

## Initial Report for the TAA Pacific Region

I started my career as an entomologist with the Commonwealth Agriculture Bureau International (CABI)'s Institute of Biological Control in India. Throughout my scientific life, I have preferred biological control, or natural methods in managing plant pests, and integrated pest management.

I worked for many years with rice, this being the staple food of more than half of the world's population. From the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), based in the Philippines, I moved on to the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Nigeria, where root crops are the main staples.

A few years ago, I joined the World Vegetable Centre (AVRDC) in the Solomon Islands as the site coordinator, and later became the senior adviser (agriculture development) with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. This involved considering food and nutritional security, and I soon realised that small island countries across the Pacific face more nutritional insecurity than food insecurity.

In the Solomon Islands, I developed the blueprint for the first ever national agriculture and livestock policy, and also subsidiary policy documents on organic agriculture systems, the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and the national rice sector policy (2010-2015). These are the first such policy documents in the Pacific islands region. In addition, I teamed-up with the government's Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, to draft the national food security, food safety and nutrition policy (2010-2015).

The blueprint for addressing food and nutrition security in small outer islands facing the consequences of climate change, family food and nutrition insecurity, and loss of biodiversity was based on the **Kwai Island organic farming model**, developed with help from Pastor Philip Manuao.

Kwai Island is a tiny dot off the east coastline of Malaita, one of the Solomon Islands. The people of Kwai generally live on seafood and root crops. This model is now widely known around the Pacific: see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cgXnzfDcbk>. It was costly for islanders to procure vegetables and fruits from the mainland, and their sandy soils hindered crop growth. We introduced 'Sup-Sup' home organic gardening. This facilitates proper waste segregation and sanitation, as well as successful local organic production of fruits and vegetables of various colours. It is a simple approach that has allowed Kwai Islanders access to a 'rainbow-coloured', nutritious, diversity of organically grown foods. This small change has impacted greatly on the lives of the Kwai Islanders, and has become a success story for other small outer islands across the Pacific. We aim to disseminate this information and reproduce the system in other Solomon islands, and in nearby Pacific countries.

Addressing issues of food and nutrition security is not just the concern of government. It is the responsibility of every citizen and relevant organisations to work together. For example, I was able to convince the Solomon Islands postal corporation to issue postage stamps on important vegetables such as tomato, pumpkin, string beans, eggplants and indigenous vegetables. Similarly, I persuaded local women's groups to submit local recipes for a small booklet on *Local*

*Vegetable Food 'Kaikai' Recipes in the Solomon Islands* produced by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, and supported by the World Health Organisation.

To enhance and sustain food and nutrition security at family level, we have to educate everybody, including the young and disadvantaged members of the community, on the importance of proper food and healthy nutrition. We need to give them the skills and confidence to produce their own foods organically and locally. As a Kwai Island fisherman, Eratus Tom, has said, '*Without the right information, we could not help ourselves....food is the difference between life and death*'.

From the Solomon Islands, I was employed by the Fiji National University as Visiting Professor of Entomology and, about a year thereafter, I was appointed as Consultant to the Offices of Minister and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji, to advise on policy and research areas. During my two years' tenure, major milestones achieved include the revival of the Fiji Agricultural Journal and the Fiji Institute of Agricultural Science; and crafting of the Fiji2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda. I was recently elected as the Non-OECD Representative to the CG Fund Council (formerly CGIAR) to represent the Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

I am confident that, as the newly-appointed TAA regional coordinator for the Pacific, I will be able to network between the TAA and regional/international organisations, regional and national universities, and Government Ministries of Agriculture in Solomon Islands and Fiji.

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