



Australian Government

**Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research**

Final report

Project full title

**Development of a third party verified
voluntary sustainable certification
program for beef and other key
commodities in Vanuatu**

project ID LS/2020/155

date published 30 May 2023

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final report number FR2023-038

ISBN 978-1-922983-43-5

published by ACIAR
GPO Box 1571
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

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1 Acknowledgments

We'd like to acknowledge and pay respect to the Indigenous peoples of the large ocean states of the Pacific and their continuing connection to the Pacific Ocean, their lands, their cultures and their communities. As without their passion and determination this research would not be possible.

We would also like to acknowledge the unwavering commitment from the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards for supporting this research through the European Development Fund (EDF 11) since project sign off.

A special acknowledgment to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Malvatumari Council of Chiefs and the communities and their chiefly representatives for their input into the development of the standards.

Finally, a special thanks to all of the agritourism operators from the Vanuatu Agritourism Association and members of the Global Agritourism Network (GAN) Pacific Committee for the commitment that you have all given to growing this important sector in the Pacific.

Last but not least, to the team members from Regenerative Vanua your commitment and passion for agritourism is quite remarkable and it's because of this that the project was able to achieve so much in so little time.

Tankyu tumas

2 Executive summary

This ACIAR funded Small Research Activity (SRA) followed a Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) process to develop a third party verified certification program for key commodities in Vanuatu that recognises and compensates for the non-commodity outputs of sustainable and regenerative farming systems and regenerative agritourism. Due to the size and geographical isolation of Vanuatu, the nation's ability to competitively participate in global markets is severely limited. The effects of COVID-19 and consequent collapse of the tourism industry have also revealed the danger in encouraging dependency on one sector.

In line with the National Sustainable Development Plan (2019-2030), strategies are needed that recognise, support and compensate smallholders for the non-commodity outputs of agriculture such as agrobiodiversity, ecosystem services, climate change resilience and mitigation, traditional knowledge systems, social reciprocal systems, nutritional security and biodiversity. Certification offers a potential avenue to add value to the non-commodity outputs that traditional agricultural systems in Vanuatu provide by facilitating increased access to environmentally conscious consumers in niche, high-value local and global markets. Certification can also provide an effective tool to incentivise sustainable and regenerative practices, equitable distribution patterns and produce for high-value niche markets through the branding of key commodities as 'sustainable and regenerative'¹. While there are globally recognised standards for recognising non-commodity outputs of sustainable and regenerative agricultural systems and agritourism experiences, there is no one certification program that covers them all.

Many regenerative practitioners have raised their concerns with developing standards and certification, as they feel this limits people from adopting new knowledge systems. A review undertaken in 2020 by the Project Leader Dr Cherise Addinsall in collaboration with Anjali Nelson, Michael Dyer, Mia Dunphy & George Chapman also found that a key limiting factor to implementing any certification program in Vanuatu is the significant financial burden for Indigenous producers and retailers to access third-party verification. To address the need for an accessible and credible third-party certification program, through a CPAR process this SRA applied globally recognised sustainability and regenerative standards and adapted

¹ *In Vanuatu the principles of sustainability (minimising negative environmental, economic and sociocultural impacts), with a focus on ethics and human rights, therefore not just minimising negative impacts but mitigating these impacts (VSTP, 2019-2030). Regenerative based on Indigenous Knowledge Systems builds on from sustainable with a specific focus on climate adaptation and resilience.*

them to a Vanuatu context with the aim to support Indigenous smallholder farmers in Vanuatu to engage in multi-functionality and diversification of agriculture through agritourism. The CPAR process also considered methodologies that require high-integrity co-benefits such as ethical benefits sharing, the strengthening of Indigenous tenure, decolonisation, revival and protection of Indigenous knowledge systems, biodiversity impacts and/or measurements against Sustainable Development Goals and Vanuatu's National Sustainable Development Plan (2016-2030).

Research outcomes supported by ACIAR projects FST/2014/067; FST/2016/154; AGB/2014/057 and LS/2020/155 have identified that the strategic approach taken by Governments and supporting agencies since the entry of agritourism into the Pacific in 2016 has not provided a supportive framework for the development of Agritourism businesses in rural areas. Agritourism was introduced to the Pacific by agricultural development organisations operating in the Caribbean as a strategy that could address the lack of integration between resorts and hotels and local productive sectors. The [Pacific Community Agritourism Week held in Fiji 2016](#) organised by Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's (SPC), the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) and the ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) was seen as a push to **include more local produce in hotels and resorts**. However, there was a significant lack of focus on **developing agritourism experiences or supporting diversification to agritourism in rural areas**.

After the launching of the Agritourism Plan of Action (2017-2019) Government priorities in Vanuatu focused heavily on building relationships between farmers, hotel and resort chefs and supply chain managers so that more locally sourced foods were served in restaurants, hotels etc. Following on from the Pacific Community Agritourism week a number of workshops and festivals were held in Vanuatu between 2016 and 2017 relating to agritourism, with the objective of [Building the capacities of farmers to access tourism markets](#). While activities that were designed to meet the objectives of the Agritourism Plan of Action were valuable and very necessary to grow Vanuatu's economy and address high leakage from the tourism industry, it did little to support rural smallholders to develop agritourism experiences and diversify Vanuatu's rural areas. After a review of the approach to agritourism in the Pacific (Addinsall et al., 2017) it was found that this approach recognises Vanuatu's rural smallholders as farmers who supply larger resorts and hotels in Port Vila, rather than as entrepreneurs who can provide tourists with an agritourism experience in their communities. The review suggested a significant gap in Government policy and strategies to support agritourism experiences. While the need to address the high import bills and lack of local produce and value-added goods used in resorts and hotels

in Vanuatu is an important issue, the review found those concerns to be more related to culinary tourism, the circular economy, the slow food movement and agribusiness, and clearly contrasts with how agritourism is defined in the tourism literature, which focuses on facilitating visitor experiences on farms (Addinsall et al., 2016b: Arroyo, Barbieri, & Rich, 2013; Flanigan, Blackstock, & Hunter, 2014; Phillip, Hunter, & Blackstock, 2010).

This SRA responds to the need for a clear definition and pathway for Agritourism in the Pacific that is better aligned to diversification through the development of agritourism experiences on smallholder farms (Addinsall et.al., 2016b). Through a CPAR process and following a pluralistic perspective, the outcome from this SRA supports multiple ways of describing, designing and applying Regenerative Agritourism and Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism to Vanua². While much of the regenerative practitioners are strongly against defining regenerative practice or using certification and third-party verification (particularly in regenerative tourism), stakeholders in this SRA expressed the need to verify regenerative agricultural practices particularly those that support in mitigation of carbon and increase biodiversity. Indigenous peoples in this SRA also expressed the importance of validating the authenticity of storytelling in their vanua in addition to ensuring Intellectual Property rights of their traditional knowledge systems, and authorised people are relaying the information.

Therefore, using the concepts from vanua and applying CPAR processes, this SRA presents the 'Regenerative Agritourism Framework' the '*Regenerative Agritourism Standards*', the '*Regenerative Indigenous Standards*' and the '*Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program*'. The research outcomes from this SRA considers Regenerative Agritourism and Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism from Indigenous voices in the Pacific as a model for facilitating the decolonisation and regeneration of Vanua. The Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program applies key global sustainability standards in addition to regenerative agricultural practices, while also validating Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism by verifying Indigenous storytelling for each vanua. The SRA concludes that centring agriculture and tourism on places based vanua and local Indigenous knowledge is vital, as Vanua has been the most fundamental component of resilience to external threats in the Pacific.

² "the land area one is identified with, [which encompasses] the people, their traditions and customs, beliefs and values, and the various other institutions established for the sake of achieving harmony, solidarity and prosperity within a particular social context. [...] It provides a sense of identity and belonging. [...] The vanua [...] is an extension of the concept of the self (Ravuvu, 1983)".

3 Background

The global modern-industrial food system not only fails to feed a large percentage of the population, it also weakens ecosystems, soil fertility and biodiversity, drives climate change, displaces communities, erodes cultural diversity and reinforces dominant power structures and exclusion of small island states such as Vanuatu (IFAD, 2013). In the case of Vanuatu, these impacts undermine ecological processes and compromise the resource base of agriculture, contributing to the marginalisation of smallholders (Addinsall et al., 2022). Within every commodity and service in Vanuatu (including tourism) there is an unequal playing field with many Ni-Vanuatu unable to participate in a meaningful way (Addinsall et al., 2016a). Developing pathways for the commercialisation of smallholder farming and engagement in tourism must also address the need for local food and nutrition security, gender equality and the protection and maintenance of custom, culture and environment (Addinsall et. al., 2022; Rantes, et. al., 2021).

Vanuatu is a geographically isolated country located in the South-West Pacific, consisting of 83 dispersed islands with a total land area of 12,2812 km² and a combined coastline of 2,530 km². Approximately 74% of Vanuatu's 307,150 people live in rural areas, with many members of these rural households reliant on traditional subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods (ADB, 2019). Vanuatu recently graduated from a least developed country status in 2020. This is highly commendable considering they are ranked first on the World Risk index due to the high frequency of cyclones and earthquakes (CEPF, 2012). Additionally, its narrow economic base (rated the 7th most tourism-dependent country in the world; Frost, 2019) was severely impacted by strict border restrictions due to the COVID 19 pandemic and widespread damage by two category 5 cyclones within days of each other in March 2023. Considering the impacts of these events, the Vanuatu Government has shifted its focus to rural and agricultural development and food production as a priority to improve the livelihoods of the Ni-Vanuatu people (Coco, 2020).

