

Skills for Agribusiness - Narrative Report January – June 2019

1. Introduction

This is an update on the activities that have been implemented over the last six months of January to June 2019 in the Agribusiness sector. Initial planning and implementation was done in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), the provincial government, agribusiness stakeholders and agribusiness clients in Malampa, Sanma, Tafea and Torba provinces.

2. Overview:

DARD aims to build a sector that contributes to economic growth and poverty reduction, improve market and trade access, address food security and improve the livelihood of the people of Vanuatu both in the rural and urban areas. Through the Skills for Agribusiness (SfA) initiative of the Vanuatu Skills Partnership (the Partnership), activities focus on supporting the implementation of DARD's Agritourism Plan of Action 2016, a component of its wider policy; Vanuatu Agriculture Sector Policy 2015 – 2030.

The Agriculture Sector Policy and the National Sustainable Development Plan – The Peoples Plan 2030 (NSDP) were used to guide the development of the DARD 2019 Business Plan. The overall objective of this Business Plan is:

“To improve livelihoods through the promotion of improved agricultural innovations in all smallholder farming communities to increase food and cash crop production capacity and to mitigate climate change and associated risks to food security”

This overall objective is translated into provincial priorities and is addressed through work programs such as the development and cultivation of coconut, cocoa, coffee, lava, root crops, fruits, spices, vegetable and rice as well as focusing on soil enhancement and strengthened farming systems. The initial objectives of the priority areas related to crops, is to increase production through the distribution of seedlings or planting materials which is complemented by skills development activities to support appropriate propagation techniques.

The SfA 2019 work priorities have centered on supporting linkages between agriculture and tourism and through agritourism product development, which links farmers with the tourism industry through restaurant and food outlets, and supports the value addition of agriculture products. The implementation of these priorities are implemented across the four provinces with different activities based on the provincial need.

In a demonstration of the strength of the working relationship between the Partnership and DARD, and MoU was signed with MALFFB, under which DARD sits, at the end of 2018.

In Jan – June 2019, SfA focused on strengthening the partnership with DARD, and ensuring their work priorities are understood by the SfA team. SfA then worked to address the DARD priorities through skills development activities.



Ambae Recovery: DARD Intergrated Backyard farming

With additional funding from DFAT Ambae Recovery Funding towards the Ambae Volcano evacuees, Sfa also worked in partnership with DARD, Department of Livestock and Department of Fisheries to deliver an integrated backyard farming unit to two new Ambae Evacuee settlements with the objective to *‘improve livelihoods through the promotion of improved agricultural innovations in all smallholder farming communities to increase food and cash crop production capacity and to mitigate climate change associated risks to food security’*

Key Strengths and Highlights

- Great coordination at the national level between DARD, Sfa Coordinator and the Productive Sector Manager (PSM)
- For the first time, there is financial commitment from DARD towards the Skills Development Fund (SDF) (3 million VUV)
- Successful implementation of the DARD Professional Development workshop in April 2019 demonstrated the importance of the partnership at a provincial level – since this activity, Sanma Skills Centre, Sfa Coordinator and DARD Principal officers have worked together to plan and implement the integrated backyard farming unit to Ambae evacuees on Santo, and the Malampa Skills Centre have reported that that DARD Officer in Malampa is more involved in the Malampa Skills Plan
- The Sfa Coordinator has been invited to be part of the DARD Extension Officer Forum Committee that will start in July 2019
- Through the strengthening this partnership, other partners such as Fisheries and Livestock are starting to show interest to work with the Partnership through the Provincial Skills Centres
- The integrated backyard farming unit delivered in Santo, through the Ambae Recovery Program, saw Sfa, DARD, Department of Livestock and Department of Fisheries plan, coordinate delivery and share resources (human and materials) to complete these new initiatives which address the objective of the DARD 2019 Business Plan
- Principal Officer North (Torba, Sanma & Penama), Ms. Charity Alick has shown great commitment to the partnership and is now constantly communicating with Sfa Coordinator – she is the Partnership’s ‘champion’ within DARD

Key Challenges/Risks

- During the workshop in April, some of the provincial officers showed a lack of understanding the Agriculture Sector Policy and how that policy relates to their work
- Each provincial DARD office seem to operate in ‘silos’ and there doesn’t seem to be ‘unison’ between the provinces and the national head office
- The Partnership’s internal coordination between the nation and provincial level can be strengthened to further understand the work priorities of DARD

- DARD do not have an M&E system developed to measure the output and outcome of the work delivered against the Agriculture Sector Policy, this includes sector indicators and tools to measure quality of their work

Key Mitigation Strategies (related to challenges/risks above)

- Establish more regular strategic meetings between the Partnership with DARD provincial managers and national managers – this will help them understand the alignment of their own provincial work with national policy – professional development workshop
- The Partnership to support DARD to develop indicators to enable them to monitor and evaluate their work delivered against their sector policy

