

Cook Islands: quarantine awareness for the motus

The third in a series of quarantine public awareness programmes targeting the outer lying motus was conducted in July 2004. The motus include Manihiki, Palmerston, Suwarrow, Pukapuka and Nassau. The main objective is to raise awareness on quarantine risks associated with unscheduled stopovers of yachts, fishing vessels and cargo freighters passing through Cook Island waters.

The exercise included both Customs and Quarantine officials meeting with the island council, selected schools and NGOs in the respective motus. Issues raised include minimising the movement of planting material to prevent the spread of the coconut flatmoth, animal quarantine on the import of animal products and export of animals, information for travellers on what can and cannot be taken to New Zealand and Australia and the health and quarantine concerns associated with tourists visiting the motus. There are now signposts on the motus targeting yachties (photo) with quarantine messages.

School presentations focused on educating school children to help spread quarantine messages in their homes and villages. Quarantine officials encouraged pupils to consider careers in agriculture.

There is apparent conflict between island by-laws and national laws passed in Parliament allowing quarantine officers to conduct their duties.

Traditional and government leaders will need to work together to resolve these issues.

This is the third quarantine awareness programme funded by SPC Plant Protection Service.



Plant Protection Micronesia

Coordinator Plant Protection Micronesia (CPPM) Mr Konrad Englberger visited Palau recently to meet with Director of Agriculture Mr Herman Francisco and Head of Plant Protection Mr Fernando Sengebau to discuss quarantine and plant protection activities. CPPM informed the meeting of the Pest List Database (PLD) training scheduled for late September. SPC Plant Pathologist and Virologist will be conducting a disease survey to include the main island and the islands of Angaur and Pelelue. Mr Aubery More of the University of Guam will carry out the invasive insect survey. Agricultural staff will work together with the experts to gain valuable experience.

Bio-control work for chromolaena weed in FSM was discussed. CPPM informed the Director of the successful biocontrol work in FSM using the bioagent *Pareuchaetes insolata*. It was decided that someone from Palau will be trained in Pohnpei on rearing the bioagent and will return with the pupae and larvae to start the project in Palau.

CPPM was asked for an opinion on the use of the butterfly *Actinote antea* as biocontrol for *Mikania* weed. His response was that more testing of the bioagent for host specificity is required.

On the threat of further spread of the betel nut disease now present in Guam, CPPM emphasised shoe dipping using Chlorox as very critical and that quarantine officers must enforce it with arriving passengers.

It was noted that Foreign Affairs staff move VIP luggage pass quarantine and customs without inspection. This practice should be discouraged and it was agreed an awareness programme for Foreign Affairs should be carried out.

Mr Englberger found two import permits for two rabbits whose whereabouts are not known. After discussions with the Director it was agreed not to issue any more import permits for rabbits as this animal could become invasive like it has in Australia.

There were over 4,000 passengers arriving on 31 flights to Palau during the 9-day Festival of Pacific Arts. Over 2,000 country delegates arrived on charter flights and some 200 from PNG and Solomon Islands arrive on two ships from PNG. No major pest incursions were recorded for the duration of the games, indicating a high level of compliance by country delegates. It also reflects good preparation by the national quarantine services in getting country delegates properly trained on quarantine issues prior to their departure. Some country delegates were not able to verify items had been fumigated when they could not locate the proper documents. Cultural items like grass skirts from smaller countries like Rapa Nui and Kiribati were not fumigated and some insects were found in them. Items were sent for fumigation using the new fumigation chamber. Some 10 fumigations were carried out in one week.

Passenger inspections were well organised by the Palau Quarantine and Plant Protection Services. There were 14 volunteers from Forestry, Extension and Agriculture Office who worked together with the eight Quarantine Officers. CPPM helped train the volunteers and quarantine officers during inspections.

Customs officials were very cooperative and in one case a customs officer found three large wasps in a passenger's bag and reported it to quarantine.

CPPM provided 3,000 copies of the general quarantine brochure to Continental Airlines for distribution, and copies of the in-flight quarantine video were given to the Continental Airlines Station Manager.

CPPM praised the high standards and professionalism of the Palau Quarantine and Plant Protection Services for a job well done during the Festival of Pacific Arts.