An analytical study of the socio-economic climate in Vanuatu reveals that tourism and large-scale agriculture are the main ongoing contributors to the dispossession of lands and alienation of Indigenous peoples (De Burlo, 1989; Addinsall et al., 2015). Conceptualisations of Indigenous land rights often end at ownership rights; however, it is colonial thought which prescribed the ownership of lands and placed emphasis on physical handover/economic transactions. Decolonisation involves far more than physical ownership and occupation, it is a spiritual and historical practice and living experience of autonomy, custodianship and respect. For a decolonial and regenerative approach to development to

exist, Indigenous communities must be co-investors, and be consulted with decision making powers.

The literature suggests that industry models are needed that consider ecological, social, cultural and economic systems holistically, with a focus on facilitating resilient and sustainable local communities and ecosystems (Torres & Momsen, 2011). A discourse analysis surrounding sustainable development reveals inconsolable contradictions, vested interests, delusional implications and, overall, a pattern of distraction from meaningful change (Redclift, 2005). This pattern of thought is in direct contrast with the principles held by many Indigenous groups in Vanuatu, who place emphasis on the planet as one living system comprised of an almost infinite number of interdependent nested living systems, from the single cell to organs, animals, plants, and ecosystems that together form one unified whole.

Within a neo-colonial worldview, the 'environment' is a resource, an object, which humans have dominion and the right to exploit and extract. The ways in which we understand both the natural and social world are directly related to, and in fact inseparable from, the way we choose to live in it (Jasanoff, 2004). The most significant long-term sustainable development issue then, in many ways, is how we frame and formulate solutions addressing sustainable development itself.

This SRA found that while there is a need for sustainability standards covering agricultural production, and agritourism, sustainability is no longer enough to address the increasing issues we are experiencing as a result of the climate and biodiversity crisis. Calls for a vital paradigm shift have become loud and pervasive throughout contemporary tourism literature, with key theorists advocating for an approach that can empower the tourism industry to create net positive effects, while restoring and regenerating human societies and ecosystems (Bellato et al., 2022).

A regenerative development approach has emerged as a way forward. Regenerative practice views the world as a complex and dynamic whole, with the ability to self-organise (Bellato et al., 2022). Drawing on Indigenous knowledge systems, practices, and perspectives, as well as Western science and development research, this regenerative paradigm has been applied to numerous sectors, including architecture and urban planning, agriculture, economies, and tourism (Matunga et al., 2020). Regenerative tourism centres social-ecological systems and encourages development practices to operate in harmony with these systems (Bellato et al., 2022). In acknowledging tourism systems as inseparable from the places and communities in which they operate, Bellato et. al., (2022, pp 2) argue

that the 'theory and practice of regenerative approaches also address climate change, urbanisation, justice and inequality'.

The practice-led regenerative development paradigm applies to numerous sectors, including built environments and urban planning (Mang & Haggard, 2016), regenerative agriculture (Haines, 2020) and regenerative economies (Lovins, 2020; Raworth, 2017). While tourism is a business operating under the basic principles of supply and demand, it is also a site of deep socio-cultural and political significance, particularly in the South Pacific.

Dr Daniel Wahl, one of several key proponents of a new form of development that works in harmony with nature called Regenerative Development, has shown that a hidden spanner exists in the works of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The hidden spanner is the mistaken assumption that we can have endless material, physical growth on a finite planet. A regenerative approach addresses the need to move quickly from an extractive economy that results in degeneration and sterility towards a generative economy fuelled by renewable sources and has the capacity to realise the untapped potential for natural abundance (Capra & Wahl, 2019). A growing number of authors in multiple disciplines are now shifting, in part, towards this paradigm (Lim, Søgaard Jørgensen & Wyborn, 2018; Stafford-Smith & Griggs, 2017). However, there is ambiguity regarding the definition and 'transformative potential' of regenerative tourism (Cheer & Lew, 2018).

Owen (2007a, 2007b) first introduced the term regenerative tourism within architectural design literature, specifically regarding ecotourism facilities (Bellato et al., 2022). With the introduction of the 'conscious travel' (Pollock, 2012) approach in 2011, which applied an ecological worldview to the tourism and travel industry, several researchers and operators became interested in a regenerative approach (Bellato et al., 2022). The development of the concept as well as the integration of Indigenous perspectives and worldviews emerged in the following years, seen in publications such as Pollock (2015), Mang and Haggard (2016), Dwyer (2018); Zivoder et al., (2015), and Becken (2019). Bellato et al., (2022) note that during the COVID-19 pandemic, 'calls to rethink tourism saw tourism scholars beginning to consider regenerative tourism as an alternative' (pp.7). They cite Ateljevic, 2020; Cave & Dredge, 2020; Cheer, 2020; Duxbury et al., 2021; and Sheller, 2021 as influential in developing the conscious travel and regenerative tourism concepts within tourism literature. The Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Strategy (VSTS) (2021-2025) echoes this shift in the literature, advocating for a regenerative approach to adapt to the consequences and revelations of the COVID-19 pandemic. The VSTS was established as:

'a call to industry, community and Government to transform our tourism industry from dependence to resilience, to be more aligned to our traditional values, an industry that is ethical, inclusive, cares for all our people, regenerates and protects our environment, kastom and culture, offers us resilience in the face of climate change and external threats such as COVID-19 and gives us the opportunity to have meaningful encounters with others.'

It is clear within both tourism literature and practice that a regenerative approach must be implemented according to locally defined values and outcomes. An attempt to strictly define regenerative tourism is at odds with its fundamental principles, as they reinforce reductive thinking and universality. While the ability to bring about change is often conceptualised at the global, political and scientific level, meaningful change actually requires an integrated and pluralistic approach (Vanhulst & Beling, 2014). It isn't about one model versus another, it's about using local experience paired with global expertise, technology, knowledge, stories and theory (Beck, 2011).

To 'think global but act local' connects widespread, complex issues to personal and meaningful action and experience (Jasanoff, 2010). Pluriversality asserts that knowledge 'cannot be universal due to different cultural contexts and varying impacts of processes such as colonisation and modernity in different places and communities' (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015 in Belleto et al., 2022, pp. 9). Belleto et al., (2022) offer a draft working definition based on the principles of pluriversality and informed by decolonial and intersection scholarship:

'Regenerative tourism is a transformational approach that aims to fulfil the potential of tourism places to flourish and create net positive effects through increasing the regenerative capacity of human societies and ecosystems. Derived from the ecological worldview, it weaves Indigenous and Western science perspectives and knowledges. Tourism systems are regarded as inseparable from nature and obligated to respect Earth's principles and laws. In addition, regenerative tourism approaches evolve and vary across places over the long term, thereby harmonising practices with the regeneration of nested living systems.'

An approach rooted in decolonial and intersectional studies that upholds Indigenous knowledge systems and honours local communities is the way forward. In the meantime, regenerative agriculture has been defined in a variety of ways, and as differently as ‘a system of farming principles and practices that increases biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds, and enhances ecosystem services’ (Terra Genesis International, 2020), to ‘a long-term, holistic design that attempts to grow as much food using as few resources as possible in a way that revitalizes the soil rather than depleting it, while offering a solution to carbon sequestration’ (Rhodes, 2017), to ‘a form of enterprise that incorporates a community of people engaged in civil labor to produce and consume the food (and land, landscape and amenity) that they, collectively, decide to grow’ (Ravenscroft et al., 2013). Clearly, there are disparities among different definitions. In part, these differences may be a product of different origins and lineages of the term ‘regenerative agriculture’ (Soloviev, 2019), though a systematic etymological history has not been established.

Agroecology provides a culturally sensitive, ethical and economically viable alternative contextual model appropriate to the smallholder scale. Agroecology encompasses a social movement that recognises the importance of traditional knowledge to sustainable farming systems. Traditional agricultural systems often exhibit high levels of diversity, as communities rely on a broad range of integrated systems to provide them with food, water, fuel and medicine (Walter & Lebot, 2007).

These systems are inspired by cultural practices and the interaction between people and their environments which have taken place over generations. FAO (2013) estimates that over 2 billion people are still reliant on the products and services derived from these traditional agricultural systems. However due to accessibility to markets and economies of scale, smallholders practising traditional agriculture often marginalised from formal markets (FAO, 2013). The Nyéléni Declaration (Anderson, Pimbert, & Kiss, 2015, p. 1) sees agroecology as ‘a key form of resistance to an economic system that puts profit before life,’ in other words, an economic approach that recognises and values the non-commodity outputs of agriculture such as agrobiodiversity, ecosystem services, climate change resilience and mitigation, traditional knowledge systems.

To provide an Indigenous Ni-Vanuatu understanding of regenerative agritourism (applying the principles of agroecology, regenerative and considering sustainability) and how best to support the growth of this approach, participatory methods were used to encourage participants to be active agents of change rather than people that need emancipation. The methodology consisted of collective discussions and interaction through ‘storian’ with

Indigenous agritourism operators who are members of the Vanuatu Agritourism Association through a Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) process.

