

REGIONAL PHAMAviews

PACIFIC HORTICULTURE & AGRICULTURAL MARKET ACCESS PROGRAM

VOLUME: 1, February 2012

FROM THE HOT SEAT

The Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA) is now over one 1 year old. The first year of operations has witnessed the usual frantic rush of setting-up the thousand-and-one things that are needed to run a project, as well as getting 'sharp end' activities happening on the ground.



The PHAMA family. Left to right Asuao Kirifi Pouono (Samoa Coordinator); Rob Duthie (Principle Market Access Specialist); Losalini Leweniqila (Fiji Coordinator); Israel Wore (Solomon Islands Coordinator); Sarah Nicolson (Program Manager, Australia); Rob Ingram (Program Director, Australia); Timothy Tumukon (Vanuatu Coordinator); Raveen Chand (Finance Officer, Suva); Anna Duthie (Quarantine and Biosecurity Specialist, Suva); Vasiti Nakoula (Administration Officer, Suva); Tom Nakao II (Tonga Coordinator); Richard Holloway (Team Leader, Suva).

It has also been a very satisfying year, with great *corps d'esprit* developing within the Team, and fantastic buy-in from government and private sector stakeholders. And results are starting to roll. Long may it continue!

PHAMA currently has 41 activities on its books, spread across the five PHAMA countries. This provides a considerable challenge on the coordination front. The key message for the next 6 months is consolidation, consolidation, consolidation.

This is the first of the regional newsletters, with the handle set to turn approximately every 6 months. We will be showcasing selected activities and providing some (maybe different, maybe challenging) perspectives from the regional Team.

WHAT IS PHAMA?

PHAMA is an AusAID-funded initiative designed to provide practical and targeted assistance to help Pacific Island Countries (PICs) manage the regulatory aspects associated with exporting primary products. This encompasses gaining access for new products into new markets, as well as helping to manage issues associated with maintaining existing trade.

While the major emphasis is on quarantine requirements, the Program can also provide assistance across other regulatory areas related to exporting, such as compliance with international food safety standards.

Phase 1 of the Program runs through to mid-2013, with a possible 4-year Phase 2. Countries covered under Phase 1 include Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The program is managed from a regional office in Suva, co-located with the Biosecurity and Trade Support Team of SPC. But the program also has a very important in-country presence – small offices have been established in all PHAMA countries, staffed by our hard working National Market Access Coordinators.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

Central to PHAMA is the idea of developing a strong partnership between government and the private sector to help manage market access issues. To achieve this, Market Access Working Groups (MAWGs) have been established in each country. These include representatives from relevant government agencies (e.g. Quarantine, Trade and Agriculture) as well as the private sector (exporters and producer groups). The MAWGs are responsible for prioritising the market access issues where PHAMA provides assistance, and for overseeing the activities supported by PHAMA to address these issues. As such they form the heart of the Program.

The Program is particularly proud of the way that the MAWGs have grown into their role. They are clearly meeting a real need for improved communication between government and the private sector on market access issues, even if the discussion gets a bit hot at times!

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

The full range of activities currently being supported by PHAMA is listed on the middle page. Further information on particular activities will be put up on the PHAMA website (under development).

The following activities are under the spotlight for this newsletter.....

Fiji-Australia bilateral talks

PHAMA countries have traditionally been poorly resourced to engage in technical market access discussions with major trading partners such as Australia and New Zealand, let alone with their smaller Pacific neighbours. Routine, programmed engagement at the bilateral level is an essential part of managing trade issues and maintaining the focus of trading partners on the longer-term market access priorities of a particular country. To address this, PHAMA is providing technical support and training to improve PIC capacity to conduct bilateral market access discussions with selected trading partners, and is also providing some logistical support. Emphasis is being placed on raising the awareness of PIC governments of the need for structured discussions to take place regularly, and to match this with appropriate budget allocations.



Suliasi Tawake (Manager Operations, Biosecurity Authority of Fiji) demonstrating planting material used for taro export production to Bill Magee, General Manager Plant Biosecurity (Grains and Forestry), Biosecurity Australia

First cab off the rank was Fiji. The Program supported bi-lateral discussions between Biosecurity Australia and the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji in mid-November, held in Fiji. In addition to formal talks, field-trips were conducted to Taveuni (to review first-hand the taro export pathway, where PHAMA and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) are currently working together to address quarantine and non-quarantine issues), and to the Yasawa Islands (to review fruit fly surveillance operations). PHAMA helped with the preparation of briefing papers, pre-visit coaching on how to conduct negotiations, and logistical support.

A major gain for Fiji from the discussions was an agreement to reduce Australia's fresh-fruit sampling regime for papaya exports, and in-principle agreement to allow loose consignments of papaya in aircraft. Both of these concessions will result in significant cost-savings for Fijian exporters. But the most important achievement is that, after a pause of more than five years, Fiji has re-initiated bilateral consultations with Australia, and is already considering who they will meet with next and what might be on the agenda.

