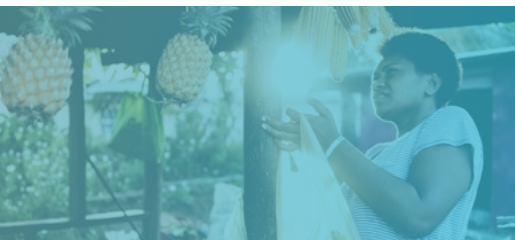
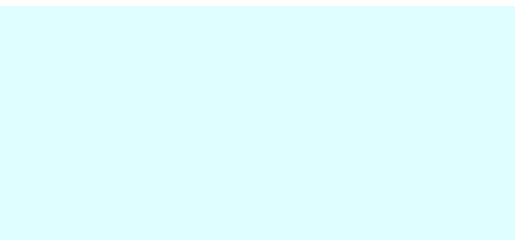




Gender-Sensitive Assessment on Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS)



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Executive Summary

The assessment focuses on Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu for their experience in Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) and potential for PGS development. In Palau, one PGS initiative is currently under development, which provides an interesting opportunity for collaboration and synergies with Slow Food activities in the country. Samoa is a country with significant capacity for organic agriculture development, but no PGS developed yet as the focus has mainly been on the export of organic produce. More attention to developing the local market for organic products would provide good justification for the implementation of PGS. In Papua New Guinea, there are currently no PGS initiatives, but POETCom is making efforts to secure funds for a project including PGS development. Finally, in Tonga POETCom has a project focusing on biodiversity and ecological farming which includes a PGS component, therefore, there are concrete opportunities for synergies to support PGS development in this country.¹

There is a clear indication of the need and potential for strengthening the role of women in fragile ecosystems linked to PGS initiatives. Gender mainstreaming in organic agriculture is still at an initial stage and POETCom has been one of the few organizations within the organic movement clearly taking steps to address this gap. Collection of gender-disaggregated data is still relatively uncommon among PGS initiatives but is already starting to be implemented among PGS initiatives that are licenced to use the Organic Pasifika mark.

As the main regional body for organic agriculture in the Pacific, with decades of experience in the promotion of organics and PGS initiatives specifically adapted to this context, the role of POETCom is crucial for any intervention planning to explore the potential of PGS initiatives to contribute to improved livelihoods of rural communities, food security and nutrition in the countries considered for this assessment.

Local authorities in the Pacific highly support local, sustainable agricultural production and women empowerment. The report highlights the results of the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and 7th Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women, both in 2021 and the call for action to "Connect development efforts to sustainable livelihood opportunities by ensuring available national and regional markets for product-based development projects and ensuring that vocational training is linked to job market realities". Some countries have developed and endorsed (Vanuatu) or are in the process of developing (Fiji, Palau and Samoa) national organic policies.

Based only on data collected for the focus countries and the PGS initiatives considered for this assessment, there are currently at least 2241 farmers involved in PGS in the region, corresponding to at least 9461,1 Ha of land currently organically managed, verified through PGS. The total figures for the region, as well as the potential for further development, is likely much higher, as there are PGS initiatives either operational or under development in other Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and territories, e.g., Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, New Caledonia.

Products currently being labelled and sold by PGS-certified producers that are particularly interesting for MPP/COFE due to market potential are: fruits, cocoa, coffee and tea (available from all PGS initiatives assessed); seeds (currently available from 2 PGS initiatives, in Fiji); coconut value-added produce and honey (available from 5 PGS initiatives in all countries); and Ngali nut, (available from 1 PGS initiative in Solomon Islands) most likely in association with turmeric.

PGS-certified producers mainly use local marketing channels. Organic Origins in Fiji is the only PGS initiative selling to restaurants or cafés, while the PGS initiative in Vanuatu indicated hotels and resorts among the used marketing channels. There are therefore opportunities to be explored with Slow Cook Alliance and Slow Food activities linked to tourism. Currently, certified produce is not sold through specialised organic shops, and none of the initiatives is involved in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes.

COVID19 had a very strong, and most likely long lasting impact on producers' livelihoods and the implementation of PGS initiatives in this region. Project and external aid can contribute to mitigating these impacts, nevertheless, dependence on these sources of income, already the case of most PGS initiatives in the region, represents a risk for financial sustainability. There is potential to support market development through the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, in parallel with quality assurance systems, to develop additional sources of income, both for producers and PGS initiatives, therefore improving financial sustainability in parallel to certification and marketing activities.

Background

Adopted in 2008 by IFOAM - Organics International, the official definition for Participatory Guarantee Systems states that: "PGS are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on the active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange." PGS are valid, trustworthy mechanisms to generate organic credibility and a necessary instrument to enable market access for all actors involved in the organic sector, particularly those producers who are primarily serving their local communities. PGS have great value beyond certification, as they foster knowledge exchange and strengthen local networks among producers and their communities, thereby cultivating sustainable food systems.

FAO and IFOAM - Organics International have been promoting PGS as conformity verification systems for organic agriculture that are highly suitable for the development of sustainable local food systems, leading to an improvement of the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in terms of income, health, nutrition and social recognition; as well as the development of local organic markets, as they contribute to increasing access to nutritious, safe food and the empowerment of local communities.

As part of an agreement with FAO's Mountain Partnership, IFOAM – Organics International and Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) conducted this gender-sensitive technical assessment on PGS initiatives for organic agriculture in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in order to understand the current status of PGS initiatives for organic agriculture, in the region and to identify opportunities for further PGS development.

The engagement POETCom was essential as it is the peak body of the organic movement in the Pacific and has been engaged in the promotion, support, development and recognition of PGS in the region for over a decade. POETCom is a not-for-profit membership organisation, housed within the Pacific Community (SPC), with membership extending across 17 Pacific Island countries and territories, including farmer support organisations, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and research institutes.

This assessment focuses on the following seven countries: Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guin-

ea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tonga. It is important to emphasize that PGS initiatives do not yet exist (operational or under development) in some of these countries. It is also interesting to point out that there are PGS initiatives either operational or under development in other Pacific SIDS and territories, namely: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, New Caledonia

Ifoam – Organics International conducted a desktop review of the organic and agricultural sector, considering these seven countries, with a focus on the role of women and gender; processed and compiled data and information which was collected and provided by POETCom. Data collection was carried out via a questionnaire developed for this assignment to outline the gender-disaggregated dataset needed, in addition to information POETCom receives via annual reports from the PGS initiatives that are licensees in their PGS program. The gaps in the data set were addressed through one-on-one interviews for follow-ups, using either online meeting platforms or phone calls.

Agriculture, food and nutrition security and the role of Pacific women

Notwithstanding the immense diversity within and among Pacific Island States, common constraints such as small size, remoteness, geographic dispersion, vulnerability to natural hazards, and dependence on external economic conditions due to reliance on exports, characterize the agricultural sector across areas and negatively impact the national efforts to achieve balanced economic growth and sustainable food security¹.

With the exception of Palau, all countries considered are essentially rural societies: almost half of the population in Fiji and more than 70% of the population in Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tonga are living in rural areas and rely heavily on agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The agricultural sector is therefore significantly relevant as a main source of income and employment, both formal and informal.

As these mainly rural societies experience a gradual shift towards commercial agriculture, land use is being diverted from subsistence to cash crop cultivation, particularly for export. Persisting, and in many cases, significant dependence on food imports negatively impacts food security and sovereignty. Also, recent changes in food consumption behaviours are associated with high percentages of obese and overweight people among the adult population. All of these factors negatively impact rural livelihoods and the health of the population as a whole, but in particular, that of rural women.

Assessing and understanding the role of women, particularly rural women, in agriculture and their contributions to households and the economy is not easy, as there are major gaps in sex-disaggregated data relating to the agricultural sector in all countries. Recently, gender assessments of agricultural and rural sectors were commissioned by FAO and SPC and conducted between 2018 and 2021 for all focus countries, except Palau². These studies³ take into consideration the significant cultural, social, geographical and economic differences

1 Mapusua, Karen; Maccari, Michele. An overview of organic agriculture in the Pacific, 2017

2 A sovereign state since 1994, Palau is home to 18092 (2020) people, the vast majority of which (81%) is urban. Recent data on employment in agriculture is not available and services consist in the main economic sector. The country is heavily dependent on food imports.