A series of workshops, storian sessions and VAA meetings were conducted through the ACIAR project and EDF 11 funded Food Tourism and Agritourism Initiative facilitated through Regenerative Vanua in collaboration with the Vanuatu Government during 2019-2022. These workshops and storian sessions took place with Indigenous VAA members, traditional landholders, community members, government officials, NGOs, and multilateral donors. Small group storian sessions worked exceptionally well and suited Ni-Vanuatu participant's ways of communicating. Storian is the Bislama term for 'chatting, yarning or swapping stories' (Crowley 1995, p. 235). The central feature of storian is relationship building between participants and the researcher which enables members of the community to play an important role in providing a collaborative environment to address the research problem (Warrick, 2009). Implementing these research methods enabled this research to be interactive rather than extractive (Warrick, 2009), which is key to empowering communities (Beeton, 2006).

By combining extensive literature analysis of regenerative systems thinking and agroecology with comprehensive dialogue with the VAA members and communities in which they are located the research team were able to develop the *Regenerative Agritourism Framework*, *Regenerative Agritourism Recognition Pathway* and the *Regenerative Agritourism Standards* to meet the local context in all six Provinces of Vanuatu. While much of the regenerative tourism literature is strongly against the use of certification and third-party verification, Indigenous peoples in this research express the importance of validating the authenticity of storytelling in their vanua in addition to ensuring Intellectual Property rights are adhered to and that the correct person is relaying the information.

The SRA concludes that centring agriculture and tourism on local Indigenous knowledge is vital, as Vanua has been the most fundamental component of resilience to external threats in the Pacific. The SRA also highlights the negative impact from projects that are too mono sector focused. For example, COVID-19 highlighted the dangers of focusing on one sector such as tourism. This SRA responds to the advocating for diversification of rural smallholders into agritourism (where tourism is not the primary business). The SRA also highlights the issues with focusing on one commodity as it further changes food crop cultivation away from a more diverse cropping pattern into a more market-oriented cropping pattern that reduces the diversity in the diets and reduces the resilience in the food production to climatic impacts.

Finally, the SRA advocates for moving away from seeking to better 'integrate' Indigenous knowledge into western science and make way for Indigenous research leadership to re correct the damages of the past to our planet and people. This is reflected with the establishment of an Indigenous managed not-for-profit Regenerative Vanua to oversee Indigenous standards for Regenerative Agritourism that is Government subsidised to ensure inclusivity. It is also reflected in the re-presentation of data to the Indigenous peoples who participated in the CPAR process, in addition to the submission of a peer reviewed paper with the Indigenous team members in this SRA as co-authors.

4 Objectives

This project aimed to conduct a detailed scoping study in Vanuatu to develop a third party verified voluntary sustainable certification program for key commodities in Vanuatu that recognises and compensates for the non-commodity outputs of sustainable farming systems and agritourism. The following objectives were:

1. To clarify what types of non-commodity outputs are being produced from sustainable farming systems in Vanuatu through primary and secondary data and gain an understanding of what these sustainability outputs mean from the perspective of key smallholder commodities/industries in Vanuatu
2. To apply globally recognised standards for recognising non-commodity outputs from sustainable farming systems and agritourism and assess application in a Vanuatu context
3. To gain recognition of standards by both globally recognised accreditation bodies and the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards.
4. Support in the potential design and governance structure of a third party verified voluntary sustainable certification program for key commodities in Vanuatu (with possible amalgamation with the Pacifica Organica)

As a result of the research outcomes presented from objectives 1 and 2, the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards prioritised the development of a Regenerative Agritourism and Food Tourism certification program that covers the key commodities in this SRA to be managed by the Not-for-Profit Organisation 'Regenerative Vanua'. To ensure the SRA aligns to the principles of PAR additional activities aimed at active participation from a wide range of stakeholders and the building of alliances and support for the certification program were added to the SRA in the final 6 months. This was required before Regenerative Vanua could have the capacity to manage this certification program.

5 Methodology

The project lead and collaborators undertook the following activities:

1. Storian Sessions in agricultural and agritourism communities for key commodities of beef, cocoa, coffee and agritourism
2. Qualitative semi structured interviews with key informants
3. Stakeholder Focus Group Workshops from key agricultural communities
4. Triangulation of stakeholder views through Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods to inform proposed standards and governance structure for a third party verified voluntary sustainable certification program
5. Final workshop to present proposed design, recognised standards and governance structure of a third party verified voluntary sustainable certification program for key commodities in Vanuatu

Based on the findings of the SRA, and on the request of the Vanuatu Government the following activities were added in the final 6 months of the SRA:

6. Validation Workshop for Regenerative Agritourism and Food Tourism Standards (once standards have been submitted to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council)
7. Additional standards developed to align with the principles of Regenerative
8. Additional standards developed to ensure authenticity and protection of Indigenous Knowledge Systems
9. Meeting with the Council of Chiefs to validate these standards
10. Capacity building of the Regenerative Vanua team to manage overseeing the Regenerative Agritourism and Food Tourism Standards

This SRA applied Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) and Exploratory Qualitative Case Study analysis (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). CPAR enables lessons learnt from the application of Exploratory Case Study analysis to deepen research findings in an iterative way and provide tangible outcomes. This process enables the researcher to explore issues in-depth so that a systematic piecing together of evidence can occur, which can ultimately lead to generating theories derived from information given directly from people that are often

given little opportunity to voice their opinions (Xiao & Smith, 2006). With its blending of theory and action, CPAR places importance on real tangible outcomes over the accrual of knowledge for knowledge's sake (O'Donoghue, 2001) thus enabling participants to be key actors in identifying and addressing their livelihood priorities (Smyth & Whitehead, 2012).

CPAR has three main characteristics:

- Active participation of researchers and participants in the co-construction of knowledge
- Promotion of critical thinking and self-awareness that contributes to individual and community change and development
- Building of alliances between researchers, participants and other key stakeholders, leading to locally relevant, validated findings.

Culturally appropriate and gender inclusive research methods

This SRA applies lessons learnt from earlier encountered issues that directly relate to cultural protocols and norms in Vanuatu. To respectfully engage with communities and rural smallholders it is necessary to firstly engage with the chief, area secretary and community leaders which often takes place in the nakamal. This process is male dominated and often takes place on a few occasions before wider engagement with the rest of the community. This SRA recognised previous experiences where initial information exchanges between project and village leaders were not necessarily passed on to the rest of the community, particularly women. In response to this engagement and awareness activities with women were prioritised following approval from village leaders. This SRA recognised that the basic principle in addressing gender inequality in agricultural development is to enable female input to decision making across all levels. To address gender discrimination a female Ni-Vanuatu project lead managed in country research activities and both female and male research assistants conducted data collection.

The research strategy was divided into 3 components based on the CPAR Exploratory Case Study analysis:

1. Storian Sessions

Storian sessions are a qualitative method of data collection that enables participants to contribute their ideas on social issues in a safe way (in single-gender groups of 3 to 4 people) that retains their anonymity. By describing and identifying conditions, participants can investigate their own circumstances to strengthen their community capacity

(McTaggart, 1997). In this way storian sessions through CPAR connect the local and global (Kemmis, 2006). The storian sessions were based on unstructured discussion to clarify what sustainability means from the perspective of different commodities in Vanuatu and the potential for applying farming or business management practices to raise the quality and sustainability of key commodities in addition to reducing carbon outputs such as: improving feed efficiency for livestock to reduce carbon. A total of 16 storian sessions were conducted in all six Provinces for key commodities of beef, cocoa, coffee and agritourism.

2. Qualitative Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants to inform the design, standards and governance structure of a third party verified voluntary sustainable certification program for key commodities in Vanuatu. Key informants consisted of agriculture and tourism sector stakeholders operating within close proximity of the case study sites; NGO's, donor and development stakeholders; and Government officials from the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards; Ministry of Trade, Tourism, Co-operatives and Ni Vanuatu Business; Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geo Hazards, Environment, Energy and Disaster Management; Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Bio Security and the Vanuatu Agritourism Association. Key informants were selected based on their position within their organisation and relevance to sustainable certification.

Stakeholder Focus Group Workshops

The stakeholder focus group workshops provided a platform to present the findings from the Exploratory Case Studies and assess proposed design, standards and governance structure of a third party verified voluntary sustainable certification program for key commodities in Vanuatu. Standards from various certification programs were assessed such as: Fair Trade, organics, sustainable and regenerative agriculture, generation of verified carbon offsets and application of Global Sustainable Tourism Council criteria. The stakeholder focus group workshops assisted in the formation of the third party verified voluntary sustainable certification program. The stakeholder focus group workshops considered methodologies that require high-integrity co-benefits such as ethical benefits sharing, the strengthening of Indigenous tenure, and biodiversity impacts.

Data Analysis

Stebbins (2001) suggests that a combination of inductive and deductive logic is important for exploration in the social sciences as new ideas and observations cannot be uncovered with deductive logic alone. Deductive logic is a more traditional system of research which requires the use of a categorical scheme which is informed by a theoretical perspective for assessing hypotheses (Babbie, 2007). Inductive logic differs from this as theorising takes place after the research enquiry. This SRA adopted a mixed approach of both inductive and deductive characteristics of Exploratory Case Study research.

The deductive element of this study was the assessment of the successful application of certification programs such as Fair Trade, Organics, Verified Carbon Offsets and the application of Global Sustainable Tourism Council criteria for sustainable tours and accommodation. An inductive approach through CPAR assisted in the uncovering of new ideas and observations that builds theory from the data and aids in guiding the proposed voluntary sustainable certification program based universal understandings of sustainability and lessons learnt from the previous application of certification programs.

