

# Pfom

## STRATEGIC REVIEW SUMMARY

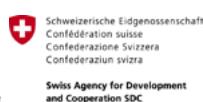




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PIFON is funded under the MTCP 2 (Medium Term Cooperation Programme with Farmers' Organisations in Asia and the Pacific Region – Phase 2) and the SPC PAPP (Pacific Agriculture Policy Program)



# Executive Summary

PIFON aims to become the lead regional organization and Centre of Excellence in agricultural extension in the Pacific Islands - promoting economically viable, culturally and environmentally appropriate sustainable farming systems – and providing the healthy local foods so desperately needed to combat the now epidemic scourge of non-communicable diseases.

PIFON's function and roles are still evolving but its major comparative advantages are in:

- Extension from Farmer Organization /farmer to Farmer Organization /farmer and
- Injecting a regional perspective into selected relevant areas such as agricultural commodity trade access and
- Meeting common markets for agricultural and food produce.

The consensus among PIFON's member organizations and partners, and others consulted for this review, was that PIFON:

- Has been doing an overall good to excellent job,
- Has proven its worth in the short period since its formation, and
- Needs to continue with greater funding of its core activities.

Within each country PIFON is highly reliant on its National Implementing Agency (NIA) for effective conduct of its activities with farmer organizations. For most part the NIAs are highly regarded by their in-country peer organizations, but in a couple of instances there have been breakdowns in communication between FOs within the same country. PIFON needs to be aware of such matters and proactively address them - for most part it will be a case of seeking better performance of the particular NIA but in some cases PIFON might need to work more directly with the particular FO member to ensure the desired communication outcomes.

Based on the overwhelming views of those consulted, this review recommends that PIFON's secretariat/management unit needs strengthening, to at least four full-time professional and administrative staff, and eventually its own permanent base in Fiji. However, prior to any expansion, PIFON needs to secure a larger recurrent core budget to cover additional staff, enhanced services to members and also to cover rental of office space. This will involve development of a realistic business plan with an achievable income pipeline – and with a diversified income stream from donors, project overheads, services and member fees (limited). Suggested PIFON services might include organizing meetings and arranging printing and distribution of publications - farmer field school manuals, value chain, FO models/templates, simple smallholder business planning manual



It is recommended that PIFON develop with the most relevant key partners in the region including the Pacific Islands Development Forum and the Pacific Community to foster and strengthen collaboration and increase the involvement of FOs into the work programs of these organizations. Minor revisions to PIFON's Articles of Association related to membership and Board have been recommended.



# Introduction

Farmer organizations play a critical role in informing and empowering rural smallholder farmers, and in developing a dynamic and more prosperous rural economy. In the Pacific Islands, farmer organizations are diverse, and generally much smaller and still developing compared with other tropical regions of the world. Prior to formation of PIFON the efforts of PI farmer organizations were fragmented, and hampered by both a lack of resources and ability to learn from like-minded organizations.

The Pacific Islands Farmer Organization Network (PIFON) was formed in April 2013 at its foundation conference held in Nadi in April, 2013. PIFON serves as an umbrella organization for national farmer organizations. Since formation the network has been progressively and sustainably adding members and now has 17 member organizations in eight countries (Fiji, Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu), including observer members (in transition to full membership). PIFON is registered in Fiji as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee.

## PIFON's main activities are to:

- Coordinate capacity building,
- Share farmer and agribusiness success stories and the lessons learnt, and
- Support regional exchanges of expertise between farmer organizations and their associated private sector and donor agency partners.

PIFON is in the final year of its three-year strategic plan (2014-2016) and implementing 23 activities spread across five objectives.

PIFON has generated funds through consultations, organizing meetings, and membership subscriptions but its overwhelming funding has been provided from two donor projects, viz.

- IFAD's Medium Term Cooperation Programme with Farmer Organizations in Asia and the Pacific Phase II (MTCPII), and
- EU-SPC Pacific Agricultural Policy Programme (PAPP).

After two years of operations an independent external review of PIFON was commissioned to evaluate PIFON's performance in relation to its 2014-16 strategic plan, member organization needs and expectations. This review also provides suggestions and recommendations to sustainably deliver improved services to member organizations, on how best to grow the network's membership and recommendations for the next 2017-19 strategic plan.

The consultant, Dr Lex Thomson, visited and sought the views and inputs from PIFON members in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tonga during April 2016 and through written correspondence with members in PNG, Samoa and Vanuatu.



# 1. Main Findings

Assessment of performance of PIFON during 2014-16 and recommendations for PIFON's new strategic plan

PIFON and its Secretariat are widely regarded as having performed well during the period 2014-2016. It was noted in consultations for this review that PIFON is a relatively new regionally-based network and that such entities can often take from several, or even many, years to find their feet and carve out a recognized position. This is not the case for PIFON which has hit the ground running.

## Key contributory factors to PIFON's initial and early success have been:

- PIFON has been built on base of a predecessor, informal co-ordinating body for Pacific farmer organizations that has existed since 2009,
- Its highly productive foundation conference held in April 2013, and attended by representatives from 13 farmer organisations from around the Pacific region which: endorsed a three-year work programme, adopted a Memorandum and Articles of Association, elected a Board of Directors and appointed a Secretariat,
- Appointment of a highly experienced, well-respected and diverse group of Board members,
- Recruitment of a dynamic, enthusiastic and diligent Manager, backed up by attentive and professional administrative support staff,
- Donor support through IFAD's Medium Term Cooperation Programme with Farmer Organizations in Asia and the Pacific Phase II (MTCPII) and EU-SPC Pacific Agricultural Policy Programme (PAPP),
- Appropriate selection of National Implementing Agencies for MTCPII,
- Maintained a clear focus on its area of comparative advantage and needs - with a highly successful portfolio of farmer-to-farmer training and learning exchanges.