Support will be provided for the remaining four PHAMA countries to hold bilateral discussions with a country of their choice over the first half of 2012.

Solomon Islands copra mill accreditation

Copra meal and Palm Kernel Expeller (PKE) export volumes from the Solomon Islands are comparatively small but still form the basis of a significant and expanding industry. The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) advised in 2010 that renewal of Australian import permits for these products would be subject to the successful audit of processing and handling facilities.



Mills in the Solomon Islands had never previously been audited, and operators were unfamiliar with the standards they were being asked to meet and how best to prepare for the exercise. A touch of urgency was added by the fact that current import permits for Australia were due to expire in mid-June 2011, potentially threatening a halt in trade if the audit had not been successfully completed by that date.

PHAMA was asked to provide support in three key areas. Firstly, it carried out a pre-audit review of processing and handling facilities, identifying shortfalls and guiding necessary improvements before the audit was carried out and hence maximising the chances of success. Secondly, it helped mill operators navigate their way through the copious volumes of paperwork involved. And finally, it helped to cover the costs levied by AQIS to carry out the audit, given that this was a first-time audit imposed on a relatively small industry at fairly short notice. Throughout the exercise, emphasis was placed on bringing quarantine staff and mill operators up to speed so that next time round (and unfortunately there is certain to be a 'next time') they are in a much better position to handle the process themselves.

AQIS visited the Solomon Islands in mid-November to carry out the audit for the three mills that wanted to participate. The result? AQIS advised on 8 December that the audit of all three mills had been successful. Some are reporting that new import enquiries from Australian buyers are already rolling in. Maybe not a direct result of the accreditation, but certainly impossible without it!

Samoa breadfruit protocol

Samoa can already export commercial consignments of breadfruit to New Zealand, provided it has been treated through the High Temperature Forced Air (HTFA) chamber to kill fruit fly larvae. An additional export pathway was also previously approved for traditionally cooked personal consignments of breadfruit. However, this pathway was closed due to detection of live pests by NZ quarantine.

Against this background, Samoa asked PHAMA to help develop an alternative heat treatment protocol covering personal consignments of breadfruit into NZ.

First-up, discussions were held with Farmer Joe's Bakery, which operates modern commercial ovens in Apia, and it was decided that this facility would provide a good option for centralised treatment of personal consignments. In November last year, PHAMA supported



Dr. Seuseu Joseph Tauati (MAF Pathologist), Toilolo Pueata Tanielu (Principal Development Officer), Aualiiitia Parate Matalavea (MAF Principal Research Officer) and staff assessing core temperature of breadfruit during cooking trials at Farmer Joe's Bakery, designed to determine cooking times and temperatures required to kill fruit fly larvae

commercial cooking trials carried out at Farmer Joe's, designed to determine the cooking times and temperatures required to guarantee effective treatment. PHAMA then worked with Samoa Quarantine to define post-cooking handling procedures so that cooked product is not re-infested. A draft import protocol is currently being finalised for consideration by NZ MAF, with the aim of having this pathway open as soon as possible. Biosecurity Australia has indicated that it may also be open to adopting a similar protocol for imports into Australia. Not quite there yet, but watch this space!

Once the protocol is established for personal consignments, development of a revised protocol for commercial consignments may also be considered.

Re-accreditation of BSE-free status for Vanuatu beef exports

Beef production is one of Vanuatu's flagship rural industries. One of the quarantine requirements for maintaining access to the Australian market is freedom from the cattle disease Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis (BSE). Although Vanuatu is currently exporting only limited quantities of beef to Australia, loss of BSE-free status could potentially have an adverse impact on exports to other key markets.

BSE-free status is based on regular herd testing and accreditation of results by Australian authorities. Submission of re-accreditation documentation to Australia was required by the end of June 2011 in order to keep the pathway open.

The problem was that Vanuatu does not currently have a Principal Veterinary Officer (PVO) in place, and the process had become stuck. PHAMA was asked if it could help.



Charolais cattle on South Efate, Vanuatu.

Technical Assistance was mobilised in June to work with Vanuatu authorities to help prepare the required documentation. Working under considerable pressure, this was lodged right on the deadline of June 30, keeping a foot in the doorway. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) will now conduct a follow-up in-country audit (required to complete the accreditation process), scheduled for this April. In the continued absence of a PVO, PHAMA is helping the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock liaise with FSANZ regarding the timing and process of the audit, and will provide additional advisory support prior to and during the exercise.