Triangulation of multiple data sets were used to contribute to the overall trustworthiness of the standards and certification program. These multiple data collection methods consisted of notes from the storian sessions, data from semi-structured interviews with key informants, and secondary sources such as business plans, government documents and NGO and multilateral agency reports. A thematic approach to analysis was applied for sorting data into themes for the case studies. The output from the data was the VBS accreditation and GSTC recognition of the Regenerative Agritourism Standards; and Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism Standards; the development of the Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program, the Regenerative Agritourism Framework and the establishment of the not-for-profit Regenerative Vanua to act as the third party organisation responsible for the Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program.

6 Achievements against activities and outputs/milestones

Objective 1: To clarify what types of non-commodity outputs are being produced from sustainable farming systems in Vanuatu through primary and secondary data and gain an understanding of what these sustainability outputs mean from the perspective of key smallholder commodities/industries in Vanuatu

no.	activity	outputs/ milestones	completion date	comments
1.1	Storian Sessions in agricultural and agritourism communities for key commodities of beef, cocoa, coffee and agritourism	16 storian sessions with a total of 120 people were conducted in six Provinces of Vanuatu over a 12-month period	December 2021	Data presented in paper submitted for review in the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research
1.2	Qualitative semi structured interviews with key informants	40 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants	December 2021	Data presented in paper submitted for review in the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research
1.3	Stakeholder Focus Group Workshops from key agricultural communities	A working group was developed with members of the Vanuatu Agritourism Association and the National Agritourism Committee.	December 2022	Data presented in paper submitted for review in the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, The VAA were a key part of the development of standards based on PAR.

PC = partner country, A = Australia

Objective 2: To apply globally recognised standards for recognising non-commodity outputs from sustainable farming systems and agritourism and assess application in a Vanuatu context

no.	activity	outputs/ milestones	completion date	comments
2.1	Triangulation of stakeholder views through Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods to inform proposed standards and governance structure for a third party verified voluntary sustainable certification program	The outcomes of the PAR process led to the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards prioritising the development of Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism standards and a third party certification program that covers the key commodities to be managed by the Not-for-Profit Organisation 'Regenerative Vanua'.	December 2022	VBA committed to funding for the development of the third-party certification program for Regenerative Agritourism Standards to be managed by the Not-for-Profit Regenerative Vanua. VBA requested additional standards to be developed (see 2.2 and 2.3) in addition to a request for ACIAR to capacity build the Regenerative Vanua team.

2.2	Additional standards developed to align with the principles of Regenerative	Contracted a local Regenerative Agricultural Technical Advisor to conduct 30 semi-structured interviews with farmers to assess application of regenerative standards to smallholders	April 2022	Global Regenerative Agricultural standards have been adapted to meet local context
2.3	Additional standards developed to ensure authenticity and protection of Indigenous Knowledge Systems	PAR with the Vanuatu Cultural Centre for Malvatumari Council of Chiefs led to the development of standards for protecting and communicating Indigenous knowledge systems (see Regenerative Indigenous Standards	April 2022	Standards covering Indigenous Knowledge Systems have been developed and approved as part of the Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism standards

PC = partner country, A = Australia

Objective 3. To gain recognition of standards by both globally recognised accreditation bodies and the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards.

no.	activity	outputs/ milestones	completion date	comments
3.1	Submit Standards to the GSTC and VBS standards committee for approval	Regenerative Indigenous Standards have been submitted to GSTC for approval, VBS standards committee have approved (See appendix 1)	May 2023	Regenerative Agritourism Standards will be piloted by Regenerative Vanua in 2023 and funded by the VBS
3.2	Validation Workshop for Regenerative Agritourism and Food Tourism Standards (once standards have been submitted to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council)	A Validation workshop was held in Santo (See appendix 2)	April 20 th	VBS and VAA representatives provided feedback on Regenerative Agritourism Standards adaptations were made and submitted to GSTC
3.3	Meeting with the Council of Chiefs to validate these standards	A Validation workshop was held in Port Vila (See appendix 3)	May 29 th	Council of Chiefs representatives approved standards at the validation workshop

Objective 4. Support in the potential design and governance structure of a third party verified voluntary sustainable certification program for key commodities in Vanuatu (with possible amalgamation with the Pasifika Organica)

no.	activity	outputs/ milestones	completion date	comments
4.1	Final workshop to present proposed design, recognised standards and governance structure of a third party verified voluntary sustainable certification program for key commodities in Vanuatu	A Validation workshop was held in Port Vila (See appendix 3)	May 29 th	The newly launched Global Agritourism Network (GAN) Pacific Committee has approved the definition for Regenerative Agritourism and Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism and will be rolling out the Standards in all member countries in 2024
4.2	Capacity building of the Regenerative Vanua team to manage overseeing the Regenerative Agritourism and Food Tourism Standards	Dr Cherise Addinsall supported the Regenerative Vanua team to develop a NPP for extra Government funding to pilot and roll out the standards in 2023/2024.	May 30 th	Regenerative Vanua now has a team of 6 staff and Technical Advisors that have all received capacity building. The NPP will cover the costs of training third party auditors for the Regenerative Agritourism Standards. As a result the Executive Director of Regenerative Vanua has been appointed Chair of the Global Agritourism Network Pacific Committee.

7 Key results and discussion

7.1 Designing a definition of Regenerative Agritourism

Agritourism is continuing to gain considerable attention from many Governments in the South Pacific who are looking to enhance opportunities for rural farmers. The first ever Pacific Community Agritourism Week in 2015 held at the Sofitel in Denara, Fiji was supported by a number of organisations, both international and regional, with the key focus being to provide an avenue to include more local produce and value-added products in resorts and hotels (Marango, 2015). While well-intentioned, Addinsall et al., (2016b) found this approach to be limiting implementation of agritourism as it is defined within the literature.

Agritourism is defined within tourism literature as a diversification strategy to generate supplementary income for farmers and smallholders through the facilitation of educational experiences between the agricultural producer, his/her products and services, and the tourists (Flanigan et al., 2014; Flanigan, Blackstock, and Hunter, 2015; and Phillip et al., 2010; Addinsall et al., 2016b). Addinsall et al., (2016b) suggested at the core of agritourism is the desire to attract tourists to venture **'outside'** of main centres and resorts to visit primary producers and value adders for an educational experience.

When the main objectives for agritourism in the South Pacific is centred around supporting the supplying of local produce to the tourism industry, particularly the larger resorts (which can be seen as the key priority in the development of the now outdated Vanuatu Agritourism Plan of Action) there were missed opportunities in developing agritourism experiences in the rural areas and connecting tourists to the farmers and value adders. The all-inclusive resort model is designed to discourage the visitor from venturing outside of the property as little as possible with the fencing off of compounds, guarded gates, perceiving safety from the crime within the destination in addition to the all-inclusive package itself with an emphasis on a 'cashless experience' (Rhiney, 2011).

Where visitors are brought into the production space it creates opportunities for 'education, quality assurance, and place attachments' associated with consuming the produce and value-added products (Rhiney, 2011, pp. 3). It's about creating connections and relationships between the consumers and producers. This contrasts with supplying the resorts with local produce, which is more closely aligned to the principles of agribusiness

and the circular economy (also vital areas in the South Pacific requiring further research and support). In response to the need for a clearer context fitting definition of agritourism in the South Pacific Addinsall et. al., (2016a) put forward a definition based on the principles of agroecology (see figure 1).

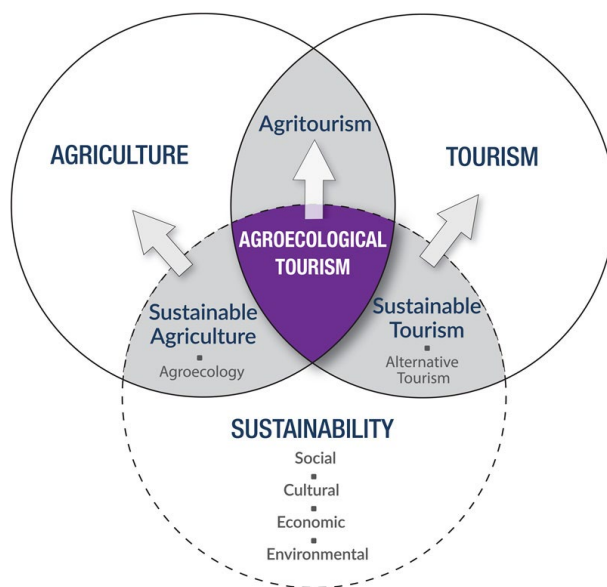


Figure 1 A model of Agroecological tourism (Addinsall et. al., 2016a)

Addinsall et. al., (2016a) define agroecological tourism as:

'having a primary focus on the interpretation of sustainable traditional agroecosystems which exhibit cultural and heritage significance. Agroecological tourism has potential to support traditional practices, enhance the preservation of cultural knowledge and promote sustainable farming practices'.

Through a CPAR process this SRA (supported by the Global Agritourism Network Pacific Committee and the Vanuatu Agritourism Association) built on from Addinsall et. al., (2016a) definition of Agroecological tourism by applying the principles of regenerative agriculture and regenerative tourism (see figure 2).

