



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

by the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community
(POETCom) of the Pacific Community (SPC)
with assistance from the Building Prosperity for Women
Producers, Processors and Women Owned Businesses
through Organic Value Chains (BPWP) project





2020 ANNUAL REPORT

by the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community
(POETCom) of the Pacific Community (SPC)
with assistance from the Building Prosperity for Women
Producers, Processors and Women Owned Businesses
through Organic Value Chains (BPWP) project



Suva, Fiji, 2021



© Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) 2021

All rights for commercial/for profit reproduction or translation, in any form, reserved. POETCom authorises the partial reproduction or translation of this material for scientific, educational or research purposes, provided that POETCom and the source document are properly acknowledged. Permission to reproduce the document and/or translate in whole, in any form, whether for commercial/for profit or non-profit purposes, must be requested in writing. Original POETCom artwork may not be altered or separately published without permission.

Original text: English

Prepared for publication at SPC's Suva Regional Office, Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji, 2021
www.spc.int | spc@spc.int

Printed at Quality Print, Suva, Fiji





CONTENTS

Abbreviations and definitions	iv
Acknowledgements	v
A message from POETCom’s Board Chair	vi
A message from the Director of the Land Resources Division	vii
A message from the POETCom Coordinator	viii
Who we are	1
Our vision	1
Our values	1
Our membership	2
2020 highlights	4
Our partnerships	6
Development partners	6
Organic policies	6
Area of impact	7
Major events in 2020	11
POETCom COVID-19 survey.....	12
POETCom mid-year and annual reflection, learning and planning workshop.....	12
Project events.....	12
Projects	13
Building Prosperity for Women Producers, Processors and Women Owned Businesses Through Organic Value Chains (BPWP) Project	14
Integration of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment into Climate-Resilient Agriculture Planning and Programming in Pacific Countries	23
Policy Drivers for Public-Private Partnerships in Pacific Organics	28
Markets for Change (M4C).....	32
Impact stories	35
COVID-19 silver linings: Strengthening partnerships and connecting local value chains	36
Conventional farmer turns organic for economic gains but finds more	39
Financials	41





Abbreviations and definitions

ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
AUD	Australian dollar
BPWP	Building Prosperity for Women Producers, Processors and Women Owned Businesses through Organic Value Chains
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
INOFO	Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organisations
LRD	Land Resources Division
M4C	Markets for Change
MEL	monitoring, evaluation and learning
MELF	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Framework
MIOFA	Marshall Islands Organic Farmers Association
OCIT	Office of Commerce, Investment & Tourism
PGS	Participatory Guarantee System (organic certification system based on a peer review model)
PICTs	Pacific Island countries and territories
PIFON	Pacific Islands Farmers Organisation Network
POETCom	Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community
POGA	Palau Organic Growers Association
POS	Pacific Organic Standard
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NRC	Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce, the Republic of the Marshall Islands
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPC	Pacific Community
SRA	small research activity
UNDP Pacific	United Nations Development Programme Pacific Office
UNWomen	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VC	value chains
VCO	virgin coconut oil
WEE	women's economic empowerment

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This 2020 Annual Report has been published on behalf of the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) by the Pacific Community (SPC) with assistance from the Building Prosperity for Women Producers, Processors and Women Owned Businesses through Organic Value Chains (BPWP) project, which is supported by the Australian government and implemented by the Pacific Community.

POETCom would like to acknowledge the support of the Pacific Community; the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR); the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Office in Fiji.



A MESSAGE FROM POETCOM'S BOARD CHAIR



Organic greetings and blessings from Vanuatu to all POETCom stakeholders and affiliates reading this report. I have been involved in the organic movement since 2004, and with POETCom since its establishment in 2012, serving on the POETCom Board since 2012 and as Chair from 2014 to 2017. It is my honour to have resumed the Chair in October 2020. With the expansion of the POETCom staff, governance oversight is essential to a well-functioning secretariat.

The year 2020 will undoubtedly be remembered for the global COVID-19 pandemic, and its effects will linger long after the last person is vaccinated. Those of us who endure will be forever indebted to the monumental efforts in science and medicine to understand and combat the disease. This crisis has provided ample opportunity to reflect on the vulnerability of our global food systems and, ultimately, our survival. Industrial agriculture drives habitat loss and creates the environmental stressors that initiate the spread of viruses such as COVID-19. The time is now for governments around the world to admit this fact and initiate changes toward sustainable and resilient food systems.

Fortunately, in the Pacific and elsewhere, COVID-19 has initiated these discussions. In my 18 years being involved in the organic movement in the Pacific, I have never seen such keen interest in sustainable food systems and traditional farming methods. I am happy to report that there has been significant progress and growth in organic agriculture in the Pacific.

According to the IFOAM – Organics International 2021 World of Organic Agriculture report published in February 2021, based on data collected in 2020, the organic movement continues to expand across the Pacific. 2020 saw strong increases in the number of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) overseen by POETCom including the expansion in number of organic farmers and organic acreage, as well as a continued expansion of the range of products.

Here in Vanuatu, we continue to see steady growth in organic acreage (by 4.5%) totalling over 8,000 hectares and including over 1200 PGS farmers. Vanilla, ginger, coconut, cocoa, coffee, and beef continue to be the most successful organic products for both our domestic and export markets, with significant increases in virgin coconut oil (VCO) volumes, leading to increases in farm gate prices. More importantly, the Vanuatu National Organic Policy, endorsed in 2019, was strengthened in 2020, including by the creation of an Action Plan for 2021 and onwards through the ACIAR-funded Policy Drivers for Public-Private Partnerships in Pacific Organics Project.

And so, as the world begins to emerge from this pandemic, I am hopeful. The citizens of the world are asking questions as to how this happened and what can be done to avoid such catastrophes in the future. We have an answer for them. There are opportunities. The Board will continue to work with the POETCom team to promote the POETCom vision, mission and values, to encourage governments to phase out the dangerous and destructive practices of industrial agriculture in favour of organic practices that sustain our cultures and communities, improve farmer livelihoods, people's health and the environment in the Pacific.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'N' followed by a cursive name.

Nambo Moses
POETCom Board Chair

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE LAND RESOURCES DIVISION



A word of thanks is extended to my predecessor, Mr Jan Helsen, who served well in this position from 2016 until October 2020. During his tenure, Jan did an admirable job of restructuring the Land Resources Division (LRD) to improve efficiencies while maintaining the highest integrity. The best wishes of the division, of the Pacific Community and of POETCom go with Jan as he applies his passion and dedication to other projects in other regions.

I am honoured, humbled and excited to be the one selected to lead the Land Resources Division, which includes POETCom, that is close to my heart. This past year has been a challenging one and leading the LRD into the so-called new normal where food systems and sustainability, climate change mitigation and human rights are both top-of-list priorities and opportunities. I am also privileged to be able to continue to support the development of organic agriculture through my service as Vice President of IFOAM Organics International.

Our work to improve the food and nutritional security of the members of the Pacific Community through the sustainable management and development of land, agriculture and forestry resources, is vitally important to recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is just as vital to strengthening the environmental and food systems of Pacific Island countries and territories to lessen the impact of future challenges, and so as my tenure begins, I have encouraged LRD and POETCom to be creative and bold, to take chances, to try new things and to get comfortable with discomfort. Also encouraged is broadening the discussion from sustainability to regeneration, since the fact is that we have a lot of work to do to rebuild our environment and ecosystems.

In May, as the COVID-19 pandemic strengthened its grip on our communities and families, POETCom initiated a survey to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on its members, supporters and partners. The survey findings helped develop recommendations for short-term interventions aimed at coping with COVID-19 and mitigating its impacts. Key recommendations were developed and incorporated into the POETCom 2020–2025 Strategic Plan.

Response to the survey was strong at 51% for members and 49% from other non-member stakeholders. Some of the findings confirmed our predictions: market and supply chain disruption, village-level income loss due to unemployment, and scheduling challenges resulting from school closures, however, the survey also revealed how innovative, creative, supportive and generous POETCom member farmers can be as they quickly reoriented markets from tourist to domestic, developed value-added products to preserve perishable food, and in many cases donated the fruits of their labours to their neighbours and communities in need. The survey also verified the premise that organic food systems are much more resilient to disruptions due to their inherent wholistic nature and their reliance on nutrient cycling instead of imported inputs. A silver lining of this tragic pandemic is the awakening of regional and national agencies and development partners to the recognition of the value of organic agriculture as a development tool for emergency preparedness.

In addition to encouraging the LRD team to think creatively, I am stressing the importance of integration and collaboration. For the POETCom team this means not only drawing regenerative best practice knowledge and resources from their colleagues to share with the growing membership, but to look for ways to incorporate the resilience of traditional and organic farming into every facet of our projects, trainings and publications.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Karen Mapusua'.

Karen Mapusua
Director, Land Resources Division, SPC

A MESSAGE FROM THE POETCOM COORDINATOR

*“Destiny shuffles the cards, but we are the ones who must play the game.”
– Wally Lamb*



This past year was the first full year the seven-person POETCom staff has been fully engaged, and despite the cards being repeatedly shuffled, the team barely stumbled as we continued working together, redirecting our energy to explore alternatives for implementing activities, and finding ways to continue to deliver quality service, wherever possible. This report is a testament to the commitment and creativity of this wonderful group of talented individuals.

This report also bears witness to the passion and dedication of the POETCom family. POETCom’s greatest strength is our network of members, supporters, friends and associates. As the world locked down in early 2020, leaving all of us confused, apprehensive, scared and somewhat angry, when it seemed like every question had the same answer – “We just do not know” – the POETCom team reached out to our organic network and engaged them to be our in-country eyes, ears and hands on the ground in order to deliver on our projects. And deliver they did. The COVID Membership Survey, a new POETCom Strategic Plan, project deliverables, national organic policy development, trainings and technical support, and significant integration of organic and gender-inclusive practices throughout LRD and SPC are among the highlights of this report. Despite our successes, however, it is important to realise just how world-changing, and how damaging, especially to underserved stakeholders throughout the Pacific region and globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has been and continues to be.

According to the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), “the global socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 have unwoven years of progress and development, requiring the Pacific region to develop integrated and innovative approaches for economic activity in order to adapt to the new normal of conducting business”. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) estimates that “nearly 100 million people in the region have been pushed back into extreme poverty, reversing years of progress against the UN Sustainable Development Goal SDG1: No Poverty”.