PIFON has substantially undertaken the activities set out in its 2014-2016 three year work plan and achieved the listed outputs as indicated in Table 1.



**Table 1. PIFON 2014-2016 work programme - objectives and activities****Objective 1: To establish PIFON as a sustainable organisation with wide membership across the Pacific Islands**

No.	Activity	Outputs/ Milestones	Proposed funding sources	Due date of out- put/ milestone	Comment	Suggestions for next three year plan
1.1	Prepare the detailed documentation for the establishment of PIFON.	All documentation is ready for discussion and endorsement at the PIFON Foundation Conference.	IFAD	Preparation of PIFON document under IFAD contract to KSF	Completed	
1.2	Organize the PIFON Foundation Conference to review the recommendations in activity 1.1 and to formalise the establishment of PIFON. Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Board Members elected.	Consultations undertaken and Foundation Conference held. PIFON formally exists as a legally constituted organisation. Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Board Members in place	IFAD/ AVRDC Pacific Vegetable Partnership/	Yr 1 M 3	Completed	Hold PIFON Regional Conference in late 2016 or May 2017 connected with Pacific Agriculture Week in Port Vila- to elevate profile of national and other FOs. Confirm PIFON three year work programs and directions, and review membership requirements
1.3	Following its formal establishment, the PIFON Secretariat will be externally funded for a further 3 years. During this period the secretariat would be expected to carry out the activities of PIFON as outlined in this proposal: finalised and endorsed at the Foundation Conference.	The secretariat carries out all of the activities described in this proposal and endorsed by activity 1.2.	MTCP II	Yr 1 – Yr 3	On track	PIFON secretariat to carry out 3-year work program, including proactively seeking additional funding and new projects that fit within remit of PIFON
1.4	The PIFON Manager to undertake site visits to member FOs to identify needs and make realistic assessments of the contribution to be made by PIFON	At least one on-site visit made to each member FO	MTCP II	Yr 1 – Yr 3	Fulfilled	PIFON Manager to make visit to each country during the three year period and meet with PIFON members in each country, as well as National Governments (Agriculture Minister, PS and Head of Ag extension)
1.5	Foundation members registered. Work with founding members to identify other national farmer organisations interested in joining PIFON. An appropriate registration and approval processes established	Founding members are properly registered with PIFON. PIFON membership is increased with wide representation.	MTCP II	Yr 1 M 10 Yr 1 – Yr 3	Fulfilled	Aim to register at least five additional members (including one new country)



**Objective 2: To provide Pacific island national farmer organisation with key contacts, information and the technical expertise required to achieve overall viability**

No.	Activity	Outputs/ Milestones	Proposed funding sources	Due date of output/ milestone	Comment	Suggestions for next three year plan
2.1	Assist members in preparation of strategic and financing plans to enhance sustainability	Assistance provided to at least 3 FOs per year	SPC/APPP	Yr 1 - Yr 3	Partially fulfilled	Assistance provided to at least 4 FOs per year
2.2	Assist members in the preparation of funding proposals. Funds will be allocated for consultants' inputs to support farmer organisations in the development of funding proposals. The secretariat will help facilitate the requests and prioritise the consultants' inputs.	Assistance provided to at least 3 FOs per year	SPC/APPP	Yr 1 – Yr 3	Partially fulfilled	Assistance provided to at least 4 FOs per year
2.3	Facilitate the establishment of a regional 'consolidator' / contact person(s) who would help farmer organisations and their members to access needed inputs. – E.g. packaging, labels, field crates, printing services, seeds and other specialised farm inputs. To provide "who to go to" advice.	Private sector partner is identified to take on the role of regional consolidator. The revenue base of national FO increased because of this initiative	Undertaken by the secretariat with the core budget	Yr 2 M 6 Yr 2 – Yr 3	Partly achieved - reluctance for FOs to take 'profit' from marking up farm inputs, e.g. TTT	PIFON secretariat to take on this role - developing an online database of suppliers. PIFON might become re-packager and supplier of open-pollinated vegetable seeds and other crops propagated by seed
2.4	Produce and distribute a quarterly newsletter highlighting the activities of PIFON as well as member success stories and lessons learnt, upcoming meetings and funding opportunities. Establish a website to house key information resources.	Quarterly newsletter is produced and distributed every three months. Website is established and regularly updated.	Undertaken by the secretariat with the core budget	Yr 1 – Yr 3	Substantially achieved, newsletters produced on average every four months	Continue production of quarterly newsletter. Revitalize PIFON Facebook page, building on e-bulletins.
2.5	Organise and support a PIFON Conference in Year 2 to highlight work carried out as well as deliver key training in the continued effort to 'professionalise' farmer organisations in the Pacific.	Conference is held and key issues addressed.	IFAD/ AVRDC Pacific Vegetable Partnership/ SPC- EU PAPP Project	Yr 2 M 9	Undertaken	Repeat - with regional conference in 2018. Suggest another venue to Nadi, to showcase the work of PIFON members in another PI country - e.g. Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga or Vanuatu. Consider bringing forward to Vanuatu (May 2017) to coincide with inaugural Pacific Agriculture Week
2.6	Proposals formulated for the long term sustainability of PIFON	Proposal prepared and endorsed by the PIFON Conference.	Undertaken by the secretariat with core budget	Yr 1 – Yr 2		More proactively seek donor funding with at least five proposals prepared and submitted each year - including to EU, IFAD, ADB, FAO, UNDP, SPC, PIDF, USAID, Australian Aid, NZ Aid, China Aid, JICA, French Aid, ACIAR and others (including Pacific Island Governments). PIFON might employ a consultant/project proposal/formulation expert to work on this to optimize likelihood of success.