Tonga watermelon exports to New Zealand

Tonga has an existing export pathway for watermelons to NZ, based on mandatory fumigation. Shipments started in late 2010, and demand continues to grow with a forecast market value of \$2.5 million Pa'anga or about A\$1.35 million per year.

Supporting improvements to this pathway is the single major focus of PHAMA's work in Tonga at present.

First up, PHAMA was asked to review the export pathway from farm gate to on-arrival inspection in NZ. The aim was to identify improvements that would ensure good quality product arrives in NZ, and export costs for growers and exporters are minimised. Particular emphasis was placed on reviewing fumigation delivery, following incidences last year with fruit damage possibly caused by fumigation problems.



Loading export watermelons into crates prior to fumigation.



Measuring core temperatures as part of training to improve fumigation delivery

This review was completed last July, producing 19 key recommendations covering fumigation delivery; procedural documentation and record keeping; phytosanitary certification; integrity and in-field control of target pest species; and development of a systems approach based on non-host fruit fly status of watermelon and other products as a possible alternative to mandatory fumigation.

Tonga's MAFFF and industry have now agreed (no mean feat!) on an implementation plan, prepared by PHAMA, covering these recommendations. This paves the way for remedial work to proceed. Among other things, work will involve updating existing management and fumigation manuals, training quarantine staff and growers to meet existing protocol requirements, and carrying out field trials relating to the development of a systems approach, as a possible alternative to mandatory fumigation. Some recommendations concerning improved fumigation delivery have already been implemented by Tonga Quarantine and industry. Implementation of other recommendations will be progressively supported by PHAMA over the next 18 months.

Subsequent to the development of the implementation plan, NZ MAF completed their own audit of the pathway last October, which reconfirmed many of the issues already identified by PHAMA. The fact that PHAMA is in the process of helping Tonga to address these issues almost certainly avoided a far more severe response from NZ MAF, including possible closure of the pathway.

Also related to the water melon export pathway, PHAMA is in the process of installing a 110 kVa back-up generator for the Tonga post-harvest and fumigation facility, which should be commissioned in time for the beginning of the 2012 water melon export season, all going smoothly. This will eliminate risk that consignments are treated incorrectly during power outages, requiring a second treatment with the accompanying risk of damage to the consignment.

THINK-PIECE

Establishing a Regional Heads of Quarantine Group

Quarantine and market access issues between PICs are a significant obstacle to increased regional trade. There is currently no regional mechanism for managing these issues, or developing regional positions and standards for discussion with other non-PIC countries. Addressing this, PHAMA is supporting the development of a regional Heads of Quarantine (HQ) Group to facilitate a regional approach to quarantine and market access issues. This Group will be responsible for:

- prioritising and working on regional market access issues raised by the MAWGs, quarantine departments and industry of each PIC
- setting work programs to address other international/ regional standards (e.g. standardised approaches) related to market access
- developing and seeking to progress with importing country regulatory authorities regional strategies related to technical market access

- representing PHAMA PICs in relevant international market access organisations.

A meeting of the Heads of Quarantine from the five PHAMA countries was sponsored by PHAMA in Nadi in late November, immediately prior to the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation Executive Committee (PPPO ExCo) meeting. They provided strong support for the concept of a HOQ Group, and a draft Service Charter was developed. The following day at the PPPO ExCo meeting, the concept was again discussed, with particular focus on the relationship of such a group to the PPPO. It was agreed that formation of the group would provide a valuable forum for resolving regional market access and quarantine issues at an operational level, but should remain subordinate to the PPPO and the MAWGs.

Focus areas over the coming 6 months include:

- further consultation with regional and national stakeholders on the proposed role, structure and operation of the group
- finalisation of the Service Charter
- finalisation of membership and Chair/ Vice Chair positions
- coordination of an initial meeting to establish a work program of current regional issues
- finalisation of arrangements for coordinator/ secretariat support, which will initially be funded by PHAMA
- development of a longer-term funding model, which could potentially include PIC Ministries, the Forum Secretariat, SPC and PHAMA.

The PHAMA team is of the opinion that a functional, well-resourced HOQ Group could go a long way towards sorting out operational quarantine issues at the regional level. It also provides the opportunity for PICs to decide and present consolidated, unified positions on common quarantine and market access issues to trading partners.

SPC BIOSECURITY AND TRADE SUPPORT TEAM (BATS)

In addition to the targeted market access activities being supported by PHAMA in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, PHAMA is separately funding SPC-BATS to:

- provide improved market access information services to national stakeholders
- represent PICs in selected international market access bodies such as PPPO and OIE
- provide improved surveillance and reporting of major pests that potentially threaten market access, such as fruit fly, invasive ants and Giant African Snail (GAS)
- help non-PHAMA countries address product-specific market access issues akin to those being addressed by the mainstream program in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

UNDER THE SPC SPOTLIGHT

The Pacific Plant Protection Organisation (PPPO) is an important forum where plant protection and plant quarantine issues are discussed to ensure safe movement of plants and plant products both internationally and within the region. The PPPO Secretariat is provided by SPC Land Resources Division, through the BATS team, with PHAMA funding. SPC hosted the 13th Executive Committee Meeting of the PPPO in Nadi, Fiji from 30th November to 3rd December, 2011.

