



THE CRAWFORD FUND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Food and Nutrition Security: Transformative Partnerships, Local Leadership and Co-Design

12-13 August 2024

Parliament House, Canberra, Australia, and online



FAALAPOTOPOTOGA O SUESUEGA FAASAIENISI A SAMOA



Australian Centre
for Pacific Islands
Research

Genuine Partnerships for Transformational Agricultural Research and Development

Dr. Seesei Molimau-Samasoni

Crawford Fund Annual Conference

13th August 2024

Outline

- The current realities
- Recommendations for moving forward:
 - Cultural & Social Awareness
 - Local champions & Local Co-Leadership
 - Capacity building Shifts
- Conclusion



The current realities

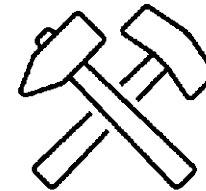
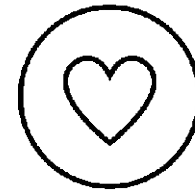
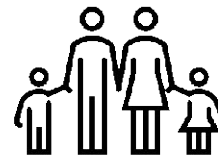
- High food insecurity in the Pacific: high reliance on imported foods, declining local food production in the face of climate change and shifting labour availability, compounded by the nature of how we do research in the Pacific
 - Research agenda based on “academic knowledge finding”
 - Pacific “partners” as service providers in research/source of information/data
 - Local Champions & the fine line they tread
 - Low interest in agricultural research as a career pathway



Improved Cultural & Social Awareness

- Each Pacific Island Country has their own culture, with commonalities between PICTS including values of family, love, respect, service (and religion) □ Health sometimes factors low on this scale of values and priorities
 - Important to first understand the social and cultural barriers that are creating gaps that we hope research will address

Samoan Values that drive the Fa'aSamoa



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Improved Cultural & Social Awareness

- Be aware of perpetuating colonialism and “forcing” Western standards onto the Pacific
 - Imperative that we identify first if the Western standard is addressing an issue in the Pacific before bringing in Western solutions (which may or may not work)
- Arriving with privileged mindsets (despite best intentions)
 - Reflecting on this is important so we do not reinforce colonial practices and continue to cause harm



Working with Local Champions, Local Co-Leadership

“Genuine participation/partnership means bringing Pacific scientists and Pacific communities in at the start of the research process”

- Local champions need to be a genuine member of the project leadership team
 - Be involved/engaged in strategic discussions for projects and be involved in the decision-making process (not a token local rep to tick the box)
- Local champions work particularly well when engaging with Government Ministries and local NGOs
 - Their local network (and reputation) can support engagement from local government stakeholders (comes with reputational risk)
- Local communities will require local champions on your project team to translate and rally engagement
 - We’ve found some communities respond well to seeing our Australian & foreign partners in the field with them



Revamped Capacity Building from the Bachelor Level

- A lot of the local researchers you'll partner with in the Pacific will be Bachelor degree holders
 - They will require mentoring, coaching and training to start thinking critically about the research work they are being asked to be part of (move away from just *doing as they are told*) – Requires commitment & time from both parties
- Agricultural research is often not considered by top tier students because local universities offer these programs (and would mean they will not travel to an overseas university to learn)
 - Consider sponsoring exceptional students interested in agricultural research for Bachelor studies in Australia/New Zealand (wider and current knowledge of agricultural technologies, practices & research), and encouraging postgraduate research to be on a topic relevant to the Pacific and practice-able in the Pacific

Conclusions



- Research partners (Australian/NZ AND local) committed to genuine partnership with power balance and real collaboration
- Requires time and financial investment
- Requires supporting governance oversight and \$\$\$ from donors



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Thank You & Faafetai Lava
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