



THE FIJIAN GOVERNMENT



Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique



SOUTH PACIFIC
TOURISM
ORGANISATION



Investing in rural people

AGRITOURISM POLICY SETTING WORKSHOPS

HELD IN NADI ON 23RD FEBRUARY AND IN SUVA ON 26TH FEBRUARY 2018

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Background

Following the request of the Fiji's Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) to the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA), together with the support of the Pacific Community, PIPSO, SPTO and IFAD, organised two workshops on "Agritourism Policy Setting Policy" which was held on 23rd and 26th February 2018 at the Novotel Hotels in Nadi and Suva.

The two days' workshop was organised with the **objectives** (i) to promote linkages between the agrifood and the tourism industry to increase sustainable local sourcing through agritourism policy Fiji, (ii) to increase the understanding and awareness of the current deficiencies in the supply of produce along the value chain and to identify the actions needed, including specific projects to upscale; (iii) to design inter-sectoral and inclusive policies which promotes PPPs. The workshop also looked at successful cases and best practices in policy and agribusiness development in the agri-tourism supply chain and identified the support needed to move this agenda forward. The workshop featured presentations from the various stakeholders, including those from the regional organisations like SPTO. Stakeholders shared views, experiences and recommendations on: (i) cross-sectoral policies needed to tap into the agriculture and tourism markets; (ii) successful local businesses which have innovated to meet demands in supply, quality, consistency and product development; (iii) tourism sector expectations, and needs from farmers and agribusiness; and (iv) the role of chefs in sourcing locally and promoting local cuisine in hotel menus.

The workshops were attended by more than 40 participants from the Senior Government Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, farmers and agro producers, farmers organisations, Chefs, floriculturists, youth entrepreneurs, women's groups, investors, Fiji Livestock and Crops Council, Pacific NGOs organisation, Fiji Hoteliers and Tourism Association, University of the South Pacific, Pacific Community, PIPSO and SPTO.

Nadi Workshop 23rd February 2018 Outcomes

Mrs Volavola briefly welcomed the workshop participants on behalf of organising partners and briefly explained the purpose of the workshop. She stated that through the request of the Ministry of Agriculture to the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the Pacific Community together with other partners worked together in organising and putting together this workshop to discuss the way forward on how to enhance the collaboration and linkages of the agriculture and tourism industry.

Furthermore, the two main outcomes of the workshop is to obtain stakeholders views and thoughts and worked together with stakeholders on developing an agritourism plan for Fiji. The second outcome is to develop three to four projects that will enhance the linkages of the agriculture and tourism industry.

Given that the stakeholders of the agriculture and tourism stakeholders are spread across the country, two workshops will be held with one in Nadi and the other in Suva.

Setting the scene: Agritourism Policy for Fiji – Benefits and Opportunities

Vatimi Rayawa, - Chief Economist, Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji

The Chief Economist, Mr Vatimi Rawaya presented on the benefits and opportunities in the Agriculture industry and how these can be enhanced to better connect with the tourism industry. He outlined that MOA strategic framework followed by the MOA and the various support available for farmers and agro producers. with the MOA.

He stated that Government has allocated a total of \$86.3 million in the 2017/18 National Budget to the Ministry of Agriculture. According this is an increase in the Ministry's Budget allocation by about (16%) sixteen percent overall or an increase of \$11.9 million from the 2016/17 financial year.

At the same time he mentioned that there has been significant increases in the Ministry of Agriculture Budget since it became a stand-alone Ministry from Fisheries and Forests in 2014. The budget allocations for the last four years show \$46.1 million in 2014, \$64.9 million in 2015, \$76.2 million in 2016, \$74.4 million in the 2016/17 budget and \$86.3 in this 2017/18 Budget.

For Fiji, a number of food items continues to be imported consistently over the years, which included rice, potato, dairy, fresh & chilled meat, and live animals. He stated that the Ministry is focussed on assisting the sector that addressed food importation and reduce the trade imbalance.

