

## INTERVENTION HIGHLIGHT

### Transforming 'ava processing in Samoa Harnessing the sun's power to improve quality

On the big island of Savaii, Robert and Misileti Satuala have made a name for themselves as one of the country's leading processors and exporters of high-quality sun dried 'ava. The couple operate a small-scale enterprise – Satuala Development, specialising in 'ava processing and exports.

Prior to partnering with PHAMA Plus, the company faced challenges in 'ava processing, particularly with traditional drying methods that relied on sun exposure, posing management challenges from weather conditions and labour-intensive monitoring.

PHAMA Plus supported Satuala Development in constructing a solar dryer with a capacity to dry 1000 kg green 'ava per month. This permanent structure with proper ventilation and drying mesh significantly improved drying efficiency, ensuring quality while reducing labour costs associated with constant monitoring for rain and wind.

#### At a glance

- The solar dryer introduced an alternative new business model for Satuala Development to purchase green 'ava directly from farmers, establishing greater control over the quality of its raw material supply chain.
- Since the installation of the solar dryer, Satuala Development has successfully processed 12,000 kg of green 'ava sourced from 42 farmers.
- Out of this, 4,800 kg was processed using solar dryers producing 1,200 dry 'ava.
- This advancement facilitated new export opportunities, with the company exporting 750 kg solar dried 'ava powder to the United States up to March 2024.

#### Community Benefits

The introduction of green kava sales has streamlined the process for farmers, saving time and reducing labour costs. This initiative also addresses labour shortages in the community, stemming from youth migration to Australia and New Zealand for seasonal work. 42 kava households of 92 men, 76 women,

and 70 youth have benefited. Satuala Development claims to have offered a premium of SAT 3.5 per kg compared to the standard green kava market price. It is estimated that green kava farmers earned an additional SAT 16,800, equivalent to AUD9,107, in the past six months.

#### Signs of Systemic Impact: Crowding in from other processors and exporters

Satuala Development's adoption of the solar dryer has sparked interest among other farmers and processors in Savaii Islands. PHAMA Plus has expanded the initiative by partnering with five more processors and exporters in the surrounding area, scaling up the solar dryer project. This expansion benefits exporters by increasing the supply of green kava. It supports kava farmers by saving time and costs while providing the potential for premium prices if the exporter identifies a premium market. Ultimately, this contributes to the growth of the kava industry in Samoa.