3 FAO and SPC. 2019. Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Fiji. Suva.
FAO. 2019. Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Papua New Guinea. Port Moresby.
FAO and SPC. 2019. Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Samoa. Apia.
FAO and SPC. 2019. Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Solomon Islands. Honiara.
FAO and SPC. 2019. Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Tonga. Nuku'alofa.
FAO. 2020. Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in Vanuatu. Port Vila.

that characterize each of the societies considered. Under this premise, a comparison of these studies was carried out and some commonalities were identified. The results indicate that rural women are major contributors to rural livelihoods, but their contribution often goes unseen, and persisting gender inequalities are particularly evident in the agricultural sector.

Strong gendered labor roles, for example, are seen across countries⁴: while men tend to carry out fieldwork such as clearing land and planting taro, managing cash crops and taking up marketing for export, women tend to be concurrently engaged in subsistence and commercial farming, carrying out ongoing maintenance of vegetable gardens and seedlings, harvesting, processing and marketing (often at local markets and by the side of roads), in addition to taking up reproductive and caregiving responsibilities within household and community.

The common patterns emerging in the assessed countries indicate that:

- 1) women tend to classify and report themselves as unemployed when they are engaged in unpaid agricultural work;
- 2) underreporting and underrepresentation⁵ of women as farmers; and
- 3) women's lack of visibility in agricultural decision-making.

These patterns are exacerbated by climate change. According to the WorldRiskReport 2021, phenomena such as extreme natural events (earthquakes, storms, floods, and droughts, as well as the steady rise in sea levels) have been increasing in frequency and intensity and will continue to increase in the long term due to the influence of climate change. Furthermore, disaster risk is particularly high where extreme natural events encounter vulnerable societies⁶, as is the case in five of the focus countries, which are all among the 15 countries worldwide with the highest disaster risk⁷: Vanuatu (rank 1), Solomon Islands (rank 2), Tonga (rank 3), Papua New Guinea (rank 9), and Fiji (rank 14). Samoa is only low exposed (11.46; rank 122). As a result, in a comparison of continents, Oceania has the highest disaster risk, mainly due to its high exposure to extreme natural events⁸. The necessity of a further expansion of social protection and its stronger integration into disaster risk reduction and measures against climate change becomes also evident⁹.

4 For more detail on each of the focus countries considered in this study, please refer to Annex 1: Country Profiles.

5 "More than five times as many men as women identify as farmers, despite women comprising more than a third of the people in agricultural households who are engaged in agricultural tasks" [Policy for Gender in Agriculture in Fiji \(2022-2027\)](#)

6 Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft, 2021. WorldRiskReport 2021

7 The WorldRiskIndex 2021 assesses the disaster risk for 181 countries. This covers almost 99 percent of the world's population. Palau is not included in the WorldRiskIndex due to incomplete data. In a comparison of continents, Oceania has the highest disaster risk, mainly due to its high exposure to extreme natural events.

8 Same as above.

9 The importance of social protection takes center stage in this year's WorldRiskReport. Social protection systems respond to the basic needs of people in the event of disaster, strengthen their resilience, and prevent them from automatically slipping into poverty. The report states that in low-income countries in particular, there is often a lack of governmental social protection systems on which those affected can rely in the event of a crisis. In fragile or conflict-ridden situations, there is often an additional lack of trust in government institutions. Yet, it has been shown that affected communities are able to independently establish informal protection mechanisms at the community and household level, even in crises situations, that can absorb at least some of the negative consequences of external shocks. Savings groups are a very well-known and effective form of informal social protection. Savings groups also provide a form of social support and offer the opportunity for exchange and social contact, especially among women and young people. This way, they form an important tool for building resilient communities. (Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft, 2021. WorldRiskReport 2021)

This is particularly relevant in the framework of this gender-sensitive assessment as global and regional¹⁰ findings indicate that climate change has specific negative impacts on women, including:

- 1) increased workload;
- 2) increased family food insecurity
- 3) increased stress-related risks for domestic and non-partner violence;
- 4) damage to women-managed niche crops that provide income; and
- 5) unequal access to information and decision-making on disaster response.

Finally, non-communicable diseases (NCDs)¹¹ are already a major health issue in all seven focus countries and there are strong indicators that there is a close link between NCDs, gender and nutrition¹².

There is a clear need, as well as plenty of opportunities, for focusing on the unseen, unrecognized and undervalued contributions of women in the Pacific Islands, by promoting women's empowerment¹³ through a holistic approach to value chain development (with organic agriculture offering both examples and untapped potential), as recently stated during the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women convened in April 2021 by the Pacific Community (SPC) with French Polynesia as the host country and chair. Among the most relevant calls for action included in the outcome statement of Pacific Ministers for Women, which was endorsed during the Conference on 4 May 2021, is the call to "Connect development efforts to sustainable livelihood opportunities by ensuring available national and regional markets for product-based development projects and ensuring that vocational training is linked to job market realities."¹⁴

Organic agriculture in the Pacific Islands – a brief overview

Traditional agricultural practices are vastly adopted for subsistence purposes in the Pacific region. The most commonly adopted agricultural practices in these mainly rural societies have been handed down from generation to generation, and are generally in harmony with the environment as well as with modern organic agriculture principles. The use of commercial synthetic fertilizers¹⁵ is not common among subsistence farmers in the Pacific

10 UN Women, 2014. Putting Women at the forefront of climate change and disaster response in the Pacific. Suva, Fiji.

11 "Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), also known as chronic diseases, tend to be of long duration and are the result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors. The main types of NCD are cardiovascular diseases (such as heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes. NCDs disproportionately affect people in low- and middle-income countries where more than three quarters of global NCD deaths – 31.4 million – occur." World Health Organization WHO, 2022 available online: <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases>

12 FAO and SPC. 2019. Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Fiji. Suva.

13 Makhoul, N; Fox, M., Ciribello, F; Kalsuak, J. - Women of the land and sea at the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women: Investing in inclusive and sustainable value chains identified as a regional priority

14 Same as above.

15 The use of commercial fertilisers in Papua New Guinea is much higher compared to all other countries considered, and has been growing. According to 2018 data provided by the World Bank, fertiliser consumption (measured in kilograms per hectare of arable land) in PNG is at 145,3. Recent data on use of commercial fertilizers is not available for all countries.

Islands, and these inputs are often not affordable since they are imported from overseas. The use of imported agricultural inputs mainly affects the production of cash crops for export¹⁶.

The concept of organic agriculture, however, was only formally introduced in the region towards the end of the 1990s, due to efforts of local and international NGOs promoting organic practices as more appropriate for small-scale farmers, as well as a tool to promote local development due to the potential for increased incomes from the export of organic agricultural products (especially cocoa, vanilla and coconut). These initial efforts focused on trainings for farmers, on organic farming methods and group certification through internal control systems (ICS), in some cases specifically addressing groups of rural women¹⁷. This initial development of the organic sector was, therefore, farmer-centred and very much driven by the civil society.

In 2006, regional efforts were taken up under the coordination of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and IFOAM - Organics International provided support to establish the Pacific Regional Organics Task Force (ROTF) and the Pacific High-Level Organics Group (PHLOG). Financial and technical assistance was provided for a multi-stakeholder partnership leading to the development of the first Pacific regional Organic Standard (POS), which was approved during the 2008 annual meeting of the Pacific Forum Islands leaders meeting in Niue, and launched two months later by the Samoan Prime Minister at the 2nd Regional Conference of the Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry in Apia, Samoa. These regional standards were approved in the IFOAM Family of Standards in 2012 and score especially well in terms of locally specific positive variations¹⁸.

In 2010, the first Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) using the POS was established in New Caledonia. The PGS initiative implemented by the Association BioCaledonia was licensed to use the PGS version of the "Organic Pasifika" mark, which was developed with the dual purpose to promote PGS and the use of the POS. This moment is seen by organic stakeholders in the Pacific as the first step towards implementing the regional certification and organic guarantee scheme. In the same year, the Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (HOAFS) and the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CGRA) endorsed requests by the regional organic movements for the Pacific Community to host the POETCom secretariat, in Fiji.

