We are utterly mindful that all our efforts will be wasted if there is no next generation to carry on the work of the organic movement.

We salute the youth who are already involved and their stories are shared in this report.

We celebrate them and the people who are at the heart of all our engagements, farming communities, youth, women and children, who are the people of the 22 countries and territories of the Pacific Islands region.

We gratefully accept the lessons that form the foundations of the pathways that we set out to forge in 2017.

We also salute the support. Without funding and kind support from various outstanding individuals and organisations, the achievements of 2016 wouldn't have been possible.

A big thank you to the Pacific Community for its ongoing support, the Director of the Land Resources Division Inoke Ratukalou, EU-PAPP Project Team leader Vili Caniogo, and all staff members!

We are also extremely grateful for our development partners the European Union, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Fund (UN SDG-F), and IFAD, which has been an invaluable partner since the first meetings were convened to develop the Pacific Organic Standard (POS).

The leadership of the POETCom Advisory Board and POETCom coordinator Karen Mapusua, who moved on to another role mid-year, in driving change along with the expertise of Organic Extension System Officer and now Acting POETCom Coordinator Stephen Hazelman, Organic Systems Officer Osea Rasea, Programme Assistant Lily Wong and Communications Officer Theresa Fox, has been tremendous. Thank you especially to POETCom members; you are the heart of the organisation.

Best wishes for all in 2017 as we strive to make organic agriculture the norm and not the option.

Organics for changed lives!



**Nambo Moses**

Chair – POETCom Advisory Board

# OUR ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

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**MOSES NAMBO**

**Experience and expertise**

Animal health and livestock specialist, a paravet trainer, serologist, natural farmer and one of the founding members of the organic movement in the Pacific Islands region.

**Nationality and residence**

Moses is Ni-Vanuatu and lives in Vanuatu.



**ADI MAIMALAGA  
TAFUNA'I**

**Experience and expertise**

Co-founder and Executive Director of Women in Business Development Inc Samoa. Expertise in community partnerships for sustainable economic development, regional economic expansion, organic product marketing.

**Nationality and residence**

Adi was born in Fiji and lives in Samoa.





### **ROBERT BISHOP**

**Experience and expertise**  
Farmer, farm manager and project manager. Expertise in family food production, value adding, marketing, farm management and project management.

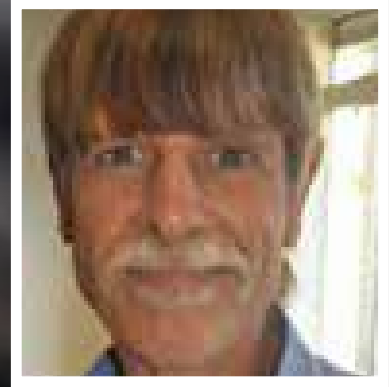
**Nationality and residence**  
Robert Bishop was born in the United States and lives in Palau.



### **FRANCOIS JAPIOT**

**Experience and expertise**  
Project Manager of the Regional Technical Cooperation for the development of a network of Chambers of Agriculture in the Pacific project, based at the Chamber of Agriculture of New Caledonia.

**Nationality and residence**  
Francois was born in France and lives in Noumea, New Caledonia.



### **GILLES PARZY**

**Experience and expertise**  
Consultant in agroecology and organic farming, and is an organic farmer.

**Nationality and residence**  
Gilles was born in France and resides in French Polynesia.





AREA OF  
IMPACT

01

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MINDSET







## FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE TO BE MAINSTREAMED, WIDELY RECOGNISED AND ADOPTED AS A SOLUTION TO MANY OF THE REGION'S CHALLENGES.

The Pacific Islands is facing a number of region-wide challenges, including the effects of climate change, degradation of ecosystems due to unsustainable use of both land and marine resources, and the need to generate livelihoods to maintain populations in the islands. Increased consumption of imported, highly refined foods, accompanied by decreased local food production and consumption, is also having serious effects on the health of island populations.

Another of the region's challenges is the high level of youth unemployment and an ageing farming population, which is a common denominator for all Pacific Island countries.

There is little doubt that promoting organic agriculture can contribute to addressing these challenges.

### ACTIVITY SUMMARY

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In order to challenge current mindsets and promote the adoption of organic agriculture, we followed a strategy that is centred on promoting the linkages between organic practices, climate change, food and nutritional security and biodiversity.

Young people have been a key audience. The primary message being promoted is that youth can earn a successful living from organic farming. It is a solution in a time when many are leaving behind farming legacies for white-collar options in towns and cities. We have shared stories of youth making a living in organic farming, shared their dreams through info-graphs promoted on social media and supported youth-focussed activities through the CTA-YLLP.

We have always been mindful of the dangerous impacts of chemical agricultural inputs and have continued to raise awareness on the environmental and health risks of many common agro-chemicals.

Given the need to support 'on the ground' activities in relation to policy and institutional developments we developed the 'Pacific Organic Policy Toolkit'(POPT) with assistance of the European Union Pacific Agricultural Policy Workshop, which is designed to assist governments and stakeholders in the development of a supportive policy environment for the organic sector.

Based on focal point reports, the following table illustrates growth against impact indicators that are identified in the POETCom Strategic Plan.



Impact Indicators	2013	2014	2015	2016
No. of national strategic development plans that include Organic Agriculture (OA) and Ethical Trade (ET)	8	16	16	16
No. of national environmental plans including OA	Unknown	16	19	19
No. of organically certified farms	> 8769 +(includes in conversion)*	Survey underway during 2015	19,171	19,578
No. of POETCom members and affiliates	12	29	39	41
No. of organic projects/ programmes in the region	16	22	41	37
No. of positive media articles	49	145	>194	>100

## STAYING PUT

Relatives and friends have told Kaboua John to leave the organic island of Abaiang and not build a business.

While many debate the possible impacts of climate change, some predict that Kaboua's country Kiribati, which is a string of 32 islands that rises only two meters above sea-level at its highest point, could sink in 50 years because of rising sea-levels.

Kiribati is the world's poster child for the impact of climate change. Those predictions cause fear and some talk about leaving Kiribati, and some have left Kiribati.

Not Kaboua, he's building a future. The 27-year-old is the owner of Terau Beach Bungalows, which are a collection of about 10 traditional homes that hang over the resplendent blue of the Pacific Ocean that lazily washes the white sandy beaches. His grandparents and the community of Tebero village taught him how to **te akawa** (to fish), plant taro, make coconut sugar and **te auti ni Kiribati** (to build the traditional homes) – skills he now uses as a hotel operator.

'Why leave? They come from all over the world to experience this place so why should I leave? My life has always been here, LOL and we have internet!' he chats back through Facebook.

'Climate change is a global problem and I'd rather fight it here on home turf, not wait around for the end but to live my life as productive as I can.'