A number of challenges continuous to face the agriculture industry, which are;

- Inconsistency in the Supply of Fresh Agriculture Produce to Markets due to seasonality of production

- Poor Quality of Produce due to poor post-harvest handling practises
- Lack of Infrastructure to facilitate Market Access
- Inability to meet international food safety requirements
- Risk from Climate Change and Disaster § Loss of arable Cropping Land to other form of development
- Lack of labour due to high rate of urban drift and aging farmers
- Lack of financial capital due to reluctance to lend by financial institutions
- Human Resource Development (Technical Experts)
- Inconsistency in dissemination of Quality and Timely Data
- Lack of Domestic Industry Competitiveness
- Lack of proactive approach from local supermarkets and hotels to accommodate locally produced commodities

These challenges have been plaguing the industry over the years and the MOA is looking at various ways to address these challenges.

At the same, there are opportunities that exists in the industry that the agriculture sector make use of. Growth in the tourism sector has been over 3 % in the last 5 years and tourists arrivals is almost reaching 1million. The growth in food tourism provides opportunities for the inclusion of local nutritious cuisine into Hotel menus and Fiji Airways flights. There is also opportunities for large-scale commercial farms to support agro-processing where demands are now increasing for Fiji's commodities. Value addition, organic foods and clustering of farmers to address supply is another area of need and growth. At the same time better packaging, labelling and marketing of products is very important.

Promoting agriculture and tourism linkages

Two presentations were made at this session. The first presentation was made by Eroni Puamau, the General Manager for Rosie Tours and looking at the International Visitors expectation and trends. The second presentation was made Lavinia Kaumaitotoya, the Project Manager for PIFON on Value chain supply development for agritourism.

Mr Puamau stated that there are new trends that they are noticing for the Fiji market. The first one is the rise of multi-generation travel especially from Australia and New Zealand to Fiji. It has been noticed that families traveling with grandparents. The second trend is new market developed by Fiji Airways, which includes bringing in a new profile of visitors to Fiji. Fiji is receiving new tourists, which includes high spending Asians who are in search of new experiences!

Mr Puamau highlighted that tourism trend is now changing with more tourists now looking for experiential tourism. No longer do tourists looking for the sun, sand and sea, they are now more interested in going to farm tours and wanting to eat local exotic foods. He mentioned that 1 in every 5 tourists to New Zealand is going on farm tours. In Fiji, 2014 statistics that 1 in 500 wants to go on farm tours. He believes that this has change and current statistics would show the increase in numbers.

He stated there is a great opportunity for agritourism and there is a need to encourage more strategic alliances across industries between tourism agriculture. He stressed that Agritourism planning should not just be at the policy level but it needs to involve the private sector, farmers, co-operatives and hotels and tour operators.

Some of the recommendations put forth includes the following;

- Consider building viewing platforms or sheds where tourists can enjoy a “controlled experience” of the farm process (growing and harvesting) which could then be followed up with a shopping, dining, retail experience.
- Presentation is key! The entrance to your farm is your “shop window”...keep it clean and tidy!
- Share farming schedules with tour operators that take tours into the farm areas so they can incorporate into their tour schedules.
- Opportunity to encourage and incentivize tour operators to Include agri - tourism experiences within their tours and packaging which can add the authentic appeal to their experiences especially where there is a natural fit.

Mrs Kaumaitoia provided interesting perspectives from the farmers side and made some very strong recommendations on how to improve the connection between agriculture and tourism.

- More training workshops on the use of local food with hotels and restaurants. Need collaboration of stakeholders both in the agriculture and tourism industry.
- Training workshops on understanding the Value Chain Supply ,
- Need to develop a better payment system between hotels and farmers. Farmers need cash while hotels want to make delay payments.
- More collaboration between hotels and farmers groups.
- Incentive: Incentivizing farmers to produce for the hotels, right now – it is not attractive, takes too much effort to push products into the hotel, too much hurdles. Much more attractive to sell at the markets.
- Food Tourism: Fiji needs to promote its destination story, to look food... Introduce slow food, traditional food, and culinary tourism - for an everyday feast, right now, hotels have it as one-day meal buffets or gourmet specials, as and when they see fit.
- Foreign Chefs need orientation training on local food.
- Improve quality and standards
- Local projects support by donors should input of local stakeholders
- Address access to finance to the farmers.
- Recommend the branding of the agritourim connection with the slogan of '*Eat Fijian Grown*'.

