

PPS assistance boosts organic farming in Niue

Niue Primary School will soon own a shaded structure that will be the main focus of the 'Organic Farming with a Difference' project. School Principal Ms Tasmania, assisted by Mr Ernest Nemaia, Director of the Department of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries and Mr Aokuso Pavihi, Facilitator of Niue Island Organic Farming Association (NIFOA), they submitted a proposal to SPC for funding for a shade house.

The shade house will be divided into seven plots. Each of the seven syndicates of the school, the Early Childhood Education Pre-School through to Year Six, will be assigned a plot. The 'difference' emphasised will be viewing students as future farmers who at an early age learn the basics of organic farming. The project was officially launched on 23 July 2004 by the Minister of Agriculture.



School Principal Ms Tasmania expressed gratitude to SPC Plant Protection Service for making the project a reality.

Comments from some Year 6 students:

'Organic garden is really cool. Every time we have lunch we can use the vegetables from the garden. It helps us learn how to plant without chemicals like weedkillers and stuff like that.'
Devon Pasisi.

'I learned to grow *kapiti* in our new garden.'
Sui Tupuiliu.

'When we opened the garden we now have a new learning activity and it will help us learn about keeping healthy.'
Eliki Sioneholo.

Other news from Niue

Earlier in the year, SPC was requested to provide assistance towards clearing land for replanting immediately after Cyclone Heta. To meet this request PPS provided over NZ\$70,000 funds towards this food security activity. Reports from Niue indicate the land clearing exercise is progressing well for the households. PPS Extensionist Stephen Hazelman facilitated this activity.

An update on nematode diseases for Samoa

PPS Plant Pathologist Technician (Nematodes) Takaniko Ruabete recently completed a nematode survey for Samoa. Local counterparts Parate Matalavea and Taulai Mauga assisted with the survey.

Comprehensive nematode surveys were carried out for Samoa some 20 years ago.

Agricultural focus has changed since then, with new crops targeted for trade, and there was a need to update the pest and disease list (on nematodes) for export crops.

Rootknot nematodes, *Meloidogyne* spp., are the most common nematodes causing plant diseases especially to vegetables.

Symptoms of the burrowing nematode *Radopholus similis* on banana and plantain are still seen all over Samoa. Nematode symptoms attributed to another nematode, *Helicotylenchus multicinctus*, were observed in this current survey.

Noni, *Morinda citrifolia*, or nonu as it is known in Samoa, is now a major export for Samoa. Unfortunately, once the plant was intensively cropped, and in the absence of a proper disease

- A thicket of the false kava (*Piper auritium*) was seen on Savaii as well as at a local nursery in Apia and it is believed to be more widespread. It is invasive elsewhere and could become so in Samoa. There is a possibility that farmers could replace real kava (*Piper methysticum*) with it because of its rapid growth rates.

Research and extension staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Meterology (MAFFM) were keen to know what could be done about some of the troublesome weeds in Samoa. PPS Weeds Officer informed them that not much could be done for most widespread problems. However, a few major weeds could be targeted using available tools like biological control, and officers should watch out for few other potential weeds like *Clerodendrum quadriloculare* and *Piper auritium*.

The PPS Weeds Officer recommended biocontrol for the two *Sida* spp. A good biological control agent, the beetle *Calligrapha pantherina*, is available currently from Koronivia Research Station in Fiji. This beetle has given good control of *Sida* spp in Australia and PNG, and is spreading in Fiji. It has just been introduced to Vanuatu.

Staff at Nuu Research Station, led by Mr Siosi Matalavea, Principal Research Officer, indicated that they would also welcome SPC PPS initiatives to work on the troublesome *Mikania micrantha*. PPS is putting a proposal to ACIAR for funding of a regional biological control research project on *Mikania* and, if the proposal gets the nod, work will be initially carried out in Samoa, Fiji and Vanuatu.

Tonga extension workers receive communications training

A need for communications training for extension workers was identified in a PRA exercise conducted by the DSAP Project. Responding to this need, a national training was organised by DSAP Information Officer Bernie Masianini, assisted by PPS Publications Officer Emil Adams, and conducted 10–12 August. Areas covered in the training include developing and



analysing extension messages, conducting radio interviews and developing extension materials. Agricultural officers from the outer islands including 'Eua, Ha'apai and Vava'u were invited and attended the national workshop. DSAP Assistant GREA Mr Salesi Kaitu'u facilitated the workshop. Participants found the training very useful but expressed concern about limited time allocated for the training. A similar training, to be held in Vava'u, is planned to be conducted over a week.