3. Partnership Status



IO-1
Skills planning
& coordination



IO-2
Public and private
resource allocation

- The MOU between the Partnership and DARD is current until 2021
- The Partnership and DARD agreed on an implementation framework referred to as the Partnership Implementation Framework (PIF) for 2019 that was signed off by Director, DARD and Director of the Partnership. It outline the 6 work proposals across 4 provinces as well as a national work priority



Malampa Province

- Malekula Cocoa Farming and Business Development

Sanma province

- Sanma (Farm to Table) Lead Farmers Business Development
- Sanma Attraction Product & Business Development

Torba Province

- Farm to School

Tafea Province

- Port Patrick Vanilla and Pepper production Development

National

- DARD Professional Development

4. Co-contributions

- DARD- VUV 3,000,000 (SDF) and VUV 1,235,000 (Indirect) (Jan – June 2019)
- Government of Australia – Ambae Recovery VUV 500,000
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5. 2019 Priority areas

Scoping and Data collection

Scoping and data collection was an important priority for SFA in 2019 to ensure the information of all individual clients was registered accurately and that the Washington Group Questions were used.

Summary of the clients registered using the new form and Kobo tool.

Province	All Clients
Malampa	64
Sanma	24
Tafea	4
Torba	22
Penama	1
Shefa	4

Agribusiness clients disaggregated by Sex

	Number	%
Female	58	49%
Male	61	51%

Malampa Province

Malekula Cocoa Farming and Business Development

The objective of this priority area is:

- Up-skilling 15 Block-holders and village farmers in good cocoa farming agriculture practices
- Develop a cocoa farm project to support public private partnership interventions
- Increase cocoa production (maximise harvest)
- Improve cocoa quality productions to meet standardised quality cocoa beans for markets

During the first 6 months of 2019, the Malampa Skills Centre registered cocoa farmers using the new improved registration form (Kobo tool) that includes additional questions on education, income and disability.

During the period January to June 2019, 64 individual clients were registered in Malampa in Skills for Agriculture (SfA). Of these clients 55% were female and 45% male.

SfA Cocoa Farmers – Business Clients /Entrepreneurs

During January to June 2019, technical coaching and mentoring was delivered to 14 cocoa farmers on good cocoa farming practices or husbandry. Two of the farmers are women.

Baseline prosperity progress data about income, expenditure and profit during the previous 6 months was also collected from these farmers.

Summary of Prosperity Data - compared to the previous 6 months

- 86% (12) of the farmers reported a higher level of sales and higher levels of income earned
- 93% (13) reported a profit from their cocoa farming business during the last 6 months and of these, 93% (12) reported that the profit was higher than in the previous 6 month period
- 58% reported that the income earned contributed to at least half of the households total income
- Two of the cocoa farmers each employed and paid salaries to 2 female workers making a total of 4 female workers employed overall during this reporting period

Sanma Province

Sanma (Farm to Table) Lead Farmers Business Development

Following the implementation of the 'Farm to Table' initiative in 2018, SfA, in partnership with DARD have identified six farmers to work with across Sanma. The objective and priorities are for the farmers to:

- operate a sustainable business farm
- to supply quality agri-products with required quantity to restaurants on Sanma in a timely manner
- to create and legalise an operational trade association for producers and buyers and create an efficient market chain for agri-products

During the Farm to Table implementation, a crop calendar was developed to assist in bridging the communication link between farmers and restaurant operators. The crop calendar was completed early this year and the Farm to Table industry coaches were again engaged to provide workshop and mentoring for the farmers to understand the crop calendar so they can maximise specific crops and also use the crop calendar to initiate market link between farmer and restaurant operators.



Sanma Skills Centre registered 24 Individual Clients - 6 Female and 16 Male.

Out of these clients, four were vegetable farmers, and prosperity progress data was collected for them. Due to the small sample only limited analysis can be made of the four clients:

- Three reported earning less than in the previous 6 month period
- All had relied on income from other sources including copra, livestock and retail store in the past 6 months
- Three had invested more in their business during the last 6 months – mainly on transport, materials and salary for workers
- Overall 2 of the 4 businesses reported a profit during the last 6 months, but the level of profit was the same or less than in the previous 6 month period

During the next 6 months further baseline progress prosperity data will be collected and will be analyzed and reported on in the December 2019 report.

Torba Province

During January to June 2019, 20 famers (10 women and 10 men) were registered in Torba province, however no prosperity data was collected.

Farm to School

Baldwin Lonsdale Memorial Collage [BLMC] is Torba Provincial College accommodating over 200 students all over Torba and few nearby provinces. The school spends more than 3 million vatu on imported food every year to feed the students. The idea of this work area is to divert these funds back to farmers and fisherman instead of buying imported food.