**Objective 3: To provide national farmer organisation with key contacts, information and the technical expertise required to enable their members to better participate in commercial agriculture**

No.	Activity	Outputs/ Milestones	Proposed funding sources	Due date of output/ milestone	Comment	Suggestions for next three year plan
3.1	Provide a clearing house for problems and questions from national FOs relating to commercial agriculture. Provide an "ask the analyst" service for member FOs	Satisfactorily answer at least 20 questions per year from members relating to commercial agriculture participation	Undertaken by the secretariat with the core budget	Yr 1 – Yr 3	An 'Ask the Analyst link' has been developed on the website but the clearing house mechanism has not been developed	This service needs to be made more functional in 2017, coupled with increased PIFON secretariat capacity and more active on-line presence.  PESTNET, e.g. Grahame Jackson) ( <a href="http://www.pestnet.org/">http://www.pestnet.org/</a> ) ought to be consulted on lessons learnt.
3.2	Support regional technical exchanges of expertise between farmer organisations and their associated private sector partners. It is envisioned that PIFON would support 3 technical exchanges per year.	At least 3 targeted regional exchanges occur.	SPC PAPP AVRDC	Yr 1 – Yr 3	Achieved and on track	Aim to maintain or increase support for targeted regional exchanges as this has been a major acknowledged benefit provided by PIFON.
3.3	Produce and distribute a quarterly newsletter highlighting the activities of PIFON as well as member success stories and lessons learnt, upcoming meetings and funding opportunities. Establish a website to house key information resources. (note: substantial duplication of activity 2.4)	Quarterly newsletter is produced and distributed every three months. Website is established and regularly updated.	Undertaken by the secretariat with the core budget	Yr 1 – Yr 3	Newsletter has been produced at 3 issues per year	Ensure that newsletter is produced on quarterly basis and that distribution list is reviewed and extended to donor agencies, educational institutes, Pacific Island Governments (Ag ministers, Heads of Agriculture, and extension officers), private sector (PIPSO, Chambers of Commerce) and other possible supporters (banks etc.). Continue excellent e-bulletin series.
3.4	Prepare a proposal to facilitate improved market access between Pacific island countries. Expertise will be sourced to help PIFON prepare a proposal to facilitate improved market access between Pacific Island countries.	A proposal is prepared and submitted to relevant authorities and donors.	AusAID PHAMA Project	Yr 2 M 3	Not undertaken	PIFON should act as peak group to provide collated input from the region's FOs into future market access programs and projects (post PHAMA which will conclude in 2017)
3.5	Become an implanting partner in the proposed ACIAR Tropical Fruit Development Project. PIFON would be a formal project partner responsible for industry engagement and outreach through grower participation in the information /knowledge and skill transfer process.	PIFON obtains a contract as an implementing partner	ACIAR	Yr 2	Not undertaken	PIFON will be a formal partner in the phase 2 of ACIAR's PARDI (Pacific Agribusiness Research for Development Initiative) and this collaboration needs to be reflected in 2017-19 strategic plan





**Objective 4: To provide national farmer organisation with key contacts, information and the technical expertise required to improve the productivity and the environmental sustainability of members farming operations**

No.	Activity	Outputs/ Milestones	Proposed funding sources	Due date of output/ milestone	Comment	Suggestions for next three year plan
4.1	Provide a clearing house for problems and questions from national FOs relating to productivity and environmental sustainability. Provide an "ask the analyst" service for member FOs	Satisfactorily answer at least 20 questions per year from members relating to productivity and environmental sustainability	Undertaken by the secretariat with the core budget	Yr 1 – Y3	See 3.1	See 3.1
4.2	Collaborate with the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) in the demonstration of sustainable agricultural practices	At least two sustainable agriculture demonstrations established per year through FOs	POETCom with possible funding from GEF/ OXFAM and others	Yr 1 – Yr 3	In progress	The 2017-19 plan should aim to include at least one major/integrated and accessible sustainable agriculture demonstration/model in each country working with PIFONs major partners in Fiji (TTT and TRTC), Samoa (SFA), Solomon Islands (KG), Tonga (Ni-shi) and Vanuatu (FSAV) and POETCom.
4.3	The promotion and demonstration of disaster and climate change mitigation measures for agriculture – with an emphasis on sharing practical lessons learnt between FOs.	At least two disaster mitigation sites established per year through FOs.	Possible funding from GEF/ OXFAM and others	Yr 1 – Yr 3	PIFON working with members to document lessons learnt from TCs Pam and Winston. Reported in PIFON newsletters and e-bulletins	At least one disaster mitigation site established per year in partnership with FO members.
4.4	Sharing information and experiences on fair-trade and organic operators and certifiers, to include both positive & negative experiences	Information provided to FOs through formal and informal networks	Undertaken by the secretariat with the core budget	Yr 1 – Yr 3	Some information shared	Continue to liaise closely with POETCom to promote organic and more sustainable farming practices and fair or ethical trade.