'Actually, I don't want to leave my country. If I leave than all my identity as a Kiribati person, my cultures they will all disappear. I love staying here because it is very simple and you can get everything from the sea and land for free, compared to overseas, you have to work hard.'

'I love to stay here because everyone can help each other. The country maybe sinking in some places but not everywhere and running away is the last option. We still have a lot to offer and through organics our island is famous the world over and we are getting visitors here and that is good for business.'

Calls that go through the Southern Cross cables, which traverse stretches of the Pacific Ocean from the POETCom Secretariat in Fiji to Kiribati, are expensive.

Facebook is free, except for the internet bills, and it also gives Kaboua a global marketing platform for his hotel. It promises visitors a rich, authentic experience of organic island living. The food and smiles are local. Guests also enjoy diving right in to catch fish and delights from the sea.

'Crayfish, reef fish and many more delicious offerings that go for easy AUD 25 a dish and I'm making money in a place cast as doomed!'

'We also serve organic coco sugar, made from the sap of the coconut tree,' he said.

'It has a low glycaemic index meaning it's great for diabetics and we also offer





tourists an island that is clean and free of harmful agricultural chemicals.'

In 2013, the chiefs, elders and people of Abaiang, along with the support of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, declared the island organic and banned the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Kaboua, the island agriculture officer, plays an important role in showing Pacific Islanders how to use organic farming technologies like composting.



Coco sugar production happened through the European Union supported Increasing Agriculture Commodities and Trade project implemented by the Pacific Community.

Saltwater encroachment from storm surges and frequent spring tides, which are symptomatic of climate change, have eroded shorelines, threatened farmland, crops and people's homes. To the north, Tebunginako villagers have relocated inland.

'We are adapting by planting inland. My bungalows are beachside and with king tides, the sea washes below. It's like having my bungalows standing over the lagoon and that's ok, visitors like the feeling of sleeping over the waters!'

'Most of the *babai* (taro) pits have been affected by seawater inundation,' he said. 'Our main problem is coastal erosion. But it's taking time. We can adapt and continue to build our lives and I feel we are doing that well with organics.'

'Really there is no need to run away, just yet! Maybe someday we will move, just not now. We are not lost, the sea hasn't taken everything in fact we are some of the richest people on earth with the good food that we harvest from the land and sea, our air is clean, our soil clean and we live free lives!'

'I believe our organic existence is helping us counter the blows we get from

climate change. We do a lot of mulching and composting and it is protecting our farming areas, these are the things that we can do.'

Kaboua is also leading reforestation with the planting of hundreds of coconut and lime trees – both are income earners and a source of everyday food.

'Supporting organics helps me to continue to produce good food for the hotel and my people as well.'

Kaboua works with children on organic farming hoping the future of Abaiang is protected by sharing his knowledge and that instead of just 50, the people of Abaiang will remain there for hundreds of years to come.

**OUR MAIN PROBLEM IS COASTAL EROSION. BUT IT'S TAKING TIME. WE CAN ADAPT AND CONTINUE TO BUILD OUR LIVES AND I FEEL WE ARE DOING THAT WELL WITH ORGANICS**

- KABOUA JOHN

# HEALTH IS WEALTH – ORGANICS TONGA

Talaivosa Tuakalau can't deny the horrifyingly familiar feeling of despair every time someone she knows dies of a non-communicable disease (NCD). Ms Tuakalau is Tongan. She works as an organic trainer (compost production) for the POETCom member, the Tonga National Youth Congress (TNYC). During the thirty-seven years of her life, she has lost a family, friend or relative to an NCD including the old and young. 'We expect young people to at least live until they are fifty, but some go too soon!'

Her parents both died of diabetes. Every year someone she knows succumbs or is sentenced to a life that is shackled by constant medication.

'It's no way to live or die. It's preventable and even for those of us that suffer an NCD; we can manage it well if we are vigilant about the food we eat and the way we live our lives,' she said. 'Sometime I feel despair, sadness, because the NCD tide of death just keeps coming and threatens to drown us all.'

Tuakalau believes organic farming can be a solution for the Pacific Island region's NCD crisis while simultaneously addressing youth income generation. She has trained more than a 100 young Tongan people in compost production to fertilise their vegetables, root-crops, vanilla and even coconuts that they then trade at the local markets or with the TNYC.

'Organic farming is more than just about food and healthy soils but is something that connects with our spirit,' she said.

'It inspires our minds to question the easy imported foods that we eat so much off today and whether or not it's good for

us, we question the safety of chemicals we use in farming, we are more aware of the need for healthy soils and we are connected to nature.' she added.

'Our Pacific ancestors were strong warriors who embraced life with health and vigour. They were one with the land and sea and farmed the land with a spiritual reverence.'

'Even if our lives seem so advanced now, with technology, education and enhanced medical scientific innovation we have today, it seems our health is a but a shadow of our great ancestors.'

'It's why I do what I do, to reignite a connection to the land through teaching organic technologies like composting,' she added.

As she works with youth farmers and villages around Tonga she tries to wean them off chemical farming. 'We use the compost for vegetables. I try to show them that compost is about putting life back in the soil and that it is a fertiliser that helps both the plant and soil. The resources we need are easily available, and they don't have to pay for these.'





'The biggest thing is to try and change the way they think because from the moment they grow up they see their elders use chemicals in farming and they never knew about what a compost is.'

'Those that don't want to change said they want to use chemicals to speed up clearing their land and crop growth.'

'We intervene by letting them know the benefits of organics for the soil, for their health and for their crops in the long run.'

Taukalau said that even though there are naysayers, there is a growing buzz for organic farming and composting. Some young people have completely abandoned chemical farming while some have reduced their volume of foreign inputs.

In a way, the NCD crisis is helping people to confront and think about food and lifestyles.

'I'm also involved in programmes with the Ministry of Agriculture and Health in promoting organic farming,' she said 'We also encourage a lot of backyard gardening using composts and it will

also get people active. There is change happening and it's making me happy and giving me hope!'

**EVEN IF OUR LIVES SEEM SO ADVANCED NOW, WITH TECHNOLOGY, EDUCATION AND ENHANCED MEDICAL SCIENTIFIC INNOVATION WE HAVE TODAY, IT SEEMS OUR HEALTH IS A BUT A SHADOW OF OUR GREAT ANCESTORS. IT'S WHY I DO WHAT I DO, TO REIGNITE A CONNECTION TO THE LAND THROUGH TEACHING ORGANIC TECHNOLOGIES LIKE COMPOSTING.**

- TALAIVOSA TUAKALAU





AREA OF  
IMPACT

02

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PRODUCTION  
AND  
ENVIRONMENT







## FOR ORGANIC PRODUCTION TO MEET MARKET DEMANDS AND ENSURE FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY FOR PACIFIC REGION'S PEOPLES.