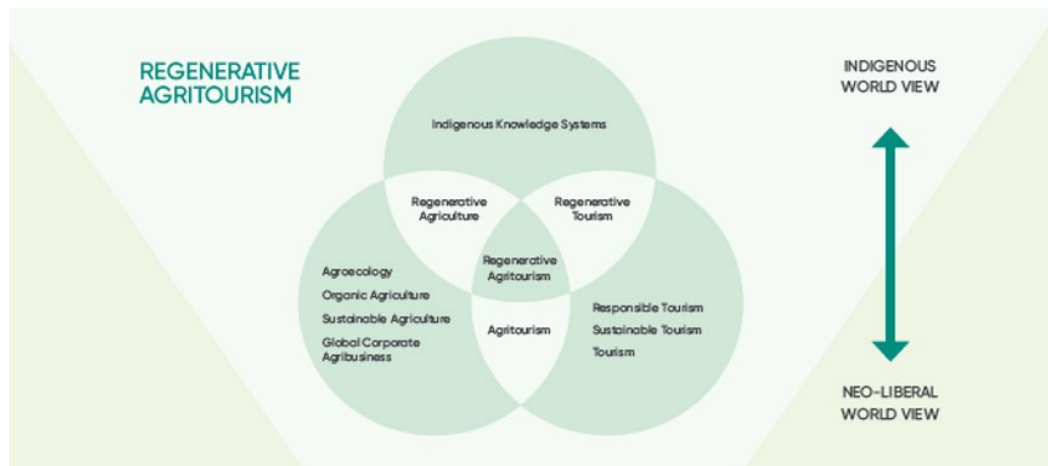


Figure 2. Application of Regenerative agriculture and regenerative tourism

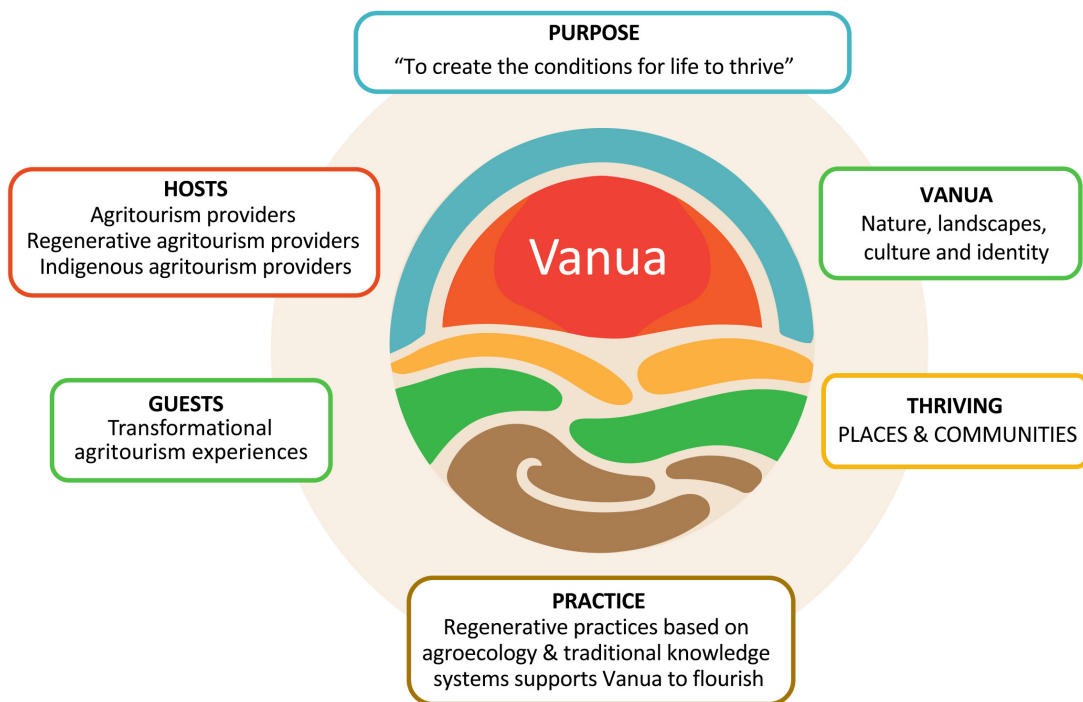


Figure 3 Regenerative Agritourism Framework (Addinsall et al., 2023) Paper submitted for review to the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research

The Regenerative Agritourism Framework (see figure 3) has been adapted from the Agritourism Dimensions Framework (Addinsall et al., 2016b) as an outcome of the SRA and in collaboration with Regenerative Vanua, the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards and the Global Agritourism Network Pacific Committee. In order to progress the sustainability and regenerative discourse, the Regenerative Agritourism Framework allows for contextual approaches that privilege sustainability and regenerative practices, smallholder benefits, community wellbeing, cultural protection and enhancement and the facilitation of quality visitor experiences.

7.1.1 Understanding of the term 'Indigenous'

It is estimated that there are more than 370 million indigenous people spread across 70 countries worldwide. Practicing unique traditions, they retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Spread across the world from the Arctic to the South Pacific, they are the descendants - according to a common definition - of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived.

The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement, or other means. Indigenous peoples are the holders of unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs and possess invaluable knowledge of practices for the sustainable management of natural resources. They have a special relation to and use of their traditional land. Their ancestral land has a fundamental importance for their collective physical and cultural survival as peoples. Indigenous peoples hold their own diverse concepts of development, based on their traditional values, visions, needs and priorities.



The United Nations understanding of the term Indigenous is based on the following:

Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member;

Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies;

Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources;

Distinct social, economic or political systems;

Distinct language, culture and beliefs;

Form non-dominant groups of society;

Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities

Guided by the Global Agritourism Network Pacific Committee this SRA designed a definition describing Regenerative Agritourism and Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism experiences that aim to preserve Indigenous Knowledge Systems and are owned, managed and delivered by Indigenous peoples in the Pacific. The Regenerative Agritourism Standards and the Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism Standards have been designed to meet the needs of Indigenous people in the Pacific. Once piloted throughout Vanuatu, Regenerative Vanua will work with other countries within the Pacific region to adapt where necessary and apply these standards to Agritourism Businesses.

Studies on smallholder farmers in rural areas highlight that agritourism at the smallholder scale and with an environmental focus has the potential to contribute positively to food security, to further develop and diversify traditional crops, to support natural, historical and cultural resources, to strengthen communities and to reduce urban migration (Bwana, Olima, Andika, Agong, & Hayombe, 2015). Regenerative Agritourism is differentiated from agritourism in that its primary focus is on regenerative agricultural practices. Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism's primary focus is on the interpretation of regenerative traditional agroecosystems which exhibit cultural and heritage significance and is seen as a tool to decolonise and regenerate Indigenous peoples Vanua.

7.1.2 The term Vanua can be described as:

"the land area one is identified with, [which encompasses] the people, their traditions and customs, beliefs and values, and the various other institutions established for the sake of achieving harmony, solidarity and prosperity within a particular social context. [...] It provides a sense of identity and belonging. [...] The vanua [...] is an extension of the concept of the self" (Ravuvu, 1983).

7.1.3 Regenerative Vanua's interpretation of Agritourism

Authentic agritourism is based on the specific concept of a touristic offer on a working farm where the main livelihood activities should be generated through agriculture. Provides diversified income-generating activities for smallholder farmers where tourism is not the primary business.

Key Criteria

- Based on a working farm
- Structures and activities correspond to the setting of an active farm
- Agricultural activities predominate agritouristic ones (60% of livelihood activities are agricultural)
- Accommodation is under 6 rooms³ in farm buildings or representing the architectural characteristics of the region where they are located
- Enabled interaction of the working farm
- Practices sustainability throughout all operations
- All related financial, legal, technical and tax aspects fall within the field of agricultural legislation and not within the service sector, touristic accommodation or private operators hospitality directories⁴

7.1.4 Regenerative Vanua's interpretation of Regenerative Agritourism

Regenerative Agritourism is an ecologically and socially inclusive model of agritourism on authentic working farms that are practising regenerative agriculture. Educational, interactive and transformative experiences are delivered based on the interpretation of regenerative agroecosystems which support climate resilience. Experiences are not primarily for international visitors, the operator acts as a regenerative ambassador tailoring experiences aimed at promoting regenerative agricultural practices and supporting positive behaviour change and connecting local youth, community and domestic tourists to local farming and food systems.

Key Criteria

- All criteria are met in section 7.1.3
- Values the rural smallholder and vanua
- Practices and promotes regenerative climate smart farming
- Follows regenerative tourism principles

³ Refer to Schedule 2 Part 3 of the Vanuatu Foreign Investment Act No. 25 of 2019 defines restricted categories for Ni Vanuatu Citizens "accommodation under 10 rooms and tour operators with an annual revenue of under 20,000 million VATU

⁴ Streifeneder, T. (2016) Agriculture first: Assessing European policies and scientific typologies to define authentic agritourism and differentiate it from countryside tourism, *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 20; 251-264

- Where land has been leased through customary land tenure by a non-indigenous investor the Indigenous landholder must have minimum 50% co-investment in the agritourism business
- The agritourism business cannot obstruct access to natural resources from the local community
- The provision of educational, interactive experiences based on the interpretation of regenerative agricultural practices
- Supports immersive reciprocal experiences between host and guest, guest needs do not prioritise the host
- Products used in the agritourism business must come from the farm or within the region where the farm is located
- Meeting international and national long-term conservation and biodiversity goals

7.1.5 Regenerative Vanua's interpretation of Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism

Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism is an ecologically and socially inclusive model of agritourism on Indigenous owned and managed authentic working farms that are practising regenerative agriculture based on Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Educational, interactive and transformative experiences are delivered based on the interpretation of climate smart regenerative traditional agroecosystems which exhibit cultural and heritage significance and support climate resilience. Regenerative Indigenous operators act as ambassadors of transformational journeys to decolonise and regenerate their Vanua (the term Vanua should be modified to the region it is applied in). Experiences are not primarily for international visitors, the operator acts as a regenerative ambassador tailoring regenerative experiences aimed at supporting positive behaviour change and connection to culture and custom in local youth, community and domestic tourists.