**Objective 5: To raise the profile of farmer organisations in the Pacific and give farmers a voice in regional and international forums – influencing and securing farmer driven donor support**

No.	Activity	Outputs/ Milestones	Proposed funding sources	Due date of output/ milestone	Comment	Suggestions for next three year plan
5.1	Develop profiles for all member organisations that will be posted on the website.	Member organisations have a profile that is accessible to potential partners.	Undertaken by the secretariat with the core budget	Yr 1 M 9	Currently profiles of 7 member organizations are accessible on PIFON website – need to add NF, FCLC, FSAF, MORDI and VCOA	All Member organizations, including observers, to have their profiles included on PIFON website
5.2	Assist national FO in the professional writing up of their lessons learnt and case study experiences	At least three (3) detailed write up of lessons learnt/ case study experiences of FOs per year	Undertaken by the secretariat with the core budget	Yr 1 – Yr 3	Four lessons learnt studies undertaken: 1. Strategic Review of NWC & lessons learnt 2. Lessons learnt from Vanuatu Spices Network 3. Evaluation Report on Napil Training Centre, Tanna 4. Lessons learnt on impact of TC Pam	Continue to develop and write up lessons learnt of member FOs – this may be undertaken during short duration secondments to PIFON by the member FO
5.3	Provide representation for PIFON and its members at regional and international forums to highlight the issues and needs of PIFON members.	Issues and needs of PIFON members have regional and international representation.	Forum sponsors	Yr 1 – Yr 2	At 6th Global Farmers Forum, 3rd Global Conference on Ag Research for Development, IFAD's 1st Pacific Programme Review Workshop AFA, Coconut Industry Development for the Pacific" FAO roundtable etc.	Continue to ensure PIFON members are internationally and regionally represented as opportunities arise including Pacific Agriculture Week, and relevant FAO, PIDF, IFAD, AFA and SPC meetings





**This review's key recommendations and options for consideration for PIFON's new strategic plan are as follows:**

1. Increase capacity of PIFON Secretariat to include a full-time manager and two assistant managers/protégés (one for planning and organizing training and publications and one for on-line services including quarterly newsletter, member enquiries, clearing house and 'ask the analyst') and one administrative officer.
2. Under Objective 1 add in activities/milestones specifically to secure long-term funding for PIFON - donor funds and projects; income generating activities and memberships.
3. Under Objective 1, add an objective which aims to grow PIFONs membership in a manner which is sustainable (and does not diminish services provided to existing members). A ball-park target might be to grow PIFONs membership to 25 farmer organizations by the end of 2019.
4. Co-ordinate and support the development of Farmer Field School Manuals for at least half of represented countries (four), these could be based on the product being developed in Tonga by Nishi Foundation/MORDI, and include appropriate figures/diagrams and local language editions.
5. Work with national farmer organizations to adapt and or produce appropriate manuals on business planning, post-harvest/value adding and value chain approaches.
6. Work with national farmer organizations to assist them in obtaining greater recognition of their roles by Governments, including exploring opportunities for them to take over some of the Government Agricultural Extension (with funding from National Government).
7. Implement and scale-up the Seed and Breadfruit project, with additional funding, and complement commercial seed supply sector with focus on open-pollinated seeds.
8. Develop the on-line 'ask the analyst' service (but perhaps with a different name).
9. Become a full partner in ACIAR PARDI (Pacific Agribusiness Research for Development Initiative) ensuring that farmer organizations are involved from the outset to optimise research questions and maximize and ensure early adoption of findings.

The feedback received from interviewed and consulted members of PIFON on member services was overwhelmingly extremely positive. Some of the frequently positively mentioned activities were the farmer-to-farmer exchanges (including the Taveuni Soil Exchange workshop; the papaya, spices and all year-round pineapple production training in Tonga; vegetable production), excellent quality of publications especially on value chain analysis, and the revising (with local contexts) and republishing of existing publications such as Pierro Bianchesi's Vanilla publication for Tonga and revising of the Tonga Farmer Field School Manual using information garnered from the Taveuni Soil Exchange; positive impacts on rural training programs such as integration of floriculture in TRTC training programs.



## 2. Appraisal of PIFON's service to members and recommendations to improve member services

### *Some examples of the typically highly positive feedback on PIFON from individuals, member organizations and donors included:*

"PIFON is operating at a high level with good leadership of the team"

"I think PIFON has done a lot in a very short time since its inception.....overall, it has delivered and been administered well as a regional office in delivering identified projects to its members"

"With the support of PIFON we have built a great network sharing and networking and improving on what we are doing individually in our own home countries and abroad"

"PIFON has been providing a high quality of trainers"

"Projects are well catered for in the form of widespread consultations"

"PIFON has been very responsive to our requests for training"

"The direct benefits of PIFON's training programs has been substantial"

"PIFON's integrity coupled with its ability to develop a network of respected farmer organization partners and deliver results makes it attractive to donors..... we have too often seen little measurable impact for our efforts to increase agricultural production in the Pacific"

"PIFON has provided vital finance for our extension activities with women and youth"

