

CASE  
STUDY

## 4

# Mobilising multi-stakeholder platforms in the design of national and regional action plans

The Innov4AgPacific project has supported the co-design and validation of seven national and four regional action plans that have mobilised Pacific Islanders around a shared agenda to implement tailor-made solutions for leveraging opportunities for agribusiness and value chain development. Among the lessons learned is the importance of capacity development for facilitating the active engagement of multiple actors representing the public and private sectors and civil society. Aligning jointly agreed actions with the aspirations of stakeholders and national and regional priorities, policies and programmes is crucial to avoid duplication of efforts and achieve the desired impact.

Strategic plans that define clear objectives, resources needed, and the responsibilities of the various stakeholders are essential prerequisites for ensuring that Pacific Island countries are able to address the challenges and opportunities in the agricultural sector for improving rural incomes and nutrition outcomes (Box 1). The Innov4AgPacific project built capacity for driving innovation and co-developing national and regional action plans to engage multiple actors in shaping policies and programmes in support of value chain and agribusiness development in the seven target countries – Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

## KEY MESSAGES

- Capacity building for innovation in agribusiness and value chain development needs to go hand in hand with the development of any action plan.
- Be inclusive – multiple actors should be engaged from the beginning of the consultative process. Involve the public and private sector, smallholder farmers/fishers and other value chain actors, as well as civil society, including urban and rural community leaders, women and youth. This participatory approach ensures that the actions defined are owned by the stakeholders to achieve the desired impact.
- Ensure alignment of stakeholder aspirations and mandates with national/regional priorities to effectively tackle specific challenges, take advantage of opportunities and minimise duplication of efforts.
- The Innov4AgPacific project fostered shared understanding of the constraints and opportunities for developing Pacific local food crops and fisheries value chains. Action plans were built around four jointly identified priority areas: nutrition and incomes, finance, ICTs and weather risk insurance, by learning from good practices, innovations and critical success factors that were determined to be of high relevance for enhanced performance.

### BOX 1. Why an action plan?

A clear, participatory and inclusive plan of action includes a well-defined scope and definite targets and allocates specific responsibilities to its identified core actors. It is a tool that coordinates who does what and when. Commitments are formalised and the action plan ensures that things get done and that the goals and visions are achieved. It addresses underlying questions, e.g.:

- What is the current situation and where do we want to go from here?
- What is currently being contributed by public-private stakeholders towards improvement – who can do what to achieve set goals?
- Who is involved along the value chain and what are the obstacles/opportunities that they face – what are therefore the critical success factors?

## The process from conceptualisation to action plan

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It's extremely important to engage stakeholders who can bring different strengths, capacities and insights from the start. Similar past programmes needed stronger commitment and partnerships for sustainability and scaling to make an impact. The multi-stakeholder engagement that was adopted in shaping the national action plan can produce more lasting results in improving the livelihoods of clients and the wellbeing of the Kingdom of Tonga as a whole. ”

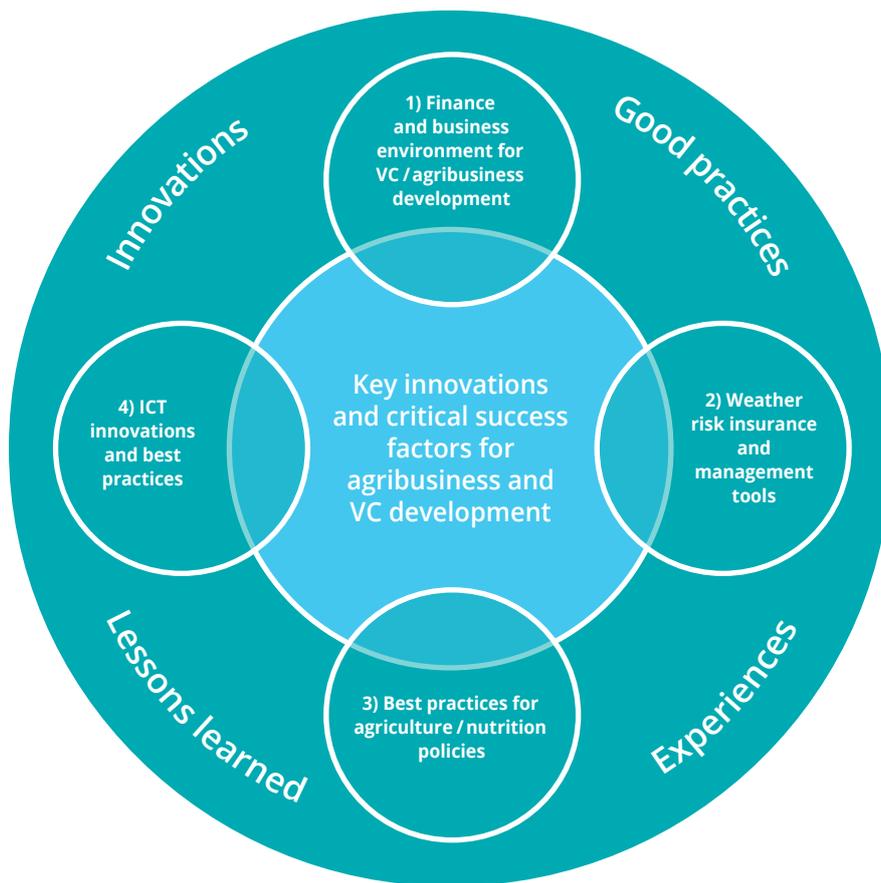
LOSALINE MA'ASI, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (2019), TONGA