The meeting endorsed:

- Development of regional guidelines for sea container hygiene. Draft guidelines have just been completed by BATS and are being circulated to the National Plant Protection Organizations for comment. A revised guideline, incorporating comments, will be presented at the next board meeting scheduled for June 18 – 22 this year.
- Development of a business plan for the PPPO through to 2019, providing a much clearer 'roadmap' of strategic directions. A draft is currently under preparation, to be circulated for endorsement at the next board meeting.

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CURRENT PHAMA ACTIVITIES

Activity Ref	Country	Activity Title
FIJI04	Fiji	Clarification of the quarantine status of nematodes associated with taro imports.
FIJI05	Fiji	Development of and training on taro production and packhouse standards.
FIJI06	Fiji	Substantiation of Australia's requirement for devitalisation of taro imports.
FIJI07	Fiji	Scoping study to develop options for the management of a new fruit fly species on Rotuma Islands.
FIJI08	Fiji	Progression of new market access requests for papaya and breadfruit to the US.
FIJI09	Fiji	Feasibility studies on eggplant, chilli, breadfruit, jackfruit, gourd/s and pineapple exports to Australia.
FIJI10	Fiji	New market access submissions for products recommended under Activity FIJI09.
FIJI11	Fiji	Management of <i>Bactrocera kirki</i> on Rotuma Island.
FIJI12	Fiji	Trials to confirm fruit fly non-host status for Polynesian plum (Wi).
FIJI13	Fiji	Review of existing HTFA pathways to NZ
SAMOA02	Samoa	Determination of the quarantine status of nematodes on Samoan taro exports to NZ.
SAMOA03	Samoa	Supply chain constraints to developing taro exports to NZ.
SAMOA06	Samoa	Development of a risk management measure for mites on organic banana exports to NZ.
SAMOA08	Samoa	Assistance with regulatory requirements associated with re-establishing beef and meat product exports to American Samoa.
SAMOA09	Samoa	Reaccreditation of copra meal export processing and handling facilities in Samoa.
SAMOA10	Samoa	Export of personal consignments of heat-treated breadfruit to NZ.
SAMOA11	Samoa	Bee health survey
SOLS04	Solomon Islands	Review of the potential for cut flower and foliage exports to Australia.
SOLS05	Solomon Islands	Accreditation of copra meal and PKE export processing and handling facilities in Solomon Islands.
SOLS06	Solomon Islands	Development of national quality standards for the production and testing of cocoa to meet international market requirements.
SOLS07	Solomon Islands	Scoping study to determine the viability of fresh fruit and vegetable exports from Solomon Islands to nearby PICs including Kiribati, Nauru, and Marshall Islands.
SOLS08	Solomon Islands	Trial shipments of cut flowers and foliage to Australia
SOLS09	Solomon Islands	Feasibility study on developing bush lime exports to New Zealand
TONGA03	Tonga	Review of the watermelon export pathway to NZ, including the delivery of fumigation prior to export.

TONGA04	Tonga	Improvements to the watermelon export pathway to NZ and development of a systems approach to replace methyl bromide fumigation for fruit fly management.
TONGA05	Tonga	Development of a 'new access' submission for the export of zucchinis and selected other crops (to be identified) to NZ.
TONGA06	Tonga	Purchase of a generator as back-up power for Tonga's fumigation facility.
TONGA07	Tonga	Facilitation of meetings to investigate Tonga-sea freight issues.
VAN03	Vanuatu	Establishment of diagnostic services for value-added products.
VAN04	Vanuatu	Development of HACCP plans for key export industries.
VAN05	Vanuatu	Training of meat inspectors for beef export processing facilities.
VAN06	Vanuatu	Feasibility study on the establishment of a facility for drying fruits and vegetables for export.
VAN07	Vanuatu	Re-accreditation of BSE free status for Vanuatu beef to Australia.
VAN08	Vanuatu	Production of a vanilla quality manual.
VAN09	Vanuatu	Production of a kava quality manual.
VAN10	Vanuatu	Bee health survey.
REGIONAL 01	Regional	Market access database development.
REGIONAL 03	Regional	Initiation of a regional strategy towards managing quarantine and MA issues.
REGIONAL 04	Regional	Funding for bilateral market access negotiations with trading partners.
REGIONAL 05	Regional	Review of quarantine issues surrounding trade in handicraft products.
REGIONAL06	Regional	Regional implementation of AFAS