"Acquittals to PIFON are followed up and done on time"

"We really need farmer-to-farmer exchange as delivered through PIFON"

"PIFON is a breath of fresh air - it is easy to work with and has a good understanding of the local situation. They thoroughly vet projects, help secure funding and have a reporting regime which is not excessively or unnecessarily onerous"

"PIFON's networking is working"

"PIFON's bottom up approach is an excellent model"

"PIFON has achieved, it has been very, very good"

"PIFON creates a good space for farmers to come together"

### *Additional suggestions and thoughts from PIFON members and donor partners on its performance and future were :*

"PIFON may need to be run as a business model to generate more of its own revenue stream"

"Sustainability is a concern - a plan should be in place on how to fund the PIFON office from activities and membership fees"

"Manager needs to invest more in building the capacity of the team/secretariat"

"PIFON needs a full-time manager"

"PIFON should have its own office apart from Natures Way Co-operative".





"There has to be two or more staff to help administer PIFON apart from current arrangements in place in Fiji. There is a need to pilot Country managers in each Pacific Island country to support and manage PIFON activities within each country".

"There is a need to increase funding for PIFON Management and current Projects in NIA countries...with country managers in each Pacific Island country to support and manage PIFON activities"

"We are currently setting up & organising farmer organisations. Once all our FO's are set up we need funding to support them and before they start 'barking' at us ....".

"Short-term training and workshops can be most usefully backed up with longer term technical assistance"

"The Soil Learning Exchange was fabulous but needed an extra day of workshopping with experts - more discussions would have been valuable"

"PIFON's lack of capacity is a risk for donors"

"PIFON needs to better define its specific core services including developing a referral/help desk service"

"PIFON can be powerful in advocating to governments in addressing issues that are properly researched and substantiated to ensure sustainable development at all levels"

"With the growing strength future partnerships formed through PIFON, the board should look at ways it can influence policies in government both country and regional, e.g. current work in seeds and breadfruit, the importance of food security and the need for private-sector driven research"

"PIFON needs improved and more transparent governance - consider widening its Board membership and/or observers to include more diversity, both commercial/markets, Government representatives and donors"

"Increased Government recognition of both FOs and PIFON is vital and a precursor to greater support..... PIFON could have a government (Dept of Agriculture) or private (Chamber of Commerce) sub-coordinator in each partner Island countries to support us and provide project updates"

"Is it possible to have French versions of PIFON documents and reports?"

"IFAD ought to send a review team to follow-up on countries that have benefited from PIFON and to start looking at issues faced by us .....and build on the lessons learnt and successes "

" the future of extension is with the farmers themselves, less government extension as this is a very weak link; more Donor resources should be pumped into building farmer-led extension through FOs and to include infrastructure such as research stations that would address the needs of farmers. A bottom up approach is needed, controlled by private sector to ensure sustainability and user pay system by farmers to ensure secured services are available for local farmers".

"....with increasing severe weather forces, intraregional trade should be prioritised and collaboration for combined regional trade is of critical importance to maintain our markets such as NZ and Australia. Supply from Fiji can be wiped out in a single cyclone or multiple cyclones, hence seek support and windows of cover from Samoa, Tonga or Cook Islands etc. PIFON should play a role to identify gaps in these, but also to include import substitution gaps."

### 3. Assessment of PIFON'S project delivery performance and recommendations

The feedback provided by SPC/EU PAPP, IFAD and AFA indicated that PIFON has a very good record of effective project delivery. The Asian Farmer's Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) is the overall lead agency in Asia-Pacific Region for the IFAD-funded Medium Term Cooperation Programme with Farmer Organizations in Asia and the Pacific Phase II with PIFON looking after the Pacific Islands countries. AFA noted that PIFON had been able to align the MTCP2 activities with their strategic plan. The feedback from AFA for this review indicated that the performance of PIFON in implementing MTCP2 as satisfactory. PIFON have been submitting progress report in time and the quality of reports is very good. In terms of the target, most of the target activities have been conducted and results have been documented through printed documentation and video. AFA also noted that PIFON is keenly responding to their recommendation for improving the outreach to marginalized small-scale farmers/farm workers through building their capacity to take leadership roles in their respective Farmers' Organizations.

### 4. Assess the current organizational structure and articles of association in terms of suitability for PIFON now and in the future

The current organizational structure and its legal status (as in the 2014-26 Strategic Plan) is appropriate and optimal for PIFON for now and foreseeable future with minor suggestions as outlined below:

#### Board Structure

At the strategic review meeting with SPC PAPP it was suggested that the Board would benefit from a person(s) with different or wider business backgrounds to complement the existing four farmer organization Board Members. This review's recommendation would be to consider adding one or two additional members to the board which might be drawn from:

- A representative Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization (PIPSO) or Chamber of Commerce
- A representative of an agribusiness supply company

Currently PIFON's Manager is represented on the Board as its Managing Director. However normally the Managing Director or CEO of an organization would not also be a board member. Accordingly, in the reviewer's opinion the PIFON Managing Director ought to not also be a Board member as the Manager provides strategic advice and guidance to the Chairman and the members of the Board, and then implements Board decisions. Certainly the PIFON Manager ought to substantially input into Board meetings, but not then also have a vote or say in Board decisions. A possible caveat on this recommendation concerns the Fiji Companies Act 1983 relating to Companies limited by Guarantee. It has been suggested that the PIFON Manager may need to be a Managing Director member on the Board in order to be permitted to carry out executive decisions, sign financial documents etc. One option may be to designate the PIFON Manager as Company Secretary (if this is not already the case?).