A multi-stakeholder consultative process was adopted to achieve a shared understanding of the constraints and opportunities for upscaling Pacific local food crops and fisheries value chains. After extensive consultation, four priority areas were identified (Box 2). All key areas are inextricably interlinked, and each plan is built around good practices, innovations, lessons learned and experiences in support of agribusiness and value chain development (Figure 1).

### BOX 2. Priority areas and their impact aims

1. **Nutrition and incomes** – Reduction of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and other nutrition-related diseases and increased income through food crops and fisheries value chain and agri-enterprise development.
2. **Finance** – Increased access to agribusiness/value chain financing through blended finance mechanisms (public-private collaboration). Development of an enterprise incubation ecosystem that benefits policy-makers, entrepreneurs and financiers.
3. **Information and communication technology (ICT)** – Increased efficiency in smallholder farming systems and agro-based small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through greater access to and wider adoption of ICTs. Increased inclusiveness, enhanced market access, improvements in food safety and traceability systems and access to financial and other services, extension, climate information, insurance and risk management.
4. **Weather risk insurance** – Reduced risks to farmers and other value chain actors through the development and institutionalisation of a tested weather index-based insurance product suitable for the Pacific Islands.

Figure 1: Four thematic areas feed into the identification of key innovations and critical success factors in value chain and agri-business development, leading to the design of national and regional roadmaps



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Countries need to have an action plan, because there has to be a map, especially when you have multiple stakeholders, so they each know their role. And if you want to have ownership, you have to bring people in at the beginning. ”

