

EIGHTH REGIONAL MEETING OF
PACIFIC HEADS OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY SERVICES (PHOAFS)
(Nadi, Fiji, 09 March 2023)

Paper reference	Session 2: Agenda Item 2.3
Title	Developing the concept of a Pacific Regional Research Agenda
Action	Decision

Summary

This Paper outlines a proposed model for regional collaboration in agriculture and forestry services research and development; referred here on as the Regional Research Agenda (RRA). The objective of the RRA is to provide members the ability to identify common forestry and agriculture development challenges in the Pacific Region, establishes Pacific research partnerships, and define research strategies to overcome these challenges. The RRA brings decision making, leadership, and planning into an inclusive Pacific process. This RRA framework was developed through regional consultations by the Pacific Community (SPC) Land Resources Division (LRD) led project team conducted from March to August 2022.

Recommendation

- a) Endorse the proposed RRA framework.
- b) Endorse SPC LRD to work with member countries and undertake the next steps required to operationalise the framework.
- c) Endorse an RRA Report as a Standing Agenda Item at the PHOAFS meetings

Development of a Pacific Regional Research Agenda (RRA)

Context

1. A Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) member owned and managed for research coordination and collaboration in agriculture and forestry does not exist.
2. The Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (PHOAFS) at their virtual meeting in August 2021 endorsed the development of a Regional Research Agenda (RRA) for agriculture and forestry in the Pacific with two recommendations:
 - a. LRD coordinates with member countries and territories to mobilise resources and a participatory process to develop the RRA.
 - b. PHOAFS and Pacific Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry Services (PMAFS) provide strategic oversight and governance of the RRA.
3. The RRA provides a framework to operationalise the Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Strategy (*Session 2: Working Paper 2.2*)
4. The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) provided funds to undertake regional consultations to develop a framework for regional research collaboration; referred here on as the project. Link: <https://www.aciar.gov.au/project/gmcp-2021-170>.

Objective of the Project

5. The regional consultations had two specific goals:
 - a. Define a shared definition and vision of the RRA and its expected outputs
 - b. Develop the framework and processes for delivering those outputs in the medium term.
6. The outputs of the regional consultation set out the shared ambitions, systems, processes and expected outcomes of the regional research collaboration that an RRA can deliver.

Background/relevant Information:

7. Participant engagement method was through twenty 'one-on-one' interviews with key informants and three workshop events. A total of eighty-eight participants from 13 PICTs participated: 39 women: 49 men, government (49), intergovernmental (24), universities (8), NGO/CSO (4), and private sector (3), and current PHOAFS members (15).
8. The regional consultation used a robust methodology to guide the analysis and search for themes and patterns that was ethical, traceable, secure, and respected participants anonymity.
9. There was full agreement from all participants on the need for an RRA. Pacific partners identified significant benefits in regional research collaboration to share risks (partner or perish), create knowledge through the exchange of information, resources, and networks, create value and impact through tackling common research priorities and challenges together, and informing policy in the Pacific and more globally through improved scientific and research capacity.
10. The regional consultation developed the following Vision for the RRA:

The Regional Research Agenda identifies common forestry and agriculture development challenges in the Pacific Region, establishes Pacific research partnerships and defines research strategies to overcome these challenges. The RRA brings decision making, leadership, and planning into an inclusive Pacific process.

11. The regional consultation developed the operational roles and activities of an RRA into a flow chart of three key areas – *Hear*, *Peer Review*, and *Partners in Research*, **Figure 1**. These three areas are:
 - a. *Hear*: A bottom-up approach to implement an inclusive process to gather information on projects and priority areas at the national level. Supported by the RRA Coordinator, national priorities with potential regional benefits are referred for consideration to a regional peer review.
 - b. *Peer Review*: Assessment of projects and priorities against an agreed criterion by a Regional Research Leaders group.
 - c. *Partners in Research*: Develop and implement research proposals with a focus on local and regional partnerships.
12. The regional consultation uncovered the features and then detailed the technical roles and activities of an RRA at three levels; these are technical, steering, and policy/strategic.
13. Majority of participants in the regional consultation recommended the RRA framework does not create a new entity but rather enhance existing regional institutions, systems, and structures.

14. Current regional consultation project (Finalisation):
 - a. Finalise the RRA report by December 2022. This is a public report available to the members and partners.
 - b. Further develop the criteria to assess and peer review priorities.

15. PMAFS endorses RRA progress (Proposed next steps):
 - a. Confirm donor funding to operationalise the RRA model.
 - b. Establish the roles and responsibilities for the RRA Secretariat
 - c. Establish the roles and responsibilities for the Regional Research Leaders group to Peer Review against the established criteria.

Recommendations:

The PHOAFS are invited to endorse the RRA progress and next steps:

16. Endorse the proposed RRA framework
17. Endorse SPC LRD to work with member countries and undertake the next steps required to operationalise the framework
18. Endorse an RRA Report as a Standing Agenda Item at PHOAFS meetings

Figure 1: Summary of three key areas to operationalise a Pacific collaborative R&D process in agriculture and forestry services