Our dream is to see Pacific Islanders thrive on nourishment that is gained from organic food consumption and free from harmful chemicals. To realise this dream, we are working towards growing organic produce so that it meets market demands and satisfies the food and nutritional security of the people of the Pacific region. We support the organic production of food by working towards creating an enabling environment that includes equipping farmers with knowledge and capacity on how to be organic farmers. We also work to build partnerships with training providers for the development of ongoing training courses, where farmers can learn from demonstration farms and the replication of lessons across the region. We are mindful of the added challenge of climate change and recognise resilient key crop varieties as an essential strategy for adaptation. Support is also given in dealing with pests associated with key export and food crops.

### Activity summary

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To support the growth of organic food production and climate resilient food systems, we focussed on providing knowledge and technical capacity through the IFAD Capacity Building for Resilient Agriculture in the Pacific Project and the UNDP Sustainable Development Goals Fund 'Farm to Table' projects. Both projects focus on young farmers and building their capacity to grow and produce organic food for consumption and sale through local market value chains.

Farmers were also assisted with technical know-how of organic technologies that they can use to deal with common production and pest issues. This was made possible with technical exchanges in French Polynesia supported by the EU Integre project and through education and

extension material provided through the POETCom email list by the Palau-Taiwan Farmers Association.

POETCom presented the development of organic agriculture and links to green waste management at the Clean Pacific Round Table convened by the Secretariat of the Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and now sits on the sub-committee to look at ways forward for green waste management, compost being an important input for organic production.

POETCom is also now actively engaging in regional consultations on implementations of the Rotterdam Convention for Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, a multilateral treaty to promote shared responsibilities in relation to importation of hazardous chemicals.





Impact Indicators	2013	2014	2015	2016
Availability of organic inputs	13 inputs available	37 inputs available	> 40	>40
No. of training courses & resources	Unknown	63	72	68
No. of demonstration farms	1	31	42	51
No of farmers undergoing training	100+	1571	1766	>1766
No. of extension services focused on/ with capacity in OA	1	20	14	19
Number of countries with Labelled organic food available	3	8	8	8



## SWITCHING TO ORGANICS

Brookie Smith left the military for the farm and has never looked back.

The 35-year-old was a soldier in Her Majesty's services. Keeping the peace in the desert sands of the Middle East, but his garden island home of Taveuni in Fiji always beckoned him.

He returned and took up the family business at Koroni Estate in Wairiki – taro and kava farming. The taro industry was booming. Taveuni, Fiji's largest taro exporter was a magnet for farmers far and wide who were hoping to make big money. 'We wanted big, quick yields and were willing to use anything to clear the land fast and speed up growth of taro and kava,' he said.

In less than six months, Brookie recalls using up to three cartons of herbicide. A carton contained twelve, 1 litre bottles.

It was all good at first; the cash was coming in fast given that the taro was selling at up to FJD 4 a kilogram. He was harvesting a crop that should naturally take about nine months to mature, in its seventh month.

The battle fields of far exotic foreign locations, where his career as a soldier had taken him, blurred in his memory and the excitement paled in significance to the big cash he was now making very quickly.

Farming was the greatest thing for him until the day that life, or more precisely nature, threw him a curveball.

His crop yields that had grown so much started to fall. Soon some of his crops didn't meet the grade for export.

'My yields in terms of weight and quality were nowhere near what it used to be and there were many rejects.'

'I started losing a lot of income fast and nothing I did, even when I applied more fertiliser, worked.'

'I seriously considered leaving farming because I just couldn't handle the loss and I worried a lot about my family.'

The garden island of Taveuni, renowned for its vibrant soil health, no longer seemed what it should be.

'It used to be everything grew on Taveuni, it just wasn't happening for me.'

His 10,000 plants of taro became a burden. Somewhere along his quest for answers and solutions for his farming dilemma, Brookie met with the group Tei Tei Taveuni.

Tei Tei Taveuni, which was founded in 2009, is focussed on working with farmers in the areas of sustainable farming and soil regeneration, food security and sustainable livelihood and conservation and environmental awareness.

According to Latai Smith, a coordinator for Tei Tei Taveuni, 'TTT is working towards its





goal using biological farming principles. The efforts are on finding solutions for farming problems which can be implemented by farmers.'

Farmers makeup the membership of the organisation and about 50 percent of these are youth.

It supports farmers by running soil schools and working with an Australian volunteer to visit farm groups in various villages, teaching them how to make biochar and compost.

Brookie was involved in one of these training sessions and converted to organic farming.

Tei Tei Taveuni also has a resource centre that farmers can use to access farming information on the internet.

Latai Smith: said 'Our mission is to promote biological sustainable agriculture. We encourage farmers to plant fruit trees and to ensure all farmers have food security and sustainable livelihoods and to promote good conservation practices and environmental awareness.'

Tei Tei Taveuni also supplies organic fertilisers to farmers at a cost.

With remarkable export prices of taro ranging between FJD 2 and FJD 6, many rushed to the 'garden island' hoping to farm their way into riches.

Being a quick learner, Brookie adopted organic practices by using brush cutters to clear the land, and keeping the grass trimmed. There was no more spraying of dangerous glyphosate.

He did composting, and used fishmeal and kelp. The years passed and he started noticing things.

'From 1,000 plants of dalo I'd make 2.3 tonnes compared to just over one tonne when I was using chemicals.'

'The crop sizes were much bigger and there were fewer rejects. Even when the sun is hot, the plants remain healthy and strong.'

'When we have kava evenings we gather and talk about the plants and feel happy we are enjoying prosperity now with organics. Many farmers are making the switch.'

Farmers like Brookie are also investing in longer term crops like sandalwood, and investing in a lot of fruit trees and reforestation. It is part of the organic dream of keep the garden island of Fiji prosperous.

**I STARTED LOSING A LOT OF INCOME FAST AND NOTHING I DID, EVEN WHEN I APPLIED MORE FERTILISER, WORKED. I SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED LEAVING FARMING BECAUSE I JUST COULDN'T HANDLE THE LOSS AND I WORRIED A LOT ABOUT MY FAMILY.**

- BROOKIE SMITH

## BEATING THE DRY

There's a reason Jerry Ani took up organic farming. When it gets really dry in the Marshall Islands and there are extended periods of dry weather, he notices something. The vegetables he plants surrenders to the intense heat and dryness.

He noticed his neighbour's vegetables fared better. The mulch generously spread over his neighbours' gardens protected them from the harsh sunlight and helped retain water.

Jerry tried mulching. His organic farming journey began.

'This year, we had dry weather for six months and my crops didn't suffer so much,' he said.

Farming is his main source of income. At night, he fishes for family meals.

The large expanse of ocean encircles Majuro Island, where Jerry lives, and farms offer a bounty of fish and seafood. However, in a community where everybody goes fishing, making a fish sale is tough.