As interest in organics and PGS continued to grow in the region, in 2013 POETCom worked with support from IFAD to establish three pilot PGS initiatives, training PGS facilitators and developing materials that resulted in the Pacific PGS Toolkit¹⁹. SPC maintains a leading

¹⁶ This could be changing: according to Jim Pierce, POETCom Coordinator, there has been in the Pacific region an increase in offer of subsidies for and promotion of synthetic fertilizers by public authorities, also for home gardens.

¹⁷ Women in Business Development Inc. (<https://www.womeninbusiness.ws/>) is an example. "The Women in Business Development Inc was set up in 1991, as the first non-governmental organisation of it's kind in Samoa. The organisation is committed to finding income generating opportunities, especially for rural village populations. This enables women to remain in their village environments, rather than leaving to look for work overseas or in the urban areas. WIBDI is committed to poverty alleviation and sustainable development of the rural villages, utilising the products of their environment to generate an income, and thus establishing and sustaining a rural village economy." Mapusua, K.

¹⁸ The results of the COROS assessment for the POS are available on line here: https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/2020-05/coros_2011_pacific_std_summary.pdf

¹⁹ This toolkit builds on the PGS guidelines published by IFOAM – Organics International. The toolkit is available here: <http://www.organicpasifika.com/poetcom/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/PGS-Toolkit-FINAL-May2016.pdf>

role in the region for the promotion of organic agriculture and PGS, in particular through its Land Resource Division (LRD) continues to house the POETCom secretariat.

As a not-for-profit membership-based organization, POETCom works throughout the Pacific Islands region with national focal points, to support the development of the organic sector. Its membership extends across 17 countries and territories, includes farmer support organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and research institutes. The organization is currently implementing the 2021-2025 POETCom Strategic Plan with a gender-inclusive people-centred approach. National affiliates receive assistance from international NGOs and bilateral development assistance. In a few cases, national governments provide financial support for organic certification costs, as in the case of Samoa and Niue, where the national governments cover certification fees for national grower groups. The regional certification scheme established by POETCom is based on the POS, with a prominent role played by PGS initiatives that are licensed to use the Organic Pasifika mark, and aims at "contributing to a productive, sustainable and healthy Pacific Islands region."²⁰

Conclusions from a sector assessment carried out in 2007²¹, still very relevant 15 years later, indicated that organic agriculture could provide "opportunities for Pacific Island Countries to export to niche markets a number of high-value, low-volume crops and enhance economic sustainability." The report also stated "The rationale for the development of Organic Agriculture should also include promotion of local consumers awareness on the benefits derived from the consumption of organic products and to assist with the development of domestic markets including tourism markets. Apart from the market opportunities, OA is relevant for the Pacific with regards to the promotion of self-reliance and will effectively address food security and food sovereignty issues, in particular, the possible reduction of food imports."

In fact, promoting organic agriculture remains associated with the potential of organic value chains to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with most production targeting the export sector. The domestic organic market is only emerging and only some of the independent countries of the region have developed and endorsed (Vanuatu) or are in the process of developing (Fiji, Palau and Samoa) national organic policies. From a legal framework perspective, New Caledonia and French Polynesia are currently the only territories in the Pacific to have regulated organic agriculture.

Taking the Pacific Islands as included in the region Oceania, the 2022 edition of the "World of Organic Agriculture: Statistics and Emerging Trends"²² reports that the highest organic shares of all national agricultural land in the region were in Samoa (14.5 percent), followed by Papua New Guinea (6.1 percent), Fiji (4.5 percent), French Polynesia (3.4 percent) and Tonga (3.2 percent). In 2022, a total of 16 PGS initiatives (13 operational, three under development) were reported, the majority of which are based in the Pacific Islands. In contrast to the positive global trend observed towards increased numbers of farmers involved or certified by PGS initiatives²³, a decrease of at least 57 percent in certified farmers and 67

20 POETCom Annual report 2020

21 The report "An overview of organic agriculture in the Pacific" commissioned by IFOAM - Organics International in 2007, authored by Karen Mapusua and Michele Maccari.

22 Available online: <https://www.fibl.org/fileadmin/documents/shop/1344-organic-world-2022.pdf>

23 Anselmi, S.; Moura e Castro, F., Participatory Guarantee Systems in 2021 in Willer, Helga, Jan Trávníček, Claudia Meier and Bernhard Schlatter (Eds.) (2022): The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends 2022. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL, Frick, and IFOAM – Organics International, Bonn.

percent for involved farmers was observed in the region, compared to data reported in the previous edition. Despite that, the total area certified through PGS has increased by +12 percent, compared to the previous year.

The observed reduction was likely caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic related restrictions on mobility and border closures, which substantially impacted²⁴ organic farmers, supply chains and certification. In fact, a survey carried out by POETCom to assess the impact of COVID19 on organic producers and their livelihoods found that related travel restrictions and lockdowns had affected inter-island supply chain logistics, regional and international trade; limited producers' access²⁵ to markets and inputs, and dramatically reduced tourism, leading to increasing unemployment. The perspectives for the organic sector in the post-pandemic period are nevertheless positive, as "there has been an increase in demand for organic-approved products as people are now more attuned to the importance of agriculture and are turning to gardening (at least for home consumption)."²⁶

The Pacific Organic Guarantee System (POGS) and role of POETCom

According to Stephen Hazelman²⁷, Organic Extension Systems Officer at POETCom, "the major challenges faced by small holder farmers in the Pacific region is the distances from markets and the high cost of third party certification. For organic agriculture to move forward and reap its full developmental benefits, POETCom felt that certification needed to be more tailored to the specific local needs and to assist in building the capacity of the farmers involved, as well as in building a local market base. The PGS model appeared to work well with the objectives of POETCom as active participation on the part of the stakeholders results in greater empowerment but also greater responsibility – there is a high priority placed on knowledge and capacity building of producers and consumers, ideal for the rural communities of the Pacific."²⁸

The investment in PGS by POETCom began with assessments on PGS as an option to address some of these constraints and the potential of this approach to certification to "provide opportunities for isolated farmers through:

- a. Reduced cost of certification
- b. Increased number of farmers and land under organic production and development of local value chains
- c. Build capacity of all involved – something that is very limited under 3rd party certification
- d. Bringing farmers together and everyone learns from each other ."²⁹

24 Mapusua, K. The Pacific Islands in Willer, Helga, Jan Trávníček, Claudia Meier and Bernhard Schlatter (Eds.) (2022): The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends 2022. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL, Frick, and IFOAM – Organics International, Bonn.

25 Travel restrictions and similar measures have in some cases even limited producers' access to their own fields, according to Jim Pearce, POETCom Coordinator.

26 Same as previous note.

27 HAZELMAN, S., PGS: Revolutionising Organics in the Pacific. Practitioners' Track, IFOAM Organic World Congress 2014, Turkey

28 Same as above.

29 Same as above.

POETCom established a regional certification scheme to support the growth of the organic movement in the Pacific, the Pacific Organic Guarantee System (POGS) and provide the framework for the coordination of PGS in the region, managing the "Organic Pasifika" mark, maintaining the Pacific Organic Standards (POS), having oversight on PGS registration and licencing, as well as supporting the development of new PGS initiatives. A strategic institutional assessment of the organization, including a possible revision of the POGS and the POS is currently ongoing³⁰.

As part of "Building Prosperity for Women Producers, Processors and Women-Owned Businesses through Organic Value Chains" (BPWP), a project running between 2018 and 2023 and funded by the Australian Government, POETCom has been implementing activities to ensure that its programs are socially inclusive and reflect the realities of communities and farming families in the Pacific³¹. A needs and gap analysis on gender and social inclusion within POETCom's strategy, governance, tools and processes, has been carried out and a Gender and Organic Value Chain Analysis Toolkit (currently in draft form) has been developed. Concrete examples of gender mainstreaming in the practices of the organization as well as specific recommendations for member organizations and PGS initiatives are included in these internal documents, and gradually and systematically addressed³².

