

INTERVENTION HIGHLIGHT

Boosting Samoa's taro industry

New commercial nursery improves access to planting materials

Taro is a staple food in many Pacific households, but in Samoa, it's in short supply. This has been attributed to a combination of declining labour and inconsistent availability of inputs or planting materials. There is strong demand for taro planting materials in Samoa, where the crop is an important food staple and export revenue earner. Tunaula Taro Nursery, situated in the village of Siumu on the island of Upolu, has emerged as a community-led initiative which addresses the challenges faced by local farmers in accessing high-quality taro planting materials known as tiapula. The nursery serves a population of about 2,446, most of whom are farmers.

At a glance

- Prior to the establishment of the nursery, farmers in the community struggled to procure improved high-quality taro planting materials, which often stagnated productivity and diminished incomes
- With the support from PHAMA Plus and MAF, the nursery commenced operations in March 2023 with 45,000 tiapulas supplied from recommended sources.
- Since its inception, the nursery has actively engaged 18 members, comprising 8 women and 10 men, in its operations.
- The nursery has distributed over 70,000 planting materials to date to farmers on the island.

Benefits to community

The introduction of high-quality tiapula varieties has sparked enthusiasm among local farmers, leading many to transition from traditional taro cultivation to commercial production and sale of tiapula. Anecdotal evidence suggests that farmers who receive tiapula from the nursery have propagated and distributed it to an average of two additional farmers within the community. With an average selling price of SAT 0.30 per unit, farmers have reported income gains from tiapula sales. Moreover, farmers from neighbouring communities have shown interest in purchasing tiapula from the Tunaula group, indicating potential for expansion and broader economic impact.

Future prospects

As the demand for tiapula continues to grow, Tunaula Taro Nursery envisions expanding its operations to meet the needs of surrounding communities. The emergence of six independent nurseries established by local farmers underscores the scalability and sustainability of the model. The intervention has provided a short-term solution for Samoa's taro shortage and supports the extension and establishment of nurseries to be able to supply planting material consistently in the longer term.



Through Tunaula Taro Nursery, we have witnessed a transformative shift in our community's approach to taro cultivation. With diversified tiapula varieties, farmers are not only improving their incomes but also embracing innovative agricultural practices. This initiative has the potential to redefine not only our taro cultivation practices but also our economic opportunities for years to come.

- Leiaea Opetai Ulisese - President of the Tunaula Green Farmers Association