Vegetables and root-crops, however, are sought after and attract good prices.

'In the day I farm to support my children's education and other household needs and at night I go fishing,' he said.

'I realise that even the ocean is benefitting from my organic farming. Although I am just one person, I can help make a difference in keeping a clean sea where the fish we eat comes from.'

Jerry is a member of the Marshall Island Organic Farmers Association supported through the IFAD-CBRAP project.

He is also an organic warrior through the CTA-YLLP.

Both the IFAD-CBRAP project and CTA-YLLP are linked. The former explores the technical and scientific aspects of organic farming while the latter promotes communications around it. The involvement of young men and women in farming is central to both projects.

Jerry loves farming but sometimes understanding the dynamics of soil composition and health can be overwhelming.

'Sometimes we plant and it doesn't grow and we scratch our heads trying to figure out what's going on. It can be discouraging if our plants are not healthy,' he said.

'And because of that many farmers turn to quick fix solutions like chemicals. But that doesn't always work.'

Through the IFAD project, Jerry is learning all about soil biology and the importance of looking after it. As a climate resilience strategy, the project works with farmers like Jerry to share knowledge and skills in building farm resilience.





Climate change is never more emphasised than in a country like the Marshall Islands where sea levels rise with higher than normal king tides, and the flat terrain and salt water inundation go hand in hand with extended periods of dry weather.

It challenges the very foundation of his farming efforts – soil health.

Having a greater understanding of soil biology and chemistry will help these farmers deal more efficiently with climate change.

‘I used a soil moisture meter and felt like a soil scientist. I feel more confident understanding the needs of my soil better.’ he said.

While doing the experiments, Jerry had his mobile phone handy. He whipped it out and video recorded other farmers testing soil moisture. That’s the organic Ritarinae (organic warrior) in him at work. Along with fellow Ritarinae Jerry is campaigning for organic farming in his community.

‘We know what climate change is. Every day and every time we see the sea we are reminded of it,’ he said.



‘At least twice a year we experience king tides that happen when we have a weather depression and we see the damage it can do,’ he added.

‘With organic farming, there is some hope that our farms will be strong enough to withstand the many changes climate change can bring. This is the hope that we cling to.’

‘As well, we can be sure, when it rains, there won’t be any harmful chemicals washed out to sea that can harm our seafood and reef systems.’

‘If we also have to lose our fish resources, it only worsens things!’



**I USED A SOIL MOISTURE METER AND FELT LIKE A SOIL SCIENTIST. I FEEL MORE CONFIDENT UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF MY SOIL BETTER.**

**- JERRY ANI**



# BUILDING A HOUSE WITH ORGANIC FARMING

Willie Moken has a bucket list. Grow tall, strong and build his house not far from his parents place in Lonahu settlement, on Tanna Island in Vanuatu.

Right now, though, he is still a 16-year-old dependent, sharing the living space with his parents and siblings; an arrangement he dubs temporary because he has a plan.

It involves building an organic vegetable and root-crop farm, and saving as much money as he can. With consistency, he believes the inevitable will happen; he will have enough to build his house decked out with the works – electricity, water supply and room to spare.

He felt at odds with a classroom, like a fish out of water, so he quit while in Year 6. Farming was a natural fit, he said, and he loved planting ball cabbages, taro and kava.

He joined the Napil Rural Training Centre programme that teaches unemployed youth from the local area to eke out an income and save for future needs.

The centre is linked to the Farm Support Association, an implementing partner for the two-year Organic Farm to Table project. The project is supported by the UNDP through the SDG-F in partnership with POETCom.

Through the Farm to Table initiative, Willie, who currently sells to the local market, will be able to connect with new buyers in the tourism sector.

The project objectives involve working with youth in Vanuatu and Fiji to provide them with skills in organic farming and facilitating linkages between the agriculture and tourism sectors to create opportunities in order for them to earn an income.

'I like farming because I can make lots of money from it,' he said.

Apart from selling organic farm produce, Willie also likes to eat them.

'I can tell the difference in the taste of cassava planted in chemicals and one grown organically. Organic cassava has so much good taste,' he said.

'It's just like how the chicken from the farm taste so much better than the one from the shop.'



'I also feel good farming without chemicals because I know I am not contributing to harming soil but instead I am making it healthy by mulching and composting.'

Willie also has some wisdom to offer his peers.

'If you dropped out of school early and you don't have a job, try farming,' he said.

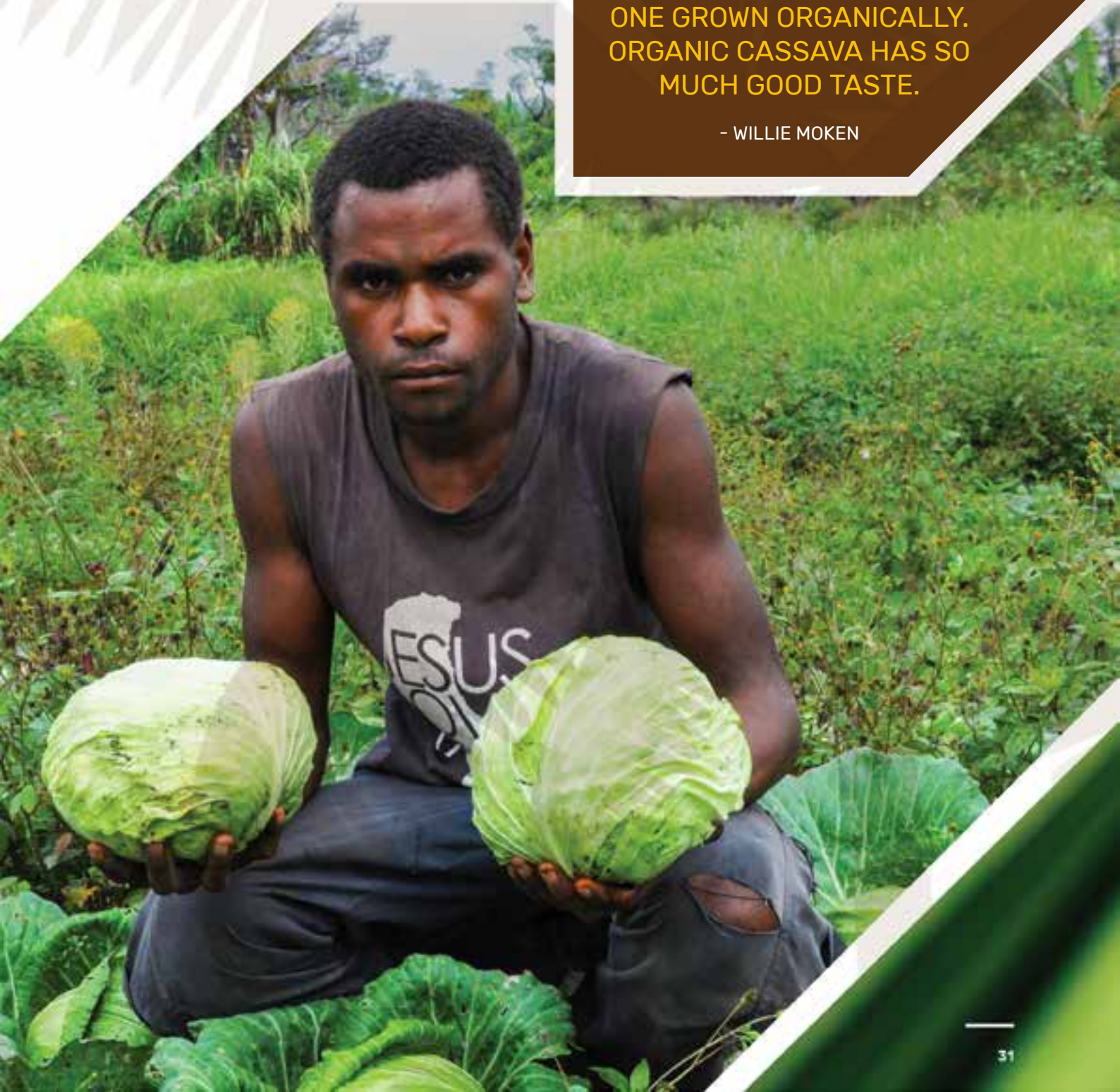
'Organic farming is good because there's no sickness in it, farming is the life!'