In PIFON's Article of Association under the heading 'Appointment and Removal of Directors' the review recommends that the current text be replaced with:

*"At each Annual General Meeting, all Directors having served for two years shall retire and then be eligible for re-appointment or re-election for a two-year period"*





## PIFON Secretariat Capacity

The capacity of PIFON's Secretariat warrants strengthening as current capacity is a limit to the advisory and support services able to be provided to members, especially for a projected somewhat expanded membership over the next three years. Capacity constraints have been mentioned as a risk to donors and the associated 'key person dependency' risk if the current manager were to leave his position. It is recommended that a stepwise approach might be taken to build capacity with PIFON as follows:

1. Appointment of two full-time assistant Program Managers.
2. Staff within PIFON Farmer Organization Members (and others from within Government, NGOs and regional organizations) be seconded to undertake short work attachments (e.g. 4-6 weeks) in PIFON's office in Nadi. These work attachments would have expected specific outputs, such as development of training manuals or development of project proposals, but the attaches would contribute to and becoming better familiarised with PIFON's operations and staff members.
3. The current half-time Manager be extended to a full-time position, subject to sufficient funding being secured.

## Membership rules and fees

It is recommended that PIFON maintains the observer and full membership status but do away with the payment of a second fee when observers join as full members. In other words there will be a single joining fee to become an observer and after 1 year, the Board can approve an upgrade of the membership with no additional fee.

The Board needs to develop a procedure for dealing with inactive members which would be incorporated into the Articles of Association. One option would be to issue a series of letters firstly seeking that they resume participation, but that if they were no longer a functional body or unable to participate that the Board would revoke their membership.

It is suggested that any new Farmer organizations who are unable to secure the nomination of an existing PIFON member may make an application directly to the Board for becoming an observer (and later full member). The Board will need to develop a set of relevant criteria by which to assess such applications: some criteria or factors which might be taken into account are an Articles of Association which are consistent with PIFON, open membership to farmers, number of members, years of operation, track record of working to benefit the a nation's farmers or sector of farmers, demonstrated good governance including financial accountability to members.

It is noted that PIFON has a diverse membership including organizations which operate to benefit farmers but which might not meet a narrow definition of Farmer Organization. The reviewer considers that PIFON is strengthened by this diversity which takes into account the unique cultural and historical circumstances of the development of farmer organizations in the Pacific Islands.

PIFON's comparative advantage is the exchange of technical information (particularly focusing on sustainable agriculture) and farmer to farmer exchanges (both within and outside the region). This is well reflected in its vision, mission, philosophy and objectives.



## 5. Assessment and recommendations for PIFON's vision, mission, philosophy and objectives

PIFON, in seeking funding, must steadfastly resist the temptation to become driven by donor agendas, who often come with well-meaning but ill-conceived agendas and implemented by personnel with limited Pacific Island's experience. A classic example for the Pacific Islands of this conundrum has been the strong focus of Australia, NZ and EU donors on international trade and integrating Pacific Island economies into the global economy. International exports and generation of foreign revenue receipts are vital, but should not take precedence, at least in agricultural/food sector, over development of import substitution and development of domestic and local markets.

This review emphasises that Pacific Island agribusiness and farmer producer networks need to improve their quality and scale of production before seeking out more demanding and challenging international markets.

### Political advocacy

One PIFON member expressed the desire that IFAD review its activities with PIFON, engage and consult with PIFON members, to start looking more closely at issues faced by them. There is also some pressure from funding agencies such as IFAD (via Asian Farmer Organisations) for PIFON to focus on political advocacy for "peasant" farmers. There is an alternative view that such political advocacy this may prove counter-productive for PIFON and its relationship with Pacific Islands Governments, as the situations facing the farming sectors in Pacific Islands and larger Asian countries are in no way comparable. The prevailing view is that PIFON needs to focus on its core business/comparative advantages and leave it to its FO members to focus on seeking desirable agricultural policy changes at a national level.

### Regional Matters (Trade, Markets and Insurance)

There is a clear role for PIFON to actively work with National Governments, FO Members and donors to identify regional agricultural matters of Pacific Island farmers and have a collective approach to addressing key issues, including:

- Market access issues and priorities (with PIFON's providing input into PHAMA)
- Harmonizing production (volumes and standards) for common regional markets, e.g. chillies to NZ and Australia; Tahitian lime and pineapples to NZ; taro to Australia and NZ. Currently the marketing of much Pacific Islands agricultural produce is too segmented and disconnected between countries, and
- Farmer / Agricultural Insurance, with opportunity to work with and build made on the start made by the FCLC.

Healthy competition needs to be balanced with greater collaboration to better meet market demand and expectations and ensure a more consistent supply of high quality produce into regional and global markets. There was also criticism during the review of the National Plant Protection Offices (NPPOs) - with one view expressed that PIFON needs to push the NPPOs to work more collectively/cooperatively on a regional basis and start to deliver useful outcomes for exports of traded agricultural commodities.

### Agricultural R&D and GAP

PIFON needs to play a greater role in addressing overall stagnant agricultural production, both in terms of volumes and quality. This might take various forms including providing advice and support for improved production techniques. PIFON also need to work with its constituent FOs to strengthen Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and identify best practices to share amongst farmers.

