



Growing Resilience: Strengthening the agro-processing sector in the Pacific Islands

A series of roundtables



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Co-hosted by the Pacific Farmer Organisations and COLEAD

Roundtable N°1

Wednesday 28 February 2024 – 9:00 am - 10:30 am (Fiji Time)

Tuesday 27 February 2024 – 9:00pm – 10:30pm (UTC)

Online ([Zoom](#))

1. Context

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), about 67% of the Pacific region's population depends on agriculture and fisheries for livelihoods. Issues such as commercialisation, natural disasters and climate change are bringing new and increasingly complex challenges for farmers in the Pacific.

Agro-processing, the process of transforming agricultural products into value-added products that can be consumed, stored, or traded, is a priority. It allows the private sector to move primary production by adding value to agricultural products and accessing new and diverse markets. Agro-processing contributes to extending the shelf life of agricultural products and reducing post-harvest losses and waste.

However, moving from primary production to agro-processing also involves many challenges and investments such as complying with standards and regulations for food quality and safety; investing in the necessary infrastructure and logistics; upgrading the skills and knowledge of the staff and the quality and safety of the products; coping with the changing consumer demands and market trends.

A priority for the Pacific region is to increase the value addition of traditional staple crops such as breadfruit, taro, cassava, sweet potato etc. improving nutrition and food security and providing new opportunities for domestic markets.

To increase incomes and value to local production the private sector in the Pacific needs to adopt innovative and sustainable strategies for agro-processing which support climate change adaptation strategies.

2. Adding value to food production through improved food processing activities

Some key areas of importance to develop and expand agro-processing activities are listed below.



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Improving shelf life to overcome seasonality of processed food is a way of overcoming the seasonality of food products, which means the variation in the availability and quality of food products depending on the time of the year. By improving the shelf life, processed food can be stored and consumed for a longer period and reduce the losses and waste due to spoilage.

Private sector operators should be aware of the different methods and techniques to improve the shelf life of processed food and packaging improvements and evaluate the benefits and risks to choose the appropriate one.

Diversifying the product range and targeting the niche markets, such as organic, fair trade, health, and ethnic products, to cater to the preferences and needs of different market segments. By diversifying the product range, companies can offer more variety, convenience, and value to their customers, and cater to their different preferences and needs. By targeting the niche markets, companies can focus on specific segments of customers who have unmet or underserved demands, and who are willing to pay a premium price for the products that satisfy their demands. Examples include organic, fair trade, health, and ethnic products; new varieties and flavours of products that are based on the local biodiversity and cultural diversity of the regions where the products are produced or sold.

Branding and promotion of agro-processed products are important aspects of marketing and selling the products that are derived from agricultural raw materials. Branding and promotion can help to create a distinctive identity and image for the products, and to communicate the value and benefits of the products to the customers and the markets.

Meeting the **food safety and quality standards** in processed agrifood products is an important issue that affects the health and well-being of consumers, as well as the competitiveness and sustainability of the agro-processing sector. The agro-processing sector needs to develop and implement effective food safety and quality management systems to translate international standard into food processor codes of practices.

Improving the traceability and labelling of the products is a key aspect of ensuring the quality, safety, and sustainability of the agro-processing sector. Traceability and labelling allow the tracking and identification of the products throughout the supply chain, from the raw materials to the final consumers.

There is a need for operators to explore these methods and techniques, the opportunities they present and the limitations and challenges for the private sector operators.

Improving the packaging and labelling of local products is needed in processed food to communicate the value and benefits of the products to the customers and the markets, i.e., quality, origin, characteristics, information about the producers.

Strengthening the linkages and cooperation among the value chain actors is critical as they can improve the efficiency, transparency, and profitability of the product and enhance the trust and satisfaction of the consumers and the markets. Linkages and cooperation can also involve the participation and support of the relevant institutions, such as the government, the private sector, and civil society. Operators need to link with research and development centres which provide technical support to the food processing enterprises to help them to develop new products based on consumer expectations and disseminate appropriate food processing technologies. Building public-private partnerships (PPPs) to enable adequate business environment for food processing-industries development in the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) remains key.

Policy incentives also remain key in terms of trade measures and facilitating access to cheaper processing technology (i.e., through reducing import levies on processing machinery, equipment and packaging materials).

3. Opportunities to discuss the PICS agro-processing sector

Agro-processing can provide opportunities for the private sector in the Pacific Islands to increase the income of value chain actors, create employment, improve food and nutrition security, and reduce dependence on imported food products while building resilience to climate change.

In this context, the Pacific Farmer Organisations (PFO) and COLEAD will start a collaboration in 2024 by organising online roundtables on “Growing Resilience: Strengthening the agro-processing sector in the Pacific Islands”.

The sessions will have a strong emphasis on the value addition of traditional crops and domestic value chains and will showcase different agro-processing initiatives from cottage industry to larger commercial export markets and share knowledge, experiences, and best practices amongst the private sector.

The proposed roundtables will focus on entrepreneurs’ successes and discuss trends, skills, emerging innovations and technologies in agro-processing across value chains across different markets.

They will bring together different stakeholders and experts to discuss the challenges and opportunities of the agro-processing sector in the region and promote the exchange of best practices and lessons learned.



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Programme

09:00-09:10 Introductory remarks and Launch of the Series

- Kyle Stice, Executive Director, Pacific Farmer Organisations (PFO)
- Stephen Mintah, Chairman, COLEAD

Moderation: Kyle Stice, PFO and Isolina Boto, Head of Networks and Alliances, COLEAD

Session: Sharing successes from private sector operators

09:10-09:30 Minoru Nishi, Nishi Trading (Tonga)

09:30-09:50 Dana Shapiro, Hawai'i 'Ulu Cooperative (Hawai'i)

Session: Insights on the development of the agro-processing sector in the Pacific

09:50-10:00 Dr. Richard Beyer, Food Technologist

10:00-10:20 Q&A Session

10:20-10:30 Conclusion



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