'Even if you have a job and work hard at your computer, at the end of the day you have to eat.'

'On the farm everything is free, unlike in the town where you have to pay for everything.'

**I CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE  
IN THE TASTE OF CASSAVA  
PLANTED IN CHEMICALS AND  
ONE GROWN ORGANICALLY.  
ORGANIC CASSAVA HAS SO  
MUCH GOOD TASTE.**

- WILLIE MOKEN







AREA OF  
IMPACT

03

VALUE  
CHAINS









THE GOAL OF THIS IMPACT AREA IS TO DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN DOMESTIC AND EXPORT ORGANIC VALUE CHAINS, THEREBY PROVIDING EXPANDED LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES FOR PACIFIC ISLAND PRODUCERS.

POETCom upholds the POS as the rulebook of organic food production. POS sets standards for organic certification that promotes the adoption of transparent food value chains from the point of production to retail. With the POS, food is produced in accordance with desired social and environmental welfare standards.

We work with communities to establish the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for organic certification for local market development and create new opportunities for domestic value chains.

## Activity summary

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The setup of PGS for organic certification in Pacific Island communities in order to create livelihood opportunities is one of the key strategies utilised under this goal. PGS stimulated local market development for some products including fruit and vegetables, coffee, ngalinuts and lemon grass tea. It is also used as a key leverage for market access for youth in Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa, who are part of the UNDP Farm to Table project (implemented by POETCom in partnership with Farm Support Association (FSA) in Vanuatu and Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprise Development (FRIEND) in Fiji, and in Samoa by our member Women in Business Development Inc. Youth in these countries are trained to comply with organic certification requirements that support the improvement of organic production practices and assist in the securing of organic markets. Similarly, the IFAD-supported Building Capacity for Resilient

The Organic Pasifika mark guarantees consumers that the product they buy was produced in a manner that is ethical and safe for the natural environment. It also assures consumers that the organic food they buy is from a trusted source that promotes benefits flowing back to the communities. Organic Pasifika is a trademark, owned by the Pacific Community on behalf of POETCom and can only be used under license.

Agriculture in the Pacific project (in the Cook Islands, Niue and the Republic of the Marshall Islands) also supports young farmers to move into value chains.

The Pacific Organic Tourism and Hospitality Standard (POTHS) was developed with the assistance of the European Union supported Pacific Agriculture Policy Project (EU PAPP) in response to requests from members of the hospitality sector in the region who are committed to using local organic products and were seeking a way to identify or promote this element of their business. The standard is being trialled through the Farm to Table project. The implementation of the standard will eventually facilitate improved value chain linkages between Pacific region producers and our important tourism and hospitality industry.





Impact Indicators	2013	2014	2015	2016
No. of different products exported	7	17	20	20
No. PGS under development (and No. Farmers )	2 PGS 150 farmers	6 PGS >400	10 PGS >1000 farmers	10 PGS >1500 farmers
No of processors organically certified	>13	>17	45	45
No. licensees using "Organic Pasifika Mark"	1	4	6	6
No. of ethical trade certifications	2	3	5	5



## MARIA TOGIA OF SAMOA

Maria Togia from Malifanua village in Samoa has a plan – sell as many organic crops as she can and build a house.

She's one of many young people working with Women in Business Development Inc (WIBDI), which supports organic product exports and the supplying of local markets in the country.

Recently, she graduated from a four-week organic farming training course supported through the Engaging Youth in Samoa in Organic Farming: A Farm to Table Value Chain Approach project. The UNDP SDG-F supports the project.

Maria was also given some farming tools and will be mentored and supported by WIBDI until she achieves organic certification. She will join a third party certification grower group, which means she will be exporting products like dried bananas to markets in New Zealand.

Seeing her farming efforts connect with international markets is exciting for the young, single mum who was born in New Zealand and arrived in Samoa about a decade ago.

'I grew up in Auckland, in an urban, concrete jungle but am happy now on the farm.' she said.

She added farming was easy, just as easy as she can shimmy up a coconut tree.

'I've got coconuts, pineapples, coffee and pawpaw that I sell at the market on Fridays and Saturdays.'

'The money that I make in a week is enough to support my family but I'd like to discover how much more I can earn with organic farm exports.'

'Besides, the more I learn about it and apply it, the greater I feel about doing farming because it's great for the soil.'

'There's a lot of savings as well on fertiliser costs.'

'I enjoy working with WIBDI, they've been giving me lots of ideas and making me really think hard about doing business better and value adding on my farm products.'

'My parents want me to go back to New Zealand and perhaps get another job but I'm going to stick with farming because I really enjoy doing it and I can make money easily.'

WIBDI's Farm to Table project supplies organically certified products, but farms just joining the programme are also given the opportunity to take part and clients are notified about them and asked if they would like to buy from farmers who are still in the conversion period.





The organisation was first established in 1991 to strengthen village economies in Samoa in ways that honour indigenous traditions, use traditional and modern technology and promote fair trade.

It empowers and equips rural families to cultivate sustainable business that maximise farm-based resources, while also facilitating trade with global and regional partners.

It has also helped hundreds of young people to start organic farming.

Organisation founder Adi Maimalaga Tafuna'i said organic certification is helping change lives like Maria's.

'Organic certification has offered vulnerable families the opportunity to add value to their produce and earn a regular income,' she said.