HOWARD POLITINI,  
FORMER CHAIR OF PACIFIC ISLANDS PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATION, FIJI

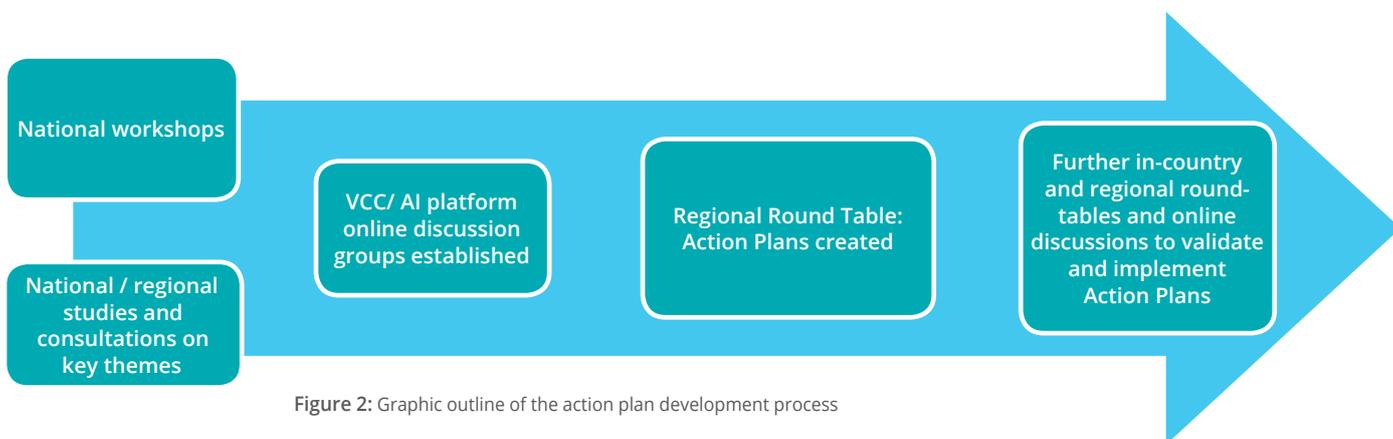


Figure 2: Graphic outline of the action plan development process



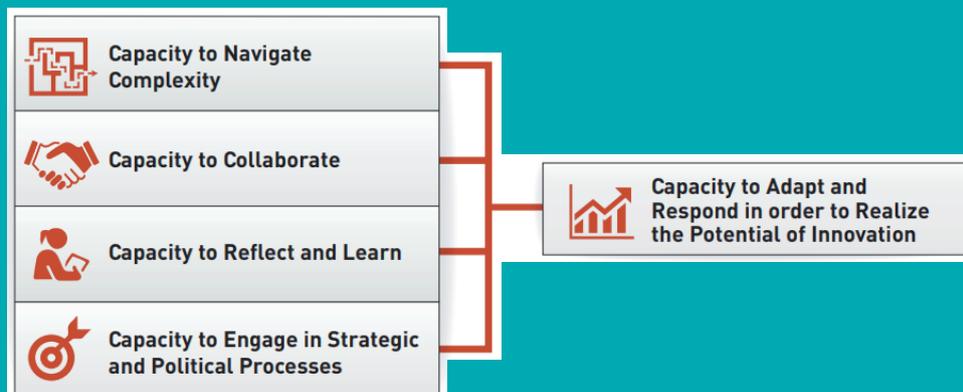
Participants of the regional forum “Developing Pacific Local Food Crops & Fisheries Value Chains – Key Innovations & Critical Success Factors” in Suva, Fiji, May 2018  
 © University of the South Pacific

The initial draft plans were developed at a multi-stakeholder regional forum in Fiji in May 2018, which brought together 100 key stakeholders from the seven target countries to steer the way towards jointly designing collective national and regional roadmaps (Figure 2). The action plans set out a precise and targeted pathway for coordinating capacity development actions that favour agricultural innovation, plot the route to implementation and identify responsibilities of various stakeholders and resources required. These were further revised and validated through national and regional online discussions and face-to-face consultations, to ensure their integration into the broader policy and decision-making processes (Figure 2). An underlying principle was to ensure alignment with national and regional priorities and policies with the objective of the national government taking final ownership of the plans in the long term.

“Samoa is the second highest country in the world for NCDs, after Tonga,” said Tai Matatumua, Assistant CEO of the Policy, Planning and Communication Division at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for Samoa. “So instead of focusing on the problem of trying to fix those who already have diabetes or other NCDs, we have tried to address the root cause, which involves targeting the agriculture sector and promoting fruits and vegetables and home gardens for women’s groups and at various community levels.”

Given the dispersed nature of many Pacific Island states, and the long distances involved, a key feature of developing and refining the action plans has been the adoption of a two-pronged approach. This mix has consisted of physical workshops and participation in online email discussion (Dgroups) via the project’s Value Chain Coordinating/ Agricultural Innovation (VCC/AI) platform.

### BOX 3. Key capacities for innovation in agri-business and value chain development



Source: Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP) Common Framework

A national facilitator was appointed, with responsibility for bringing together a range of stakeholders to coordinate the development phase of each national action plan (NAP). Each facilitator received technical support, including training and coaching and an [online guide](#) on how to design and plan workshops to ensure inclusivity and engagement of stakeholders, develop clear and reachable objectives and build consensus. NAP coordinators also received training in the use of Dgroups and best practices in online facilitation. In the process, facilitators and stakeholders developed key capacities for innovation – specifically, the ability to navigate complexity, collaborate, reflect, learn and engage in strategic political processes in support of agri-business and value chain development (Box 3). Watch an example of a national roundtable and participants’ statements [here](#).

Experience has shown that the online dialogue approach works better in some countries than in others. In the Solomon Islands and the Marshall Islands, poor internet connectivity has proved to be a challenge, and in a number of countries there was reluctance to engage in this unfamiliar communication channel, though that initial resistance has been overcome in some cases.