Key Criteria

- All criteria are met in 7.1.4 and 7.1.5
- Must be on custom land within the Indigenous persons Vanua
- Aspires to enhance the preservation of cultural knowledge
- All interpretation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems must be delivered by the Indigenous persons within the particular Vanua (not in a different vanua setting) and validated by the chief of the Vanua

- All activities delivered by the agritourism business must be considered authentic and verified by the agencies responsible for cultural verification
- All interpretation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems can only be used if they have Intellectual Property recognition and validation

7.2 Regenerative Agritourism Standards & Pathway Recognition Program

Using the concepts from vanua, through CPAR processes this SRA presents the 'Regenerative Agritourism Standards, Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism Standards and the Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program' which applies key global sustainability standards, regenerative agricultural practices, and transformation regenerative experiences while also validating Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism by verifying Indigenous storytelling for each vanua.

Literature on the commodification of kastom and culture, notably Connell (2007; 2008), alludes to the 'inauthenticity' and performative nature of tourism which focuses on cultural differences and tradition. It is true that there is a danger of exploitation in the commodification of culture, the environment and people.

A VAA members noted:

'We need to make sure everyone that is saying they are regenerative agritourism operators are not misleading visitors and other operators. I think we can do this through storian, showing stories and examples of our regenerative Indigenous practices through our association and having clear guidelines of how to apply regenerative principles to your agritourism business'.

Another VAA member highlighted the desire to see a firm commitment to buying local and supporting local communities.

'Since being in the Regenerative Vanua Agritourism program I have learnt how important it is to support others in the community and I do this by buying produce from them for my business. I used to buy most

of the food from the store which is all imported food. I think we need commitments from our agritourism operators to purchase local and be recognised for that when they do.'

In regards to 'regenerative agritourism' this too holds the danger of exploitation and greenwashing of the regenerative principles which are largely based on Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

'So many years of colonisation have changed the way many Indigenous people are practising agriculture. Those who have received advice from outside and are now burning forest and planting only kava, some communities don't even grow food anymore. The soil is becoming degraded. I think it's important not to assume we are all still practising our traditional knowledge or that we still have this knowledge. I think having guidelines that support us to be regenerative in our farming and business, training and recognition will act as an incentive for many to return to this way of doing things.'

This SRA sought to address the need for standards that enables oversight of businesses claiming to be practicing regenerative agritourism while also acknowledging the contradiction of creating a set of indicators that auditors can tick off as regenerative is counterintuitive to the key principles of regenerative systems thinking. A VAA member responded to the need for incentives to commit to regenerative practices in agriculture.

'Incentives are important. We have had so many researchers and consultants saying we should conserve our forests and look after our environment, practice our traditional knowledge etc but we also need to survive. We have more things we need to buy now and school fees and transport are expensive. Having incentives to do these things helps.'

The SRA responded to this tension by developing categories that enable the auditing of regenerative practices while also developing categories that enable the agritourism operator and community within their vanua to share stories around their regenerative transformational experiences that can be 'recognised' not audited with a set of indicators. A VAA member shared a story of how he is following regenerative principles in his agritourism business.

'Many of our land disputes and issues that impact our agritourism businesses comes from jealousy in the community. When people see you doing something new and exciting instead of supporting it they get jealous and then start to harm your business. I've learnt now that when I start to see jealousy occurring, I approach that person and ask "Hey I need a lot of Taro tonight to make laplap for my guests could you sell me some from your garden" I do this even if I have enough Taro in my garden because it makes them feel included. I also ask community members to run tours for my guests, take them to their house for a traditional meal and provide boat transport. The disputes happen when you try to keep the visitor to yourself and not share with your community. When you share the visitor has a more enjoyable time and becomes welcomed into the community, it's very special.'

Despite the wide variety of local and organic produce available in Vanuatu, often traditional and local cuisine is usually presented or served just once or twice, while the rest of the meals will consist of imported food,

A VAA member stated:

'Most of their guests complain that our traditional food 'is too heavy' so we give them imported food like noodles, rice, tinned fish and chicken. They don't like our local chicken because it's tougher than imported chicken, which is true but I think our local chicken has more flavour.'

As per observations, there is an abundance of root crops such as Yam, Kumala, Taro, Banana, Manioc (Cassava), fruits and local vegetables. However, the use of vegetables and fruits is not really a priority in a lot of the cooking or food preparation observed.

As part of the CPAR the research team attempted to gather information and stories around the unique traditional stories behind each food culture throughout the provinces as well as the style and technique of cooking, including common or unique techniques from each community and operator. As part of this drive to restore traditional cuisine, the research team noted the need to protect and/or build from the traditional techniques as the foundational food culture on which innovative and beneficial recipes can be developed. As

part of the Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program there are supporting mechanisms for agritourism operators to develop their meal plans aligning with the theme of their Agritourism business whether it be a restaurant, or cultural/farm tour.

The Regenerative Agritourism Standards and the Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism Standards are to be accredited by the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards Committee and a MoU has been signed between the VBS and Regenerative Vanua recognising Regenerative Vanua as the third-party organisation responsible for managing the certification of these standards. The VBS has also committed to funding the training of third-party auditors to audit against the Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism Standards. Regenerative Vanua has also submitted the Regenerative Agritourism Standards to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) for recognition.

The Regenerative Agritourism Standards are presented in the following categories:

- A. **Regenerative Agritourism pursues net-positive and improved system capacity incorporating sustainability measures** (*Verification that the agritourism business is doing no harm, based on core sustainability principles, however, it is less about minimising and mitigating negative impact and more about net-positive*)
- B. **Regenerative Agriculture and nature positive landscape practices** (*Verification that agricultural and land management practices are regenerative and suited to place*)
- C. **Animal welfare** (*Verification that the agritourism business is ensuring the welfare of animals, acknowledging cultural considerations*)
- D. **Thriving places and communities** (*Verification that the agritourism business is practising inclusivity, localisation and supporting communities to thrive*)
- E. **Regenerative transformational agritourism experiences** (*Verification that the agritourism business is providing and has permission to deliver authentic regenerative experiences based on Indigenous Knowledge Systems*)

7.3 Development of the Not-for-Profit third-party certification organisation Regenerative Vanua

Regenerative Vanua was established as an outcome of the CPAR in this SRA and formally registered as a Charitable Organisation under the Charitable Associations (Incorporations) Act [Cap 140] in Vanuatu. This SRA played a key role in capacity building the Regenerative Vanua team (see section 8.2) as well as establishing the Regenerative Vanua board and constitution. This SRA also supported Regenerative Vanua in collaboration with VBS and the GAN Pacific Committee to develop the first Regenerative Agritourism Standards globally that will be recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to ensure the development of agritourism is resilient in the face of climate change and protects and promotes Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Regenerative Vanua was awarded an Islands Innovation Award, demonstrating the success of this approach to regenerative agritourism. Regenerative Vanua has already had a significant positive impact on Indigenous people throughout Vanuatu's islands. The Organisation has created opportunities to support adaptation and diversification through the development of Food Tourism and Agritourism experiences based on Vanuatu's rich cultural heritage. Regenerative Vanua is also having positive social, cultural, environmental and health impacts on Indigenous people and further supporting the Sustainable Development Goals and Vanuatu's National Sustainable Development Plan (2016-2030); Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy (2019-2030) and the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Strategy (2021-2025). By increasing the pride in local food and farming systems Regenerative Vanua is supporting better health outcomes and supporting livelihoods in rural areas. Winning the Global Award significantly raised the profile of Vanuatu's cuisine, agriculture and agribusiness internationally to make them attractions in their own right.

Regenerative Vanua's board now encompasses representatives throughout the Pacific to support regionalisation of the Regenerative Agritourism Standards, Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism Standards and the Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program.

7.4 Global Agritourism Network Pacific Committee

Agritourism is growing across the globe, along with its impacts on society especially in rural communities. Increased societal demand for services that combine agricultural and touristic features are met with experiences and product sales that entrepreneurial agricultural producers offer. Examples of regional agritourism growth around the globe showcase the health of the sector, which calls for developing a network to support and advocate for this industry through education, research, outreach, and advocacy efforts in an orchestrated manner.