If possible PIFON might look to partner with national FOs who have resources for R&D. These would not necessarily be the existing NIA's (national facilitators), but rather identified appropriate entities who are currently doing relevant R&D work to build on and strengthen and use as a delivery body or extension arm. The planned involvement of PIFON and collaboration with PARDI 2 in Vanuatu, Fiji and Solomon Islands and its strong linkage to NWC (through its shared manager/researcher) can provide a springboard for greater involvement of PIFON, FOs and farmers in R&D to ensure that the most urgent and appropriate researchable constraints to Pacific agriculture are addressed.



## 6. Assessment and Recommendations on PIFON's business model in relation to income generation and sustainability

### Donor funding

For the foreseeable future, PIFON will be heavily reliant on donor funding. In such a scenario it is vital that PIFON carefully target its potential donor funders and projects. PIFON needs to proactively identify those donors and projects which are most likely to provide funding support for PIFON to achieve its core objectives and goals, and either strengthen or begin to develop a relationship with them. Such relationships can be built through periodic formal and informal meetings as well as sharing copies of newsletters and relevant project documents with the relevant staff in donor organizations. The PIFON Manager has excellent communication and networking skills which ought to be put to good use in better tapping into prospective donors.

PIFON needs to review prospective donor funding preferences - and have a reasonably good idea of what they might likely support, that is within PIFON and its member objectives, and at what quantum and time scale of funding. For example, current foci of the Australian Government's development assistance program are private sector development and linkages, and empowerment of women. PIFON already has WIBDI and SSO as founding members, both of whom are assisting women in agribusiness, female farmers and floriculturists, and more recently PNG Women in Agriculture has joined: all three are outstanding in their own right and respective fields. PIFON might approach the Australian Government with a project to build on its women FO membership, such as for example by inviting Women in Business in Solomons, Roko Tani Keni and Floriculture Solomon Islands to join, and build on its training programs and technical exchanges for its women organizations' members. Taiwan has had a focus on vegetable production, including seeds, in the Pacific Islands and might be targeted to provide ongoing support to PIFON's seed programs. Many donors to the Pacific Islands region (including USA and EU) have a focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation and PIFON (and Kokosiga's) work to promote breadfruit production ought to be a perfect match.

PIFON also needs to be able to provide advice and assistance to its FO members on how they can attract funding for their own programs and activities: not only is this an important goal in its own right, but PIFON's *raison d'être* is dependent on having a sufficient number of adequately resourced and well-functioning member FOs spread throughout the Pacific Islands region.

At the FAO/MFAT Roundtable on Private Sector Development in Pacific Agriculture held in May 2016 in Auckland, a concern expressed by major donors (which included EU, ADB, World Bank, IFAD, MFAT NZ and DFAT Australia) was a lack of co-ordination of activities and effort in the agricultural sector and lack of good information and intelligence. Other concerns and challenges included the failure of Pacific Islands Government extension programs in agriculture and the often testy relationship between Government and private sector. One suggestion was for donors to support a fulltime PIFON (or National FO) employee who would act as a liaison between the farmer organizations (and private sector) and the Ministry. This person would also produce a quarterly country update on the agricultural sector, including on existing and planned projects, training programs, meetings and market opportunities to be incorporated into the PIFON quarterly e-newsletter. The donors were very receptive to this idea and it ought to be quickly followed up, in the first instance with MFAT New Zealand and DFAT Australia.





## Towards self-sufficiency

A key challenging question for PIFON is how can it best move away from major donor dependency?

### Pacific Islands Governments

There is a need to raise the status and profile of farmer organizations with National Governments, and also make Governments aware of PIFON and its functions as a vital regional network for Farmer Organizations. A critical area for farmers and rural economies is the reach and quality of agricultural extension services. It has long been considered that the private sector/Farmer Organizations will be more efficient at delivering agricultural extension services than the current Government agencies (which have an overall poor track record). There is an identified need to further strengthen farmers and their organizations to act as extension officers/services in each country: this can be effectively achieved through greater collaboration and information sharing.

For varied reasons donors are reluctant to provide long term financial support, especially for staff positions, to their implementing partners. Accordingly it is evident that the more financially self-sufficient PIFON can become, the better for its continued existence and sustainability. One area that could be more actively promoted by PIFON is private sector associate membership, where significant fees are paid. Possibly the associate member joining fees need to be further subdivided into large agribusiness companies (e.g. turnover of more than US 250,000 per annum), small agribusiness companies and individuals. Large agribusinesses would be asked to provide a more substantial joining fee (e.g. USD 1,000 per year) with an annual subscription of similar magnitude. The larger commercial banks, including development banks, might be targeted for associate membership as the work of PIFON is aimed at building a more commercially viable rural sector in which the banks will be beneficiaries. It could also be promoted as part of the bank's CSG responsibility (...but also a good investment with medium and long term returns). Fiji is a case in point: banks are required to hold 4% of their deposits in loans to the agriculture sector but struggle to meet this target. Perhaps PIFON in the first instance might approach banks such as FDB to become associate members? Once one or two banks were signed up it might be easier to get the other majors to join. PIFON will need to offer agribusiness associates something worthwhile in return. This could be through 'free' advertising in the quarterly newsletter and through directing FO and their members to the products and services they provide.