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**We have found that this blend is the most effective approach. The physical meetings are important, such as the 2019 Pacific Week of Agriculture in Samoa. That helps to build trust, which is extremely important. But face-to-face meetings are expensive and time-consuming, especially in some Pacific countries where the islands are very scattered and remote. So online groups help to keep communication going outside the face-to-face encounters.**”

JUDITH FRANCIS, PROJECT LEADER, CTA

#### BOX 4. The action plan development process

STEP 1	Conduct in-country and regional studies, multi-stakeholder consultations and roundtables to identify challenges and opportunities and key areas for joint action planning
STEP 2	Initiate online discussion groups that support the face-to-face workshops for joint learning and building consensus and trust
STEP 3	Organise a regional workshop to jointly agree on priority areas for intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include mixed and equally represented country representatives in multi-stakeholder discussion groups: governments and regional agencies; NGOs and community organisations; farmers, fisher folk and producer organisations; researchers; the private sector SMEs and representatives of finance institutions</li> <li>• Follow a structured discussion plan that includes catalyst speeches of key experts; live Q&amp;As; identification and agreement on priorities (e.g. voting) and acknowledgment of everyone’s inputs</li> </ul>
STEP 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select national and regional facilitators who can mobilise a variety of stakeholders and engage them through the online discussion groups</li> <li>• Build in-country facilitation capacity: train facilitators in managing online discussion groups and face-to-face meetings</li> <li>• Seek endorsement of line ministries</li> </ul>
STEP 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support national facilitators to organise first follow-up evidence-based in-country multi-stakeholder workshops to further refine the action plans and mainstream recommendations into policy processes</li> <li>• Support the establishment of steering committees (include representative from Ministry of Agriculture, Health and Finance) and technical working committees (public and private sector)</li> </ul>
STEP 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue virtual communication through email discussions (Dgroups) via the VCC/AI platform to further refine plans</li> <li>• Incorporate feedback from regular meetings of steering and working group committees</li> </ul>
STEP 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support national facilitators to organise an in-country multi-stakeholder validation workshop, which integrates lessons from earlier workshops and online discussion groups</li> <li>• Encourage country teams to use NAP to develop an investment/business plan to mobilise financing from donors, development partners and other financial institutions</li> </ul>
STEP 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek official endorsement of NAP from relevant ministries</li> </ul>

The strength of the process lies in the sharing of knowledge, among a wide range of actors. To identify and source the financing required to grow and market certain crops, there is a need to involve actors from the business side. Bringing all these people – who are living with such issues on a daily basis – together to discuss policy issues is

critical, so as to explore if solutions are practical and can be implemented. The ministry officials are involved in drawing up and implementing policy for food and nutrition security, and the farmers are suppliers, so if the goal is to promote nutritious food, these are the people on the ground growing it.

## From plan to implementation: Mobilising financing

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Each of the seven countries has drawn up their own national action plan, before seeing how to leverage money from financiers and potential donors. Before embarking on the validation process, we came together to decide a national agenda for the country, looking at Samoa's priorities in health, education, ICTs, and aligning it with policy documents. We also looked at development initiatives in many areas, and we thought we should build on the key schemes and enhance those, and mobilise resources, especially from the private sector. ”

LAFAELE ENOKA, CONSULTANT, SAMOA

The Innov4AgPacific project has encouraged partners to use the approved action plans as the basis for attracting additional financing to support implementation. Write shops on how to prepare investment plans and training sessions on how to pitch them to development partners, donors and other investors were organised. In the case of Samoa, a donor roundtable was held during the 2019 Pacific Week of Agriculture. There was high-level representation from governments, donors (e.g. the World Bank), development partners, banks and other financiers (e.g. the Asian Development Bank), which expressed interest in investment opportunities around the four priority areas that had been endorsed by Pacific stakeholders.

## Achievements and lessons learned

The NAPs for Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu have been validated. In general, the Ministries of Agriculture have taken the lead, and

separate steering and working committees have been set up with a diverse range of actors; this process has proved to provide successful achievements (Box 5).

### BOX 5. Examples of quick wins in influencing policy processes

Following national policy roundtables, key recommendations were shared with government ministries and other agencies for defining new and/or revising existing policies and strategies. Immediately after the Fiji workshop in June 2017, the Ministry of Economy requested the submission of three major strategies. These have been reflected in the [5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan – Transforming Fiji](#).

In Samoa, institutionalisation of the priority actions enabled inter-sectoral coherence between the Nutrition Division of the Ministry of Health and the Curriculum Design Division of the Ministry of Education to enhance the technical content of training programmes.