Chefs for Development: the link between agriculture & cuisine

Two presentations were made from Malisa Raffe from Flavours of Fiji Limited and Ms Litia Kirwin of Lovings.

Ms Raffe is the owner of Flavours of the Fiji Ltd, which is the cooking school operating at Denarau Nadi and offers to tourists cooking classes on cooking local indigenous food. The school is ranked 20th in World for the best cooking schools.

Ms Raffe who is a local chef explained the challenges that she faced when opening her cooking school. It was something new for the industry and did not get much assistance as the Fiji Tourism organisation did not understand the services that she was providing. As to date, she has received 4,500 visitors and recently won two Tourism Awards at the local premier event for Tourism industry in Fiji.

She highlighted that the tourists thoroughly enjoyed their cooking experience where it starts on a tour to the local market to purchase local food. Tourists have their own cooking stations and with local assistants to assist them.

This cooking school is providing the link between agriculture and tourism and introduces to tourists to eat local food that are healthy and nutritious. She also stated that she is also receiving chefs from international hotels to go through the programme. This provides an opportunity for international chefs to be oriented to local food, which they use in their menus.

Ms Kirwin, a youth entrepreneur is the founder of the NGO Loving Islands. This NGO was established to provide training to local farmers on organic farming, which was not present in Fiji. This organisation comprises of youth trainers that goes from island to island in Fiji and providing the needed trainings. The training programme is supported from various donors including UNDP.

Ms Kirwin stated that communication is a vital need to get across the message in training. Using local trainers is an advantage as they can communicate in the local language. Recently the organisation has just completed a training guide on organic farm and will be launched soon. This training guide is a very useful tool kit that can be easily understood.

Product Development, Value Adding and Branding

This session looked at product development, value adding and branding the companies or organisations in Fiji have gone through. In branding her product, the criteria she used include amongst other, that the product was local, authentic and reflected the Fiji's Culture. Following the branding of her products that would allow the products to be competitive, she has now secured some international orders.

Something of the things that Mrs Sadranu highlighted that helped with branding her products was the assistance she received from Market Development Facility, which was very crucial. This type of supports is needed to assist companies moved to the next level.

She also worked closely with an Australian University, which helped her with the quality of the product and ascertaining about the sustainable supply of nama. This resonates the importance of academic and research institutions in working closely with companies with regards to product development and

Mrs Aileen Burness, the Founder Floriculture Support Association present on an overview of the association and its starting and purpose. She also highlighted that thy also received support from CTA some years ago to develop some publications with regards to the floriculture in Fiji. This has helped the association tremendously.

She also raised issues confronting her association and the lack of support the tourism industry for members. Flowers arrangement are an important of the hotel industry, events and conference. However, she stated that they have seen very little support. The flowers and flowers arrangements can make a difference to the front lobbies of hotels. Her association has found that the hotels are using their own flowers that they have planted and making sub-standard flower arrangements.

Members found that they could make more by selling in the markets and roadsides. Selling to the hotels is also difficult, as they want to make delayed payments.

She highlighted that the Floriculturists have a role to play in the agritourism sector and that more support should be provided to them to increase their flower supply to hotels. Furthermore, access to finance to women is an issue and she highlighted a number of issues, which includes collaterals, and loan conditions that needs to be addresses.

Two other participants presented which included investor Mr Sitiveni and Laisa Waleilakeba and John Magnifico.

Mr Weleilakeba spoke about the \$3m project that they working on to build in a location in Suva like a farm. Amidst all the hassle and bustle, there will be this farm that people and tourist can go to unwind and enjoy local products and cuisines. At this farm, all local products will be sold and local food will be served. It will act as an outlet for producers to sell their products.

John presented on digital technology that his company is offering in Fiji. This is a satellite technology that can map all the farms in Fiji, assess its yield and future yield and soil moisture content. Such a technology can provide real data to policy makers, farmers and agro producers that can better manage their supplies in a way that will ensure the sustainable supply of products.

With all the presentations that made, discussions and questions made, below is an outline of recommendations suggestion made at the workshop at Nadi. At the group discussions, they were asked to highlight the constraints and the how to address these constraints in the agritourism sector.