The Global Agritourism Network (GAN) with over 700 representatives from 81 countries now has a unified voice with leading trainers, agritourism operators, researchers and NGO's to advocate for the development of agritourism experiences, diversification of farming and improving the livelihoods of rural people. During the first World Congress on Agritourism in November 2018 hosted by Eurac Research in Bolzano Italy, the birthplace of agritourism, it was recommended the need for a unified network to support the development of agritourism experiences on farms in rural areas throughout the world. At the closing session of the International workshop on agritourism in Vermont USA August 2022 it was agreed to develop the Global Agritourism Network (GAN). The chair of the GAN noted *'In response to the call for a Global Agritourism Network we have assembled an amazing team of regional representatives throughout the globe who are leading in the space of agritourism.'*

Supported by this SRA in collaboration with the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards, Regenerative Vanua are now gaining global attention for the research and development outcomes in regenerative agritourism. In April 2023 the GAN leadership Committee officially launched the GAN and appointed the Executive Director of Regenerative Vanua, Mr Jerry Spooner, as the Chair for the Pacific region. The GAN leadership Committee stated that their decision to elect Mr Spooner was made in recognition of Vanuatu's approach to regenerative agritourism, one that focuses on a defined pathway and a clear definition to guide the region, while also supporting each agritourism experience to be unique and differentiate itself.

Christine Peipul, GAN Pacific Committee member for PNG stated

'Since being engaged with Vanuatu we are following Vanuatu's pathway by establishing our PNG Agritourism Association that will be the country focal point to be working with Regenerative Vanua and we are so excited to be part of this global network through this platform.'

Floris Niu, GAN Pacific Committee member for Samoa stated:

'When I returned to my ancestral land in 2014 from New Zealand, I was at a dark place of my life, but coming home I felt an incredible warmth of my ancestors embracing me. I knew immediately what I had to do. I began farming my family's customary land and revived our organic cacao plantation with the addition of this agritourism business called Ms Sunshine Organic Farms. I share our traditional farming practices and food preparation, encouraging our people to go back and eat from our cultural landscapes for health and preservation of our most resilient cultural assets. I can see the value in sharing this type of knowledge through agritourism, and I'm so excited to be a part of Regenerative Vanua and this GAN Pacific Committee representing Samoa.'

Vanuatu will also be the first member country to host the Annual GAN Pacific Committee meeting in August 2023. Jerry Spooner commented on this exciting new journey stating:

'This is an amazing opportunity to be hosting the first Annual GAN Pacific Committee Meeting. The Regenerative Vanua team alongside the VBS are already in preparations for the event which will host 14 Pacific country committee members as well as Regenerative Vanua's Annual Board meeting in which our Pacific board members will attend.'

8 Impacts

8.1 Scientific impacts – now and in 5 years

This SRA reviewed the previous approaches to agritourism and through a CPAR process have defined a pathway with a clear definition to guide the region while also supporting each agritourism experience to be unique and differentiate itself.

Votausi Mackenzie-Reur SRA In-country Project lead and National Regenerative Agritourism Coordinator stated:

'After a review of the previous approach to agritourism in Vanuatu we found that this approach was trying to address so many of the issues we are facing in our productive sector without addressing the fundamental core issues that we are experiencing in Vanuatu which is the loss of pride in our own local traditional farming systems, our local food and traditional cuisine. We cannot put it on the resorts and hotels to increase the use of local food if their customers are not seeking it out and our own people have lost connection to our local food. Increasing the supply and consumption of local fresh produce and value-added products in resorts and hotels is important however this is not agritourism. Agritourism is about getting the visitors to venture outside of the resorts and hotels to our rural communities to experience our local food, our traditional farming systems and our traditional cuisine so that they become attractions in their own right. This will help increase the pride of our Indigenous Knowledge Systems and raise the profile of our produce, medicinals, handicrafts and value-added products.'



Figure 4 Votausi Mackenzie-Reur and Leonid Vusilai conducting traditional cuisine training with VAA member

Figure 5 VAA member from Maewo: Hanare Regenerative Agritourism Cultural Tour

The CPAR outcomes from this SRA have been submitted for peer review to the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, based on the findings of this SRA titled '*Regenerative Agritourism Framework*'. The Indigenous Ni-Vanuatu team members on this SRA are co-authors on the paper.

8.2 Capacity impacts – now and in 5 years

The CPAR process in this SRA has led to the formation of the not-for-profit Regenerative Vanua. The project leader supported Regenerative Vanua and the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards to develop a NPP for Government funding to pilot and implement the Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program. As a result of the global recognition Vanuatu has been receiving through the support of the ACIAR projects (ACIAR LS/2020/155 and AGB/2014/057) the Executive Director of Regenerative Vanua was approached by the newly launched Global Agritourism Network (GAN) Executive Committee to Chair the GAN Pacific Committee. In the first GAN Pacific Committee Meeting it was agreed to pilot Regenerative Vanua's Regenerative Agritourism definition, standards and certification program to all member countries once the program had been piloted in Vanuatu in 2023. Regenerative Vanua will also be playing a key role in supporting the GAN Pacific Committee in all member countries.

8.3 Community impacts – now and in 5 years

8.3.1 Economic impacts

From the outcomes of this SRA, Vanuatu now has Government policy, strategies, and a clear direction for agritourism in Vanuatu which has led to donor confidence and increased support for agritourism business development in rural areas. Regenerative Vanua, in collaboration with the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards, secured 39,000,000VT from the European Development Fund (EDF 11) to pilot the Regenerative Agritourism Standards and Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program in 2023. This funding will support Regenerative Vanua Technical Advisors to conduct capacity building and awareness of the Regenerative Agritourism Standards, the Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism Standards and the Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program in all six Provinces of Vanuatu. The funding also covers the costs of training local third-party auditors to meet global standards. The project leader also supported Regenerative Vanua and the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards to develop a NPP for Government funding to roll out the Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program in all six Provinces of Vanuatu and to subsidize the costs of certification making it accessible to all Indigenous rural smallholder agritourism operators.

The CEO of the VBS Mrs Ruth Amos stated

‘Vanuatu is a small island country therefore the only way we can compete in tourism and trade is to focus on niche areas. We cannot compete on the mass platform; this is what VBS stands for in Vanuatu, focusing on niche areas such as Regenerative Agritourism. Standards and 3rd party verification are the only way forward to ensure quality, consistency, credibility, in order to give reassurance to the market. Our commitment to support Regenerative Vanua as the 3rd party organisation responsible for agritourism standards is reflected in our partnership agreement. Through this collaboration we will ensure that certification is accessible to all of our Indigenous Regenerative agritourism operators. Slowly people are starting to understand the important role of 3rd Party Audits and Certification. If we want quality, consistency and credibility, this is the way forward. It’s been a long journey but we are slowly getting there.’



Figure 6 CEO of VBS Mrs Ruth Amos

8.3.2 Social impacts

The SRA approached agritourism not as a niche form of tourism, but as a behavioural change and resilience strategy to better connect tourists with Vanuatu's rural smallholders and local productive sector through regenerative agritourism experiences. Agritourism is a social revolution that facilitates more meaningful participation of locals in tourism, with the ultimate goal of protecting traditional knowledge while supporting innovation and creativity. This can lead to improving the wellbeing of Ni-Vanuatu based on the core values of land, custom, culture, family, community, food, and time to spend connecting to these.

The SRA achieved tangible community impacts as result of the formation of Regenerative Vanua. Regenerative Vanua has strong links to the Vanuatu Agritourism Association members that are dispersed across Vanuatu's six Provinces. Around 5,000 community members are linked to the agritourism-experience enterprises. These members are mostly employees of the various 27 operators we have partnered with directly (27+ operators indirectly) and derive employment and training support on sustainable and regenerative agriculture and agritourism from their employers and partners. Regenerative Vanua has continued on with project activities in regenerative agritourism and food tourism and are having positive social, cultural, environmental and health impacts on rural smallholder communities and further supporting the Sustainable Development Goals and Vanuatu's National Sustainable Development Plan (2016-2030); Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy (2019-2030) and the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Strategy (2021-2025).

The SRA has actively engaged women including female in-country researchers with highly effective female leadership in the team and key activities. The agritourism component responded well to needs of women and girls and the project demonstrates this through the

successful female participants. Female led enterprises in agritourism have created excellent outcomes and demonstrate the opportunities for ensuring inclusion within the agritourism sector.

Laurana Rakau-Tokataake, Operations Manager for Regenerative Vanua stated:

'The ACIAR project supported the establishment of Regenerative Vanua out of the need for a Non-Government Organisation that can act as a bridge between our Agritourism operators, our communities and relevant Government agencies seeking to support resilient, diversified and regenerative rural development. Regenerative goes further than sustainable because it ensures the diversity, quality of production, vitality and health of the soil, plants, animals and people improve together, it's not about minimising damage of income earning activities it's about building on our traditional knowledge to improve the wellbeing of our people, communities, the land and ecosystems.'



Figure 7 Operations Manager for Regenerative Vanua Mrs Laurana Rakay-Tokataakee

8.3.3 Environmental impacts

In recent years, agriculture in Vanuatu has undergone an important transformation. There is a shift away from subsistence systems, towards commercialisation of agriculture and increased food imports at the expense of local and Indigenous food production and associated environmental benefits. This shift in livelihood activities in rural areas of Vanuatu is also leading to a public health emergency which can be shown in a 2013 Demographic Health Survey. More recent studies show that 20.9% of Ni-Vanuatu (61,700 people) experienced moderate levels of food insecurity and 2.4% (7,000+ people) were exposed to

severe levels of food insecurity in 2019. This is a result of changes in food crop cultivation away from a more diverse cropping pattern into a more market-oriented cropping pattern that reduces the diversity in the diets and reduces the resilience in the food production to climatic impacts.

The research outcomes from this SRA have supported the development of a clear definition, standards and practices for sustainable and regenerative agriculture and agritourism that meet the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Sustainable Tourism Criteria and Indicators and Regenerative Agricultural standards. This is a tangible example of the success of collaboration between ACIAR projects operating in Vanuatu.