POETCom currently has 13 PGS licensees under this certification scheme, of which 10 are fully operational: one in Cook Islands, five in Fiji, one in French Polynesia, one in New Caledonia, one in Solomon Islands and one in Vanuatu. The granting of the PGS license is the final step for PGS initiatives to be included in the Pacific Guarantee System and is the result of a legal contract signed between the PGS initiative³³ and SPC. As part of the requirements under this contract, the PGS initiative submits annual reports to POETCom including detailed data on the numbers of farmers currently certified. The data collected is used to analyse the progress of the organic movement and is published by POETCom via each annual report.

³⁰ Final results are expected to be available by August 2022.

³¹ The project allocated funds for the recruitment of a Gender and Value Chain Advisor, to ensure that resources and skill are available for gender mainstreaming.

³² At the recent General Assembly held virtually in 2021, the new POETCom Board was democratically elected and the current members will be responsible for providing guidance to the organisation until the next General Assembly. With this new board, there has been a shift towards a more gender balance leadership, as in 2020 the board comprised of seven men. Currently three women and three men sit at the board, as follows:

- Sashi Kiran (Chair), Female, Founder and Chief Executive Officer for Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development (FRIEND).

Franck Soury-Lavergne (co-Chair), Male, Founder and manager of a market garden and fruit farm since 2012, with organic produces guaranteed under the Organic Pasifika mark. President of BioCaledonia since 2019.

- Litia Taukave (co-Chair), Female, Established the Loving Islands organic PGS group in Fiji.

- Nambo Moses, Male, Principle Vanuatu Livestock Officer-Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry Fisheries and Biosecurity

- Sala Georgina Sueina Mary Bonin, Female, Current Board member at the Women in Business Development Inc. (WIBDI) and Market Access Working Group (MAWG) in Samoa.

- Drew Havea, Male, a founding Member of the Tonga National Youth Congress

- Iototoro Vakapora, Male, Founding member of (NKA) Natura Kuki Airani – the Cook Islands Organic Movement. Chair of the local PGS group in the Cook Islands.

³³ The terminology used by POETCom is "PGS group" to refer to "PGS Initiatives" which IFOAM - Organics International defines as: "Entity or organisation that has adopted a common set of standards for organic agriculture and a common set of procedures (i.e. they have a common manual describing those procedures), and that has a coordination body (i.e. secretary, association) that has the overview of the data coming from the local groups or the individual farmers directly. A PGS initiative will typically use one common label to identify the products of their farmers as organic, often in addition to a logo used by other PGS initiatives, such as a national/regional organic logo (i.e. Organic Pasifika mark). A PGS initiative can be composed of one single local group, especially at the initial stage of development. Even though it is common for PGS initiatives to be composed of various local groups, it is also possible that the PGS producers in a PGS initiative work together based on geographic proximity or technical expertise without forming a local group."

PGS initiatives that are currently existing and operational are mainly resulting from partnerships between local organizations from the civil society (NGOs) and POETCom, funded through various development cooperation projects. The common process foresees the provision of training and coaching by a qualified PGS expert, or staff member of POETCom, up to the point in which the local PGS initiative can submit an application for licensing. The duration of this set-up process until application depends on various factors, such as the history of agricultural practices in the area, and on average lasts about 12 months. During this timeframe, PGS groups become familiar with their roles and receive ongoing support from the POETCom trainers. The Pacific Organic Standard has clear requirements about conversion periods that suit the regional conditions and sometimes a PGS initiative might need much longer to be fully operational: when a community is ready that they will apply for approval and licence to use the Organic Pasifika logo.

In order to apply, POETCom insists that each PGS initiative prepares and submits the following documents:

- cover letter,
- PGS application form,
- PGS management manual,
- a sample of all templates used (i.e., registration forms, check lists, certificates, etc.)
- the farmers' pledge,
- example of farm maps,
- excel spreadsheet/database,
- supporting letters from governments, community leaders, key actors

Once the documents are submitted, the POETCom volunteer PGS Approval Committee³⁴ goes through the documentation and approves or rejects the application. They may go back to the PGS initiative for further queries and documentation. A licensing agreement is then signed between the applicant PGS and the Pacific Community (SPC) for the use of the Pacific Organic logo/mark.

Each PGS initiative is required to submit a PGS annual report to POETCom. This is done after each PGS has carried out annual peer reviews of all farmers and approval by each local PGS certification committee is given. This process is repeated for the annual renewal of membership. POETCom will evaluate all annual PGS reports and follow up if further information is needed.

Usually, the assessment by the PGS Approval Committee, from when the documents are submitted to when the approval/rejection is given to the applicant PGS initiative, requires about 12 months.

Status of operational PGS initiatives in the focus countries

³⁴ Currently, all members of the PGS Approval Committee are volunteers, invited by POETCom staff to join the committee based on their past organic experiences in the organic sector, mainly in third party certification in this regions. A new call for more volunteers will be launched this year. The current members are four men and two women:

- Alain Jacobi (Vanuatu) - over 15 years as a 3rd Party certified exporter and farmer, serving for two years
- Benuel Tarilongi (Vanuatu) - trained by ACO Australia and currently auditing for NASAA, serving for two years
- Gilles Parzy-Tehau (French Polynesia) Certification Agent for Bio Agricert, serving since 2009
- Claire Lataste (New Caledonia) - many years in PGS - serving for one year
- Poeti LO (French Polynesia) - managing a PGS that started in 2011 - serving since one year
- Mani Mua (Fiji) has PGS experience (Rotuma), currently PhD in Plant Health - one Year

From the currently 13 PGS initiatives licensed by POETCom, only those that are fully operational and based in one of the focus countries were considered for this study: five from Fiji, one from the Solomon Islands, and one from Vanuatu (seven in total, in three countries).³⁵

Information collected for the other countries shows that there are interesting opportunities for PGS. In Palau, there is currently one PGS initiative under development, implemented by the Palau Organic Growers Association (POGA), which should be operational towards the last quarter of 2022. In Samoa, there is one PGS initiative but it is not currently fully operational, mainly due to financial issues (expected to be sorted out soon). It is important to note that this is a country with a lot of local expertise on organic agriculture, an essential aspect affecting the sustainability of PGS initiatives, and, among the seven focus countries, the one with the highest percentage of total farmland currently under organic management: 14,48%. In Papua New Guinea, there are currently no PGS initiatives under development nor operational, but the National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI), POETCom's focal point in the country, is making efforts to secure funds for a project for this purpose. Finally, in Tonga POETCom has a project focusing on biodiversity and ecological farming which includes a PGS component, and is linked to counterparts in French Polynesia and New Caledonia.

Structure and organization

Within the focus countries, the PGS initiative implemented by the NGO FRIEND counts the most years of operation, it is based in Fiji and has been active since 2004. All other PGS initiatives started their activities between 2014 and 2021.

The organizations implementing PGS initiatives are for the majority, associations (Organic Producers Association) (three) and non-governmental/non-profit organizations (NGO) (two). In the Solomon Islands, the PGS initiative is implemented by a private company (SolAgro-Binata PGS). The only case of a public office or government agency implementing a PGS is that of the Cicia Organic Monitoring Agency. Currently, 180 farmers (74 women and 106 men) are involved in this PGS, mainly producing virgin coconut oil, mostly for local consumption (although part of it is also exported as conventional) and vegetables, also mainly for local consumption through school meals. This is a quite unique, context-specific set-up, as the PGS in Cicia takes on a whole organic island approach³⁶.

In general, the organisation implementing a PGS initiative has the overall management and oversight responsibility. This organization appoints and trains a person to be responsible for technical matters and the coordination of the PGS, called the PGS Certification Manager, who also trains producers in organic practices and maintains a producers database, checks all documentation and arranges the peer reviews. Some initiatives also appoint an Approval Committee to review documentation and approve certificates.

35 The information presented in this chapter was compiled based on data collected by POETCom (deriving from annual reports that were submitted by licensees, from the application of the questionnaire developed in cooperation with IFOAM – Organics International and the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, and from direct interviews to refine and address gaps in the data). It is important to emphasise that IFOAM – Organics International did not have access to the single annual reports nor the single answered questionnaires, as the information from these sources was prepared by POETCom staff and delivered as one database (Excel) and answers to specific questions via email.