Cook Islands PLD version 2 installed

Information Assistant Sarah Pene visited Cook Islands in August and carried out the following tasks.

- i. Installed Version 2 of the Cook Islands PLD and trained users in the new features.
- ii. Reviewed occurrence data and entered into the PLD.
- iii. Reviewed the extent to which the new Quarantine pest interception reports meet the Ministry of Agriculture reporting requirements.
- iv. Assisted with the use of the system and get feedback on possible improvements.

Land Resources Division hosts Heads of Agriculture Meeting

SPC Land Resources Division (LRD) hosted the first conference of Pacific Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry and the Heads of Agriculture and Forestry (HOAFs) in early September. The back-to-back meetings were the initiative of the Land Resources Division to integrate what were previously two separate agriculture and forestry gatherings. The Ministers meeting, 9–10 September, preceded the HOAFs meeting 13–17 September, both held at Tradewinds in Lami, Fiji.

The organisation of the two meetings mirrors the new changes at SPC Land Resources Division, where agriculture and forestry programmes are now integrated under one management and headed by former Tonga Director of Research and Extension, Mr Aleki Sisifa (*seen in the photo talking to Samoa Minister of Agriculture Hon Tuisugaletaua Sofara*). The

move to integrate these sectors was welcomed by delegates, who expressed their approval in country statements and the international donor and agricultural organisations who liked the strategy of pooling resources together.

Samoa Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry and Meteorology the Honourable Tuisugaletaua Sofara delivered the keynote address complimenting SPC on the move to integrate agriculture and forestry programmes.

‘Closer collaboration amongst Pacific islands and the sharing of plant and animal genetic resources builds the foundation and way forward for agricultural development in the Pacific,’ said the Honourable Minister. He pointed to the Fiji Fantastic sheep going to Samoa to build up the sheep industry there as an example of making good use of opportunities for closer collaboration amongst Pacific islands. He thanked Palau and Micronesia for sharing their plant genetic resources in the new taro leaf blight resistant varieties which have helped Samoa revive its collapsed taro industry.

Delegates were presented with the new four year Strategic Plan 2005 – 2008 for the Land Resources Division. This work plan focuses on three main thematic areas: Food Security and Health, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry Systems and Biosecurity and Trade Facilitation. The Strategic Plan also reflects the recent organisational restructure of the Land Resources Division, whereby services to the region now fall under the broad categories Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, and Biosecurity and Trade Facilitation.

At the end of the Ministers Meeting a 20-point communiqué on general policies recognising agriculture and forestry as important sectors that need further development was produced and presented to the HOAFs meeting. The Ministers welcomed recent developments where New Zealand and Australia have established dedicated positions in their biosecurity agencies to facilitate Pacific access to their markets.

During the HOAFs meeting there were separate sessions for the South Pacific Regional Initiative on Forest Genetic Resources (SPRIG), Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific (DSAP) and Animal Health and Production. The SPRIG session focused on a more community-centred approach to forestry, and plans for placing high value tree germplasm in the hands of farmers. SPRIG 2 is coming to an end and SPC has been approached to manage forest genetic resources. The DSAP presentation noted that the participatory approach is central to identifying practical farming methods for the DSAP programme. HOAFs felt that DSAP and the FAO Regional Food Security Programme should work closely as the two complement each other. The SPC Animal Health and Production programme pointed out the low priority given to animal health and production in the Pacific. It also noted the low numbers of Pacific national animal health specialists. HOAFs requested SPC to allocate more resources to strengthen this training programme for animal health specialists.

The 1-week HOAFs meeting ended with a list of outcomes and recommendations for SPC Land Resources to consider and address in its new Strategic Plan. One recommendation specifically requests SPC to closely work with other national and regional organisations to ensure efficient delivery of services. Another is for SPC to continue to focus on advice and capacity building and supplementation to strengthen regional human resources.

SPC donor partners and collaborating partners were also invited to the meeting and made short presentations. They included ACIAR, AusAID, EU, FAO, Government of Taiwan, USP/IRETA, Commonwealth Veterinary Association, International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), PNG’s National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), PNG National Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection Authority, Papua New Guinea Coffee Industry Board, Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO) and PestNet.