Norah Rihai Vanuatu Regenerative Agriculture and Agritourism Advisor stated:

‘Through Regenerative Vanua, we are supporting regenerative agritourism experiences that are protecting and raising the pride of our regenerative land management practices guided by traditional knowledge passed down generations. Everyone is familiar with sustainable tourism and sustainable agriculture or organic agriculture which aims to minimise the damage caused from tourism or agriculture to the environment and our people. But this is not enough, we are now in a climate crisis and our people will have to make sure that all activities they carry out on our land are adapted to climate change. Regenerative goes further than sustainable because it's not about minimising it's about improving the wellbeing of our communities, land and ecosystems based on our traditional knowledge. The exciting thing about the principles of regenerative is that it is based on Indigenous knowledge systems, Research is showing agriculture globally is struggling with the impacts of climate change it is our traditional knowledge that is being applied as a mechanism to adapt to these impacts.’



Figure 8 Mrs Norah Rihai conducting video interview on Traditional Water Taro gardens

8.4 Communication and dissemination activities

The Project leader through this SRA supported in the following communication and dissemination activities:

- Supported in the development of Regenerative Vanua’s Instagram and Facebook pages and capacity built in the writing of content. The facebook page now has 11,700 followers. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/3851794411542010/>
- Supported in the establishment of Regenerative Vanua’s website including capacity building in content writing for blogs, marketing Regenerative Agritourism operators through their associations, program descriptions etc. <https://www.regenerativevanua.org/>
- Presented in a Global Sustainable Tourism Council Webinar “Regenerative Vanua: Supporting resilient communities and livelihoods through climate smart regenerative agritourism, February 9th 2023 <https://www.gstcouncil.org/membership/upcoming-members-webinars/>
- Publishing of a peer reviewed paper submitted to the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, based on the findings of this SRA titled “*Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism: immersive experiences based on decolonising and regenerating Vanua*”.
- Supported in content writing for the following media releases:

- Vanuatu Chair's the Global Agritourism Network (GAN) Pacific Region Committee, Vanuatu Daily Post, May 8th 2023
- Regenerative Vanua announces first global regenerative agritourism and food tourism standards, Vanuatu Daily Post, Nov 26th 2022
https://www.dailypost.vu/news/regenerative-vanua-announces-first-global-regenerative-agritourism-and-food-tourism-standards/article_4995e9bf-1de6-5647-979a-d7e8ba354f96.html
- Vanuatu Agritourism wins global award, April 30th 2022
https://www.dailypost.vu/news/vanuatu-agritourism-wins-global-award/article_94bb91e3-2b95-56f8-8231-a7598f1db39b.html
- The year in review: Vanuatu wins global award, December 31st 2022
https://www.dailypost.vu/news/2022--the-year-in-review/article_da5e035c-aec0-5696-8fe7-6dca79786ce7.html
- FAO Pacific
<https://www.facebook.com/109649454603118/posts/congratulations-to-vanuatus-food-tourism-and-agritourism-initiative-ftai-which-h/336792341888827/>

9 Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 Conclusions

This ACIAR funded Small Research Activity (SRA) followed a Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) process to develop a third-party verified certification program for Regenerative agritourism in Vanuatu that recognises and compensates for the non-commodity outputs of sustainable and regenerative farming systems. In line with the National Sustainable Development Plan (2019-2030), strategies are needed that recognise, support and compensate smallholders for the non-commodity outputs of agriculture such as agrobiodiversity, ecosystem services, climate change resilience and mitigation, traditional knowledge systems, nutritional security and biodiversity.

Certification offers a potential avenue to add value to the non-commodity outputs that traditional agricultural systems in Vanuatu provide by facilitating increased access to environmentally conscious consumers in niche high value local and global markets. Certification can also provide an effective tool to incentivise sustainable and regenerative practices, equitable distribution patterns and produce for high value niche markets through the branding of agritourism and the products derived from these smallholders as 'sustainable and regenerative'⁵. However, while there are globally recognised standards for recognising non-commodity outputs of sustainable and regenerative agricultural systems and agritourism experiences, there is no one certification program that covers them all.

To address the need for an accessible and credible third-party certification program, this SRA through a CPAR process applied globally recognised sustainability and regenerative standards and adapted them to a Vanuatu context with the aim to support smallholder farmers in Vanuatu to engage in multi-functionality and diversification of agriculture through agritourism. The CPAR process also considered methodologies that require high-integrity co-benefits such as ethical benefits sharing, the strengthening of Indigenous tenure, biodiversity impacts and/or measurements against Sustainable Development Goals and Vanuatu's National Sustainable Development Plan (2016-2030). This SRA also responded to the need for a clear definition and pathway for Agritourism in the Pacific that is better

⁵ *In Vanuatu the principles of sustainability (minimising negative environmental, economic and sociocultural impacts), with a focus on ethics and human rights, therefore not just minimising negative impacts but mitigating these impacts (VSTP, 2019-2030). Regenerative based on Indigenous Knowledge Systems builds on from sustainable with a specific focus on climate adaptation and resilience.*

aligned to diversification through the development of agritourism experiences on smallholder farms (Addinsall et.al., 2016). Through a CPAR process and following a pluralistic perspective, the outcome from this SRA supports multiple ways of describing, designing and applying Regenerative Agritourism to Vanua⁶. Using the concepts from vanua, through CPAR processes this SRA presents the *'Regenerative Agritourism Framework'* *'Regenerative Agritourism Standards'*, *'Regenerative Indigenous Standards'* and *'Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program'*.

The research outcomes from this SRA considers Regenerative Agritourism from Indigenous voices in the Pacific as a model for facilitating the decolonisation and regeneration of Vanua. The Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program applies key global sustainability standards in addition to regenerative agricultural practices, while also validating Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism by verifying Indigenous storytelling for each vanua. The SRA concludes that centring agriculture and tourism on places based vanua and local Indigenous knowledge is vital, as Vanua has been the most fundamental component of resilience to external threats in the Pacific.

9.2 Recommendations

Due to the size and geographical isolation of Vanuatu, its ability to competitively participate in global markets is severely limited. While attempts have been made to increase export of primary produce from Vanuatu, this SRA highlights the need for Vanuatu to participate in high value niche markets. The effects of COVID-19 and consequent collapse of the tourism industry also revealed the danger in encouraging dependency on one sector. The SRA highlights the negative impact from projects that are too mono-sector focused and responds to this by advocating for diversification of rural smallholders into agritourism (where tourism is not the primary business). The SRA also highlights the issues with focusing on one commodity as it further changes food crop cultivation away from a more diverse cropping pattern into a more market-oriented cropping pattern that reduces the diversity in the diets and reduces the resilience in the food production to climatic impacts.

⁶ *"the land area one is identified with, [which encompasses] the people, their traditions and customs, beliefs and values, and the various other institutions established for the sake of achieving harmony, solidarity and prosperity within a particular social context. [...] It provides a sense of identity and belonging. [...] The vanua [...] is an extension of the concept of the self (Ravuvu, 1983)".*

The SRA concludes that centring agriculture and agritourism on local Indigenous knowledge is vital, as Vanua has been the most fundamental component of resilience to external threats in the Pacific.

Further research is now needed to support the adaptation and implementation of the Regenerative Agritourism Framework, Regenerative Agritourism Standards, Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism Standards and the Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program in other Pacific Island countries once piloted in Vanuatu. There are also significant opportunities for research to support regenerative agritourism experiences based on FAO Recognised Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) certification for traditional farming systems that combine agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems and a valuable cultural heritage that sustainably provide multiple goods and services, food and livelihood security.

Finally, the research outcomes from this SRA have gained considerable attention from international research partners with new partnership opportunities opening up in Europe and regionally throughout the Pacific. As ACIAR does not have any further research ties to agritourism in the Pacific there is real risk of losing connection to considerable traction that agritourism is having in the Pacific and globally. Therefore, we recommend that ACIAR extends on the CPAR in this SRA with a larger research project that can collaborate with these new emerging partners.

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9.4 List of publications produced by project

- Publishing of a peer reviewed paper submitted to the Asia Pacific Journal of Sustainable Tourism based on the findings of this SRA titled “*Regenerative Indigenous Agritourism: immersive experiences based on decolonising and regenerating Vanua*”.
- Supported in content writing for the following media releases:
 - o Regenerative Vanua announces first global regenerative agritourism and food tourism standards, Vanuatu Daily Post, Nov 26th 2022 https://www.dailypost.vu/news/regenerative-vanua-announces-first-global-regenerative-agritourism-and-food-tourism-standards/article_4995e9bf-1de6-5647-979a-d7e8ba354f96.html
 - o Vanuatu Agritourism wins global award, April 30th 2022 https://www.dailypost.vu/news/vanuatu-agritourism-wins-global-award/article_94bb91e3-2b95-56f8-8231-a7598f1db39b.html
 - o The year in review: Vanuatu wins global award, December 31st 2022 https://www.dailypost.vu/news/2022--the-year-in-review/article_da5e035c-aec0-5696-8fe7-6dca79786ce7.html
 - o FAO Pacific <https://www.facebook.com/109649454603118/posts/congratulations-to-vanuatous-food-tourism-and-agritourism-initiative-ftai-which-h/336792341888827/>

10 Appendixes

10.1 Appendix 1:

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