Although we have yet to know the full extent, we have also seen reports of significant progress reversals due to the effects of the pandemic toward SDG2: Zero hunger, SDG5: Gender equality, SDG8, Decent work, SDG12: Responsible consumption and production, SDG13, Climate action, SDG14: Life below water, and SDG15: Life on land. All of these can be improved through organic farming and sustainable development, the heart of POETCom’s mission, vision and values.

As we anticipate whatever the post COVID-19 “new normal” or “new traditional” brings, we know that there will be opportunities presented, and challenges to address. We very much look forward to the vaccinating, reopening and transitioning to the new traditional since face-to-face exchanges are so important to Pacific culture, and is often the only way to experience all points of view, and to see, feel and understand what is happening on, in and under the ground. Although some exchanges bring dissonance, and others lead to consensus, these interactions foster community – an organic community that binds and blesses so many of us.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim Pierce". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jim Pierce
POETCom Coordinator

WHO WE ARE

The Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) is the peak body of the organic movement in the Pacific. POETCom is a not-for-profit membership organisation housed within the Pacific Community (SPC). Its membership extends across 15 Pacific Island countries and territories and includes farmer support organisations, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and research institutions.

We work with people and nature, leading the development of organic agriculture in the Pacific Islands region. As a tool for sustainable development, organic agriculture touches on key areas of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – SDG 1: No poverty; SDG 2: Zero hunger; SDG 5: Gender equality; SDG 3: Good health and wellbeing; SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation; SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production; SDG 13: Climate action; and SDG 15: Life on land. Through partnerships and spirited engagement, we share information, coordinate and support networking, and build capacity to strengthen the organic movement within the Pacific.

POETCom has established a regional certification scheme to support growth of the organic and ethical trade movement, and contribute to a productive, resilient, sustainable and healthy Pacific Islands region.

OUR VISION

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

OUR VALUES

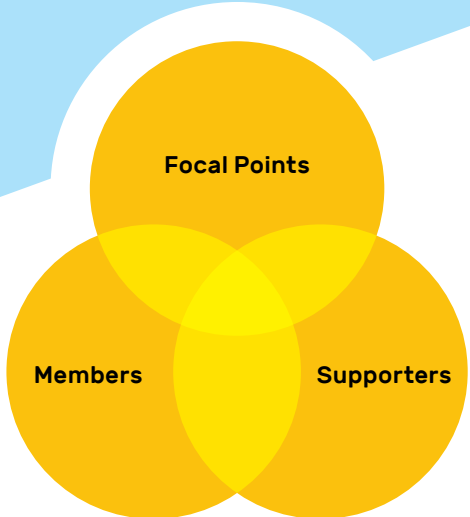
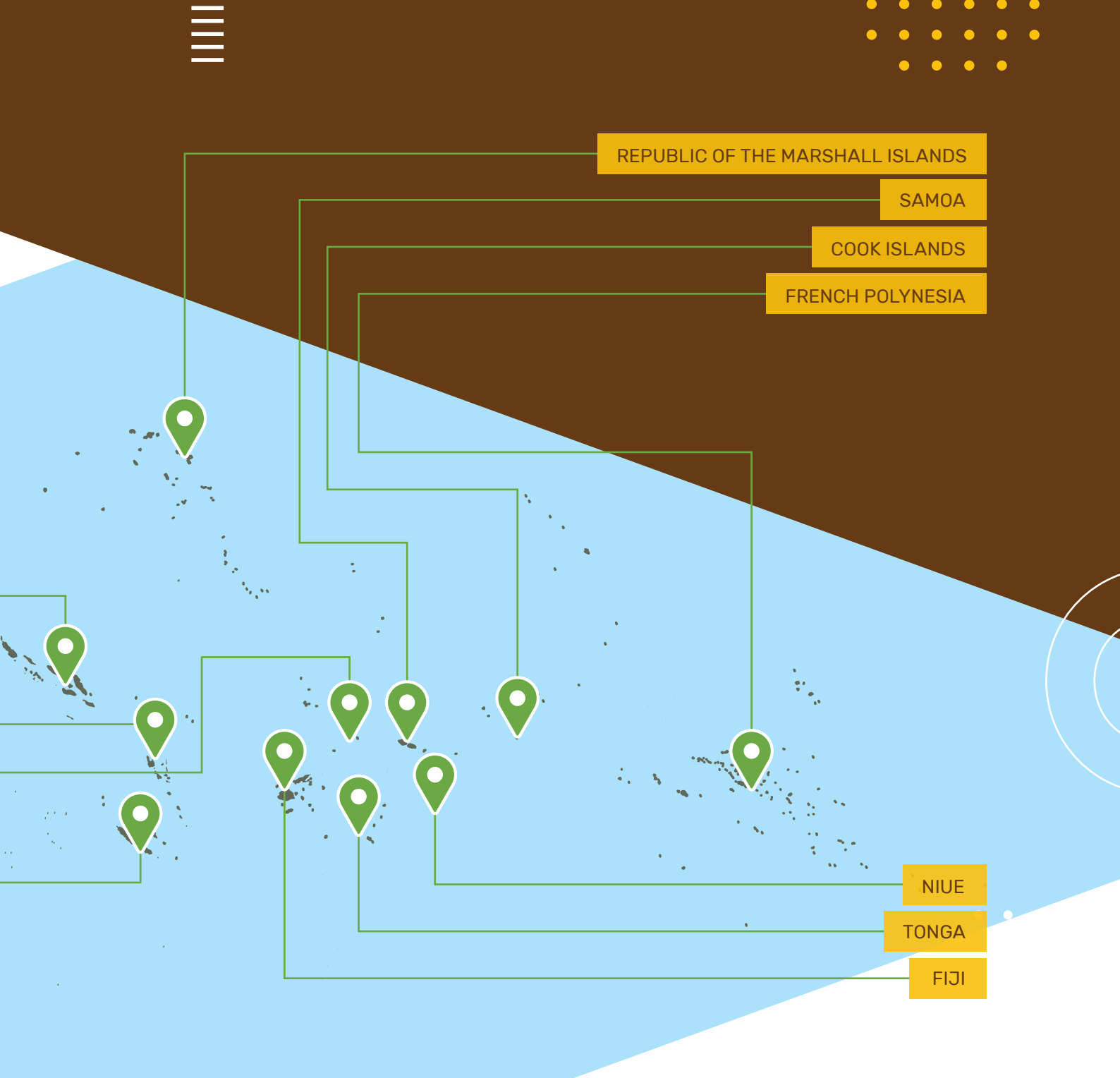
We are guided by these values in all our interactions with our stakeholders, colleagues and the broader community:

- We are committed to a deep respect for all creatures of our green and blue world, and to protecting their natural wellbeing. We grow by sharing this spirit of balance.
- We are committed to preparing our populations for the challenges of climate change, ensuring food and nutritional security and enhancing adapted biodiversity.
- We are guided by an understanding of Pacific approaches to decision-making, and we take into account Pacific values, traditions and cultures.
- We seek to ensure equality of access and benefit – for example, by people of different genders and ages and from different countries, territories and sub-regions – as well as the principles of fairness, justice and partnership.
- We recognise the value of women and youth for a productive agriculture sector and sustainable and productive organic agriculture development.
- We recognise the need to support and enhance the quality of people's lives – with an emphasis on those who work on the land and future generations as well as respect for the land and broader environment.
- We are committed to networking, positive engagement and communication, and the development of increasing self-reliance.
- We are committed to the principles of organic agriculture and the holistic approaches it encompasses.
- We are committed to building a more inclusive Pacific community – working together, supported by past traditions and connections with the land – to achieve our vision.
- We are committed to the principles of good governance, to the defence and promotion of gender equality and human rights, and to ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable in our societies are at the forefront of our work.

OUR MEMBERSHIP

POETCom has members in 13 Pacific Island countries and territories. POETCom implemented activities in Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in 2020 through four projects, with the focus on investing in the development of organic agriculture, empowerment of youth and women, and product development for income.





POETCom Affiliates – 55 memberships in 13 Pacific Island countries and territories; and 1 metropolitan country

- 11 Focal Points from 11 countries and territories (Cook Islands, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna).
- 7 Supporters from 5 countries or territories (Australia, Fiji, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu).
- 37 Members from 10 countries or territories (Australia, Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu).

2020 HIGHLIGHTS



409,717.24 hectares (ha)
of organic certified land in 8
Pacific Island countries and
territories



399,945.33 ha
third-party certified



9771.91 ha
guaranteed under the
Participatory Guarantee System
(PGS)



11 PGS groups operational
in 6 Pacific Island countries (Cook
Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia,
New Caledonia, Samoa, Vanuatu)



**5 PGS groups under
development**
(Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Palau)



71 third-party licensees
in 9 Pacific Island countries and
territories (Fiji, French Polynesia,
New Caledonia, Niue, Papua New
Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands,
Tonga, Vanuatu)



887
new growers
guaranteed under the PGS

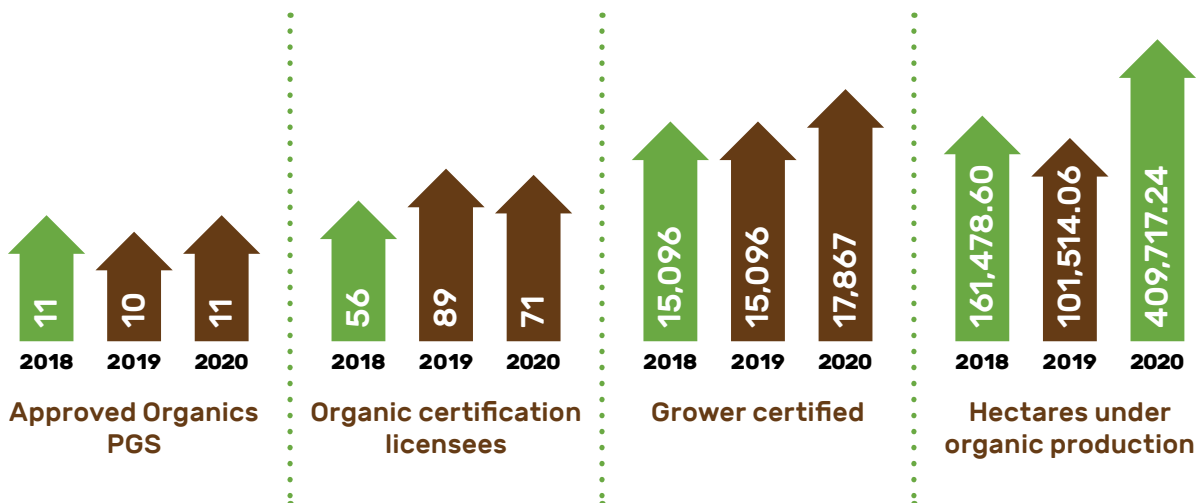


16,980
new growers certified under
third-party licences



38 people
(including representatives
from government, farmer
organisations and community
members) trained on PGS for
organic production in Fiji and
Palau. POETCom conducts PGS
training upon request from our
farmers

