



Pacific Food Matters

Summary of Research Agenda 2017-2027

Jessica Hutchings, Karen Mapusua, Jo Smith,
Stephen Hazelman, Francois Japiot, Valérie Kagy,
Takena Redfern, Gesche Krause and Valerie Tuia



Pacific Food Matters Research Outcome:

To innovate and improve organic food security for local communities, farmers and families² by sharing, generating and applying new knowledge drawn from across diverse traditional knowledges, practices, social and ecological sciences.

What is this Research Agenda?

This is a multidisciplinary research agenda developed between 2015-2016 supported by PACE-Net Plus seeding money. Our collaboration is multiregional involving lead partners based in New Zealand, Fiji, Kiribati, New Caledonia, and Germany and including affiliated regional networks across the Pacific.¹ The lead partners are New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Pacific Organic Ethical Trade Community (POETCom), Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), the Alfred-Wegener Institute (AWI), Pacific Community Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT), Institut Agronomique Néo-Calédonien (IAC), Chambre d'Agriculture, and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development, Kiribati. This document represents the shared thinking of these members as well as the shared aspiration to pursue a 10-year research agenda that will connect to practices and strategies on the ground to enhance organic food security both locally, and globally. The next phase of this project, post PACE-Net Plus funding, is to pursue funding opportunities to implement the research agenda.

¹ These regional affiliations are connected through the networks of POETCom that include 15 Pacific countries, diverse Māori communities engaged through the networks of Te Wāhanga, NZCER and Indigenous Arctic communities engaged through the networks of AWI.

² By local communities, farmers and families we mean those in the Pacific Islands, Aotearoa/New Zealand and the Arctic.

³ It is a clear intent that any research pursued under this research agenda supports, maintains and protects the cultural and intellectual property rights of Indigenous and traditional communities in accordance with the Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

Who Benefits from this Research?

The primary beneficiaries of this research are local communities, farmers and families. The secondary beneficiaries of this research are the knowledge dialogue and transfer agencies and actors who connect the research to practice. Other beneficiaries include the researchers, scientists, students and educators involved in the research programme.³

Background context in which this research agenda is located

Food security, within a traditional knowledge framework, connects with other dimensions of social life, best expressed in the links between people, land and sea. Due to the increased influence of Western, modern life styles underscored by neoliberal ideologies, an increased disruption of these linkages can be observed. These linkages have been further accelerated by the effects of climate change coupled with globalised food systems, which severely impact on Pacific Island food security and traditional food knowledge systems and practices. Indeed, industrial or commercial agriculture and their associated knowledge dialogue and transfer systems currently claims to be the optimal solution to increase food security, producing more and more manufactured foods and turning towards genetically modified crops to improve yields. Other factors include the high cost of some manufactured foods and the increasing reliance on a farming system that is dependent on externally purchased inputs – including seeds. Due to a number of complex factors, however, many local communities remain hungry and/or malnourished.

Historically it is the ability and flexibility of small-scale food producers that has built the backbone of local and

international food security alike. Thus, the ongoing role of small-scale producers cannot be ignored if we are to remain food secure in the future. As a case in point, the Pacific Islands have maintained food security through traditional mixed cropping practices, ensuring diversity of crops, resilient production systems, care of the soil and environment coupled with appropriate knowledge transfer, education and learning systems. On the other side of the world, Arctic communities are also working to retain traditional food practices that still provide a large degree of food security for their communities, and as with Pacific small holders these practices are becoming increasingly under threat from both global and local pressures. The focus on both a cross-regional and international approach in relation to *Pacific Food Matters* is innovative, noting the shared predicaments of global food security and the value of sharing of diverse knowledges to help these predicaments. A key focus of this research agenda is to bring a range of traditional communities into conversation to share innovations and ideas across traditional, ecological and social science discourses.

Overarching Research Thematic

Pacific Food Matters takes a complex systems approach to building and transferring diverse knowledges that will enhance organic food security between people, land and sea. These exchanges include organic and traditional, ecological, social and scientific discourses. A central focus is to produce a range of outputs to contribute across varying levels of the organic food security network from, communities, farmers and families to agencies, scientists, students, educators and researchers. These outputs will enhance the socialisation of organic food security issues at national, regional and local levels in both political and social ways.

Key Overarching Questions

This research agenda has three key research thematics: 1) soil fertility, 2) knowledge dialogue, transfer and uptake and 3) education, learning and knowledge systems. Key overarching questions are:

1. What are the most effective organic and traditional practices to manage soil fertility and what innovative and relevant technologies can farmers apply to monitor and enhance their soil fertility to improve organic food security?
2. What are the tools, techniques and relationships needed to enhance and innovate the transfer and sustainable uptake of diverse knowledges that promote organic food security?

3. In what ways can informal (tribal and community meetings and gatherings, workshops, on-farm exchanges etc.) and formal education strategies (curriculum design, the development of learning pathways from primary through to tertiary) contribute to the development of new knowledge systems, skills and abilities required to address the complexities of organic food security?

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is the chosen methodology for this research agenda and will be activated in relation to the diverse knowledges, communities and actors involved under any aspect of the research agenda. The methodological focus is to engage culturally appropriate Indigenous, traditional and decolonising methods and approaches that work in site-specific ways, building on the strengths of existing and emerging ways of knowing and doing.

RESEARCH THEMATIC 1

Soil Fertility in organic farming systems

Keywords: Soil fertility (organic matter, water, soil life), organic, biodiversity, research/experiments, participatory & multidisciplinary actors/methods

Aim: Increase sustainable organic food production: Soil fertility is one of the main priorities for developing organic agriculture and sustainable production, particularly through the development of simple and affordable tools such as “Good Organic Agricultural Practices”, including the monitoring, management and improvement of soil fertility.

RESEARCH THEMATIC 2

Knowledge dialogue transfer and uptake

Keywords: dissemination, knowledge transfer, forms of dialogue, media, farmer to farmer, education, curriculum, evidence based, diverse social, language and cultural settings

Aim: Increase knowledge transfer and uptake that promotes organic, traditional knowledge, social and ecological science.

RESEARCH THEMATIC 3

Education, learning and knowledge systems

Keywords: education for sustainability and education for resiliency, school, traditional knowledge systems, Indigenous knowledge systems, tertiary, university, curriculum development, qualification pathways, future focused education, educational exchanges.

Aim: Strengthen and improve informal and formal education and learning strategies, that contribute to education for sustainability and resiliency, with a focus on knowledge exchange between Arctic, Pacific and Māori communities.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

See: <http://jessicahutchings.org.nz/pacific-food-matters/>

Contact: Project Leader, Dr Jessica Hutchings
jvhutchings@gmail.com



Pacific Food Matters research team, Meeting one, Suva Fiji, 2016
From left to right: Karen Mapusua, Jessica Hutchings, Stephen Hazelman, Valérie Kagy, Francois Japiot, Tarena Redfern, Valerie Tuia



Jo Smith



Gesche Krause