The objective of the work priority is for Torba Skills Centre, DARD Torba and SfA to identify potential farmers who will consistently provide food, vegetables and protein to BLMC at a reasonable price annually. These farmers will then be given skills development to farm for commercial consumption to ensure supply and quality of production is consistent.

Tafea Province

During January to June 20 famers were registered in Tafea province data, and no prosperity data was collected.

In 2018 Tafea Skills Centre and Tafea Department of Agriculture identified committed vanilla and pepper farmers on Port Patrick and encouraged these farmers through skills development to improve production of their produce as well as supporting the selling of this produce to the Cruise Ship market on Mystery Island.

The objective outlined in the proposal to address this work priority is:

1. Value add vanilla and pepper to sell to the cruise ship market and to individual private niche markets
2. Increase production of root crops and other crops for the market on Analgauhat
3. Increase production of value adding products to supply to domestic market

Due to a shift in priority activities for SfA, this activity has not been implemented in this period.

National

DARD Professional Development

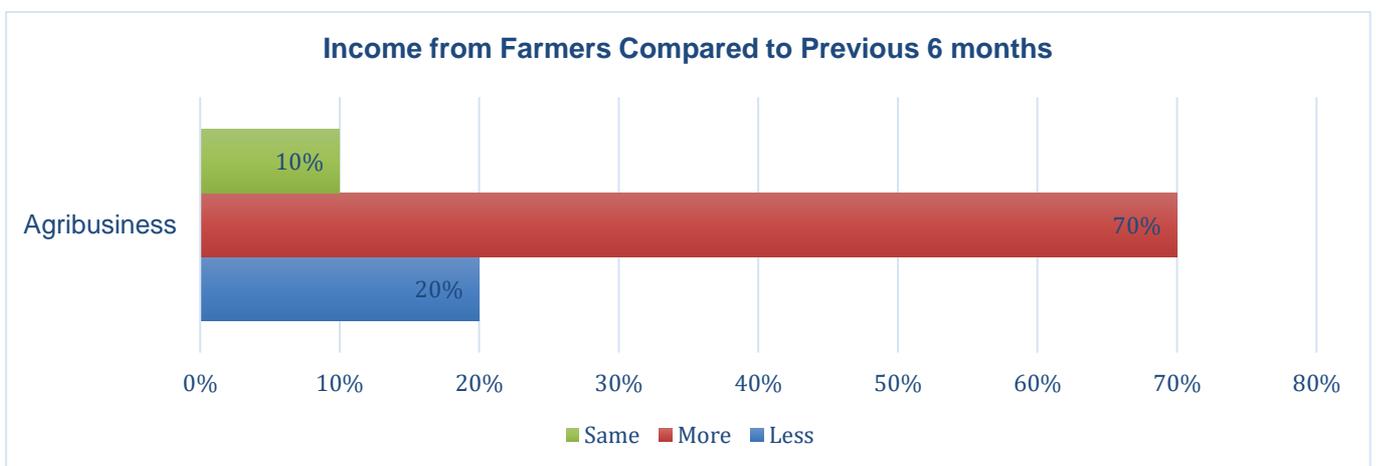
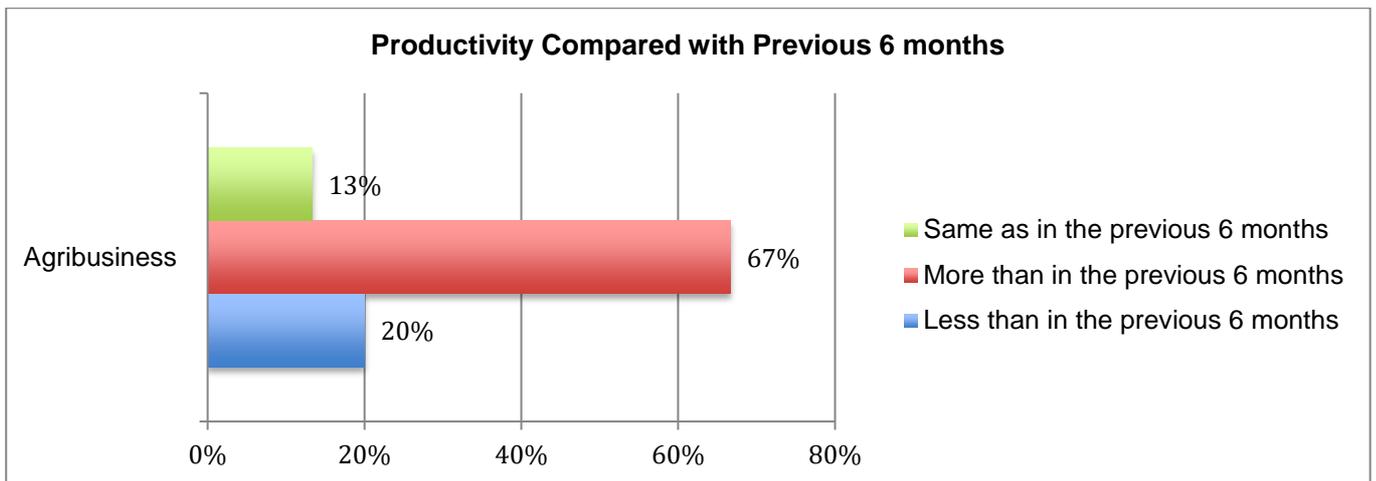
A targeted suite of skills development was planned to address skills gaps/needs identified by DARD staff in order to strengthen their capabilities to implement their work priorities. The first delivery was delivered to two groups where the senior management team undertake a Management and Leadership tailored to their work place and the junior staff given to the staff undertake basic ICT specific to understand the Microsoft application so they can write report on word document, do presentation on power point and records data on excel spreadsheet.



