



Agriculture and fisheries for improved nutrition: integrated agri-food system analyses for the Pacific region



Overview

The Pacific food system is failing to provide the region's people with nutritious food. The paradox of apparently abundant fish, vegetable and root crops with consistently poor health outcomes is a significant challenge for policy makers.

Agricultural and fisheries production are declining per capita and imports of nutritionally poor food are increasing. Combined with urbanisation, migration and globalised food trade, these factors are seeing Pacific Island Countries greatly affected by the triple burden of malnutrition – the coexistence of undernutrition, nutrient deficiencies and obesity.

The rise of non-communicable diseases has major implications for economic growth, development and aid policy, as well as in the personal tragedies of reduced lifespans.

Action needs to be taken to improve local food environments and promote healthier, more diverse diets.

KEY FACTS

ACIAR Project No. FIS/2018/155

Duration: August 2019 to December 2022 (3.5 years)

Target areas: The Pacific Region

Budget: A\$2,359,999

Project Leader

Professor Neil Andrew, University of Wollongong

Key partners

- University of Sydney
- The Pacific Community
- WorldFish
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation

ACIAR Research Program Manager

Ann Fleming



Objective

The project aims to characterise Pacific agri-food systems, recommend actions to improve local food environments and support national policies to promote healthier, more diverse diets.

The objectives are to:

- Complete integrated analyses of dimensions of the agri-food system at regional and national scales.
- Analyse policy coherence across food system sectors and identify opportunities to strengthen policy in focal countries.
- Characterise informal markets and prioritise actions that enhance nutritional outcomes from local food environments in Solomon Islands.
- Develop diagnostic tools to improve policy interventions in national agri-food systems and improved metrics for reporting status and progress against national, regional and global targets.

Expected scientific results

- Contribute to the transition to nutrition-sensitive food systems through the search for solutions that integrate sustainability and nutrition, and which look beyond the usual playbook of increased production, economic growth and development.
- Encourage and assist with the development of new approaches that leap out of the sectoral silos that constrain research, and only enable partial policy solutions.
- Generate data and systems that have relevance for other low and middle income countries, and contribute to the urgent global need for research into food systems, from production to food retail through supply chains.
- Identify specific interventions and strategies to improve food environments for nutrition.
- Broaden the knowledge and awareness of sustainable diets through, in a Pacific Island Countries context, the promotion of greater dietary diversity through high consumption of fish, traditional root crops and vegetables.
- Develop approaches to achieving sustainable diets that are appropriate for Pacific Island Countries.

Expected impact/outcomes

- Analyses of agri-food systems and food sector policies co-created with regional stakeholders, which will be critical for scaling-out lessons from the research.
- Significant next-users of our research will be The Pacific Community and national agencies in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.
- Production of The Pacific Community-branded advice and recommendations will be influential in regional policy and reduce silos among national agencies and policy makers.
- Contribute significantly to the global food system agenda and policy, including in Australia, by addressing priority issues in agri-food systems.
- Improved informal market food environment through the increased availability of nutritious, local foods.
- Increased dialogue and flow of information between policy makers, vendors and consumers as a result of participatory research to strengthen food system policy.
- Application of lessons learned in initial case studies to other Pacific Island Countries, particularly in Melanesian contexts.

