



## Pacific Horticultural & Agricultural Market Access Plus Program

Supported by Australia and New Zealand

### COUNTRY OVERVIEW

# TONGA



The Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Plus (PHAMA Plus) Program supported by Australia and New Zealand aims to contribute to improved economic growth and rural livelihoods, and contribute to economic recovery from the global COVID-19 pandemic.



Our target is to benefit **200,000 Pacific households** in the Pacific economies of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, as well as small island state signatories of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus).

### PHAMA PLUS' END-OF-PROGRAM OUTCOMES ARE:



Producers and exporters use **maintained and new export market access** for Pacific export products.



Women and men exporters, processors and producers **adopt quality and productivity enhancing innovations** for their export products.



Women and men staff of Pacific **biosecurity authorities** perform their **market access facilitation** functions better.



To address gender inequalities and support the **empowerment of women, youths and people living with disabilities** in agriculture, PHAMA Plus works with its partners to strengthen gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) along the agricultural value chain.

### WHAT WE DO: EFFECTIVE MARKET ACCESS SUPPORT

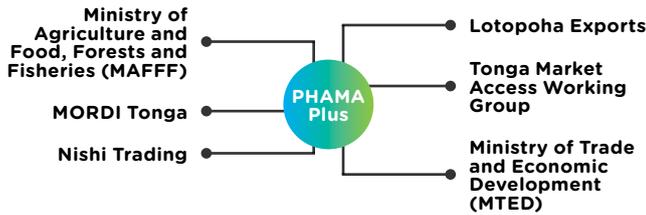
PHAMA Plus works with businesses and the public sector to maintain and improve trade of agricultural products by assisting them to meet export market requirements. PHAMA Plus also assists with market research and market development activities in terms of new export products. To maximise impact, the program works with key actors in the market system to generate benefit among farming households.

PHAMA Plus has been working in Tonga since 2011 to maintain and improve existing market access, and create new markets by developing the capacity of public and private sectors to meet export market requirements. The Program continues to support farming households in Tonga through our public private partnerships to increase the quantity and quality of their agricultural, horticultural and cultural exports in ways that benefit producers, exporters and importers.



## PARTNERS

Some of the organisations that PHAMA Plus works with include:



## KEY SUCCESSES IN TONGA

- Improved market access for taro to Australia was achieved
- Exports of Tongan watermelons increased from 86 tonnes in 2010 to 626 tonnes in 2020
- Played a key role in opening the new squash marketing pathway to China with the first consignment in January 2017
- Development and commercial use of new branded packaging promoting “Kingdom of Tonga” country of origin for fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables
- Training and support towards accreditation of processors and exporters to Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) standards (food safety and hygiene)
- Improvements to the government export packhouse in Nuku’alofa, to increase its capacity for pre-export fumigation and inspection of handicraft.

## CURRENT PRIORITIES



### HORTICULTURE

(watermelon, squash, butternut, butterkin)

**PHAMA Plus works with businesses, government and horticultural growers in Tonga to:**

- Develop information on improved productivity and commercial potential of horticultural crops for export
- Improve efficiency at farm level through investment in appropriate tools, machinery, crop inputs and related support services; and
- Expand and certify root crop processing facilities to meet compliance and food safety protocols of the export market.



### ROOT CROPS

(Cassava, Yam, Taro, Sweet Potato)

**PHAMA Plus works with root crop exporters and government agencies in Tonga to:**

- Provide timely crop and pest/disease management advice to producers;
- Introduce new methods/tools/inputs for increased climate resilience and productivity;
- Develop financial mechanisms for producers; and
- Improve integration of biosecurity compliance responsibilities across the export chain covering both private and public sectors.

## CASE STUDY: MAINTAINING TONGA’S SWEET WATERMELON TRADE

On 13 October 2020 New Zealand biosecurity inspectors detected live fruit fly larvae in a consignment of watermelons from Tonga, leading to a suspension of watermelon exports to New Zealand. This suspension caused significant economic hardship for growers, exporters and importers, and further damaged Tonga’s reputation for complying with export requirements.

PHAMA Plus worked with the watermelon industry and the Tongan Government to respond to the suspension of the Tonga-New Zealand export pathway. PHAMA Plus helped facilitate the quick reopening of the pathway by working with affected private sector partners, contributing to the New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries-MAFF audit, assisting MAFF to procure vital fumigation equipment and supporting liaison between partner agencies in Tonga and New Zealand. On 2 December 2020, New Zealand gave temporary approval of the pathway; less than two months after it was suspended.

Approximately 20 tonnes of Tongan watermelons were exported to New Zealand via air freight in December 2020. This was Tonga’s first commercial watermelon export consignment via airfreight, and the first consignment since the suspension on the Tonga-New Zealand export pathway

in October 2020. The airfreight service provides more export opportunities and increased income for over 30 growers and 120 watermelon farming households in Tonga. PHAMA Plus continues to support Tonga to achieve full approval of the pathway.



CONTACT  
US



[info@phamaplus.com.au](mailto:info@phamaplus.com.au)



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