



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2014, Prague, Czech Republic

“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Promoting Nutrition Sensitive and Climate Smart Agriculture through Increased Use of Traditional Underutilised Species in the Pacific

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Abstract

Traditionally the Pacific Islands have depended on the diversity of their local food crops for food and nutritional security. However, increasing urbanisation, poor investment in agriculture and the availability of cheap food imports have contributed to the decline of traditional crop production. The focus on markets has encouraged a general erosion of diversity in the food production systems through farmers concentrating on those crops and varieties attractive to the markets. The Pacific region has always faced challenges, due in part to the size of the islands and their geographical isolation. However, with the increasing reliance on imported food products affecting the health of the people across all age ranges, and climate change questioning the resilience of Pacific agriculture, the challenges for food security are greater than they have ever been. Promoting the use of traditional underutilised species has to incorporate development of a value chain approach and market strategies to ensure delivery of health benefits to consumers and economic benefits to local horticultural producers and other value chain actors? Identifying the reasons behind food choices is an essential component of successful value chain development, and addressing those issues that prevent more consumption of traditional, underutilised species. Highlighting the link between dietary diversity and resilient food production systems must be strengthened to ensure that practitioners in both nutrition-sensitive and climate smart agriculture coordinate their interventions. This paper will discuss these issues in the context of the Pacific region, and will focus on a number of species which have been identified by the Pacific Plant Genetic Resources Network (PAPGREN) as target species for promotion and development. The currently underutilized priority crops include breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*), bananas of the Fe'i group and/or Pacific plantain, Polynesian chestnut (*Inocarpus fagifer*), *Pometia pinnata*, giant swamp taro (*Cyrtosperma merkusii*), bele (*Abelmoschus manihot*), the lesser aroids *Alocasia* and *Xanthosoma* and, particularly for the atoll islands, *Pandanus* spp..

Keywords: Climate smart agriculture, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, Pacific Islands, underutilised species