

INTEGRATING PROTECTED CROPPING SYSTEMS INTO HIGH VALUE VEGETABLE VALUE CHAINS IN THE PACIFIC AND AUSTRALIA

Strengthening value chains through technology and business organisation

CQUniversity's Institute for Future Farming Systems (IFFS) recently led a Category 1 Australian Centre for International Research (ACIAR) project aimed at promoting the effective use of protective cropping systems in the Pacific Islands, to enable farmers to grow high-value vegetable crops all year round. The consistent crop yields and product quality from protected cropping systems improves domestic food supply as well as providing farmers with access to high value markets such as resorts which require consistent produce supply and high quality. The three-and-a-half-year project involved international collaboration between CQU, partner organisations in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga and the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Increasing and Consolidating Smallholder Growers' Capacity

Smallholder farmers in Pacific Island countries traditionally grow their vegetable crops in the open field. Conditions for crops are ideal after the wet season, but producing crops at other times of the year is very risky. Using demonstration sites to train farmers in protected cropping practices, the project has built capacity for year-round vegetable production within Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. Local production has started to replace vegetable imports to supply tourism markets and delivers fresh produce to local markets throughout the year.

Greenhouses have the potential to close the gap between local supply and demand. Establishing coordinated, small-scale grower groups and supporting them to develop business and marketing skills will help smallholders gain and maintain access to high value markets.



A Fijian Capsicum Grower inspects his crop in a greenhouse established through the project

Improved Economic Outcomes

With increased business skills and new value-chain connections, the project has assisted smallholders to progress from being opportunistic seasonal producers to full-scale agribusinesses providing vegetables for targeted markets. The livelihoods of vegetable growers and their communities have improved as vegetables become a high-value cash crop with a longer production season.

- For more information contact Prof Phil Brown, p.h.brown@cqu.edu.au or 0408 523 894