'The participating youth will have the opportunity to sell their farm produce to an already sourced market, so they don't need to sit at a market all day.'

'Other crops like coffee, cocoa, and lady finger bananas and dried fruit are also sold locally and exported to markets in NZ and Australia,' Adi added.

Maria farms half an acre but is ambitious about seeing that expand.

'I see my farm expanding in the next few years and that house I'm planning to build will happen.'

THE MONEY THAT I MAKE  
IN A WEEK IS ENOUGH TO  
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MORE I CAN EARN WITH  
ORGANIC FARM EXPORTS.  
BESIDES, THE MORE I LEARN  
ABOUT IT AND APPLY IT,  
THE GREATER I FEEL ABOUT  
DOING FARMING BECAUSE  
IT'S GREAT FOR THE SOIL.

- MARIA TOGIA



## JERMIN YAKO OF VANUATU

Jermin Yako was 11-years-old and in Year 7 when she was forced to drop out of school in Vanuatu.

There was no more money to cover her school fees. Overnight, her life changed.

The closing of the school door ended her ambitions of becoming a school teacher.

She returned to the farm where expectations were different from a world at school where pen and paper, chalk and blackboards, exams and school grades were all that mattered.

Now she must pass a different kind of test, the test of farm life. She must thrive in the rituals of Lamlu village, tending to the gardens and animals in order to survive.

Jermin accepted her lot in life and found that unlike popular belief a good life can be made in farming.

She farms taro, ball cabbages and corn using organic methods and is supported to achieve organic certification and gain more from her farm through the two-year UNDP Farm to Table project in partnership with POETCom and FSA.

Organic certification will be through PGS of organic certification.

'I like it that I don't use chemicals. It has poison, chemical fertilisers are poison because it can damage the land and also our health,' she said.

The 18-year-old sells her crops at Lenatal Market and sometimes at the big market in Port Villa. Her farm earnings are saved in a bank account.

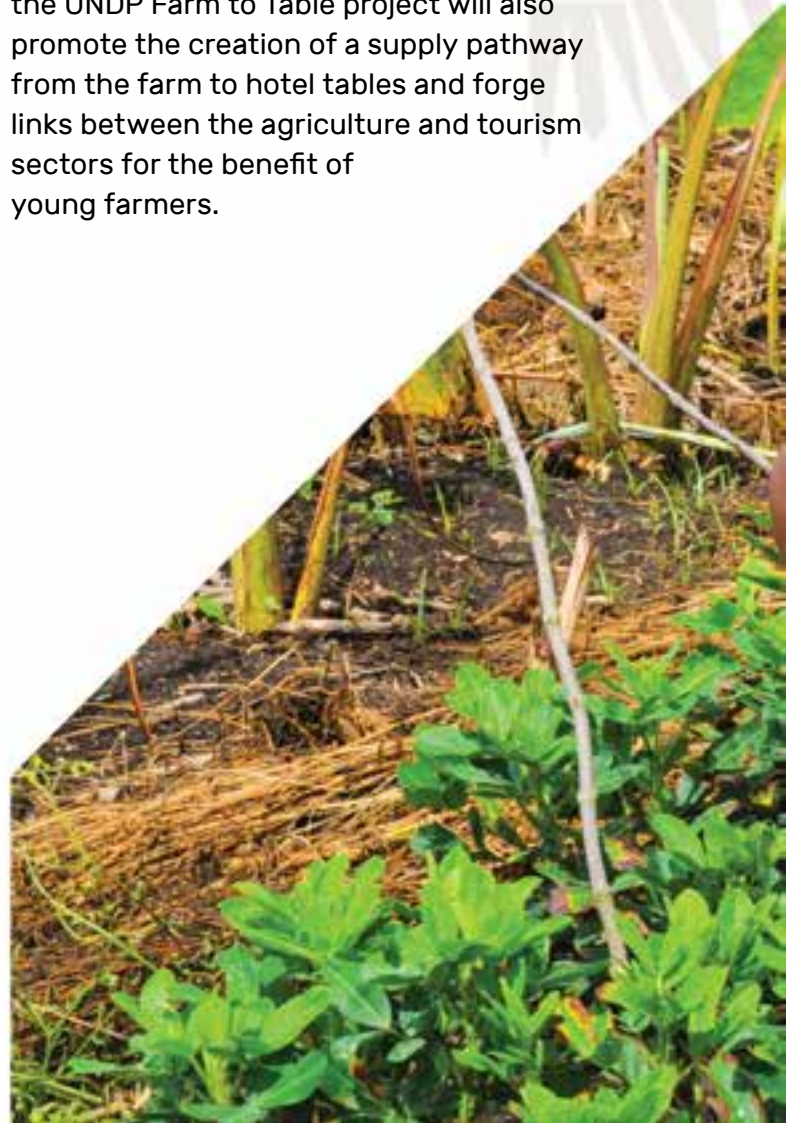
Jermin learnt how to save at the Napil Rural Training Centre, which is located in the rural area of Middle Bush on

Tanna Island and a stone's throw from her village.

The centre, through a course called the Vanuatu Young Farmers Development, is a trial by FSA to increase the productivity of traditional farming systems like the one Jermin operates in.

The programme engages village-based youth – especially young women like Jermin – in commercial agriculture.

The organic component supported by the UNDP Farm to Table project will also promote the creation of a supply pathway from the farm to hotel tables and forge links between the agriculture and tourism sectors for the benefit of young farmers.





She hopes to save enough for the future.

'One day when I get married and have children I hope I have saved enough so that I can afford my family a better standard of living,' she said.

'I don't have electricity at home, that is something I'd like to see happen.'

'I don't want to be reliant on anyone and farming is helping me become financially independent.'

**I DON'T HAVE ELECTRICITY AT HOME, THAT IS SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN. I DON'T WANT TO BE RELIANT ON ANYONE AND FARMING IS HELPING ME BECOME FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT.**

- JERMIN YAKO







AREA OF  
IMPACT

04

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SUSTAINABILITY







THE GOAL FOR THIS IMPACT AREA IS FOR POETCOM TO SECURE THE PARTNERSHIPS AND THE HUMAN, FINANCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE ITS MISSION AND GOALS.

POETCom implements all its activities in accordance with the Strategic Plan 2013–2017 and is mindful of donor wishes and the needs of Pacific Islanders with oversight from the Board. Close consultations, engagements and regular communications form the crux of our relationships with development partners and stakeholders. Fostering such close collaborations strengthens the implementation of organic activities and magnifies impacts. POETCom’s unique position within LRD of SPC allows for the mainstreaming of organic practices into the division’s work.