### A couple of models for sustainable funding

(i) **French Chamber of Agricultures - A possible model for sustainability is provided by the French Chamber of Agricultures (CANC) such as in New Caledonia. The CANC has three sources of funding:**

- A levy on imports of agricultural products (approx. 49% of CANC total annual budget), which illustrates the proactive role of farmers' representative organization (including the Chamber) and the government's willingness to support local production (i.e. interface farmers organization / government)
- Funding allocated for specific operations: i.e. Fertilizer subsidy, GDS-V and other (approx. 49%)
- Membership fees (2%)

Pacific Island Governments might to be lobbied by National FO to put a levy on imports of agricultural/food products which is then used to support farmer organizations and local farmers; increase production of local foods, reduce imports and stem the rise in NCDs.



## (ii) Trust fund

PIFON might consider establishing a trust fund, with the aim of raising FJD 1 Million: once the designated principal is reached then the interest from the trust fund would be available to run PIFON's Secretariat and basic administration during periods in which donor funds are scarce or not forthcoming. The two difficulties with this approach are firstly raising the funds in the first place, and secondly in a period of low interest rates (as at present) the trust fund model is not workable.

### Charging of Overheads

Another revenue raising measure, and aimed at improving PIFONs sustainability, is through an overheads loading or project delivery fee, whereby funds are generated from each project or event managed by PIFON. This is already being done to some extent but could be developed much further. The overhead rate might be negotiable depending on project/activity and donor but with a minimum of 25% of total project cost.

### Expanding PIFON membership

Donors often measure success by the number of members (including requirement for gender balance) and thus there may be undue pressure to increase membership too rapidly just to tick the boxes. Certainly PIFON needs to grow its membership but this needs to be done in a careful and measured way to ensure both sustainability and that expectations from existing and new members can be met.

In addition to the three Solomon Islands womens' groups mentioned earlier, other possible new members suggested for Solomon Islands are NGASI (Nut Growers Association of Solomon Islands) and Gurafesu Farmers (a member of POETCom).

PIFON has received an application for membership from the national umbrella association of seed producer groups in Timor Leste (ANAPROFIKO). PIFON expects that through this new network both ANAPROFIKO and existing PIFON members will benefit from the sharing of information and experiences.

PIFON might also consider extending its geographic spread to New Caledonia - specifically to include the Chamber of Agriculture (see <http://www.canc.nc/regional-network-of-chambers.html>).

Concerning its future expansion and new members, PIFON would be wise to heed the old adage of 'under promise and over-deliver'. In particular PIFON should be cautious about any pressures to extend activities to smaller Pacific Island nations and territories, especially in northern Pacific, where transactional costs will be high and farmer organizations are currently weak or non-existent.





## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AFA</b>	➤ Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (HQ in Quezon City, Philippines)
<b>EU</b>	➤ European Union (HQ in Brussels, Belgium)
<b>FCLC</b>	➤ Fiji Crop and Livestock Council, Lautoka, Fiji
<b>FRIEND</b>	➤ Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development, Fiji
<b>FSAV</b>	➤ Farm Support Association, Port Vila, Vanuatu
<b>FSAF</b>	➤ Floriculture Support Association, Nadi, Fiji
<b>IFAD</b>	➤ International Fund for Agricultural Development (HQ in Rome, Italy)
<b>KGA</b>	➤ Kastom Gaden Association, Honiara, Solomon Islands
<b>KSF</b>	➤ Kokosiga (Fiji) Ltd, Suva, Fiji
<b>LRD</b>	➤ Land Resources Division of SPC, Suva, Fiji
<b>MTCP2</b>	➤ Medium Term Cooperation Programme with Farmer Organizations (FOs) in Asia and the Pacific Phase II (funded by IFAD)
<b>MORDI</b>	➤ Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovations, Nuku'alofa, Tonga
<b>NF</b>	➤ Nishi Foundation
<b>NPPO</b>	➤ National Plant Protection Office
<b>NWC</b>	➤ Nature's Way Cooperative (Fiji) Ltd, Nadi, Fiji
<b>PAPP</b>	➤ Pacific Agriculture Policy Project, SPC/EU, Suva, Fiji
<b>PARDI</b>	➤ Pacific Agribusiness Research for Development Initiative (ACIAR project, Canberra, Australia)
<b>PHAMA</b>	➤ Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program, Suva, Fiji
<b>PIFON</b>	➤ Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network, Nadi, Fiji
<b>PNGWiA</b>	➤ PNG Women in Agriculture,
<b>SAPV</b>	➤ Syndicat Agricole et Pastoral de Vanuatu, Port Vila, Vanuatu
<b>SFA</b>	➤ Samoan Farmers Association, Apia, Samoa
<b>SPC</b>	➤ Pacific Community (HQ in Noumea, New Caledonia)
<b>SSO</b>	➤ South Sea Orchids Ltd, Nadi, Fiji
<b>TGF</b>	➤ Tonga Growers Federation Inc, Nuku'alofa, Tonga
<b>TRTC</b>	➤ Marist Tutu Rural Training Centre, Taveuni, Fiji
<b>TTT</b>	➤ Tei Tei Taveuni, Fiji
<b>VCOPA</b>	➤ Virgin Coconut Oil Producers Association, Honiara, Solomon Islands
<b>ZNT</b>	➤ Zai na Tina Centre for Organic Systems, Honiara, Solomon Islands





# PIFON STRATEGIC REVIEW SUMMARY