Biocontrol agents arrive in Vanuatu

Vanuatu has initiated the first stages of their first-ever national biological control of weeds programme against the troublesome pasture weeds *Sida acuta*, *S. rhombifolia* and the aquatic weed *Eichhornia crassipes* with the help of SPC PPS under the EU-PPP Project.

SPC Weeds Officer Mr Warea Orapa delivered 1000 adults of the *Sida* leaf feeding beetle *Calligrapha pantherina* (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae) and 1100 adult weevils of the water hyacinth weevil *Neochetina eichhorniae* (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) to Vanuatu during the period 19–20 August 2004. These two biological control agents were reared under laboratory conditions at Koronivia Research Station and SPC Nabua in Fiji. They were introduced under Vanuatu Import Permits No. 1000 and 1201. The agents will be reared through to first generation as required under international protocols for the movement of biological control agents in the newly built post-entry quarantine (PEQ) facility at Tagabe, also funded by EU-PPP funds. The activities will be undertaken by Vanuatu Quarantine Plant Protection Officers. Field releases are expected in October and the agents and weeds will be monitored over a period of 1–2 years.

Ladybird beetle to fight mealybugs in Marshall Islands

Two shipments of the ladybird beetle, *Cryptolaemus montrouzien*, a biocontrol agent for mealybugs, have arrived in Marshall Islands. The ladybirds were sent at the request of the Division of Agriculture. Each shipment contained at least 100 adults of the predatory beetle. Fred Muller, Secretary for the Division of Agriculture, informed PPS that the biocontrol agents arrived in good condition. SPC Entomologist Sada N Lal will visit Marshall Islands soon to monitor the release of the bioagents.

Yaqara Pastoral Company ventures into horticultural production with neighbouring settlements

Entomology Assistant Naca Waqa and Extension Assistant Salend Kumar visited the Yaqara Pastoral Company located in the northern tip of Viti Levu island, Fiji. The two PPS staff held discussions with company management regarding their proposal for the company to set up horticultural farms with the surrounding villages and to buy produce off the farms and market it overseas.

Diversifying into horticultural crops away from its core business of beef production, Yaqara Pastoral Company, a state owned enterprise, is set to develop the Vatukalolo region where its operations are located.

PPS has been identified as a collaborative partner and will be asked to provide technical advice on organic farming. Yaqara would like to enforce organic farming in its crop diversification programme. The Vatukalolo region is one of Fiji's pristine land areas.

Completed PPS activities in PICTs

<i>PPS Staff</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>PICT Activity</i>
Warea Orapa Richard Davis Takaniko Ruabete	23 July – 6 August	Samoa: Plant disease and weed survey
Steve Hazelman	2 – 10 August	Samoa: Niue Minister of Agriculture and Young Farmers agricultural sector tour American Samoa: PLA follow-up
Emil Adams	3 – 6 August	Tonga: DSAP Extension Communications training
Salend Kumar Bal S Narayan	9 – 20 August	Tuvalu: coconut scale extension
Sidney Suma	9 – 13 August	Nadi: regional workshop on draft ISPM
Sada N Lal	2 – 6 August 15 – 21 August	Niue: cabbage pests Brisbane: Entomology Congress
Salend Kumar	12 – 13 August	Taveuni, Fiji: taro beetle awareness
Warea Orapa	19 – 22 August	Vanuatu: weed biocontrol
Naca Waqa	19 – 20 August	Yaqara, Fiji: Co op Yaqara Plan and Vision

PPS Staff Travel

Dates	Country	Staff	Activity
21 – 28 Aug	Cook Islands	Sarah Pene	PLD follow-up
26 Aug – 6 Sept	Kenya	Sidney Suma	Attend 16 th RPPO
28 Aug – 10 Sept	Vanuatu	Sada N Lal Feret Atumuaria Naca Waqa	Harvest taro research trials Van lure field trials and HTFA trials

30 Aug – 9 Sept	Australia	Richard Vernon	Attend plant virology workshop
27 Aug – 2 Sept 2 – 4 Sept 6 – 8 Sept 9 – 20 Sept	PNG	Warea Orapa	Port Moresby: invasive weeds training Lae: Parthenium weed eradication Rabaul: Plant Protection Workshop New Ireland and Manus: fire ant and weed surveys
18 – 25 Sept 26 Sept – 1 Oct	FSM Palau	Sarah Pene	PLD workshop PLD workshop
25 Sept – 30 Sept	Palau	Konrad Englberger	PLD workshop

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