



# Increasing the export capacity of Samoan agriculture

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## Agriculture in Samoa

**Around two-thirds of Samoa's population is engaged in agriculture. In terms of crops, coconut is the most widely grown, while taro, bananas and breadfruit are also significant.**

Samoan farmers produce food for home consumption, local sale and export. In the 1990s, agriculture and fisheries contributed approximately 20% of gross domestic product (GDP). Unfortunately, this has dropped to only 9.7%<sup>1</sup> of the total \$809.1M GDP<sup>2</sup> (agriculture 4.5%, and fisheries 5.2%). This decline is a result of a number of challenges, notably limited national investment, declining productivity due to diseases such as taro leaf blight and reduced international competitiveness due to relatively high labour costs and difficulties in meeting overseas biosecurity requirements. Niche export opportunities exist for higher value agricultural produce, including processed and semi-processed products.

## PHAMA Pacific Horticultural & Agricultural Market Access Program

An Australian Government initiative



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



## Public-Private Partnerships

PHAMA is about maintaining, identifying and strengthening sustainable and profitable trading partnerships that benefit South Pacific island countries. Through 'Market Access Working Groups' (MAWGs), PHAMA facilitates public-private partnerships that pinpoint viable commercial export opportunities and collectively work to realise these opportunities for local agribusiness. MAWGs involve private sector and community representatives (e.g. exporters and producer groups, Women in Business Development Inc) and relevant government agencies (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour, Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa). They are the vital link between farmers, processors, exporters and government.

## PHAMA successes in Samoa

- **Fumigation** – Installation of a new fumigation chamber and the training of Samoan Quarantine staff in its safe and effective operation. This chamber will improve the safety (for operators) and effectiveness of fumigation treatment of exports such as fine mats, fruit, vegetables and foliage. Effective fumigation should significantly reduce the risk of shipments of these types of agricultural exports being rejected on

<sup>1</sup> Samoa Bureau of Statistics. 2012. Agriculture Census Analytical Report 2009. Apia.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank statistics 2013



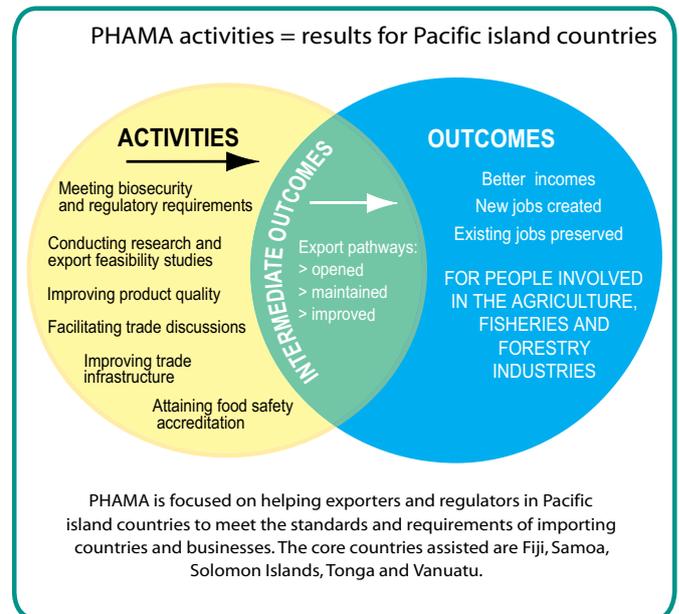
arrival in an importing country.

- **Breadfruit** – Gaining access to New Zealand (NZ) and Australia for commercially-cooked breadfruit. Breadfruit is a widely-grown small holder crop with over 80% of the country's 16,000 farm holdings growing this staple food mainly for consumption. The sale of excess product, especially during peak season, is an important income source for communities. Samoa has market access for fresh breadfruit to NZ but it needs to undergo a range of costly treatments to meet NZ requirements. Demand has long existed in NZ for traditionally ('umu') cooked breadfruit from Samoa, but biosecurity concerns over home cooked product meant that previous informal exports ceased. PHAMA helped develop a commercial cooking process using bakery ovens that could reliably manage quarantine, food safety and quality issues. Trial shipments have been sent to NZ and Australia following government approvals.
- **Food safety and quality testing** – Improving the capacity of the Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa (SROS) to undertake food safety and quality testing to enable local agricultural products to be tested according to internationally-accredited standards. The Samoan Government and private sector are looking to increase exports of processed food products and boost the country's employment opportunities. Commonly-grown products such as taro, coconut, breadfruit and cocoa represent value-adding opportunities. Success in this relies on access to scientific analysis and advice.

## Current focus

While niche opportunities for exporting fresh agricultural produce exist in Samoa, PHAMA is increasingly supporting local partners to improve their capacity to enhance the value of Samoan produce and improve food safety through the following areas.

- **Fresh taro** – In 1993, prior to the decimation caused by taro leaf blight (TLB), exports represented 60% of total exports. Exports to NZ alone were worth WST\$9.5M (AUD\$4.75M). In the same year, Australia introduced a ban on the importation of fresh taro from Samoa, which has persisted to this day. To reinstate this once important trade pathway, PHAMA is helping to determine whether the quarantine risks raised by TLB can be managed cost effectively and to Australia's satisfaction. This includes identifying research that needs to be undertaken such as research on potentially TLB-resistant taro varieties now being grown in Samoa.
- **Frozen taro** – Developing frozen taro (and other frozen food products) for export to overcome the quarantine and quality barriers faced by exports of fresh produce. PHAMA activities include research into processing techniques, packaging, commercial-scale adoption and trial shipments.
- **Ornamental foliage** – Cut flowers and ornamental foliage such as cordyline (or ti leaves), ferns,



palms and banana leaves have traditionally been grown and marketed within Samoa for decorative purposes, consumption and use in cooking. PHAMA is helping Samoa to seek viable access into NZ for ornamental foliage. The industry provides individual women and groups with valuable income-generating opportunities.

- **HACCP Accreditation** – HACCP food safety accreditation is increasingly a pre-requisite for selling produce to overseas buyers such as supermarket chains. PHAMA is providing training and support to Samoan producers, processors and exporters so that they can achieve accreditation.
- **Cocoa** – Flavoursome, sought-after cocoa varieties are successfully grown in Samoa. In the early 1960s, cocoa was the country's second largest export earner with annual production around 5,300 tonnes. However, in recent decades, the impacts of cyclones and lack of replanting led to progressive, long-term decline of the industry. Today, most Samoan-grown cocoa is sold and consumed in the popular local drink 'koko Samoa' but there is also strong export potential. The Samoan Government has a major 'Stimulus Program' to assist farmers rejuvenate the cocoa industry through new plantings and adoption of improved agricultural practices. PHAMA is supporting SROS to conduct cocoa bean quality research and enabling them to boost their laboratory analysis capacity.

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