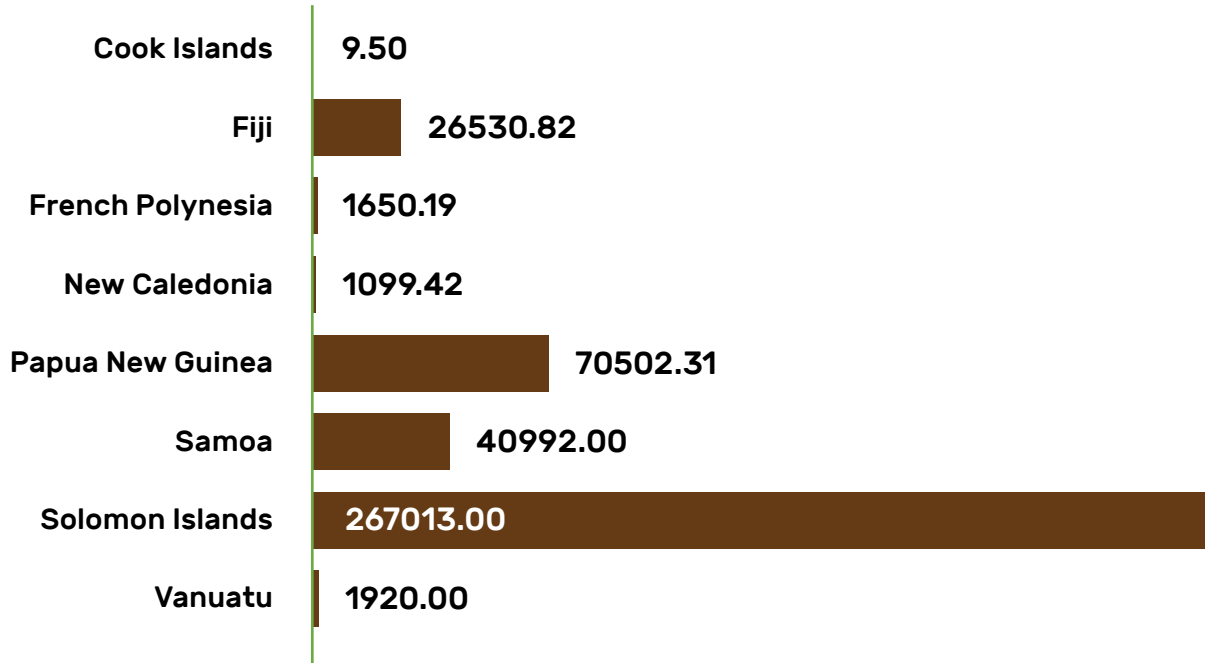
*PACIFIC ORGANICS IN NUMBERS



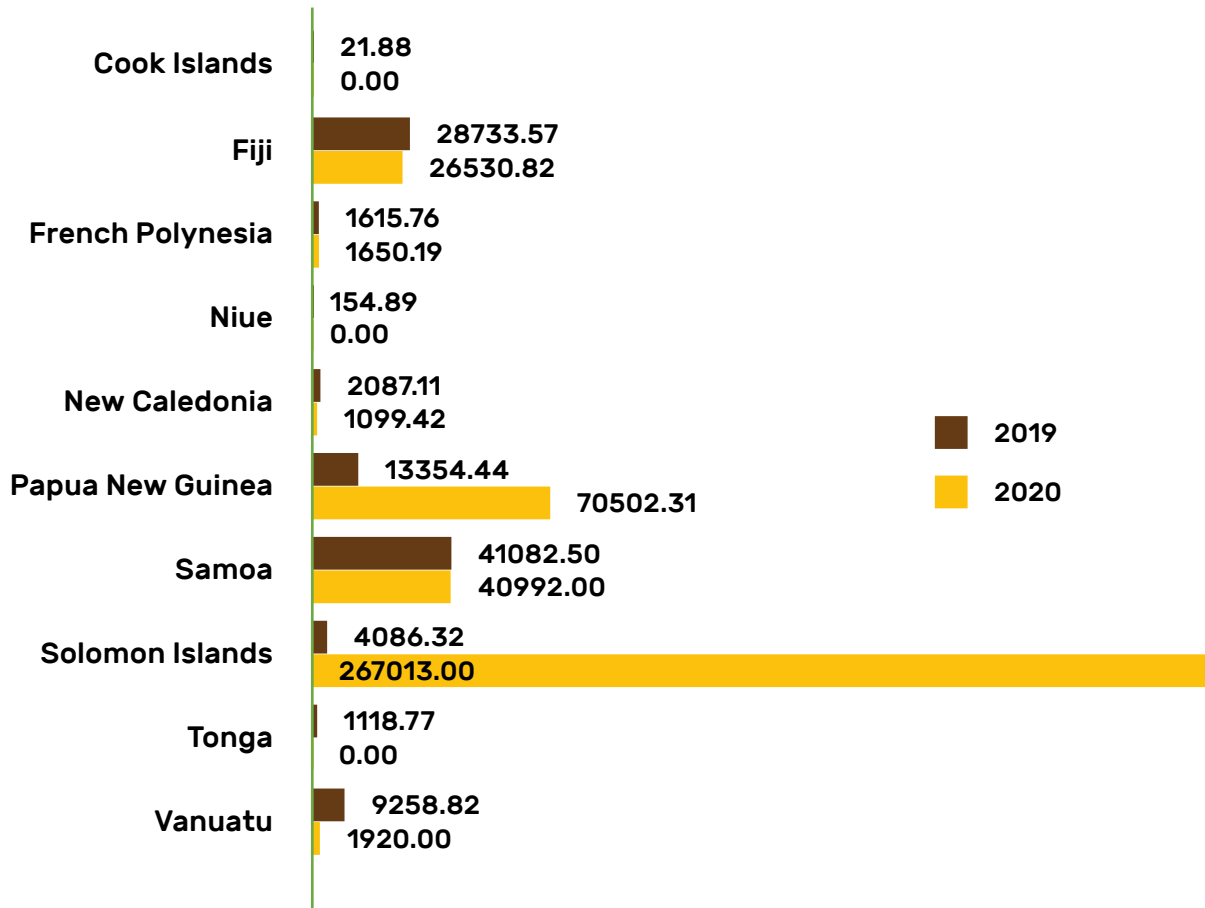
Data provided by accredited certifying bodies and POETCom's PGS reports

* Data provided by 8 out of the 11 active Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) groups in the Pacific.

Total area of organic certified land (Ha) during 2020



Ha Certified - 2020 vs 2019





OUR PARTNERSHIPS

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

POETCom is significantly supported by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade through the BPWP Project, providing support to core services as well as project implementation funding for Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Kiribati and Federated States of Micronesia (Pohnpei). Other important development partners include the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for assessment and a people-centred approach to sustainable value chains; UNDP for national organic policy development and the creation of the POETCom 2021–2025 Strategic Plan; and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) for the Policy Drivers for Public–Private Partnerships in Pacific Organics.

Over the years, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, POETCom has become known as a dependable project partner due to our extensive knowledge of the region, our vast in-country affiliate network, and by delivering quality work regardless of the challenges.

ORGANIC POLICIES

National organic policies were developed by the governments of Fiji and Solomon Islands.

AREA OF IMPACT



Our priority is the promotion of organic agriculture. To support this priority, we invest in building capability in the following four areas.



MINDSET

For organic agriculture to be mainstreamed, widely recognised and adopted as a solution to many of the region's challenges.

The mainstreaming, recognition and adoption of organic agriculture can be a solution to many of the region's challenges. We raise awareness through outreach events, communication strategies and products, and conversations at regional, national and community levels, showing the benefits of organic agriculture as a solution for regional challenges and issues related to youth employment, gender equality, climate change, food and nutritional security, and sustainable management of natural resources.



PRODUCTION AND ENVIRONMENT

For organic production to meet market demand and ensure food and nutritional security for Pacific people.

We promote organic food production as a source of nourishment free of harmful chemicals. The food that is produced must meet market demand and standards and satisfy the food and nutritional security needs of Pacific people. To facilitate organic food production, we provide training to farmers and technical support for the implementation of the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for organic certification as an alternative to third-party certification. With partners, we build knowledge banks of information that any farmer can use.

MARKETS \$\$



FARM

VALUE CHAINS

To develop and strengthen domestic and export organic value chains to expand livelihood opportunities for Pacific Island producers.

Development and strengthening of domestic and export organic value chains will provide livelihood opportunities for Pacific people. We assist communities to develop PGS organic certification based on the Pacific Organic Standard (POS) to ensure production is in accordance with desired social and environmental welfare standards. After achieving certification, producers can use the Organic Pasifika mark, which guarantees their product is organic. The certification has inspired product development for markets, based on a trusted value chain system that promotes the flow of monetary benefits back to communities.



SUSTAINABILITY

To secure the partnerships, and human, financial and institutional resources needed to achieve POETCom's mission and goals.

Securing partnerships and the human, financial and institutional resources needed to achieve our mission and goals is vital. Our activities are implemented in accordance with the POETCom 2021–2015 Strategic Plan. We work closely with donors and under the guidance of the POETCom Board. We collaborate with partners and stakeholders to implement organic activities and maximise their impacts. We are building strategic alliances to secure sustainable funding streams for the secretariat.