‘This Heads of Agriculture meeting has been an eye-opener for Tokelau. Our problems such as food security and health of our people are also shared by other Pacific islands. We are not



isolated. This meeting allows small island nations sharing their problems with the bigger islands and drawing in SPC resources to help identify solutions to some of these problems,' said Mose Pelasio, Senior Policy Advisor for the Tokelau Department of Economic Development and Environment.

New fumigant to replace methyl bromide

CSIRO and the global industrial gas company the BOC Group have signed a deal to deliver to the international market a new environmentally-safe fumigant for treating soil, insect pests, weeds and diseases.

CSIRO and BOC have agreed to commercialise ethanedinitrile (EDN) as a fumigant to replace the ozone-depleting methyl bromide which is being phased out under the Montreal Protocol.

EDN is a fumigant discovered by CSIRO in 1994. Field tests have shown it to be more effective than methyl bromide in treating soil, timber and imported feed for livestock.

The global market for methyl bromide is estimated to be more than \$500 million. With the phase-out of methyl bromide scheduled for 2006, organisations worldwide are racing to find suitable alternatives.

In addition to being environmentally better, EDN is also more effective in penetrating soil and timber and more effective than methyl bromide in killing unwanted insects, moulds, bacteria and nematodes.

EDN is being introduced initially into the South Pacific market, where growers, fumigators and producers who had experienced problems with many of the current replacements for methyl bromide have expressed willingness to participate in the development phase.

Under the agreement, CSIRO will assist BOC and develop the efficacy data for the fumigant, with BOC registering the product and identifying suitable manufacturers for ethanedinitrile.

Both CSIRO and BOC have already received expressions of interest from a number of countries to trial and introduce applications of EDN. *CSIRO Media Release.*

Completed PPS activities in PICTs for September

<i>PPS Staff</i>	<i>PICT</i>	<i>Activity</i>
Warea Orapa	PNG	Weed training
Sada N Lal Feretī Atu	Vanuatu	Harvesting taro trials
Naca Waqa	Vanuatu	Van lure and HTFA trials
Sarah Pene, Konrad Englberer	Palau	Pest List Database workshop
Bal S Narayan	Tuvalu	Coconut scale
Sada N Lal Salend Kumar	Fiji	IPM Meeting
Simi Tukidia Naca Waqa	Fiji	Export commodities pathways
PPS Staff	Fiji	HAOFs Meeting
Dick Vernon	Micronesia, Federated States of	Pest List Database workshop

PPS Staff Travel

Dates	Country	Staff	Activity
26 Sept – 1 Oct	Palau	Sarah Pene	PLD training
22 Sept – 1 Oct 1 -12 Oct 13 – 24 Oct	Palau	Korad Englberger	PLD workshop Pest survey, Palau Pest survey, Yap
2 – 10 Oct	Croatia	Sada N Lal	Whitefly Symposium
25 Sept – 25 Oct	Palau, Yap	Jacqui Wright Takaniko Ruabete	Disease surveys
4 – 10 Oct 14 – 29 Oct	Wellington, NZ New Caledonia	Warea Orapa	GBIF Meeting Weed survey
7 – 11 Oct	Brisbane, Aust	Sarah Pene	ACIAR Forest Health Surveillance Wksp
18 – 25 Sept	FSM	Dick Vernon	PLD workshop
26 Sept – 1 Oct	Palau	Sarah Pene	PLD workshop
25 Sept – 30 Oct	Palau	Konrad Englberger	PLD workshop
2 – 16 Oct	Samoa	Steve Hazelaman Salend Kumar	PAPGREN Workshop FAO PLA Meeting
2-25 Oct 28 Oct-6 Nov	Tokelau Samoa	Nacanieli Waqa	Fruit fly activities Quarantine training for Tokelau
25 – 29 Oct	New Caledonia	Sidney Suma	ERP Workshop
18 – 21 Oct	Kiribati	Emil Adams	IRETA Food Security Meeting and breadfruit disease extension materials

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Published by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community: Plant Protection Service, Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji Islands. Tel: (679) 3370-733; Fax: (679) 3370-021.