## Activity summary

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Clear, regular communications are used to keep members and stakeholders well informed about various organic agriculture related news items through various mechanisms and platforms, such as the quarterly Cultivating Community Newsletter, social media networks, an annual report, and an email-list service. Reporting on the implementation of projects is strictly complied with. Significant human resources continue to be invested in the development of concept notes that have the potential to capture investment interest and attract support for POETCom operations and the growth of the organic agriculture sector. Capacity building of our human resources and a focus on young people prepares us for continued growth and development, as does linking the impact of organic initiatives to wider development outcomes.

SPC’s governing body, the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA), was presented an update of the development of organic agriculture in SPC through its hosting of POETCom. CRGA urged the Secretariat to integrate organic agriculture into relevant strategies, including the business plan for LRD and noted the relevance of organic

agriculture to several of the SDGs. Such integration will contribute significantly to the provision of sustainable servicing to the organic sector.

CRGA:

- i.** Acknowledged SPC’s hosting and support of POETCom since 2012;
- ii.** Acknowledged the complementary roles of SPC and POETCom in the development of organic agriculture for improved environmental, cultural, social and economic development outcomes;
- iii.** Urged the Secretariat to fully integrate organic agriculture into relevant strategies, including the business plan for the LRD; and
- iv.** Agreed that options for sustainable financing of an organic agriculture programme in SPC will need to be considered.

Focal points report that there has been an increase in funding and development partner engagement, but challenges remain in developing sustainable programme-based funding in particular for the Secretariat.





Impact Indicators	2013	2014	2015	2016
Growth in use of POS	4 countries	6 countries	7 countries	7 countries
No. of donors and partners	15+ regionally	32 regionally	31 regionally	32 regionally
No. of regional governments providing budget allocation to organics	4	4	4	6
Focal Points able to meet reporting obligations	Capacity building required	Capacity building required	Capacity building required	Capacity building required
Internship/volunteer programme in place	First Intern placement complete	Ongoing	Ongoing	On hold due to new requirements in SPC
Number of regional exported products	2	6	7	7



## SOW THEM YOUNG

When Jazinta Levi was a little girl, her father, Hiva Levi made her and a cousin sit on his truck full of organic banana trees, wearing attire made from organic pandanus leaves. It was national show day in Niue.

'I was embarrassed but he was trying to make an impact, a statement about the value of organics that I didn't really understand until a few years later.' she said.

He later showed her how to plant bananas and other fruit trees. Hiva was one of the founding fathers of the Pacific organic movement and also helped establish the Niue Organic Farmers Association.

Decades on, Jazinta's organic varieties of bananas, herbs, vegetables and root-crops held their own at the Hakupu village show day competing with the best from her community. They also earn her a bonus income. The 25-year-old is a strategic planner for the government and is so passionate about organic farming that it has become a way of life. How does a young woman become so engrossed with a 'chore' hardly considered a woman's domain?

'He planted the seeds in my life that has now flourished into what I love doing now!' she said.

'I wouldn't be interested in organic farming if it wasn't for him. He has taught me so much.'

'Yes I may pick up some tips and tricks from Pinterest and various blogs online but most of my knowledge about organic in Niue is from him especially the traditional knowledge that he passed down from my grandfather.'

Farming using traditional knowledge that is complemented by access to current and accessible sources of information and platforms for marketing like the internet is an aspect of a project supported by the CTA.

The CTA YLLP is linked to the IFAD CBRAP project.

A theme central to both projects implemented in Niue, Marshall Islands and Cook Islands is the need to attract youth back into agriculture by using a scientific and ICT approach.

As a participant of the CTA project, Jazinta learnt about using the art of storytelling to show the value of organic farming by using social media to reach out to the masses – especially young Pacific Islanders. About 100 youth were engaged in the training workshops held in the three countries this year.

She shares her pursuits on her Facebook page by using images of her organic garden produce, which attracts likes, shares and interest while simultaneously marketing her products.

Jazinta has a small scale plant nursery that sells vegetables and herb seedlings at show days and the local weekly market. The nursery setup was supported by the IFAD CBRAP project.

She also plans to open a cafe that uses organic produce from the farm with a little farmers market to go with it.





'Ever since I was 12 I have been interested in organic farming and now that I have the means and wider understanding, I can grow organic without being embarrassed and I'm proud to say that I am an organic farmer because it is actually hard work,' she said.

'I love to grow plants of all sorts-vegetables, herbs, fruit trees and flowers! I enjoy watching them grow from seed and nurturing them throughout the growth stages and of course the harvest at the end where I get to make delicious meals from what I grow.'

'Gardening just makes me feel at ease. It's nature's therapy that I enjoy.'  
Jazinta also value adds on her organic farm produce.

'I've dried fruits and sold them and made vanilla ice cream which I've found to be quite a hit with tourists,' she said.

'Organic farming has proven to be an awesome hobby of mine because I get to earn pocket money, harvest food and have fun at the same time.'

'I particularly enjoy organic gardening because I love the challenge of growing the natural way without short cuts such as fertilisers and weed killer. I'm also health conscious so with the limited organic fruit and vegetable available on the island, why not grow my own right?

Everything, I have grown is organic. It's not only the effects those toxic chemicals may have on our bodies but also the environment so why take the risk.'

It has been a year of breakthroughs for her organic farm and also one of personal loss.

'Before my father passed away he taught me how he planted award winning bananas because of their gigantic sizes. I am extremely lucky; his legacy lives on in me.' she said.

This young farmer believes young people need to start farming early in life to even consider pursuing it as career later on in life. It must also be considered as a business opportunity.

'Niue youth are engaged in agriculture but not so much organic farming. We have grown up farming for our families so it is perceived as a chore and not a business opportunity,' she said.

'Farming must be made interesting through using things like social media, visuals, audio media, fitness and health and profit.'

'When young people understand the many benefits of farming other than just 'grow your own food' perhaps they would be interested in looking at it as a career path operating and organic farm on a large scale and not just a chore. They won't develop an interest if they don't know where to begin.'

'That's why I love both projects coordinated by POETCom because it's engaging young people like the children of Vaiea who are doing organic backyard gardening and they are mostly below the age of ten.'

'It's never too early to start farming, my father knew that and now he lives on in my life because of organic farming!'

**I PARTICULARLY ENJOY ORGANIC GARDENING BECAUSE I LOVE THE CHALLENGE OF GROWING THE NATURAL WAY WITHOUT SHORT CUTS SUCH AS FERTILISERS AND WEED KILLER. I'M ALSO HEALTH CONSCIOUS SO WITH THE LIMITED ORGANIC FRUIT AND VEGETABLE AVAILABLE ON THE ISLAND, WHY NOT GROW MY OWN RIGHT?'**

**- JAZINTA LEVI**

## BREAKING THE LONG WALK

At Tom Daoni's village, women have died giving birth at home. His village Molotobe in Malaita province of Solomon Islands is located about 20 kilometres from the nearest health facility at Kwailabesi. It is a long walk if you don't have the means to hire a truck.