MINDSET	Organic Pasifika social media platforms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ For increased visibility, infographics and videos were posted on the Organic Pasifika Facebook page and the POETCom Twitter account. Social media is an optimal way of reaching wider audiences, since a growing number of Pacific Islanders are engaging with these platforms. During 2020, about 700 posts were made on Facebook, including those shared from other pages on organic techniques, certification, products and research; pictorials of POETCom workshops and field activities; and infographics promoting organic-related fields of work such as the #IGrowYourFood campaign, 16 days of activism against gender-based violence and other international days. POETCom gained 2315 new followers on Facebook and 53 on Twitter in 2020. ➤ Infographics were posted on social media for International Women’s Day, World Indigenous People’s Day, World Food Day, International Day for Rural Women, World Soil Day, and the #IGrowYourFood campaign was promoted on World Organic Day (25 September). ➤ Three issues of the Cultivating Community newsletter were released in 2020, reaching approximately 10,000 readers on email and social media platforms.
	International Women’s Day
OUTREACH	<p>In March, POETCom participated at the ‘picnic at the museum’ event organised by the Human Rights and Social Development Division of the SPC. With participation of over 100 people, this session featured a ‘gunu tea and talanoa’ session with Dr Claire Slatter (feminist academic) co-leading the discussion with Matelita Buadromo (Athletics Fiji rep) and the Striders Women’s Rugby Club representatives, reflecting on progress and challenges made towards gender equality and women’s human rights. The Fiji Museum exhibition space was used to display ‘inspiring Pacific women’ photos from SPC’s 70 Inspiring Pacific Women campaign. The picnic featured staff from iTaukei Affairs Board introducing an ancient Fijian traditional game played only by indigenous Fijian women called ‘caqe moli’. There were also cancer screening and health checks.</p>
	#IGrowYourFood online campaign
	<p>In September, POETCom participated in this online event led by IFOAM – Organics International. The #IGrowYourFood campaign is a global action day celebrating the men and women who grow our food sustainably. Organic farmers around the globe were invited to share their work, the challenges they face, and how we can support them. The idea was to flood social media platforms with these messages from farmers on 25 September, World Organic Day. For the Pacific, a total of six farmers/ farmer organisations from Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, Samoa and Vanuatu participated. Their videos were shared across POETCom (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) and IFOAM social media platforms.</p>
	World Consumer Rights Day
	<p>In March, POETCom participated in the World Consumer Rights Day celebration organised by the Consumer Council of Fiji. With theme ‘The sustainable consumer’, POETCom was invited to participate in a panel discussion as the council advocated for reducing food waste, with more emphasis on seasonal consumption of local fruits and vegetables. The council aims to bring about changes to reduce food waste mainly through advocating for change in consumption behaviour while also encouraging young consumers, particularly the so-called Generation Z, to take action, champion and work in solidarity towards sustainable consumerism. To commemorate the event, the Consumer Council planned a slate of speak-out sessions on the topic ‘Love food, hate waste, save money’, which concluded with a Q&A session allowing the audience to participate and contribute their views. This collaboration provided an excellent opportunity to promote POETCom and the Pacific organic movement, to network and teach some fundamental organic best practices.</p>





OUTREACH	Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organisations (INOFO) Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) webinar
	POETCom in April participated in the Asia Pacific INOFO PGS webinar. The webinar provided a platform for exchange of learnings from PGS groups in the Asia Pacific region. POETCom shared lessons learned as a leading sector in the organic movement and PGS implementations in the Pacific. POETCom hopes to run similar webinars for PGS groups in the Pacific.
	Introduction to organics at Navuso Agriculture school
PRODUCTION AND ENVIRONMENT	In August, POETCom was invited to provide an introductory lecture on organics in the Pacific and its relevance to POETCom to the students of Navuso Agriculture Training Institute in Fiji. The event provided an ideal platform for the promotion of organics to youth. POETCom hopes to assist Navuso Secondary School in identifying funds to assist with organic farming on its 10-acre land.
	PGS introduction to mushroom farmers
	POETCom in November provided an introductory talk about organics in the Pacific, the PGS and their relations to POETCom, to a group of mushroom farmers in Fiji. The group expressed keen interest in pursuing the PGS system and is collaborating with POETCom on this.
VALUE CHAINS	PGS training (peer review training)
	PGS peer review training for 38 people (including representatives from government, farmer organisations and community members) was carried out for Fiji and Palau. Support for the PGS training and establishment of groups was provided through the BPWP Project. With POETCom’s support, members are now involved in expanding the reach of PGS by holding trainings of their own. PGS trainings are conducted upon request from our farmers.
SUSTAINABILITY	Gender and value chain assessments
	As part of the DFAT-funded Building Prosperity for Women Producers, Processors and Women Owned Businesses Through Organic Value Chains (BPWP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Climate and Gender Assessment of Agri-food Value Chains projects, two value chain case studies were finalised: The pandanus fruit in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and mangrove oysters in Fiji (May 2020). A gender analysis of coconut syrup value chain in Rabi Island, Fiji was conducted in September/October 2020. The project team will leverage on the learnings to inform value chain analysis and development in Kiribati under the BPWP Project.
SUSTAINABILITY	Partnerships
	Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE)
SUSTAINABILITY	POETCom built partnerships with the University of New England and University of Sydney, Australia under an ACIAR project to undertake a gender and social inclusion assessment of the small ruminants (goat/sheep) sector in Fiji and Samoa. The assessment will be undertaken in 2021.
	Collaboration across SPC divisions was strengthened for knowledge sharing and for delivering meaningful gender-related activities.



MAJOR EVENTS IN 2020





POETCOM COVID-19 SURVEY

To better understand the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on its members, supporters and partners, POETCom carried out a survey beginning 4 May 2020. POETCom asked members and stakeholders about how they were addressing the COVID-19 crisis impacts. This helped to map out existing avenues and strategies, as well as to identify gaps and potential support needed. The survey findings helped develop recommendations for short-term interventions aimed at coping with COVID-19 and mitigating its impacts. Key recommendations have been developed in line with the POETCom Strategy Plan 2020–2025 (<https://bit.ly/39m8PhA>) key impact areas that provide the organisation’s overarching and sustainable framework. The learning from this survey was also included in POETCom’s current and upcoming programme and project activities. Click on this link (<https://bit.ly/3L17n4>) to access the full COVID-19 survey report.

POETCOM MID-YEAR AND ANNUAL REFLECTION, LEARNING AND PLANNING WORKSHOP

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, particularly travel restrictions and lockdowns, the project organised a mid-year reflection and planning workshop in June to review and revise the 2020 annual workplan. The team then also held its annual reflection, learning and planning workshop in October to reflect on achievements, challenges and learnings in 2020, and to plan activities for the following year. The team developed its draft 2021 workplan, strategising on implementation amidst this pandemic.

PROJECT EVENTS

Other significant events are outlined in the projects below under Key activities.

PROJECTS





BUILDING PROSPERITY FOR WOMEN PRODUCERS, PROCESSORS AND WOMEN OWNED BUSINESSES THROUGH ORGANIC VALUE CHAINS (BPWP) PROJECT

DONOR: The Government of Australia, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

VALUE: AUD 3,884,100

TARGET COUNTRIES: Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and Pohnpei State in the Federated States of Micronesia

PROJECT TIMEFRAME: August 2018–June 2022

STATUS: Ongoing

The DFAT-funded BPWP Project started implementing activities in March 2019 with a full team engagement from June 2019, making 2020 its second year of implementation. The aim of the project is to empower women through supporting their participation in organic value chains, and anticipates the following end-of-investment outcomes:

- women have increased financial independence and influence in decision-making in the household;
- women are increasingly participating in organic value chains including decision-making processes;
- women and men benefit from viable organic value chains that meet market needs and increase food security;
- the Pacific organic sector has more gender equitable policies and practices.

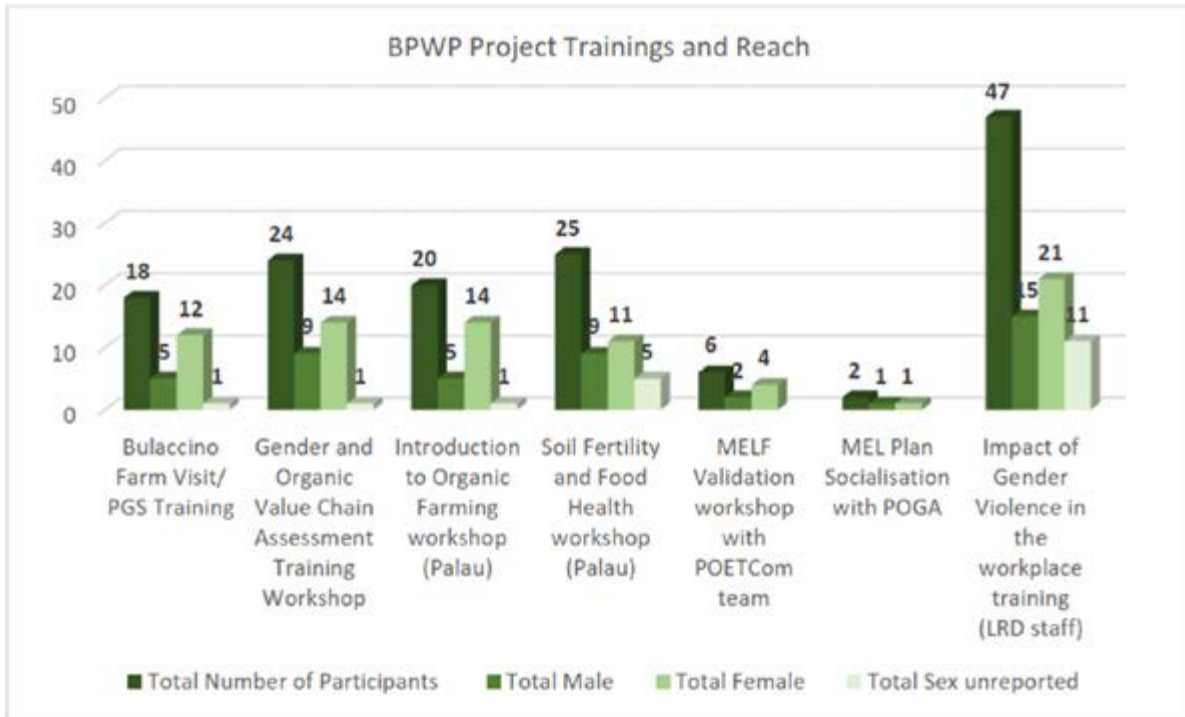
The project used a combination of inter-linked activities to deliver the stated outcomes. These are achieved through providing trainings to project partners, capacity development of national organic farmer groups, technical assistance to primary actors, and advocating for policy and regulatory standards in countries to promote organic agriculture and gender equality and social inclusion (GESI).

The project is currently under way in Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and implementation will start in Kiribati and Pohnpei State, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) in 2021. The project is being implemented in three phases:

- **Phase 1:** Establishment phase focusing on development of tools and strategies
- **Phase 2:** Primary implementation in Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) focusing on capacity development of implementing partners and primary actors
- **Phase 3:** Secondary implementation in Pohnpei State, FSM and Kiribati.

The project works through in-country POETCom members in Palau and RMI – Palau Organic Growers Association (POGA) and Marshall Islands Organic Farmers Association (MIOFA) – as well as the relevant national ministries, such as the Bureau of Agriculture and the Gender Division in the Bureau of Aging, Disability and Gender in the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs in Palau, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (NRC), Office of Commerce, Investment and Tourism (OCIT), and the Gender Division of the Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs in RMI.