Outcomes of the discussion by the groups on the Constraints in AgriTourism are as follows;

- Lack of local inputs
- Inconsistency in supply - Quality Control is weak
- Disconnect between Agriculture and Tourism Sectors; R&D is lacking; identification of crops is lacking
- Farm-to-Table concept not fully understood, especially the value chain process from farm to table
- Absence of an association of farmers/chefs/hoteliers/suppliers to ensure effective dialogue for effective partnerships
- Lack of effective coordination/networking between farmers to supply the tourism industry
- Lack of commitment from Tourism operation e.g. culinary services
- Lack of data - information from hotels to farmers on the type of crops/produce they need, etc.
- Lack of access to finance – high cost of funds on lending to farmers and agriproducers
- Fiji Development Bank acting like a commercial bank and not addressing the farmers financing needs.
- Lack of support for the women involved in floriculture
- Lack of a brand in agriculture and an absent of a marketing organization like NMA to focus on marketing Fiji's agriculture products.
- Lack of availability of large parcels of land

b. How to address challenges

- Having associations in place that are inclusive of all key partners/stakeholders to help resolve issues and impediments
- Having champions/role models in agritourism that can play the lead role in showing how things are to be done
- Support for floriculture women's association
- Employing technology to help farmers particularly with data, effective communication with suppliers, etc.
- Culinary schools, like Catering (FNU) must include a curriculum on local cuisine (fusion of local and international flavors).
- Need to challenge the banking industry to revisit their financing model and to review the role of the Fiji Development Bank in lending to the agriculture industry
- The Ministry of Lands and the Taukei Land Trust Board need to review the tenure of their land leases and the availability of large parcels of land for commercial agriculture for agriproducers.
- Develop an agritourism plan, which includes all relevant stakeholders to map out strategies, and action plans.

26th February 2018 Suva Workshop

Ms Fantasha Lockington (CEO Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association) opened the workshop session with an overview of the tourism industry in Fiji. She highlighted that more than 80% of tourists that come to Fiji are for leisure activities. Therefore, it presents an opportunity for the agriculture industry to provide an array of activities that can match or attend to the needs of these tourists.

In term of foreign exchange earnings, the tourism industry is ranked number in the country and will continue to dominate in the country for the next coming years. With that in mind, the opportunities presented by the tourism industry is enormous and it is important that all stakeholders work together to make use of these opportunities.

For the hotel industry, they want consistent supply of products. While a lot of work has been done in this area, a lot more needs to be done. Work has been done in the area with the industry to improve food safety protocols and her organisation is working closely with Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Health, to introduce newly developed food safety management system. This minimum guide will ensure that standardized of food safety and will assist small SMEs involved in the tourism industry.

Conclusions and recommended Actions from the Nadi Agritourism Workshop

Mrs Volavola briefly presented the outcomes of the workshop at Nadi and outlined the recommendations put forth by the participants. Furthermore the participants at the Nadi workshop were quite keen in moving the agritourism agenda forward with plans put in place to establish a network and to look at addressing issues that were raised in the workshop and work together to strengthen the linkages of the agriculture and tourism industry.

Opportunities and Challenges of Agritourism and Impact to Rural Development

At this session, three presentation were made from three different organisations.

Mrs Sereana Qoro, President, Lomaiviti Provincial Women Association presented on the agribusiness and fisheries development for the women in the Lomaiviti Province.

The Lomaiviti women organisation comprises of 75 villages and 1,500 members. Its registration as Trade association is in progress. The development objectives of the group is based on the economic empowerment of the women's and increase income distribution within the province.

The women's group has developed a strategic plan and it work in focussed on capacity, access to markets, promotion and awareness and business development.

The women group plans to upgrade their business centre in order to provide business trainings and other training that is relevant to assist women in their agribusiness. Product development and quality assurance are some of the needed training. The

women's group are also pursuing setting up collection centres and connect with private sector wholesalers who will be able to sell to the hotel industry.

They are also confronted with many challenges, which includes access to finance, transportation, access to markets and access to information regarding agritourism/fisheries business models and support.