36 In 2006, the District Council (Bose ni Tikina) approved the idea of engaging in organic farming at the island level, and the use of chemicals (fertilizers, pesticides, weedicides) was therefore banned from Cicia. In 2013, the island was declared organic, not through a third-party certification process, but through a Participatory Guarantee System, based on the direct involvement of farmers in the organic guarantee process. The implementation of this system involved the creation of Cicia Organic Monitoring Agency (COMA), gathering the island's former and current agriculture officers, the District Council's chairman, the district's official representative (Mata ni Tikina), the headman of each village (Turaga ni Koro), and other representatives from each village. Fache, E., Pauwels, S. The ridge-to-reef approach on Cicia Island, Fiji. *Ambio* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-021-01669-w>

Decisions on certification and on the organization's governance rules are taken by absolute majority or by consensus and four out of seven initiatives have a formalized, written procedure for amending the PGS operating rules.

Producers and compliance

Gender disaggregated data on farmers involved and certified is not yet available from all PGS initiatives, but recently efforts have been implemented by POETCom to support their members and licensees to adopt a gender-sensitive approach, which is in any case quite innovative within the organic movement itself³⁷.

As of May 2022, the number of farmers involved in the PGS initiatives considered for this assessment³⁸, including those who are not yet certified, per country, is as follows:

- Fiji: 146 women and 430 men - 576 in total;
- Solomon Islands: 51 women and three men - 54 in total;
- Vanuatu 1611 in total (gender-disaggregated data not available)

Among these, the number of PGS-certified farmers, per country, is as follows:

- Fiji: 36 women, 39 men, 75 in total;
- Solomon Islands: 46 women, two men, 48 in total;
- Vanuatu: 904 in total (gender-disaggregated data not yet available)³⁹

These figures correspond to at least 9461,1 Ha of land that is currently under organic management, verified through PGS⁴⁰.

Producers involved in or certified by the PGS initiatives assessed manage land individually or as a group, with clusters of farm plots or scattered plots; in the case of Cicia Island, the certification and land management take place through a whole island community approach (even though the certification of the island in its entire area has not yet happened).

Except for the PGS initiative in Vanuatu, a certificate is awarded individually for each producer assessed for compliance, also in cases of group certification. The use of the Organic Pasifika mark is not awarded directly to the individual producers, but the PGS initiatives

37 Collecting gender disaggregated data from PGS initiatives on the total numbers of producers certified by and/or involved in the PGS is still relatively uncommon. The most common format for data submission to IFOAM – Organics International (for regular or bi-annual surveys) is through aggregated data indicating the total number of producers certified by and/or involved in a PGS initiative. As gender mainstreaming activities are gradually being implemented by POETCom and its affiliates, we can expect more complete and relevant gender-disaggregated data, guiding necessary gender analysis for further value chain and sector development in the Pacific. In particular, one recommendation emerges from the previously mentioned "Needs and gap analysis: Gender and social inclusion within POETCom's strategy, governance, tools and processes" that is specific to PGS initiatives refers to the inclusion of a gender and social analysis in the POETCom PGS toolkit's situation analysis section. The needs and gaps analysis states that a "gender analysis is important to ensure that the PGS does not negatively impact or increase the burden of care of particular groups and that, wherever possible, it expands opportunities for marginalised farmers and producers. The identification of stakeholders should include sex and age disaggregated data and information."

38 The total figures for the Pacific region are likely much higher, as there are PGS initiatives either operational or under development in other Pacific SIDS and territories, namely: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, New Caledonia.

39 In Vanuatu the figures for certified producers in 2022 refer to producers (or actually households) that received their certification in 2021 and had it carried over to 2022. There were no new certifications completed in 2022, therefore the 904 hectares were certified in 2021 and were carried over to 2022. The data provided refers to households (certified/involved) and gender disaggregated figures are not available and; the estimation is that each for household there is one male and one female and 2-3 children (average household size is 4.8 people).

40 It is important to emphasize that some PGS initiatives submitted data on the certified area even though the numbers of certified farmers was not available for the current year (due to missing or postponed peer reviews or pending certification decisions). This information therefore reflects an estimation of the actually certified area based on data from previous years and the current number of producers involved in PGS (including those who have not yet received any certification).

approved by POETCom may authorise the use of the Organic Pasifika PGS mark to their members, after concluding a licensing agreement with POETCom (SPC). The relevant Organic Pasifika Mark may be attached to certified or 'in conversion' goods, their packaging and/or sales invoices. Three PGS initiatives (all in Fiji) also have developed their logo, which they use in addition to the Organic Pasifika mark.

The questionnaire included points referring to the applicability of the Pacific Organic Standards⁴¹ and the capacities of the producers to comply with these. According to POETCom's staff, producers and PGS initiatives' understanding of the POS and its application increases over time, as training by POETCom is carried out and support is provided through messenger groups, phone calls and emails. At the start of setting up the PGS, specific requirements from the POS that apply to each location or situation are identified and then translated to the relevant local languages, in order to ensure that producers understand what they need to comply with. Non-conformities or deviations are very rare (less than five percent of farms) or never identified, according to the responses provided, and the most frequent non-conformities are related to a lack of proper records of inputs used on the farm, pending risk analysis requirements, and general issues with record keeping. According to one of the respondents "Record keeping is not in our culture of oral tradition".

Marketing

The products available from PGS-certified producers are:

- Vegetables (root crops and horticulture): five PGS initiatives (Fiji and Vanuatu)
- Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea): all PGS initiatives
- Seeds: only two PGS initiatives, both in Fiji
- Processed products (coconut value-added produce, honey): five PGS initiatives (all countries)
- Ngali nut⁴²: one PGS initiative (Solomon Islands)
- and some animal products: one PGS initiative in Fiji (poultry) and one in Vanuatu (beef)

Sales of PGS-certified produce take place mainly at local markets (village or district level) but are only limited to the local markets in two cases both in Fiji: PGS Cicia and Organic Origins. The latter is also the only PGS initiative selling to restaurants or cafés. Two PGS initiatives operate both at the local and national level: FRIENDS PGS from Fiji, and the PGS implemented by "Syndicat Agricole et Pastoral de Vanuatu", in Vanuatu. In the Solomon Islands, instead, PGS-certified products are not for the local market: they are sold to the national and also to international markets, through wholesales and supermarkets.

Direct marketing is the preferred approach (used by producers from four PGS initiatives) and the main channels are sales at farmers' markets (three), farm gate (one) and organic box schemes, either via home delivery or pick-up (two, both in Fiji). There are supermarkets that are offering PGS certified- products in all three countries. Only the PGS initiative in Vanuatu indicated hotels and resorts is one of the used marketing channels.

⁴¹ Questions 2.7, 2.9, 2.9 were meant to understand how applicable are the standards in reality, if producers are often having problems to comply with them and what are these problems. POETCom (under the EU Protégé project) is reviewing technical guidelines for POS.

⁴² The Ngali Nut (*Canarium indicum*) is the fruit of a mainly dioecious tree native in eastern Melanesia. The tree is usually found in rainforests, secondary forests, old garden areas, around villages and settlements. It is also used as a shade tree, as a windbreak and in agroforestry. The Ngali nut tree can be used as a food and timber source, in traditional medicine, intercropping and agroforestry. In the Solomon Islands, they are important in traditional society, with the ownership of trees being a measure of wealth. Organic PGS certified Ngali nuts of the Baniata community (Solomon Islands) became a traditionally harvested product collected and prepared by women. This tradition is now a key source of income and a way to empower female farmers in their community. More information online: <https://www.organicwithoutboundaries.bio/2020/03/03/ngali-nuts/>

Conventional traders and public procurement (e.g., canteens in schools, hospitals, etc.) are only used by the PGS in Cicia. Certified produce is not sold through specialised organic shops and none of the initiatives are involved in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes.