In 2020, the project had seven capacity building activities targeted at improving skills and knowledge on organic agriculture and/or gender equality.



KEY ACTIVITIES

Strengthening POETCom capacity

Supporting POETCom service delivery

The POETCom team currently has seven staff, all funded through the BPWP Project. The POETCom team consists of the POETCom Coordinator, BPWP Project Manager, Organic Extension Systems Officer, Gender and Value Chain Adviser, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Officer, Finance and Administration Assistant and Communications Assistant. The POETCom team, while working on delivery of the project activities, also plays the role of POETCom Secretariat and implements activities to promote and support organic agriculture and principles in the Pacific.



The POETCom Secretariat team in 2020.



POETCom team capacity development

Capacity development for the team was provided in the form of technical PGS training for POETCom staff, Bulaccino farm staff and Fiji Queen Organic Association members at the Bulaccino farm in Nadi, Fiji. The training provided the participants with field experience on the processes of PGS assessment and requirements before a farm can be certified organic. These requirements and processes help maintain organic standards in the Pacific.

The project provided financial support for the POETCom Organic Extension Systems Officer to attend the Food Safety Management System and Food Safety Management System Internal Audit training courses at Fiji National University. This training complements the work on developing organic value chains that include processing facilities. The project also supported the Gender and Value Chain Adviser who participated in an online training on market systems solutions to tackle COVID-19 impacts. The training, organised by Innovision Consulting Private Limited, provided an opportunity for the POETCom team to familiarise themselves with the business model canvas tool, a strategic management template used to strategise, summarise, document and present how a specific business desires to achieve its vision.



The POETCom team during the PGS training at the Bulaccino Organic Farm in Nadi, Fiji.

Development of BPWP Project tools

In 2020, the BPWP Project finalised its Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF), and the project communication and advocacy plan. The project framework assists in monitoring activities and guides the evaluation and learning processes. The communication plan provides a guide to activities that the project needs to undertake to improve visibility and foster positive behavioural change, in addition to producing communication and advocacy tools.

Integrating gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) in organic agriculture

Needs and gaps analysis: gender and social inclusion within POETCom's strategy, governance, tools and processes

It is vital that GESI is integrated into POETCom practices and tools to achieve sustainable project impacts. POETCom governance is scheduled to undergo a systematic review and revision in 2021. In preparation for this, the BPWP Project completed a needs and gap analysis for gender and social inclusion within POETCom's strategy, governance, tools and processes. That report will help ensure the reviewed structures for POETCom have GESI integrated and adapted as practice.

Gender and organic value chain assessment toolkit

The project developed a gender and organic value chain assessment toolkit in 2020. The toolkit is designed to support various organic agricultural stakeholders to integrate gender into their work – in particular programme managers and practitioners working on organic agriculture, as well as extension officers, farmer organisation managers and participatory guarantee group members. The toolkit provides common tools tailored to the organic and Pacific context designed to actively address gender-related gaps, challenges and opportunities for supporting women's participation in value chains. The toolkit was trialled in September with farmer group associations, gender experts and key project partners in a two-day workshop in Suva, Fiji.

The workshop provided an opportunity for the participants to review the toolkit, with a focus on appropriateness for different communities and for diverse value chains. The toolkit includes a one-day component that focuses on creating awareness and working knowledge of GESI; and a one-day component that focuses on developing value chains with GESI consideration.

The project team is currently incorporating participant feedback into the toolkit. Once finalised, project country partners will be trained to use the toolkit to carry out gender and value chain assessments.



Participant discussions at the Gender and organic value chain assessment toolkit workshop.

The pandanus value chain in RMI's Laura area

The Gender and Value Chain Adviser assessed the pandanus value chain in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to understand existing challenges and opportunities for women as primary actors. The assessment focused on the Laura area of RMI as this is an ideal location for a gender-sensitive assessment for the following reasons:

1. the pandanus tree is readily available, making its cultivation a dominant rural activity;
2. a large number of women are involved in farming activities in the pandanus sector;
3. organic pandanus production is possible given the current eco-friendly farming practices and environmental conditions.

The findings from this assessment have been compiled as an information brochure that will be further translated into Marshallese for in-country use. This was done in partnership with the RMI's Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce and Marshall Islands Organic Farmers Association (MIOFA).



A woman farmer in Laura area, Marshall Islands showing one of her pandanus trees.

Promoting GESI through SPC and LRD events

The project supported the participation of POETCom in the International Women's Day event organised by SPC in March. The event, held at the Fiji Museum in Suva, included activities to advocate for women's significant role in the organic agricultural sector. POETCom set up an information booth promoting the role of women in agriculture. It also promoted an online Facebook advocacy campaign focusing on women in agriculture.

POETCom's work to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through the BPWP Project was featured in the SPC Women in Agriculture campaign in July 2020. The campaign aimed to inspire more women and girls to participate in the agriculture sector, but more importantly, bring the work that women do in the agriculture sector to the forefront, and recognise their contributions.

The project also hosted a learning session to coincide with the UN Women's 16 days campaign to eliminate gender-based violence, which was attended by LRD and other SPC staff. The presentation focused on the impact of gender-based violence in the workplace. POETCom also advocated against violence on women through its social media platforms.



The Land Resources Division workshop on domestic violence.

Women's chapter in POETCom newsletter

The BPWP Project is promoting women in agriculture through POETCom's quarterly newsletter, Cultivating Community. It has initiated a women's chapter in the newsletter that features success stories, women champions and GESI-related awareness and advocacy articles. These articles are also promoted through the POETCom Facebook page, Organic Pasifika.

Supporting organic agriculture

Capacity development of organic farmer organisations

In May, the project finalised an agreement with Palau Organic Growers Association (POGA) to support BPWP Project implementation in Palau. The agreement is the first that POGA has consented to as a project implementation partner.

The project team conducted a partner capacity assessment with POGA. The assessment was designed to identify the organisational capacity and resources for project implementation partners such as POGA to manage project advocacy and implementation activities. This has helped the project's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team identify POGA needs and challenges and develop areas for joint work on capacity development throughout its life. In 2020, the project invested in the following capacity development activities:

Finalisation of POGA's five-year strategic plan

With the support of the project, POGA has finalised its five-year strategic plan (2020–2025). The plan sets out the following key priorities:

1. Improve organisational effectiveness (administration, management, sustainable financing, etc.).
2. Expand POGA's outreach, education and awareness activities to promote organic
3. agriculture in Palau.
4. Advocate policies that support organic agriculture and develop organic certification systems and standards.

Reporting support and development of Palau project MEL plan

The MEL team initiated learning and consultation sessions with POGA, designing their reporting template for the project. The team also provided ongoing guidance to POGA on monitoring and reporting needs. The MEL team also worked with POGA to develop the MEL plan for Palau.

Organic agriculture trainings

In partnership with POGA, the project had the following training workshops in Palau.

Introduction to organic farming workshop (9 September 2020)

The one-day workshop was attended by 20 participants. The workshop aimed at getting the participants to learn the basics of organic farming, the concepts of Pacific Organic Standard (POS) and the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS).



An organic farming workshop in Palau.

Soil fertility and plant nutrition workshop (14 October 2020)

The one-day workshop was conducted with the aim that the 25 participants would learn the basics of organic farming and the dos and don'ts, with a focus on soil fertility and plant nutrition. POGA collaborated with the US Small Business Administration, Palau Community College and Palau Bureau of Agriculture.



Soil and fertility workshop participants in Palau.



Palau national organic policy

The Palau Bureau of Agriculture requested that POETCom provide assistance in the development of the Palau National Organic Policy. This resulted from BPWP Project team discussions with the Bureau of Agriculture team.

POETCom has facilitated the national organic policies for Fiji and the Solomon Islands, and has the technical expertise to do the same for Palau with the BPWP Project. Through the project and with fulltime engagement of a Gender and Value Chain Adviser, POETCom has now taken a systematic and integrated approach to mainstreaming GESI in organic policies to support women in agriculture.

The situational analysis, reporting on the status of organic agriculture in Palau, will start in early 2021.

Organic agriculture advocacy

POETCom uses its Twitter account, Facebook Page, website, quarterly newsletter and email distribution lists to promote organic agriculture. POETCom actively uses its Twitter and Facebook pages to circulate posts on significant calendar events such as the World Food Day, International Day for Rural Women, and the IFOAM #IGrowYourFood campaign.

The project was represented at the Land Resources Division/SPC Open Day on 6 November, with a display of organically certified products from its Fiji PGS members. The team spoke to other SPC staff on the work that POETCom and the project was doing in the Pacific, and the importance of organic agriculture as well as women's participation in value chains.

The project team attended the Pacific Women Annual Reflection Workshop, Pacific Women's WEE (women's economic empowerment) roundtable events, as well as the Land Resource Division's Annual Reflection, Learning and Planning Workshop. The BPWP Project, through POETCom, also reported to SPC through the Results and Learning Workshop in alignment to the LRD objectives stipulated in the LRD Business Plan 2019-2023.



POETCom staff in Fiji promoting organically branded products.





KEY CHALLENGES

Travel restrictions limiting face-to-face and in-field technical support

One of the key challenges for the project has been managing in-country implementation without being able to provide face-to-face and in-field technical support, capacity building and mentoring. During country missions in 2019, the project team identified a number of capacity building needs for implementation partners, especially in relation to GESI, technical management of PGS, and identifying project primary actors. Unfortunately, with travel restrictions it was difficult to deliver these in a timely manner.

Communication barriers

The project also had challenges connecting to some partners, especially the farmer groups in Marshall Islands where access to the internet is limited. Correspondence has delayed responses, resulting in activity planning taking additional time.

Uncertainties amid the COVID-19 pandemic

The first half of 2020 was the most difficult for implementing project activities. As countries were restricting movement due to COVID-19 and people were uncertain about jobs and livelihoods, project implementation could not move forward as initially planned. The project had to wait for social stability in project countries to restart the implementation process.

Quality and timing of project activity implementation

The project team understands that delivery of activities may take longer as POETCom continues to support implementation partners remotely. Delivery and quality of project activities will be compromised for certain components as expertise and skills are limited in implementing countries, especially for the gender and organic value chain work.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Inclusion of a wider population in its organic farming trainings and workshops, especially for sessions on organic agriculture
- Focus on sustaining domestic markets, with an eye towards export markets as the global COVID-19 situation improves
- Investment in online learning platforms for trainings and workshops and conversion of training materials into webinars and learning videos
- Exploring approaches for developing and testing toolkits in Fiji before partner implementation in Palau and RMI, with the provision of capturing challenges and lessons learned to review and revise the toolkits in 2021
- Engagement of in-country consultants for project implementation in Palau and RMI (including organic farmer groups and government ministries)
- Use of online applications such as Zoom, Skype, Facebook Messenger that are more relevant to project partners for meetings



INTEGRATION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT INTO CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING IN PACIFIC COUNTRIES

DONOR: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

VALUE: USD 80,000

TARGET COUNTRIES: Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Samoa, Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Nauru

PROJECT TIMEFRAME: April 2019–April 2020

STATUS: Completed

The FAO-funded Integration of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment into Climate-Resilient Agriculture Planning and Programming in Pacific Countries Project is aimed at the development of diversified sustainable food and agriculture systems in the Pacific through:

- Mainstreaming gender equality in resilience planning and in climate-smart agriculture programmes (focus on small-scale farmers) and promoting a gender-sensitive approach, enhancing women's equal access to and control over productive resources and services and fostering viable women-led enterprises for resilient and inclusive food systems; and,
- Integrating a gender perspective in national policies, as well as in accessing in public investments and exploring opportunities to mobilise international climate finance instruments.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Rapid assessment of the policy and institutional environment

A rapid assessment of policies and institutional environment was carried out, looking at integrating gender equality in climate change and agriculture programming in Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Nauru, then to identify the main challenges and opportunities.

The assessment identified the following challenges:

- Women's roles within value chains are often invisible.
- Women are often involved in low-return value chains. These may be particularly vulnerable to the additional stresses of climate change.
- Women face significant and multifaceted barriers to doing business, at the household, community, island and national level.
- Women continue to be excluded from training, particularly in male-dominated value chains.
- Supporting women to increase their income requires a holistic programme that also engages men to successfully address issues of agency.
- Insufficient attention is paid to the specific context for integrating gender within agriculture and climate change initiatives.

The assessment also identified the following opportunities and recommended actions:

- Strengthen programme design processes to integrate gender and climate change considerations.
- Build political and institutional commitments to support gender and climate mainstreaming.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms for gender and climate integration.
- Advocate for the benefits of promoting gender equality.
- Involve gender and climate specialists in value chain selection and analysis.
- Identify appropriate, context-specific, approaches such as family-farm approaches and the use of trusted intermediaries.

- Use climate finance to drive more socially inclusive and climate-smart agriculture programming and finance.
- Increase the use of local consultants and expertise as part of environmental and social safeguard assessments.
- Support women's leadership and women-led civil society organisations to access climate finance.

Climate and gender-sensitive assessments

The value chains for pandanus fruit in RMI and freshwater oysters in Fiji were assessed using a climate change and gender framework. Some of the key recommendations from these assessments are:

- Strengthening capacities of implementing partners, including agricultural and aquaculture extension/support services, development organisations and national stakeholders in integrating gender and climate change considerations as cross-cutting issues in their work
- Working with (and through) culture to foster social cohesion and develop sustainable solutions, drawing upon positive elements of culture and building local support to help reinforce the positive role of traditional systems
- Considering the family-based approach as an entry point for interventions that reach out to women and explore and address gender issues at the household and community level
- Building on, expanding and strengthening women's skills to enable them to move up the value chain
- Building partnerships with the private sector to promote development of sustainable value chains
- Collaborating with policymakers to increase resilience to climate change while promoting women as key agents of change in climate responses.



Woman farmer in Laura Area, Marshall Islands showing her pandanus plants.

Synthesis report

A synthesis report was developed, summarising lessons learned from activities that provide the basis for a Pacific work programme on gender and climate change in agriculture and value chains. The reports detailed the following recommendations:

Policy and institutional environment:

- Ensure policies and strategies related to agricultural value chain development include explicit objectives to simultaneously promote gender equality, address gender-based constraints and promote climate resilience.
- Ensure that policy documents and institutions include appropriate accountability measures for tracking progress on promoting gender equality and climate resilience (for example, within performance appraisal processes for managers and senior officials and within monitoring and evaluation plans and processes).


- Provide appropriate spaces for women's organisations and women-led farmer groups in the policy development, implementation and monitoring process to act as agents for change in promoting climate resilience.
- Ensure that data and information is gathered in a gender-sensitive way to support gender analysis and monitoring and evaluation. Sex-disaggregated data should be gathered that captures the extent of women's involvement in agriculture and fisheries recognising that products are often co-produced as part of family farms.
- Ensure that services provided by ministries responsible for agriculture and fisheries adequately consider and address climate risks and the different needs and priorities of men and women and are informed by a gender analysis of these needs and of the capacity within the ministries to address them. Where capacity is lacking (for example, in being able to conduct gender analysis, apply participatory approaches or undertake gender-sensitive vulnerability assessments), training and mentoring should be provided to address these gaps.
- Scope partnerships to address coordination issues and the siloed nature of work across government to promote the involvement of women in agriculture and promote policy coherence on agriculture and climate change priorities.

Programming and internal capacity to support gender and climate risk analysis:

- Recognise the long-term nature of addressing gender equality and climate risk and develop longer-term programmes (five plus years) to ensure transformative change can be realised
- Build the capacity of implementing partners, including agricultural and fisheries extension services, support services and development partners to undertake gender and climate risk analysis and programme design
- Support training, mentoring and professional development of practitioners to expand gender and climate risk analysis skills capacity and to ensure they understand the rationale for and are able to apply and champion various gender analysis and climate risk tools
- Ensure that the programme design considers the specificity of the local context including the diversity of women's experiences. Women's leadership in business and access to decision-making can vary significantly across countries, for example. Similarly, the climate and agricultural context also varies significantly across the region
- Involve gender and climate specialists within analytical and programme design teams and ensure that findings and measures identified are carried through to the implementation phase. Champion the benefits of inclusive and risk-informed programme design and implementation with partner countries
- Ensure the inclusion of gender and climate considerations as a key criterion for programme and value chain selection
- Use existing gender-sensitive tools that allow for rapid screening of the cultural /society norms and their impacts across different sector
- Build internal leadership, advocacy and political will to ensure that promoting gender equality and climate risk are seen as important factors in delivering success
- Utilise the opportunity of developing environmental and social safeguarding policies (a requirement of many climate change funding mechanisms) to integrate gender across the project and programme screening mechanisms within the agencies responsible for climate change and ensure the inclusion of accountability mechanisms. Increase the use of local consultants and expertise as part of environmental and social safeguard assessments
- Support women's leadership and women-led civil society organisations to access climate finance.

Prioritise value chains that demonstrate higher potential to promote gender equality, women's economic empowerment and climate resilience and support women to 'move up' the value chain

Based on the review, the most promising value chains to promote gender equality and climate resilience include coconuts and pandanus and the value-added products derived from them such as virgin coconut oil (VCO) and handicrafts.



Both coconuts and pandanus are widespread throughout the region, are important crops culturally and economically and are tolerant of climate extremes. Supporting women to create business opportunities as part of these value chains, however, requires providing access to training, not only in production techniques and methods, but also in entrepreneurship, financial management and marketing.

These value chains are currently dominated by women, but a large proportion of women's time, particularly in using pandanus for mat weaving, is unpaid, informal and integral to cultural obligations and exchange. There is therefore the risk of entrenching existing inequalities by attempting to support women within a value chain with existing 'gendered roles'.

- Work with partners to screen and identify specific value chains that have the greatest potential to promote gender equality and climate resilience, based on the specific context, using existing and adapted tools.
- Support women with product development advice and skills to add value to coconut, pandanus and other products and provide training and mentoring in financial literacy, business management and partnership brokering to strengthen their roles in the value chain.
- Identify specific local niche products such as jams, chutneys, VCO, high-quality cocoa and handicrafts, breadfruit and cassava flour that support women to 'move up' the value chain.
- Support the recognition of the processing and marketing roles that women play in value chains by supporting women with financial management and marketing training, for example within the kava industry, as part of promoting kava in agroforestry, climate-resilient systems.
- Reduce climate-related losses (or preventing their increase) by reorienting agricultural value chains to support the maintenance of food security through various grassroots and community-based climate-smart agriculture (CSA) approaches that are grounded within the local context. Identify value chains that simultaneously promote food and nutritional security and climate resilience, such as breadfruit.
- Provide targeted extension service support to women's groups and women-led enterprises.
- Tailor measures to the specific context to promote gender equality and climate resilience within value chains.
- The lack of a regionally agreed definition of women's economic empowerment in the Pacific context, recognising the specific cultural context in managing enterprises in communal settings, adds to the risk of either entrenching women in low-margin value chains or adding to their unpaid work burden unless holistic approaches are adopted.

It should also be recognised that promoting women's economic empowerment is less about the specific value chain chosen, and more about the approach taken to support women to negotiate access and control over the resources necessary to thrive in agribusiness and as entrepreneurs. This includes mitigating bias within extension offices to provide equitable support to women farmers, strengthening financial literacy and access to start-up capital for women-led businesses, addressing ease-of-doing business constraints that act as barriers to formalising businesses and supporting women to connect to market opportunities.

Niche products also represent an opportunity to support women develop and expand climate-resilient agribusinesses. These include cocoa beans and boutique chocolate, jams, chutneys, vinegars, lip balm, soaps, tuna jerky and a variety of different products. The development of niche products usually requires engagement with a responsible intermediary with the same values and a strong commitment to gender equality who can act as a quality assurance and marketing support.

A structured approach to supporting women to formalise what may currently be home-based, informal enterprises could support women's economic empowerment, but care must be taken to ensure that enterprises grow slowly and sustainably.

Partnerships with intermediaries and the private sector are vital for progressing women's economic empowerment and climate resilience and suitable private sector actors should be identified that share these values.

- Develop a regionally agreed-upon definition of women's economic empowerment and tailor measures that fit within the specific cultural context.
- Reconsider economic and business models that are profit-driven to broaden the definition of success such that it better aligns with Pacific cultural values of wellbeing.
- Consider using family-farm approaches as entry points to promote gender equality and climate resilience.
- Support women-led enterprises to link to higher-value markets, through targeted market analysis, product development advice and brokering relationships.
- Support opportunities for collective product development and marketing.
- Strengthen women's entrepreneurial and business networks to advocate for structural changes needed to reduce and eliminate barriers women currently face.
- Strengthen peer networks to allow female entrepreneurs to share experiences and provide individuals with the confidence to know that they are not alone.
- Strengthen value chains by supporting progressive intermediaries, agribusinesses and service providers to develop strategies relating to gender and social inclusion and climate risk management and trialing new techniques and approaches to support climate change adaptation.



Cicia women from Fiji with their virgin coconut oil product.

KEY CHALLENGES

The key challenge for the project was difficulties around field data collection due to travel restrictions, activity restrictions and lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project team was not able to travel to project countries for further research as targeted countries had put in place travel restrictions.

LESSONS LEARNED

There is a need to explore entry points for promoting gender equality within climate-resilient agriculture and fisheries value chains, looking at integrated holistic approaches that strengthen women's roles as well as strengthen supporting services to advance women's engagement in value chains that are sustainable and resilient to climate change impacts.

POLICY DRIVERS FOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN PACIFIC ORGANICS

DONOR: ACIAR

VALUE: AUD 46,480

TARGET COUNTRIES: Fiji and Vanuatu

PROJECT TIMEFRAME: 11 June 2019–30 June 2021

STATUS: Completed successfully – Final financial report completed

Under ACIAR's approach, a small research activity (SRA) is a tool used to explore a topic in-depth and if findings from an SRA warrants further research, a larger, long-term project will be developed and funded by ACIAR.

KEY ACTIVITIES

This SRA was funded by ACIAR to analyse partnerships in extension and policy changes required to support multi-stakeholder extension in Fiji and Vanuatu.

The research objectives were to:

- Conduct a review of literature around partnerships and policy, particularly Pacific Island policies and programmes to identify actions that might enhance partnerships;
- Conduct case studies based on interviews with stakeholders in ginger, turmeric, coconut, coffee and cassava supply chains to better understand extension service provision partnerships, including PGS and third-party systems; and
- Hold policy forums to share case study findings and partnership experiences.



Participant discussions at the Policy Drivers for Public-Private Partnerships in Pacific Organics: Improving Extension Policy through an Evidence-based approach workshop for the Fiji government.



KEY CHALLENGES

The COVID-19 situation did not allow the full research team from ACIAR and POETCom to attend in-country workshops

LESSONS LEARNED

The global organic market is growing and there is high potential for Pacific Island farmers to have greater involvement. Organic agriculture offers the possibility of higher premiums and market access, but can require higher labour and certification costs, and potential costs during the time of transition to organic production. Various PGS schemes seek to reduce these problems for more traditional, smallholder farmers in developing countries, however, for a greater uptake of these schemes, improved extension of technical knowledge and its coordination is a key need in the Pacific, particularly around input use, pest, weed and disease management, and storage, handling, transporting and processing to meet organic requirements.

Extension services have traditionally been provided by the public service but the private sector can help provide information and access to standards, market intelligence, and contracting for export supply, although the sector faces its own challenges in doing so, and needs economic and policy stability. Additionally, farmer organisations have a key role to play in effective coordination and reach with members. Public-private partnerships with clear role definitions can help to overcome perceived dependency as well as funding constraints. The Pacific Islands Extension Strategy was developed in 2014/2015 and launched in 2018. One of its purposes was to provide a framework for advisory services with clear roles and responsibilities that would streamline investment and institutional support.

The policy review showed that extension requires consideration of the nature of the farm (based on wealth, education and literacy), the links with farmer organisations, and appropriate technical and market information to meet stringent certification (or conversion) requirements, third-party certification and market equivalence of standards used elsewhere. Certification in the Pacific is not required but does exist via the IFOAM-accredited Pacific Organic Standard, under the trademark Organic Pasifika, and delivered through PGS peer audits. The PGS system is relatively inexpensive and suits small-scale farmers. Exports to regulated markets require third-party certification of produce to a fixed standard or equivalent. POETCom developed a Regional Pacific Organic Policy Toolkit to guide government involvement in organics that includes push, pull, enabling and barrier removal activities such as subsidies, agreements and networked extension.

Partnership-based extension needs consideration of the different stages of the whole supply chain and the multiple roles of participants in the network, for example, a farmer may be a producer, NGO member, trainer, and/or certifier. Specific needs in Vanuatu and Fiji include infrastructure, transport and quarantine needs for export; the need for subsidies, loans and elimination of duties; information on the viability of organic farming; funding for policy interventions including targeted extension; tailored to the diversity of farmers and islands; specific help for compost knowledge and diffusion; and the role of each stakeholder including farmer organisations. The establishment of national groups may support the development of information sharing networks, link governance and supply chains, raise the profile of organics nationally and internationally, and provide a means of collating data and engaging with producers.

Key findings from the five case studies revealed:

- partnerships are not a fixed model but evolve over time within different contexts;
- not all information and training needs are being met;
- value chain conflicts exist between meeting business objectives, organic objectives, and social justice/community development objectives;
- whole-of-value-chain understanding varies greatly with stakeholders, with many understanding their own component in the value chain, but not the specifics of others;
- third-party certification requires more widespread training of recording skills, including a long-term approach where skills can be taught in schools;

- fluid processes between PGS and third-party certification need to be developed;
- partnerships need to address wider value chain impacts, better market chain access, and help in higher risk situations along the value chain;
- farmers would benefit from an overall organic management plan;
- organic farming criteria are not always met or considered;
- organic farming and food markets are primarily chosen for market access, health, and sustainability reasons, and not to gain a premium;
- organic farming and food markets may help address climate change impacts and build resilience along the value chain from farming families to consumers; and
- organic farming and markets can address inclusion of women and young people across the entire value chain, and not just at the farming end of the value chain.

The online policy forums revealed important commonalities in Vanuatu and Fiji in that there was a need to coordinate supply chain-based extension (through either a delegated officer or research coordinator), a need for specifically targeted extension, and an additional need for economic analysis of costs and benefits of producing organically throughout the organic chain with consideration for different crops, islands and the nature of farms and markets.

Policies need to include public–private partnership extension that take into account differences for subsistence growers, local commercial growers and export growers and the specialist expertise that each may require with respect to technical needs (including different crops, soil types etc.) and market needs. Interventions such as support and subsidies and roles/responsibilities/delivery need to be clear as to what is delivered by government, the private sector, NGOs, and PGS and local farmer organisations.

To effectively coordinate the diverse farms, targeted knowledge, and roles and responsibilities across a whole-of-supply-chain approach, strong governance is needed to work across different countries, and their varying regulatory regimes and cropping/environmental characteristics. Appropriate processes need to be designed that are inclusive of all stakeholders, understand their needs and where they fit in the value chain, their specific barriers and constraints, and provide different benefits for each. There is no singular approach or benefit that should be encouraged, rather appropriate processes to work with each crop and coordinated effectively. These processes need to also explore how to train others, including the use of members of organisations and a facilitator for farmer-to-farmer learning, and then a process to scale up and out across the diverse Pacific region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations that arise from this study for the organic sector in the Pacific are:

- adopt a systems approach to organic farm conversion from production methods to market access and export;
- initiate trials of mature value chains for cost–benefit analyses of policy interventions to different partners at various stages;
- conduct cost–benefit analyses of various production and marketing choices specific to these value chains;
- ensure effective coordination of the diverse range of partnerships needed for various farm types and crops;
- design appropriate processes that establish and agree on the role of diverse stakeholders at different stages in the value chain, including policy supports and what is delivered by whom;
- compare such whole-of-value-chain costs and benefits in case studies with conventional agricultural systems of the same crop type;
- design supports to streamline movement between PGS and third-party certification;
- coordinate the diverse extension content from the cost–benefit analyses of different support mechanisms, farmer choices and market arrangements within a national database of organic information;

- build individual, organisational and institutional capacity for effective extension delivery of these costs and benefits;
- design effective extension curriculum with clear information about the various policy supports and which type of extension approach is best for different farms, value chains, partners, and regions;
- design tailored extension delivery with different extension formats, where in the supply chain this mode of delivery occurs, to whom and by whom (i.e., government officers, the private sector, farmer organisations);
- tailor extension advice on production and marketing to specific value chains in each trial;
- assess the effectiveness of the extension content and its delivery format in each value chain;
- scale-out learnings from trial value chains to the different cropping environments of Pacific nations;
- establish a governance structure to work across different countries, and their varying regulatory regimes and cropping/environmental characteristics; and
- ensure monitoring of organic rollouts such as nutrition risks (with crop replacement) and impacts on vulnerable groups.



Policy Drivers for Public-Private Partnerships in Pacific Organics: Improving Extension Policy through an Evidence-based approach workshop for the Fiji government.



MARKETS FOR CHANGE (M4C)

DONOR: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

VALUE: FJD 253,294

TARGET COUNTRIES: Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands

PROJECT TIMEFRAME: April through December 2020

STATUS: Complete

The Markets for Change project was developed collaboratively between POETCom and UNDP following the successful two-year Farm-to-Table project that was carried out in 2017 and 2018 in Fiji and Vanuatu.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Development and implementation of a National Organic Policy in Solomon Islands

A Solomon Islands Situational Analysis Report began by collecting and analysing baseline data through a desk review, and an in-country stakeholder survey to assess the current state of the organic movement, and the specific needs for national regulatory support. Following this initial review, a stakeholder workshop was held in September which was attended by 39 people, including 12 women and 12 youth. Collaboration for the workshop included SPC staff stationed in the Solomon Islands working with the POETCom Gender Specialist in Fiji. This collaboration with regional staff assured us that the GESI component was thoroughly addressed and captured throughout the final report.

A silver lining of the pandemic travel ban presented itself when we were able to redirect budgeted funds from travel and transportation and develop the situational analysis into a draft Solomon Islands National Organic Policy final report. This report will be presented to the Solomon Islands Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in 2021.

Development of the POETCom 2021–2025 Strategic Plan through a gender lens, and mainstreaming gender into this new strategic plan

Delivery on this activity began with a review of previous POETCom Strategic Plans by the POETCom Gender Specialist to harvest gender and value chain lessons learned, resulting in a POETCom Strategic Plan Gender Gaps and Opportunities report. The findings and recommendations of this report, along with substantial input from POETCom staff, Board, and a wide spectrum of stakeholders went through an extensive drafting, commenting and revision process resulting in the **POETCom 2021–2025 Strategic Plan** which was approved by the POETCom Board on 3 July 2020. Following Board approval, the document went through editing, layout, translation, publishing and printing.

On 20 November, a formal POETCom 2021–2025 Strategic Plan launch event was held at SPC's Narere campus. The event was attended by about 35–40 people, including Mr Ritesh Dass, Permanent Secretary at Fiji's Ministry of Agriculture; Ms Jane Kierath, First Secretary at the Australian High Commission; Mr Kevin Petrini, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP; Ms Sandra Bernklau: Representative of UN Women's Fiji Multi-Country Office; and Ms Karen Mapusua, Director of SPC's Land Resources Division.

Following the launch event, hardcopies of the strategic plan have been transferred to the SPC's Noumea headquarters for distribution to the French territories, electronic copies in English and French have been uploaded to the POETCom website and PDF copies and website links sent to POETCom affiliates. The new strategic plan will be the core influential document in developing POETCom and individual staff workplans and has been extensively highlighted through social media and on the POETCom website.



Kevin Petrini, Deputy Resident Representative for UNDP is handed a copy of the POETCom 2021-2025 Strategic Plan by Karen Mapusua, Director of the Land Resources Division.

Organic information and knowledge management system is established through revising and updating of the POETCom website, and training of POETCom staff to maintain the revised website

The process of updating the POETCom website began with a series of staff and SPC stakeholder meetings, which led up to a user-needs workshop to define the purpose and priorities, including training of POETCom Staff on website content management. Input from the workshop user-needs report was used to design and develop a revised website information architecture (IA).

The revised information architecture became the redesigned framework of the new website.

Although the UNDP-funded activities have been completed, the review, revision, redesign and reconstruction of the POETCom website continues under the technical expertise and guidance of the website host, and in-house expertise managed by the POETCom Communications Officer Lore Croker. Under their guidance the work has involved the efforts and input of the entire team. The new site will feature success stories of POETCom members, an extensive online resource centre of organic information and knowledge products, links to our primary partners in the organic movement, and up-to-date news and events throughout the POETCom network.

The new POETCom website will be launched in 2021, and as with any dynamic website, modifications, improvements and revisions will be ongoing.



POETCom stakeholders at the POETCom website-users workshop.

KEY CHALLENGES

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent travel bans caused the need to refocus on the activities and methods of delivery. POETCom is fortunate to have an extensive and committed network of members, friends and partners who have been able to step in and deliver quality work in lieu of staff. We found, however, that despite this advantage, competition from other projects for skilled in-country assistance is significant.

As the new POETCom website was developed, it became apparent that information technology continues to advance and evolve, necessitating the need to constantly respond and adapt to remain current, dynamic and useful to our stakeholders in this space.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Although it is possible, and sometimes even desirable, to work with strategic partners to carry out the work, it takes additional time and planning to deliver quality outcomes. Proactive planning, including the development of ready-to-execute procedures, boilerplate templates and contracts is invaluable to being prepared for unforeseen circumstances.
- Despite the efforts it takes to plan and execute formal launch events like that of the strategic plan, there is significant publicity generated, which in turn fosters goodwill that can lead to additional collaborations.

IMPACT STORIES



COVID-19 SILVER LININGS: STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS AND CONNECTING LOCAL VALUE CHAINS

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY

National border closures and travel restrictions have significantly and negatively impacted value chains (VC) heavily reliant on international trade resulting in stakeholders diverting value chains to local markets. This was the case for a local Fiji business called Marama Niu.

CONTEXT

The current COVID-19 border restrictions have increased logistics and transportation cost challenges for Marama Niu in accessing their regular supply of coconut syrup from Tuvalu.

Coconut syrup, locally known in Rabi as kaimamai, is produced by boiling down the sap of the coconut blossom, or fresh toddy. While harvesting fresh toddy is regarded as male activity, coconut syrup production is a traditional activity carried out by women. There are currently 25 fresh toddy producers in the four village communities on the island, but only two women produce value-added coconut syrup. Avi Pita is one of the two local women producing coconut syrup in Rabi in northern Fiji.

Marama Niu is a vegan and dairy-free ice cream-producing business run by two local women entrepreneurs, Kylie Patterson and Jovina Ah Yuk. This small-scale business uses coconut syrup as an alternative sweetener to sugar and the coconut syrup is usually supplied from Tuvalu.



Avi Pita (in blue) and two other women working with coconut nectar products.

WHAT WE ASPIRED TO DO AND HOW WE DID IT

A joint effort by the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON), in partnership with the Pacific Community's Ridge to Reef project and POETCom programme, provided technical and business support to Marama Niu in reorienting the value chain to domestic suppliers.¹

¹ Under the Pacific Agribusiness Research in Development Initiative Phase 2.

This resulted in the introduction of Rabi coconut syrup producer, Avi Pita, to Kylie and Jojina of Marama Niu, in September 2020, for potential business collaboration. This face-to-face approach was critical to building the trust, confidence and initiating the business relationship between the two value chain actors while creating a story of sustainability, partnership, and the Rabi community ownership around coconut syrup.

Due to cultural, economic and infrastructural factors, this traditional practice of producing coconut syrup may soon disappear on the island. The partnership with Marama Niu offers an opportunity to reverse this trend, while joining current environmental preservation efforts. Initiatives aimed at protecting and restoring the environment of Rabi Island at a broader level were launched by the Fiji Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Forestry and LRD under the Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project in 2020. Activities implemented so far include a land use survey, tree planting, establishment of a coconut seed nursery, and the successful establishment of the Rabi Organic Participatory Guarantee Group.



Coconut nectar products packaged and sold by Marama Niu.

EARLY/INCREMENTAL CHANGE

The partnership between Marama Niu and Avi serves as a pilot initiative enabling partners, and value chain actors, to gain a deeper understanding of the value chain challenges and opportunities. Some of the challenges identified included dissensus on the retail cost of the coconut syrup among other potential producers; gender issues as bottlenecks to value chain development (Box 1); the high cost of transport and logistics in general; competitive products obtained from fresh toddy; competing income-generating activities; and natural disasters.

While partners work to unlock the barriers to value chain development and strengthening, they are looking forward to witnessing the potential benefits of an increased coconut syrup production with the following additional benefits:

- Cultural survival: to preserve traditional knowledge and related practices and products of the Banaban people;
- Sustainable practices: to promote organic and sustainable practices by providing an alternative to other natural resource extractive income-generating practices such as largescale planting of kava, which are leading to environmental degradation mainly due to deforestation threatening watershed areas;
- Women's empowerment: to create a livelihood opportunity for Banaban women potentially leading to their increased agency, participation and decision-making power at different levels;
- Value chain expansion: providing the Banaban community with an opportunity to move up the value chain by introducing a value-added product for market reach-out.



Box 1: Why gender matters in value chain development

Gender inequalities at household and community level, and the traditional and rigid gender division of labour in fresh toddy and coconut syrup production, has an impact on the value chain functioning. Women are not traditionally involved in fresh toddy harvesting, often leading to a weak technical knowledge and decision-making power among them on related activities. Their say on the use of fresh toddy for value addition products, such as coconut syrup, is limited. This in turn prevents many opportunities for VC expansion from further development. Excessive workload and time poverty (women are primarily responsible for household chores and childcare), limited control over household resources and financial decisions, are other gender issues precluding women from investing time and resources in increasing their coconut syrup production for a greater income and market reach-out.

A market and cost analysis to inform the price of the coconut syrup could potentially lead to a consensus among different producers on the retail price, bringing more farmers and families into the coconut syrup business while supporting women's role in processing coconut syrup, and reshaping more equal power dynamics at household and community levels.

Currently, the retail price is based on individual preferences and is not informed by any study or consensus involving more women producers.

LESSONS LEARNED

The impact of closed borders and travel restrictions is forcing value chain stakeholders to pivot their business strategy, to look internally and domestically for sustainable and resilient responses and for new, innovative and flexible partnerships. Partner support and collaboration is critical in ensuring the functioning, continued production, constant offer of value chains on the markets, as well as livelihood opportunities for farmers and local businesses.



CONVENTIONAL FARMER TURNS ORGANIC FOR ECONOMIC GAINS BUT FINDS MORE



Louis Ate of New Caledonia shows trainees around his orchard during a training on Participatory Guarantee System with his tribe.



Louis discussing organic certification with a facilitator from Biocalédonia in New Caledonia's Northern Province.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY

The increasing demand for organic products in New Caledonia motivated Louis Ate to transition to organic farming. The benefits Louis gained, however, surpassed his one motivating factor – better economic returns. Louis realised that providing and supplying healthy and quality food for his family and community was equally important. Along the way he learned to appreciate and maintain the health of the environment that sustains his livelihood.

“I used to have a small field and orchard,” said Louis. “I wasn’t paying much attention to waste management and we used to burn many things among the crops. Now I have stopped burning waste. I cultivate it. My field is healthier. I expanded my cultivated plots and my orchard, and I have more citrus trees that I grow under banana plants, for direct sunlight protection and drought resistance. Especially the local mandarin – that is a speciality from my region.”

CONTEXT

Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Certification and labelling for organically grown food items and products have been developed to provide consumers with the means to clearly identify products that correspond to their purchase criteria such as nutrition, ecology or ethics. While certification required is demand-driven and determined by the market, now more than ever, farmers and consumers are realising the importance of organic agricultural practices.





WHAT WE ASPIRED TO DO AND HOW WE DID IT

In 2009, POETCom helped with the formation of the Biocalédonia association in New Caledonia. The Biocalédonia association was created to provide organic producers with a guarantee tool to better promote their products, while ensuring that the tool is adapted to the various production systems found in the territory. It has about 95 producers certified organic representing 1287.11 hectares of organic certified land in New Caledonia (Data from POETCom's 2019 PGS report).

EARLY/INCREMENTAL CHANGE

In addition to support with organic certification, POETCom offers trainings and capacity building on organic production and certification, working in partnership with its farmer organisations and PGS groups in the region. One such exchange happened in New Caledonia in 2019 in which Louis Ate participated.

At an individual level, Louis improved his agricultural practices through the Biocalédonia association and POETCom's collaboration for trainings and information sharing held in 2019. He established a local PGS system in his tribe, the Konoyes-Chaoué in Kouaoua, and became the tribe's first PGS certified organic producer. Other producers are also turning to organic farming, with two farmers now PGS certified and three others in transition.

Now enjoying the fruits of his labour, Louis said, "I'd like more people to join the association and the PGS, to come back to farming, to respect our environment, its health and the consumers' health. We must take care of the land bequeathed to us by our elders."

LESSONS LEARNED

Organic agricultural practices improve local and regional food and nutritional security and sovereignty for all. It helps to improve human health by providing better access to high-quality clean and nutritious food.

Organic agricultural practices protect and enhance the environment by encouraging the use of environmentally friendly management practices.

INCOME	EURO TOTAL
Opening balance	473,402.26
Donor contributions	140,339.26
Programme contracted with member organisations	-
Government and non-governmental agencies grants	-
Other incomes, sales and recoveries	-
Interest income	-
TOTAL INCOME	613,741.52

EXPENDITURE	
Programme activities	375,403.00
Support services	121,747.36
SPC contribution	28,179.03
TOTAL EXPENSES	525,329.39