Ms Emele Duituturaga, PIANGO Executive Director presented on the development Challenges of rural Women and solutions. She highlighted the many challenges confronting women in the rural areas. She highlighted a survey that was undertaken in Solomon Is, which is a mirror reflection on what is also happening in Pacific islands. The broad areas of challenges include access to finance, land ownership, access to information, violence and gender equality.

Mrs Jiu Daunivalu presented on the potential opportunities of agritourism and support required for farmers and livestock farmers to supply the tourism industry. She highlighted that many farmer in Fiji are subsistence based and they find it quite a challenge to meet the tourism industry demands. They lack the ability to provide a wide range of products, lack transportation to provide same day delivery, substandard packaging and credit payment, which impacts on cash flow needs.

At the same time, the farmers faced other challenges where agro inputs are not easily accessible, lack of awareness of what is available, support and assistance provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and access to finance.

To address the challenge confronting the farmers a number of recommendations were put forward which includes business and finance training, food safety management, market information system, value chain supply training and developing farms for farm tours by tourists.

In addition, there is a need to establish a national facilitation committee for agritourism and to drive the action plans need that will strengthen the connection between agriculture and tourism.

Ms Kelera Cavuilati of SPTO presented on the areas that needs to be developed to build the agritourism sector in Fiji. She highlighted the top tourist worst experiences in the Pacific and pointed out that food was one of them. Therefore, there is an opportunity to improve tourists' food experience here in Pacific including Fiji and to offer the exotic local food. SPTO has been undertaking culinary training across the Pacific with the support of the development partners to build the capacity of the chefs. Based on these trainings, SPTO has seen positive results the increased connection between the agriculture and tourism industry, the enhancement of the skills and knowledge of chefs and the increase use of local foods in hotel and restaurants menu.

Forecasts by SPTO indicate that the economic contribution of tourism will increase to US\$4.4bn by 2019 as the World Bank has forecasted that tourists' arrivals will double

by 2040 to 3 million. This would create an additional 127,600 jobs to the region by 2040.

SPTO has been conducting culinary training in the Pacific since 2014 and 162 chefs from various countries have been trained. Based on these trainings, a number of key issues have emerged:

- The need for a Pacific Agritourism and Seafood strategy for the Pacific which includes a Pacific Chefs Development Strategy
- The need for the agriculture sector to provide professional, consistent and quality produce to the Tourism Industry
- The need for the subsistence farmers to establish cooperatives to market their supplies and link with the tourism industry
- The need to provide consistent culinary capacity building throughout the year within our member countries
- The need for Pacific Islands to establish Culinary Associations and a pool of in-country qualified trainers
- The need for regular dialogue and strategic partnerships between partners/donors to pool resources and avoid duplication

There are important considerations to take into account in developing the agritourism sector:

- Pacific tourism needs to maintain a higher competitive performance against other regions
- Agribusiness is a potential 'niche' product and 'money maker' for the tourism industry
- Crucial for all players in the value chain to realize the importance of building sustainable farm-to-table relationships
- Pacific destinations need to have the confidence and pride to sell/serve quality, local food to the Tourists
- Complimenting 'sand, sea, and sun' with 'high quality locally grown food/local cuisine'
- Capacity building of Owners and Chefs in the region to become innovative in using local produce and seafood in their cuisine linked to local culture
- Quality standards related to food & beverage needs to be developed for the Pacific before branding the region as a Quality Food Destination!

With regards to the way forward, two important actions are required;

- Pacific Chefs Development Strategy- Chefs in the region to become innovative and to use local produce and seafood in their cuisine linked to culture promotion.
- Delicious Pacific Brand (Product Differentiation)- Branding the Pacific as a Quality Food Destination and the specific branding of each Pacific destination- Food Cuisine.

Ms Dawn Gibson, Senior Lecturer of the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management (USP) presented on the Agritourism linkages and the potential for import substitution. She highlighted the importance of sustainable tourism, which is not just

about the environment anymore. There is an emergence to consider the broader range of multi-stakeholders and multi-sectoral nature of tourism. The relationship between food production and food consumption and sustainable tourism is virtually ignored. At the same time, there is an increase in slow food.