Except for the case in Cicia (Fiji) and in Vanuatu, all initiatives have developed a document that describes the rights and duties of different types of members. The initiatives in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and only in one case in Fiji (Origin Organics) request that the producers pay membership fees. Annual certification costs are a requirement only for producers under the FRIENDS PGS, in Fiji. Participation in training sessions is the main requirement for members of PGS initiatives (six out of seven cases). Producers are required to participate in farm or peer reviews for conformity evaluation in five out of seven cases. Out of these five PGS initiatives, four of them also required participation in local group meetings from all members, and three of them request participation in the appointment or elections of representatives for decision-making bodies.

Participation in certification decisions and in collective work both play an important role, as they are required for producers in five out of the seven PGS initiatives considered.

Members' duties and rights are equal for all, regardless of gender and age in five PGS initiatives. For the PGS Cicia (Fiji), these are different based on gender, while for Rabi Organics member's duties and rights are different based on age.

Sustainability

With the exceptions of the Cicia Organic Monitoring Agency and Organic Rotuma (both in Fiji), all organizations implementing PGS have employed or assigned staff members to perform administration and communication tasks, as well as training and certification activities. The assessment indicates that most PGS initiatives in this region are essentially funded through projects and external aid, which represents a risk in terms of financial sustainability. Indeed, when asked "Is your organization financially and materially self-sufficient?" only two positive answers were given (Cicia and Origin Organics, both in Fiji). PGS initiatives that are not financially self-sufficient receive support mainly from NGOs or foundations (five out of seven) and/or through Local public authorities (Vanuatu). The support can be financial (specific funds), material (premises, computer, telephone, etc) or staff members assigned to carry out specific PGS activities (Solomon Islands).

Common challenges faced by PGS initiatives were lack of organic knowledge and awareness, both on the side of consumers and producers. Respondents indicated that producers are not always able to commit full-time to farming and processing activities and are not able to regularly supply some of the crops that are usually in high demand, while consumers are not fully aware of the constraints faced by farmers.

The Covid19 pandemic had a strong negative impact on funding and implementation of planned activities due to travel restrictions, which will be felt for some years, as most farmers were not able to sell their produce in the local market (or even to other outlets) and there was a massive decrease in tourist arrivals (important consumers of organic produce).

Tropical Cyclones and other similar phenomena are constant threats: producers have to start from scratch after such events, once they have rebuilt their homes as their priority initially is ensuring shelter for their family.

Ensuring the availability of farmers to join peer reviews and participate in meetings is also an issue. Maintaining a PGS structure and properly assigning roles and responsibilities to be fully functioning is still a difficulty faced by some initiatives.

Record keeping is also a challenge, so the PGS initiatives have difficulties in getting up-to-date data from the producers, to know the total quantity of produce they have within their groups before any buying run. Mobile networks are not reliable and often unavailable, so it is hard for managing organizations to get in touch with producers and follow up on the status of their farms.

The communal land system was mentioned by one PGS initiative as a challenge for PGS implementation.

Finally, some respondents indicated that ensuring a market for the organic produce, as well as obtaining funding to support more activities, such as value addition, are issues that affect both implementation and expansion of PGS initiatives.

Conclusions and recommendations

PGS and parallel social processes, such as small-scale saving schemes or saving groups, can trigger innovation and adaptation to improve the livelihoods of rural communities worldwide, with positive impacts both on food security and nutrition in rural areas, as well as providing an important platform for community development⁴³. POETCom has been engaged in the promotion of PGS in the Pacific Islands, supporting communities to actively adopt principles and practices of organic agriculture through processes that are specifically adapted to their contexts. Therefore, any intervention aiming at further supporting PGS development in this region should be carried out in close consultation and coordination with POETCom staff and membership.

Gender mainstreaming in organic agriculture is still at an initial stage and POETCom has been one of the few organizations clearly taking steps in order to address this gap. Among the many efforts under implementation, one activity was also essential for the preparation of the current assessment: the collection of gender-disaggregated data. This is still relatively uncommon among PGS initiatives worldwide and efforts in this direction, such as demonstrated by the majority of POETCom licensees assessed for this report, make it possible to have a better understanding of the roles, needs and valuable contributions of women to the organic movement.

Among the focus countries considered for this assessment, it is important to highlight Fiji,

43 The Global Comparative Study on Interactions Between Social Processes and Participatory Guarantee Systems assessed how PGS and parallel social processes, such as small scale saving schemes or saving groups, can trigger innovation and adaptation to improve the livelihoods of rural communities worldwide. It states "PGS can be the first social activity of a group leading to further community actions beneficial for development." The study also concluded that PGS initiatives have positive impacts on farmers livelihoods both on cash and subsistence farming, thereby improving household nutritional requirements. This means that PGS, as a development tool, has the potential to make significant contribution to the reduction of food insecurity as well as to improved nutrition among farmers in rural areas. The study also showed that PGS is an important platform for the development of additional social processes (or informal social protection systems) that in turn positively impact PGS initiatives in different ways, thereby improving the sustainability and impacts of the PGS. The study is available online here:

https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/2021-11/Global%20Study%20on%20Interactions%20between%20Social%20Processes%20and%20Participatory%20Guarantee%20Systems_1.pdf

Solomon Islands and Vanuatu for their experience in PGS and strong potential for further PGS development. In Palau there is one PGS initiative currently under development, providing an interesting opportunity for collaboration and synergies with Slow Food, which is very active in the country. Samoa counts on the significant capacity for organic agriculture, but no PGS initiative is operational or under development there yet, as the focus has mainly been on the export of organic produce. It would be important to shift attention to developing the local market for organic products, thereby justifying the implementation of PGS in this country as well. Papua New Guinea also offers good potential for the development of the organic sector, despite difficulties related to logistics and infrastructure (not unique to Papua New Guinea, of course) and there are currently no PGS initiatives in the country. POETCom is making efforts to secure funds for a project including PGS development also there. Finally, a POETCom project in Tonga is focusing on biodiversity and ecological farming and includes a PGS component: there are concrete opportunities for synergies to support PGS development also in this country.

Considering the benefits of organic agriculture and the potential positive impact on achieving Sustainable Development Goals, as well as addressing the issue of increasing non-communicable diseases in the region, support to local organic markets and further PGS development is more than justified. It is encouraging that governmental authorities in the Pacific highly support local, sustainable agricultural production and recognise the need to promote gender equality and women empowerment through a holistic approach to sustainable value chain development.

Products currently being labelled and sold by PGS-certified producers that are particularly interesting for the Mountain Products Partnership (MPP) and the Coalition of Fragile Ecosystems (COFE), due to market potential, are fruits, cocoa, coffee and tea (available from all PGS initiatives assessed), seeds (currently available from 2 PGS initiatives, in Fiji), coconut value-added produce and honey (available from 5 PGS initiatives in all countries), and Ngali nut, (available from 1 PGS initiative in Solomon Islands) most likely in association with turmeric, a crop that grows naturally under the Ngali nut trees, as an additional crop to maximise the income of the producers.

Local marketing channels are used by all PGS-certified farmers. Organic Origins in Fiji is the only PGS initiative selling to restaurants or cafés and the PGS initiative in Vanuatu indicated hotels and resorts among the used marketing channels. There are opportunities to be explored with Slow Cook Alliance and Slow Food activities linked to tourism. Currently, certified produce is not sold through specialised organic shops and none of the initiatives are involved in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes.

COVID19 had very strong, most likely lasting impacts. The majority of PGS initiatives in the Pacific are funded through projects and external aid, which represents a risk for financial sustainability in case no additional and more stable source of income is ensured. There is potential to support market development through MPP, in parallel with quality assurance systems, in order to increase income for producers and PGS initiatives and improve financial sustainability.