More engagement and participation of youth stakeholders has been cited by all national facilitators as crucial in developing the action plans. High youth unemployment in the islands is a serious problem, and youth are currently not closely engaged in agriculture – the average age for farmers in the islands is 55-60. To increase input into the Solomon Islands' NAP, facilitator Gilbert Tabihau contacted youth stakeholders, including the Malaita Youth in Business Association, who are now part of the working committee. Tonga facilitator Joanna Bourke has noted that a key consideration remains how best to incorporate youth into the NAP activities and processes.

Fragmentation of priorities, lack of effective leadership and ownership, and limited access to resources were identified during the Pacific Week of Agriculture 2019 as future challenges to effective implementation of the NAPs. Weather index-based insurance was cited by several facilitators as requiring more investment for awareness-raising and pilot studies to sensitise stakeholders to this instrument, which is largely untested in the Pacific region – though there is a clear need for some form of weather risk insurance product. This is extremely important as Pacific Island states are acutely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and other natural disasters. In the past 20 years, the region has suffered the effects of an average six tropical cyclones annually, causing damage estimated at more than US\$2.9 billion. The Fiji

Crop and Livestock Council (FCLC), the Conference of the Parties (COP) Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), FAO and the Government of Fiji are collaborating to fund the introduction of a weather index-based insurance scheme in that country. The Fiji Government has allocated FJD 350,000 (about €142,000) to support development of the pilot project to include informing farmers and building capacity for administering the scheme.

In supporting the co-design of strategies to support improved agricultural performance, health, dietary diversity and livelihoods, one important lesson is that it is imperative to adopt a consultative process involving the public and private sectors, with the active engagement of smallholder farmers and other value chain actors, as well as civil society, including urban and rural community leaders, women and youth. This participatory approach ensures that the interests of everyone are protected, and that the policy measures have a greater chance of being adopted due to an increased sense of ownership. The Innov4AgPacific rapid country scans revealed that a number of former interventions had been unsuccessful due to their top-down approach, together with a lack of awareness of the various policies and programmes and their impact on target beneficiaries.

For Dr Shane Tutua, NAP coordinator for the Solomon Islands, the value of the NAPs has been in drawing up one roadmap, approved by everyone affected.

## BOX 6. Lessons learned and critical success factors

- An inclusive bottom-up multi-stakeholder consultation process is crucial to the successful design and implementation of plans and policies.
- A shared understanding of the constraints and opportunities for upscaling local food crops and fisheries value chains at national and regional level is essential for design and planning purposes.
- Training facilitators and building their skills supports success and inclusiveness.
- Capacity development is crucial for agricultural innovation, so that all stakeholders can navigate complexity, collaborate, reflect, learn and engage in strategic policy processes.
- More engagement and participation of youth stakeholders as next-generation leaders is needed.

“I think it’s important to have a guideline, to be able to mobilise funds or put it to the donors,” he said. “In the Solomons, we have an agriculture plan, and the Ministry of Health has its own nutrition plan, and often these plans are written up and presented, but then they just sit there – there is no action. It’s a national plan without the action. What I like about this NAP is that it aims to take these actions and present them to donors and say: This is what the country wants. These are the priorities. And it’s very important to have all the stakeholders on board, so that all those involved in the four priority areas can put their ideas into one document.”



## About the project

The project “Leveraging the Development of Local Food Crops and Fisheries Value Chains for Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Food Systems in the Pacific Islands with a focus on Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu” was co-funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and is implemented in partnership with the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO). The goal was to strengthen the capacity of the Pacific Island governments, farmer and private sector organisations, and sub-regional institutions to develop strategies and programmes – as well as mobilise financing – that can increase poor rural people’s access to nutritious and healthy food. CTA had overall responsibility for the implementation of the project.



## About the partners

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). CTA operates under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement and is funded by the EU.

For more information on CTA, visit [www.cta.int](http://www.cta.int)



The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialised agency of the United Nations, was established as an international financial institution in 1977 as one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference.



The Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization (PIPSO) is the premier private sector representative body in the Pacific Islands region. It was set up through the mandate of the Forum Economic Ministers in 2005, and legally established in 2007, to be the representative body of the Pacific region’s private sector.

## Authors

Jana Dietershagen and Judith Ann Francis, Innov4AgPacific Project Team, CTA, and Clare Pedrick

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