She highlighted the common problems of sourcing products, inconsistent quality and farmer's reliance on intermediaries to link to the chefs in the tourism market. In some recent surveys undertaken by the Ministry of Tourism and Stollznow Research in Fiji shows that the positive food ratings. The quality of food has increased by 78.7%, variety of food to 77.9%, availability of local food of 70.9%. About 33% agreed that there was high availability of local food and 79.2% found it value for money.

The hotels and resorts are using local food in season and importing out of season, Many menus still reflect a bias for western foods but slowly changing to include local substitutes e.g. cassava, dalo, kumala or breadfruits. It was found that smaller resorts are more likely to use high percentage of local produce.

With regard to potential outcome, she outlined the following;

- Increase use and cultivation of indigenous products
- Increase local production of exotics (e.g. salads, microgreens, dragon fruit, rambutan, herbs)
- Farmer/ Chef markets
- Broaden presentation of traditional foods and cookery methods
- Opportunities to capitalise on broader societal trends towards organic production, experiences etc. slow food interest in authentic tourist
- Spin offs such as agritourism/ farm visits/ farm stays, value added products, food festivals, "healthy and boost agricultural exports foods" concept etc
- By forging stronger linkages between agriculture and tourism through development and promotion of sustainable cuisine, a symbiotic relationship between these sectors can be established (Berno, 2011).

Mr Richard Bare made a brief intervention and spoke on the importance of food quality and food safety management. He highlighted that in linking agriculture and tourism, the supply of food, quality and hygienic preparations are very important. He also stated that he had worked very closely with the FIHTA, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Tourism to develop the minimum guidelines on food safety to be used by the tourism industry which he hopes to release soon. Further to that, he has prepared value-adding manuals for making jams, chips and chutneys, etc.) which can be produced by women, youths and disadvantaged communities.

Outcomes from the Suva Workshops

In addition to the outcomes from the Nadi workshop, the following were identified;

- Need to develop contract farming guide and train farmers on contract farming. It has been found that farmer are not being honest with their dealings with agro producers.
- Importance of farming clusters and the need to organise farmers in this manner.
- There is a need to greater assistance to agro producers to undertake large commercial processing. Commercial operations requires massive capital investment for machines.
- Importance of pricing mechanism. More training on value chain supply so that all the players in the value chain supply understand the pricing mechanism along the value chain supply
- Research and development is important to provide real time quality data to assist in decision-making. There is a need to undertake needs assessment in various sectors with the agriculture and tourism industry. Support is greatly needed in this area.
- Information and technology- It is important to engage latest relevant technology that will assist farmers, hoteliers, agro producers and government and other key stakeholders.
- Budget support – there is a need for resources support especially for especially small farmers and agro producers.
- Training in the areas of product development, value additions, and food safety management systems.
- Need to undertake an assessment of the Tourism Office of Fiji and the Agro Marketing Company to ascertain how the AMA Company can be better structured in marketing Fiji agricultural products.

The second major outcomes agreed by the participants is the proposed agritourism taskforce to be established to work on producing Fiji agritourism plan and drive actions to address issues that have been raised in the two agritourism workshops.

The taskforce is a multi- stakeholders and multi-sectoral and will be chaired by FITHA. At the same time, it envisaged that an agritourism unit to be established at FHTA to work on providing support to the taskforce work and connecting the agriculture and tourism industry.

Membership

- Private Sector - 4 Reps
- Fiji Crops and Livestock Council – 1 Rep
- Government Ministries – 4 Reps (MOA, MIT, Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Fisheries)

- Education Institutions – 2 Reps (USP & FNU)
- Women – 1 (Ministry of Women)
- Chefs - 1
- RBF - 1
- FNPF -1
- FIHTA - Chair

THEMATIC AREAS

- Land Availability
- Access to Finance
- Transportation
- Product Development
- Value Chain Supply
- Taxes/ Incentives
- Technology, Research and Development

This taskforce will have its link to the Nadi based Agritourism group and likewise any other agritourism groups that will be established around the country.

The meetings of the taskforce will be held in Suva and Nadi interchangeably and will involve established networks.

The first formal meeting of the taskforce is expected to be held in the first week of April.