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Annex 1: Country profiles

Fiji

The Republic of Fiji is composed of 322 islands and over 500 smaller islets, of which 106 are permanently inhabited. The nation is comprised of multiple ethnic groups, with different sets of cultural and social norms. This is the second most populous among the 7 focus countries, with a total population of 896444, 43% of whom are living in rural areas. As of 2019, 17,61% of the employed population worked in agriculture, fisheries and forestry, (22 % of all males and 8% of all women employed) and women are more likely than men to work as own-account workers or contributing family workers on family farms, as vulnerable employment affects 48% of all female employment, (compared to 39% of all male employment). The average time women spend on unpaid domestic and care work corresponds to about three times the amount of time spent by men in these activities of household provision of services for their own consumption, in a day. Gendered divisions of labour are clear in the agricultural sector: women tend to be more involved in garden maintenance, harvesting processing and marketing, while men tend to carry out physically strenuous work, but contributions of rural women to household and rural economies are not well known and visible. Women are usually excluded from formal decision-making processes concerning land in the largely male-dominated mataqali systems. In rural Fiji, it is common for women's husbands or brothers to be the public voice for the family in community or village councils. There are still considerable gaps in sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis related to agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Non-communicable diseases account for approximately 82 percent of all deaths in Fiji. There is also a close link between non-communicable diseases, gender and nutrition. Services are the main economic sector, with tourism-related industries expanding fast: in 2021 the country registered 894000 tourist/visitor arrivals at national borders. There is potential for organic sector expansion leveraging on tourist demands for locally produced certified organic food.

A total of 19303, 44 ha are currently under organic management, representing 4,54 % of total farmland. Fiji hosts at least 6 PGS initiatives and reported a total of 720 PGS-certified producers in 2020.

Palau

Palau consists of more than 340 islands, with only fourteen being inhabited. Koror is the economic center and where two-thirds of the population resides. No country gender assessment of the agricultural sector has been conducted and in general, there is very little information available on public databases. The 2008 FAO Country Report on the state of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture states that the "Average farm size of private farms in Palau is 0.25 acre or less. (...) Traditional agriculture in Palau has included agroforestry systems and multistory plantings of trees and root crops. (...) mainly for subsistence and customary purposes, although sales of products such as vegetables, root crops, fruits and betel nuts are common. Farm labor is provided by women with the most commonly produced commodities being taro, sweet potato, cassava and some fruits. There is an element of extended dualism with some women employing foreign labor to assist in the production of taro which is an important crop culturally and economically, as well as for subsistence purposes. Some foreign laborers are employed also by Palauan owners of commercial farming operations." The population currently comprised of 18000 people is predominantly urban (81%) and services represent the main economic sector, with the tourism-related industries playing an essential economic role: in 2018 and 2019

the country recorded 106000 and 94000 Tourist/visitor arrivals at national borders. Since independence, the trend towards urbanization had increased, as stated in the above-mentioned FAO country report from 2008 "Urban population increased from 71.4% in 1995 to 77.35% in 2005; while rural population decreased from 28.59% in 1995 to 22.65% in 2005. This increase in urban population means a significant increase in demand for agricultural production which has significantly affected food security and rural development. Because of this, there was an observed increase in rural poverty primarily due to urban migration which resulted in less farming manpower and therefore less food production." More than 80% of the food consumed in the country is imported. Recent comprehensive tax reforms have been carried out with the goal to incentivize domestic production, reduce competition with imported goods and increase availability of locally grown food produce. The reform also imposed tariffs on agricultural inputs such as synthetic fertilizers, which might have a positive impact in the development of organic agriculture . A national policy on organic farming has been under development for a few years but still lacks official approval.

Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea comprises the eastern half of the island of New Guinea and its offshore islands in Melanesia. With a total population of 9119000, it is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. The majority of the population lives in rural areas (87 percent) characterized by poor infrastructure and often rugged terrain, with little or no access to basic services, such as health, education, sanitation and safe drinking water. Accounting for over 50% of total employment, agriculture is key for the country's economy. This sector is mainly dominated by smallholder farming systems engaged in both cash crop production (coffee and cocoa) and subsistence production, though there is limited commercial farming. Traditional farming systems normally do not include synthetic fertilizers or chemicals, except when planting cash crops. Gender disparities in the agricultural sector are seen in access to and control over key agricultural and rural resources and services, knowledge, opportunities and markets. Rural women are major contributors to the economy but their rights are not properly recognized and they have not benefitted equally from past economic growth. They are systematically excluded from access to resources, essential services, and decision-making, even though they play a prominent role in subsistence food production, agricultural value chains and rural livelihoods. They sell their surplus produce, generally at local markets, to generate income for their families. Geographical and structural issues, but also security challenges restrict the mobility of girls and women, further excluding them from key downstream activities within value chains, such as selling to exporters, therefore limiting their access to markets and their control over their income. Income-generating opportunities are needed for rural women, along with support in addressing challenges in crop and livestock production. Tourism is only an emerging industry and in 2021 the country registered 160000 tourist/visitor arrivals at national borders.

Samoa

Samoa is an independent Pacific island nation comprised of two main islands, Upolu and Savaii, and eight smaller islands. Only 4 of these are inhabited. The total agricultural land area is 350 km² and the total forest land area is 171 km². Beyond the narrow coastal plains, the mountain ranges rise steeply to a maximum of 1859 meters on Savaii and 1100 meters on Upolu, intersected by fertile valleys. The greater part of the territory is covered by lush vegetation and rainforest. Approximately 97 percent of all households in the country are engaged in some form of agriculture. Samoa relies heavily on imported food (between 2005 and 2014 food imports increased by 60%) and this dependence is linked to changing dietary patterns. These include increased consumption of processed, high calorie, high so-

dium and low nutrient content food coupled with relatively low consumption of fruits and vegetables. Such a diet increases the level of risk for non-communicable diseases (NCDs). There is evidence that women and entire families are turning to cash crops such as turmeric, cocoa, taro, bananas and noni. As a result, families don't spend enough time on their other agricultural activities such as growing vegetables for their personal consumption and for sale in local markets. Samoan women and men contribute to rural livelihoods in different ways. Men undertake labor-intensive jobs such as planting taro and clearing the land, while women are often engaged concurrently in subsistence farming and in marketing at roadsides as well as in more structured local markets. In addition, women play multiple roles that include the provision of support in both the family and community settings and income generation through small-scale businesses. Rural women manage small family businesses as families transition from subsistence to market-focused agriculture. They are also recognized to be key in the production of value-added goods, particularly in quality control and compliance in export businesses. Women's employment in agriculture is likely under-reported, as official figures state that less than 7% of total female employment refers to this sector. Most women employed in agriculture are not paid (88.1 percent) and/or are self-employed (88.3 percent). Older women are more likely than younger women to participate in household decision-making and women from urban areas are more likely to participate in decision-making than women from rural areas. In the organic industry, consisting of export of extra virgin organic coconut oil, fetau oil and noni juice, women are involved in all three areas in various stages of the value chain process. The key challenge for the Government of Samoa, as outlined in the Agriculture Sector Plan, is to grow the sector in a sustainable way to provide food and raw materials, increase productivity and ensure high-quality products that can compete in both domestic and international markets. The Government's priority under the ASP is to find ways to develop smallholder farming and fisheries and to shift the focus of small-scale farmers from subsistence agriculture to small-scale commercial production and marketing. This move into the commercialization of agriculture via cash cropping could be complemented by an increase in targeted community awareness of the benefits of growing vegetables.

Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands, an archipelago of 997 islands with a total land area of 30 407 km², is the third largest archipelago in the South Pacific, with a wealth of natural resources including native forests, fresh water, marine and fishery resources, minerals and agricultural land, distributed unevenly across the nine provinces. Solomon Islands are heavily dependent upon the performance of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The population total 686878 people, of which 75 percent of lives in rural areas and depends on agriculture for their livelihoods. There is an indication that over 90 percent of rural households grow at least some of their own food. The diverse indigenous languages spoken indicate a wide range of cultures and social norms that shape Solomon Islanders' worldviews and the construction of gender relations in society. Both women and men engage in subsistence agriculture and fisheries, in different ways, as a gendered division of tasks, responsibilities, equipment use and knowledge is prevalent. Men tend to undertake the more strenuous work of clearing gardens, heavy planting and harvesting tasks, and construction work, whereas women tend to do more ongoing and labor-intensive tasks such as maintenance of seedlings and gardens, and post-harvest processing. Statistics show that rural livelihoods are heavily concentrated in the subsistence sector and that women play a prominent role in selling agricultural produce and goods produced in the home in markets or alongside roads, as they are less likely to travel to larger markets as often as men. Market infrastructure is poor, lacking proper sanitation, security and transparent governance systems. There is an indication that rural women are also turning to cash cropping (for export: copra, cocoa

and coconut oil) since it is more lucrative; this move by women and their families into cash cropping could impact the health of families as nutritious food is increasingly replaced by imported, less nutritious foods. Rural women have limited participation in both informal and formal business. Barriers to women's participation in small businesses include time constraints due to reproductive and caregiving responsibilities, subsistence food production and community expectations that women will provide free labor to prepare and serve food at community and church events. In general, statistics show that women and girls have less access to opportunities and services, and less control over resources, than men and boys. Heavy workloads and high rates of violence against women and girls significantly constrain both rural and urban women from exercising their rights to participate equally in the social, economic and political spheres.