DARD Agriculture Assistant Officers with their facilitators in Basic Computer skills

Work plan progress update





DFAT Funded - Ambae Recovery Project

Following the mass evacuation of the Ambae people due to volcanic unrest, the Partnership, through the Sanma Skills Centre coordinated a responsive approach to implement activities that support the livelihoods of evacuees.

The SfA coordinator and the Sanma Provincial Training Coordinator (PTC) conducted individual consultation meetings to various partners including:

- Department of Agriculture Rural Development (DARD)
- Department of Livestock
- Department of Fisheries (Tilapia)
- Vanuatu Disability Promotion Advocacy Association (VDPA)
- Women’s Affairs
- International Migration Organization-UN (IOM)
- Save the Children (SCA)

The team held an open discussion meeting to prioritise activities that will best suit the needs of Ambaean evacuees settled on Sanma.



Representatives of ALRC

The Ambae Livelihood Recover Committee (ALRC) resolved to undertake the following areas of skills development activities:

Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Honey Bee Development •Integrated Backyard Farming System x 2 •Kava Plant propagation
Accredited Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Certificate II in Building Construction - Basic Cluster

The delivery of the integrated backyard farming system comprised a poultry (chicken) unit, a vegetable unit and a tilapia fish farm unit. Participants who attended the workshop were given skills and knowledge to utilise the space in their backyard and practice this farming system with the intention that it will result in healthy eating and increased food security for the household.



Handing over of integrated farming system to community by Sanma Secretary General and the Partnership Director

The delivery of the activity also provided the Sanma Skills Centre and SfA with the opportunity to engage with wider partners. The Partnership engaged a private service provider in heavy machinery road equipment to dig a hydraulic network system so water can be accessed in the communities. The Luganville power company, VUI, extended power lines to the water source in order to power a new submerged water pump for the new communities. The Sanma Department of Water approved water connections to the new areas and has provided technical support on the water pipe connection to the new sites.

6. Skills for Agribusiness Contextual Analysis

Influencing Factors	Key Opportunities	Key Constraints	How are we taking advantage of these opportunities and mitigating any risks?
Policies and legislation, regulation and standards – government, industry, national and international	DARD have policies in place to guide the development of the sector and also the different priority areas that DARD is working in. These policies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Vanuatu Agriculture Sector Policy 2030 ➤ Coconut Strategy 2025 ➤ Kava Strategy 2025 ➤ Fruit and Vegetable strategy 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor coordination and planning within DARD to set clear direction on the implementation of the strategies and policy between provincial and national agents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Facilitate strategic meeting with provincial and national staff to better understand the implementation of these strategic documents ➤ Address any skills needs through professional development
Economic – local, interisland, regional and international economies, investment and markets scope and scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clear targets are set at the national level around producing seedlings that address the DARD priority programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is no strong coordination with farmers to enable DARD to distribute seedlings and other support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Address this coordination and planning during professional development
Politics, leadership and relationships – the types and location of different structures, processes and people of influence, power holders and decision makers in the system/sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Charity Alick is the Principal Officer in charge of Torba, Sanma and Penama. She is proving herself a great leader in a male dominant sector. 		
Society and culture Inclusion (gender or disability) cultural revitalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Two lead farmers in Santo are female and both show confident leadership to operate their farm and lead the workers ➤ The Ambae Recovery Program provides an opportunity for SfA to work more strongly with 		

	communities of evacuees to support inclusive recovery efforts and skills development opportunities for people with disabilities and women.		
Environmental – location, climate change resilience and mitigation, disaster risk prevention and response			➤ SfA to strengthen the work with the DARD technical staff to identify farming techniques that address climate change
Technology and Infrastructure - roads, shipping/flight schedules, airports etc.	➤ New road on Tanna and Malekula helps the farmers to have better access to the market		