

LINKING FARMERS WITH FAIR TRADE MARKETS:

Vanilla Production on Aneityum

The Vanuatu Skills Partnership, through its Tafea Skills Centre, has worked in collaboration with the Tafea Provincial Government, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), the Department of Industry (DOI) and the Farmers' Support Association since 2017 to support vanilla farmers in Port Patrick, a very remote village on Aneityum in Tafea province.

While support has traditionally focused on quality production and yield, coordinating better access to a fair and sustainable market has always been a challenge.

Historically, vanilla buyers travelled to Port Patrick and underpaid farmers, who lacked a strong understanding of quality and fair market prices. This exploitation resulted in decreased motivation among farmers who turned to 'quick cash' opportunities, selling vanilla to cruise ship tourists to supplement their earnings.

Following COVID-19 border closures, the number of cruise ships visiting Aneityum dropped from 83 in 2019 to none in 2020. This had a huge impact on the livelihoods of the people of Aneityum, especially those in Port Patrick.

The Partnership saw this as an opportunity to work with partners in Tafea province to equip the producers with the skills and knowledge to access more equitable markets. An industry coach was engaged to provide technical support to the producers, including training on the elements of quality production.

The industry coach worked closely with the Partnership's Productive Sector team to broker the relationship between the network of farmers, government partners and buyers. For the first time, DARD and DOI staff were able to actively participate in the vanilla supply chain development, as per their work mandate stipulated by the Government of Vanuatu.



The Partnership and partners worked with the industry coach to undertake a vanilla domestic market study, which in turn linked producers with domestic buyers. It also enabled mutual understanding of, and agreement on, vanilla specifications, quality, and a grading requirement. This ensured a fair and equitable market price whilst also meeting international quality standards.

A professional development activity was also conducted with DARD and DOI Tafea staff to increase their understanding in a range of technical areas, such as vanilla growth husbandry, grading, pricing and labelling of vanilla beans for market. This activity equipped the officers with the skills to coach vanilla farmers in the future.

As a result of this initiative, 22 vanilla farmers in Port Patrick cured 93,365kg of beans in 2020, which they sold for a total value of VUV 1,554,630.

DARD and DOI have pledged their ongoing support to developing the vanilla bean industry in Aneityum.

"DARD will continue to support small farmers to reach their potential and enhance their productivity as they contribute to the sector."

Mr Antoine Ravo, Director of DARD