Sometimes, he saw 'bush beds' carrying pregnant women from deep within the forests, even further from Molotobe. At Molotobe, they'd be transferred into a truck bound for Kwailabesi. Others have had to walk the distance to the health centre and some have delivered their children and died on the way.

The struggle inspired the setup of Gurafesu Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change Community Development Association (GBCCCCDA). The group started out at Molotobe and now has a branch at April Ridge in Honiara, and focusses on providing organic farming skills to its members. The training courses are focussed around key thematic areas: biodiversity, organic gardening, sustainable land management, and climate change and livelihood empowerment.

A percentage of the earnings of members through the sales of their organic crops go into building essential services like a health centre at Molotobe.

'In assisting our village, we are helping other forest communities, that are more isolated than us,' Daoni said.

'We encourage a lot of backyard gardening so the community is also food secure.' Tom Daoni is a 30-year-old founding member of GBCCCCDA and coordinates

all activities. Rotary Australia is building a health clinic valued at AUD 50,000 at Molotobe as a result of seeing the efforts and successes of GBCCCCDA. As the building grows, so do the villagers' hopes that the long walks to reach medical assistance will end. He said organic agriculture has been a useful tool for his community's development and has allowed the locals to enjoy the rights and access to basic health services.

Daoni is a business finance graduate of the Solomon Islands National University (SINU). Farming is central to his life. 'When I was in high school I experienced financial problems so I used to farm to pay for my school fees.'

'I love farming because I love to watch the plants grow and the harvest makes me smile especially the selling part, it's all exciting!'

'Sometimes weekend long I'm at the market selling.'





'Now we have a clinic in the community and it will really help hundreds of people especially our women who have suffered for so long.'

'Giving birth to life shouldn't be a deathly experience. We could change the way things were and organic farming really assisted us.'

'Our young people too are able to earn an income.'

'We started in Molotobe and farmers sell at the local market. Here at April Ridge, where we started later we plant all kinds of vegetables and root crops and supply the University (SINU).'

'We make good money from it and encourage each other to keep farming organically for the sake of our village developments.'

'We see organic farming as a solution for Solomon island farmers because they don't have to worry about the cost of fertilisers and besides its good for the environment and the soil.'

'Soil is what we have, what we can use to change our circumstances, to enable our people access crucial health services.'

There are about 200 farmers that are members of GBCCCCDA. The group aims to have a wider influence beyond Molotobe and dreams of a Solomon Islands with a large, extensive network of organic farmers.

'We believe with organic farming we will be able to set an example for all Solomon communities,' Daoni said.

'One community can start the change.'



**I LOVE FARMING BECAUSE I LOVE TO WATCH THE PLANTS GROW AND THE HARVEST MAKES ME SMILE ESPECIALLY THE SELLING PART, IT'S ALL EXCITING! SOMETIMES WEEKEND LONG I'M AT THE MARKET SELLING. NOW WE HAVE A CLINIC IN THE COMMUNITY AND IT WILL REALLY HELP HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE ESPECIALLY OUR WOMEN WHO HAVE SUFFERED FOR SO LONG.**

- TOM DAONI



# POETCOM'S DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

'TOGETHER WE ARE CHANGING THE PACIFIC'

The POETCom development partners are part of the foundation of our work and, along with Pacific Islanders, are at the heart of our mission. We extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all of our supporters: the International Fund for Agriculture Development, the European Union, the Pacific Community, our 44 member organisations, volunteers who donate their time and the passionate organic advocates. Their valued support has enabled us to achieve numerous significant outcomes as we pursue the protection of the land and production of chemically free food sources for our people.

**In 2016** POETCom worked with the following entities:

The **EU's** Increasing Agricultural Commodities Trade (IACT) project supported POETCom's Secretariat services and activities in relation to developing the Pacific Organic Guarantee System, awareness raising and the organic certification scheme.

**The IFAD CBRAP project** supported capacity building of organic producer organisations and young farmers in Niue, Cook Islands and Republic of the Marshall Islands with a focus on developing climate resilient farming systems and value chains.

The **EU's PAPP** has supported training of organic inspectors and the development of the Organic Tourism Standard and Policy Toolkit.

The **UNDP SDG-F** implementing Engaging Youth in Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu in organic farming – A farm-to-table approach.

The **CTA** implementing YLLP in Niue, Cook Islands and Republic of the Marshall Islands.

We especially acknowledge as well the funding support of the **EU INTEGRÉ Project** for the coordination of regional workshops and activities in Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT's) namely French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis & Futuna and the Pitcairn Islands involving members of the organic farming community and the POETCom Secretariat. The lessons learnt and initiatives inspired from these have assisted in the growth of the organic movement across the Pacific Islands. This collaboration will be strengthened under the European Development Fund 11th (EDF11) for the development of African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) and overseas countries.

**Dr Bronners Soaps** who donated USD 5000 to Secretariat operational expenses.

**2017 – Looking ahead. Activities for the year will include:**

- Complete implementation of the UNDP SDG-F Engaging youth in Fiji and Vanuatu in organic

farming: A farm to table approach, which will provide Pacific youth with new livelihood opportunities in organic agriculture, by creating farm-to-table value chains in the tourism and hospitality sector.

- Continue the implementation of the IFAD supported CBRAP project in the Cook Islands, Marshall Islands and Niue, which involves teaching producer groups to focus on organic production of fruit, vegetables and root-crops in each project country in order to build the organisational and technical skills they need to be able to support their members – especially teaching young farmers how to build climate-resilient food systems.
- Complete the implementation of the CTA supported YLLP project, which shares best practices and marketing of young people's products.
- Support governments and organic advocates to utilise the Organic Policy Toolkit in order to develop supporting strategies for expanding organic agriculture and markets. This will also facilitate development of regionally compatible national policies in line with the Framework for Regionalism.
- Consolidate the network of organic participatory guarantee systems across the region.
- Continue to provide ongoing technical support and advice to members, governments and new entrants of organic and ethical trade on certification, production, market access and policy.
- Continue awareness-raising activities and campaigns through social media, events and communications materials; in particular, materials that highlight organic agriculture's potential contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Host the Organic Technical Exchange and POETCom General Assembly. These are core meetings within POETCom's governance and network strengthening activities. In 2017, the technical exchange will focus on farm learning experiences and farmer-to-farmer exchanges. The main point of discussion at the General Assembly will be to agree on the most beneficial way forward for the organic movement in the region, including finalising decisions on the possible legal registration of POETCom and the preferred relationship of POETCom with the Pacific Community. This has been delayed from 2016 due to insufficient funds.
- Work with the Pacific Community to implement the decisions of the CRGA.
- Programme development and fundraising remains a critical issue for POETCom's sustainability. 2017 is an important year for this as all current projects are due to close in the first quarter of 2018. If additional funding is not secured, the Secretariat will be forced to close and all operations will need to go back to voluntary like contributions by the members