

Inclusive Agriculture Value Chains

PHAMA Plus Performance Story

Across Pacific agriculture, deeply embedded gender norms, disability exclusion and unsafe workplaces continue to shape who participates in value chains, and who benefits from growth. Not only a social challenge; this directly affects supply reliability, labour availability, workforce retention and business competitiveness.

PHAMA Plus responded to these challenges through its Inclusive Value Chain Roadmap and GEDSI strategy, anchored in four drivers of empowerment: challenging social norms; agency and decision-making; access to assets, skills and services; and changing business practices. Applied across the value chain, from household production to processing, employment and market access, this approach has strengthened Pacific agribusiness systems.



The evidence shows that PHAMA Plus's inclusive value chain interventions delivered clear economic results: higher and more diversified incomes, more reliable supply for exporters, reduced labour and productivity constraints, stronger women-led enterprises, and greater resilience of farming households and agribusinesses. Together, these outcomes demonstrate how inclusive value chains drive sustainable and more equitable economic growth across the Pacific.



Inclusive value chains are not about charity. They're about recognising who is already contributing and making the system work better for everyone.

Setareki Macanawai,
Strategic Development Group

What did PHAMA Plus achieve?

PHAMA Plus supported Pacific Island agribusinesses to work differently. The below figure showcases examples of how the program used **drivers of empowerment** to affect change across the value chain.



STRATEGIC SECTOR & PARTNER SELECTION

Improved access to assets, skills and services

The deliberate selection of sectors and partners that provide opportunities for advancing GEDSI, and partners that are led by women, people with disabilities or youth, or that provide significant opportunity for employment of marginalised groups, have been prioritised for support. Practical assistance to women-led businesses gives them an important leg-up. This can provide women with access to networks, resources and advice they may otherwise be excluded from. More than 46% of the small businesses supported by PHAMA Plus were led, either solely or jointly, by women.

One such example is Mele Sisi Finefeuiaki, founder of Lotopoha Export Trading who has transformed root crops from subsistence production into a reliable income source for smallholder farmers in Tonga. Mele currently exports around 28 tonnes per month to New Zealand, Australia and the United States. With PHAMA Plus support, Lotopoha strengthened farmer participation and resilience through major environmental and economic disruptions and opened a HACCP-certified packhouse in 2025–26, improving food safety, export compliance and the long-term sustainability of this women-led agribusiness.

PHAMA Plus supported women-led florists and nurseries in Samoa to unlock the commercial potential of the ornamental plant sector by establishing exotic plant import pathways, strengthening propagation skills and building a viable domestic market. Within two years, participating businesses scaled production, diversified products and increased incomes, including Flonior's Nursery, which grew weekly earnings from WST300–400 to around WST2,000 and expanded into plant hire, strengthening business resilience and future growth prospects.

Marama Niu, founded by Kylie Daunoco and Jojina Ah Yuk, grew from a home-based ice-cream venture during COVID-19 into a women-led social enterprise that formalised traditional Banaban coconut nectar harvesting into a reliable, community-based supply chain. With PHAMA Plus support, the business strengthened food safety, handling and logistics systems, enabling it to expand into multiple value-added products now sold in supermarkets and airports, while creating stable income for Banaban families.





PRODUCTION



Challenged social norms to increase agency and decision making

Family Farm Teams (FFT), developed by University of Canberra and ACIAR, trains farming families to operate as a cohesive and equitable business unit. It has proven effective in strengthening household decision-making and shifting social norms within farming families, while also increasing and diversifying farm production. One of PHAMA Plus's partners, Winsome Farms have used FFT to train 49 women, men and adult youth from 20 families living on the Ura Estate - many from landless or vulnerable backgrounds - to diversify beyond kava and taro into short-cycle vegetable production. The results are already visible. Families have improved communication and shared decision-making, with men contributing more to childcare and domestic work, women participating more actively in farm decisions, and youth more engaged in household and farm tasks. Diversified crops such as cabbage, chilli and eggplant are generating more regular incomes, enabling families to invest in assets including solar panels, generators, transport and refrigeration.



PROCESSING + VALUE ADDITION



Changed business practices to support safe, equitable and accessible workplaces

High rates of domestic and gender-based violence across the Pacific continue to undermine not only the safety and wellbeing of women, but also workforce stability, productivity and business performance in agriculture value chains. As women make up a large share of the processing and packaging workforce, violence and safety concerns directly contribute to absenteeism and high staff turnover for exporters. In response, Pacific agribusinesses are increasingly recognising that safer, more supportive workplaces are critical to both inclusion and commercial success.

Kaiming Agro Processing partnered with PHAMA Plus to strengthen workplace safety and inclusion by establishing a secure accommodation centre for women workers, including a safe space for those experiencing or at risk of violence. The facility provides safe housing and peer support, helping women reduce daily pressures, improve wellbeing and participate more consistently in work. For the business, the initiative has improved attendance, retention and workforce stability, while reducing sick leave and health-related costs. Kaiming views the accommodation as a strategic investment that protects vulnerable workers and supports a resilient, high-performing agri-processing workforce.



ENABLING ENVIRONMENT



Voice and agency in decision-making to challenge social norms and change business practices

The Inclusive Agribusiness Value Chain Guidance Note was designed to help agribusinesses, farmers with disabilities, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and governments work together more effectively.

The Guidance Note outlines practical steps for inclusion, including accessible facilities, appropriate assistive technology, non-discrimination, community-based inclusive development and meaningful engagement with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.

Rather than treating inclusion as a social add-on, the Guidance Note positions it as a practical response to persistent operational and market challenges facing Pacific agriculture.

“Farmers with disabilities are already involved in agriculture. What we haven’t done well is remove the barriers that stop them from participating fully.” —Macanawai

Learnings for future support

FFT has proven to be an effective foundation for strengthening equity and women’s participation in household decision-making, planning, and the adoption of improved farming practices, including climate- and disaster-resilient approaches.

FFT is most effective when accompanied by complementary support for participating households, including access to inputs (seeds, tools), extension services, mentoring, and market linkage. All adults and older youths from a farming household participate in the training together, team. FFT trainers should have a mandate and means (budget, support) to deliver training to farming communities. FFT should be delivered by accredited men-women training teams.

The impact of FFT is strengthened when training materials are adapted to local cultural and linguistic contexts. While the PNG FFT manual can be used in other countries and contexts, learning can be improved by revising the manual for the national, agriculture and cultural contexts. .

Future support to agricultural value chains will be most effective when targeted towards sectors and partners that offer genuine opportunities for the empowerment of marginalised groups. Evidence from supported initiatives highlights the importance of inclusive training approaches that engage both women and men, are accessible to people with disabilities, and are designed to reach diverse participants.

Findings from supported agribusinesses show that workforce quality, retention, and productivity are closely linked to inclusive workplace practices. Evidence confirms that targeted support to help businesses identify and address barriers to inclusion, including through training, positive workplace policies, and safe and affordable accommodation, contribute to improved worker satisfaction, retention, and business performance.