Tourism is an emerging industry, which was heavily impacted by COVID-19 travel restrictions with a reduction by 84% in the number of visitors arriving in the country in 2020. There is potential in consumer demand of organic produce by tourists, particular specialty products such as the ngali nut .

Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga is a Polynesian country composed of over 170 coral and volcanic islands, of which 36 are permanently inhabited. Its total land area is 747 km². Tonga's main island of Tongatapu constitutes 35 percent of the country's land area and hosts most of the population, currently totaling 105697 people. 77% of them are living in rural areas. Tonga's economic growth has been led by agricultural diversification, with the development of export crops of vanilla, squash and kava. As with many other Pacific SIDS, the country relies heavily on remittances from Tongans living overseas. Agriculture, including forestry and fisheries, is the main sector of employment for Tongan women and men aged 15 years and above. The rate of subsistence food production in Tonga is among the highest in the Pacific Island Countries and 40 percent of subsistence workers are rural women. The agricultural sector, primarily horticulture, is very important in terms of its contribution to family and household incomes in outer islands and in greater Tongatapu. Fewer than 10 percent of Tongan farmers are commercial producers. Most farmers practice a mixed cropping system with coconut inter-cropping with either kava or coffee and taro. The average size of small farms is 2.5 acres while large-scale farms are approximately 25 acres. Customary law in Tonga reinforces the class system and perpetuates gender inequalities and woman's subordination at all levels of society . Rural women have limited ability to speak in public to influence land use and economic development and are more likely to experience hardship than their urban counterparts. Decision-making mechanisms within the community and villages are largely dominated by men. Tongan women have considerable entrepreneurship experience that is seldom recognized because most are involved in the informal economy. Rural women commonly sell surplus agriculture products, fish and handicrafts. Tourism is an emerging but promising industry. In 2019, with 0.89 tourists per resident, Tonga ranked 48th in the world and 1st in Polynesia, in terms of numbers of visitors and tourists.

Vanuatu

Vanuatu is an archipelagic nation of 83 islands, 65 of which are inhabited, extending over 1000 kilometres. Port Vila, on the island of Efate, is the capital. Communities are widely dispersed across more than 80 islands. The geographic dispersion of Vanuatu's population at low densities across a number of islands has resulted in inadequate and poorly maintained road, air and maritime infrastructure. Vanuatu is the world's most at-risk country for natural disasters, according to the UN World Risk Index. Ninety-nine percent of the

population is indigenous Ni-Vanuatu. There are over 100 languages spoken, of which approximately 80 are actively spoken, making Vanuatu one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world. In this agricultural society, where 74 percent of the total 307150 population lives in rural areas and depends largely on subsistence agriculture and fishing for daily sustenance and livelihoods, 88 percent of households engage in some form of vegetable crop production (The 2016 Mini-Census found that). The Vanuatu economy is based on agriculture (mostly subsistence farming), fishing, tourism and offshore financial services. Exports are dominated by a narrow range of agricultural and economic growth is constrained by access to markets, relatively remote and isolated island communities with associated high transport costs, and natural disasters. As a result, Vanuatu is dependent on aid for development projects. Although agriculture is the primary activity for the majority of the population, only about one-third of production is commercial, resulting in the sector's relatively low share of GDP, while the majority of economic activity is in the services sector, largely driven by tourism. Transportation constraints negatively impact the productive sector, including agriculture and fisheries in Vanuatu. The high cost of air, marine and land transportation for products, coupled with extremely poor road, marine and market infrastructure, constrain rural people's ability to sell their products. Women and men participate in almost equal numbers in the agricultural sectors, although they may grow different crops and use different levels of technology. Women have a heavier workload than men due to expectations that, in addition to agricultural work, they are responsible for small-scale marketing, handicraft production for sale and/or household use, caregiving, housework and a considerable amount of voluntary community work. Women in the fieldwork areas are rarely allowed to have a direct voice in community decision-making and have no control over customary land except through male family members. Prevalence rates of physical and sexual violence against women and girls are one of the highest globally. Rigid social norms in rural areas reinforce the decision-making power of males, including regarding natural resources, land and other productive resources. Female-headed households were more likely than male-headed households to rely on the sale of goods as their main source of income. Rural communities' consumption of imported foods, which are becoming increasingly available, is increasing. Rural women can be influential in fighting non-communicable diseases linked to eating imported processed food, but their lack of knowledge is a barrier. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism generated around 35% of total employment. The Department of Tourism's strategy for the recovery of the tourism sector released in 2021 focuses on supporting the transition to a more resilient and less dependent tourism industry which better supports local industries and livelihoods, and specifically indicates the need to increase local organic production as well as to support PGS development.

Annex 2: Summary of key points of PGS initiatives in the Pacific SIDS

Note: Cells highlighted in grey represent operational PGS initiatives that are licenced by POETCom but were not included in the scope of this report as they are based outside the 7 focus countries.

Country	Name of PGS initiative or facilitating organization:	Legal structure of the PGS initiative or facilitating organization	Year PGS activities started	Where the PGS is operational	Producers involved (W)	Producers involved (M)	Producers involved (ALL)	Producers certified (W)	Producers certified (M)	Producers certified (ALL)	PGS certified Hectares	Produce
Cook Islands	Natura Kuki Airani	Non-governmental/ non- profit organization (NGO)	2015	National (country)	5	12	17	1	3	4	23,5	Fibers (cotton, linen, jute, etc), Vegetables (root crops and horticulture), Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea), Processed products
Fiji	FRIENDS	Non-governmental/ non- profit organization (NGO)	2004	Local (village)	32	261	293	32	32	64	112,1	Vegetables (root crops and horticulture), Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea), Seeds, Processed products
Fiji	Cicia Organic Monitoring Agency	Public office / government	2013	Local (village)	74	106	180	0	0	0	8287	Vegetables (root crops and horticulture), Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea), Processed products
Fiji	Organic Rotuma	Association	2021	District	15	39	54	4	7	11	71	Vegetables (root crops and horticulture), Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea), Seeds
Fiji	Organic Origins	Association	2021	District	5	4	9	0	0	0	50	Vegetables (root crops and horticulture), Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea), Animal products (poultry)
Fiji	Rabi Organics	Non-governmental/ non- profit organization (NGO)	2019	Local (village)	20	20	40	0	0	0	12	Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea)
French Polynesia	PGS Bio Fetia	Association	2011	National (country)	38	77	115	21	46	67	323	Vegetables (root crops and horticulture), Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea), Animal products, Harvested products, Processed products
New Caledonia	Association Bio Caledonia	Association	2009	National (country)	100	140	240	64	91	155	1676	Vegetables (root crops and horticulture), Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea), Animal products, Harvested products, Seeds, Processed products
Solomon Islands	SolAgro-Binata PGS	Private company / Ltd	2015	Local (village)	51	3	54	46	2	48	25	Vegetables (root crops and horticulture), Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea), Processed products, Ngali Nuts
Vanuatu	Syndicat Agricole et Pastoral de Vanuatu & Farm support	Association	2016	National (country)			1611	0	0	0	904	Vegetables (root crops and horticulture), Trees (fruits, cocoa, coffee, tea), Processed products
Total					335	650	2613	168	181	349	11483,6	

Gender-Sensitive Assessment on Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS)