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Issue 1

# PIFON

## Newsletter

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## **Introducing the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON)**

The Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) is a regional farmer organisation coordinating body that has been operating informally since 2009. PIFON was formally established at its Foundation Conference on April 15, 2013 at the South Sea Orchids convention room situated at Nasau, Nadi in the Fiji Islands.

The Foundation Conference endorsed a 3 year work programme, the adoption of its Memorandum and Articles of Association, the election of its Board of Directors and the appointment of a Secretariat by representatives from 13 farmer organisations from around the Pacific region as far as the Cook Islands and the Solomon islands.

PIFON's objectives translate into 3 broad types of activities as follows:

- Enhancing viability and sustainability of national farmer organizations (FOs);
- Providing practical information to member farmers to enable them to better participate in income generating activities; and
- Providing practical information to member farmers to enable them to adopt more sustainable production practices.

PIFON has been selected as the official implementing agency for the Medium Term Cooperation Programme with Farmers' Organisations in Asia and the Pacific Phase II in the Pacific region (MTCP II) which is co-funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Swiss Development Fund.

MTCP II will provide part of the core funding for PIFON's endorsed 3 year work programme which will be supplemented by other regional agencies and aid agency partners.



**PIFON Foundation Conference attendees at the South Sea Orchids in Nasau, Nadi, Fiji**

# National Implementing Agencies (NIAs) selected in five countries for MTCP II project

National Implementing Agencies (NIAs) have been selected in the five countries directly involved in the MTCP II project for the Pacific (Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Tonga). NIAs will be responsible for managing activities in each country guided by PIFON. The confirmation of NIAs was endorsed by the PIFON Board and the MTCP II steering committee meeting held in Nadi in November 2013. The appointed NIAs are as follows:

Fiji	Samoa	Vanuatu	Solomon Islands	Tonga
Tei Tei Taveuni (TTT)	Samoa Farmers Assoc. (SFA)	Farm Support Assoc. (FSA)	Kastom Gaden Assoc. (KGA)	Tonga Growers Federation (TGF)

As of February 2014, three out of the five NIAs, namely, TTT, SFA and FSA have signed Letters of Agreement (LOAs) with PIFON. National consultations are still ongoing in Tonga and the Solomon Islands to determine priority activities.

**MTCP2** Medium Term Cooperation Programme with Farmers' Organizations in Asia and the Pacific, Phase II  
 Strengthening the Capacities of Farmers' Organizations to Deliver Services and Engage in Policy Work



## Farmer-to-farmer exchanges—a priority activity for PIFON

A number of farmer-to-farmer exchanges have been initiated through MTCP II funding to PIFON. Many of these exchanges were identified as priority needs at PIFON's Foundation Conference in 2013 and now they will become a reality. Exchanges currently initiated include:

- Papaya technical expertise from Fiji (Nature's Way Cooperative) travelling to Samoa to work with the Samoa Farmers Association on improved production practices.
- Soil conservation and sustainable systems expertise (Vanuatu Farm Support Association) travelling to Fiji to work with Tei Tei Taveuni and Tutu Rural Training Centre on improved practices of ally cropping, cover cropping and erosion control.
- Off-season pineapple expertise from Fiji travelling to Samoa to work with Samoa Farmers Association.

Facilitating farmer-to-farmer exchanges is a core activity for PIFON and it is anticipated that as the network grows and more information is available about the work happening in each organization, there will be more requests for these exchanges.



**Oliva Lato of FSA Vanuatu works with Fiji farmers on an alley cropping demonstration site in Nadi, Fiji.**

# PIFON members to showcase at International Horticulture Congress 2014

Representatives from three PIFON member FOs will be supported through the MTCP II project to present scientific papers at the ISHS International Horticulture Congress in Brisbane (August 2014). These papers include:

- “More resilient cropping systems for food security and livelihoods in the Pacific islands” – **Peter Kaoh**, Vincent Lebot, Andrew McGregor, Mary Taylor and Mike Bourke.
- “The past, present, and future role of Pacific Island Farmer Organisations in empowering rural people to take advantage of economic livelihood opportunities.” – **Afamasaga Toleafoa** and Kyle Stice.
- “Approaches/strategies for mass propagation of a traditional crop to develop an export industry – Village based nursery enterprises in Fiji” – **Fr Petero Matairatu**, Livai Tora and Kaitu Erasito



A number of other PIFON members will also be presenting research at the IHC 2014 through separate funding in the areas of papaya, breadfruit and market access.

## Nature’s Way Cooperative Launches Certified ‘Fiji Red’ Papaya Seed

The Fiji Papaya industry will now have access to locally produced, high quality papaya seed at a more affordable rate. PIFON member, Nature’s Way Cooperative (NWC) in close collaboration with the Fiji Ministry of Agriculture Research Division has developed a certification scheme for the production and sale of ‘Fiji Red’ papaya seed. This locally produced ‘Fiji Red’ seed replaces seed that was previously imported at a very high cost from the University of Hawaii.

The launch of the new seed scheme is a result of several years of research to re-introduce the package of practices for local tree selection, flower bagging, quality assessment and processing. This research was funded through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) under the Fiji Papaya Project. The current seed production standard provides the industry with a guarantee that only the best genetics, selected under Fiji’s conditions are available for export.

Without the additional costs of freight and quarantine fees, the locally produced seed is available to nurserymen and farmers at a cheaper rate than seed from the University of Hawaii. This cost savings is in line with the primary goal of the Cooperatives Research and Extension programme, which is to make papaya production and exporting more profitable for all actors in the supply chain.

**NATURE’S WAY COOPERATIVE**  
**Certified ‘Fiji Red’ Papaya Seed**

**Packed on:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Batch #** \_\_\_\_\_

**PH: 679-672-4566**  
**E-mail: nwc@connect.com.fj**

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Keep seed dry and away from direct sunlight. Store in refrigerator at 5-10 deg C.  
 Germination ≥ 80% within 9 months of packing date.

# PIFON Supports Documentation of Lessons learnt from Vanuatu Spices Network

Farm Support Association (FSA) in Vanuatu has received support from PIFON under the MTCP II project to assist in the professional write-up of lessons learnt and experiences with regards to Vanuatu's Spices Network. Some key lessons from FSA's long experience in facilitating income generation by ni-Vanuatu small holders include:

- Premium quality products are imperative for the commercial viability of niche market exports from a small remote country such as Vanuatu.
- The importance of "suitcase" exports through tourists visiting Vanuatu.
- There is greater interest in vanilla in more remote locations where farmers have fewer alternatives.
- Farmers in remote locations can produce world class spices provided they receive appropriate support and have confidence in the buyers. Organic certification provided this confidence to overseas buyers.
- Spice organic certification is more important in accessing markets than generating price premiums.
- There is a need for agribusinesses to "pull" products through the value chain.
- The need to consolidate on the work of the Spices Network particularly for the benefit of farmers in more remote locations.
- The high overhead cost of external third party organic certification make it unsustainable and there is need to move to local and Pacific island based certification systems.



**Oliva Lato of FSA Vanuatu training rural famers from the spices network on correct curing and storage of vanilla beans.**

## PIFON Partners



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