



REPORT - SAMOA AGRITOURISM POLICY SETTING FORUM

PROMOTING LINKAGES BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM RELATED MARKETS FOR IMPROVED
FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

**Organized by the Government of Samoa (the Samoa Tourism Authority and the Ministry of
Agriculture), PIPSO and CTA**

Samoa Conference Centre, Apia, Samoa, 13th - 16th December 2016

Prepared by:

Planning and Development Division on behalf of Samoa Tourism Authority

Endorsed – STA CEO : Papalii Sonja Hunter _____

Date: January 9th 2017

Table of Content

	Page#
1. Abstract.....	3
2. Introduction.....	4
3. Background.....	4
4. Samoa agritourism development context–regional & national level.....	6
5. Samoa agritourism –Involvement and Opportunities.....	7
6. Agritourism Financing – local commercial entities.....	7
7. Conclusion.....	8
8. Recommendations.....	8

1. Abstract

Agriculture and tourism are productive sectors which offer unlimited possibilities and opportunities for economic and equitable growth for small and vulnerable economies of Pacific island countries like Samoa. Enhancement and strengthening of the linkages between the two will provide economic opportunities that will not only contribute tremendously to the national development of Samoa but especially build resilience in rural communities and sustainability in both sectors.

However, the development of both sectors has followed separate trajectories and, as such, past policies and frameworks have not been fostered or geared towards achieving the overall expected results. Overcoming knowledge gaps in both tourism and agriculture may be considered as one of the numerous means to clarify and improve the relationship between the two sectors. Furthermore, with Samoa's continuing trade deficit in terms of declining agricultural exports, a strong partnership with growing the tourism industry is considered a productive, successful and sensible way forward for positive outcomes.

Ensuring effectiveness and sustainability will depend on a significant proportion of the tourism expenditure being directed towards locally produced goods and services. The supply and demand chain requires far better improvements in order to sustain the food and hospitality sector. Whilst some local agricultural goods have been catered towards the needs of the tourism sector, the highest value goods consumed are meats, dairy, seafood and beverages. The capacity of local producers to provide the mentioned goods remains limited. Key challenges are unsustainability and inconsistency in supply, as well as rising food prices.

Positive outcomes in terms of processed and value added agricultural products include root crop chips, cocoa, coconut base products, skin care products, beverages, nonu, poultry, taro, and medicinal ranges. This is the result of collaborative efforts and shared resources due to close partnership between the private sector, representative organisations, donor partners, local communities, together with government agencies such as the Scientific Research of Samoa, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Samoa Tourism Authority, Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labour etc.

In terms of economic drivers, tourism continues to produce significant growth. Tourism development in terms of growth in tourism products and return on investments such as tourism spending and arrival continues on a positive trend. The financial year 2015/16 recorded 145,338 visitor arrivals with an estimated \$389 million injected into the local economy, and a growth of 9.54% on visitor arrivals and 12% earnings as compared to the previous financial year. Moreover, there has been a significant growth in the accommodation sector in terms of additional rooms, particularly with the substantial increase in the deluxe accommodation category alone, with the bulk of the holidaymakers preferring to stay in the deluxe accommodation category when compared to other categories. Holidaymakers also spent the most on accommodation followed by food and drinks as highlighted in the recent International Visitors Survey. Overall, such growth is projected to continue in the coming years.

There are opportunities and possibilities given the growth in the tourism sector that will potentially impact positively on the agriculture sector. Such can be achieved through strengthened proactive partnerships, promotion and awareness as well as shared human and capital resources.

2. Introduction

The Samoa Tourism Sector Plan (STSP) established the consolidated five-year period frameworks for the development of tourism in Samoa from 2014-2019. Tourism development is indeed highlighted as a major economic development under the current Strategies for the Development of Samoa (SDS). The potential benefits in terms of direct and indirect “trickle down effects” opportunities for the country as a whole will not only “boost productivity for a sustainable development” but also achieve the overall vision of “improved quality of life for all”.

In line with the overall STSP vision’s five (5) key strategic areas, building a stronger link and partnership between the agriculture and the tourism sector must be explored and strengthened as one of the key outputs in addressing the mentioned five (5) areas. The development of a robust agritourism policy with an action plan as part of its outcomes is a way forward. To ensure such, a sector wide participatory approach and consultation process including potential donor partners must be in place to ensure a wide collective feedback is emphasised and integration of policy efforts into each sector-localised framework.

In close collaboration with the Netherland’s based Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization (PIPSO) and based on work done in other countries in the Pacific region, the first Agritourism Policy Workshop for Samoa was held on December 14-16, 2016. The focus was to ensure and especially strengthening the links between the agriculture and the tourism sector through a robust and proactive policy setting that will pave the way for the growth of agritourism. Samoa benefitted tremendously in terms of human resources capacity, as a team of local, regional and global professional experts in the field of agri-tourism presented and shared their invaluable experiences and knowledge.

The three (3) days’ workshop was focused on establishing an Agritourism Policy that will support local businesses in not only serving tourism-related markets but in also further developing the linkages and identifying the gaps through other sectors such as the agriculture, trade and manufacture. At the end, there was a clear understanding and awareness of the opportunities in agri-tourism for all key stakeholders, and a validation of the key elements towards the development of an agri tourism policy. Establishing a pathway on a regional scale was also considered as a long-term outcome.

This report will highlight the summary of outcomes of the three days’ workshop based on presentations by participants representing the agriculture, tourism, trade, and health sector, and non-government organisations. Specifically, it includes a brief analysis of the key outputs as a result of the three days consultation with all concerned stakeholders. The overall goal was to promote sustainable use of local food by the tourism industry through sectoral policies.

3. Background

The tourism sector continues to be the economic backbone for the majority of the Pacific Island countries. For Samoa, the diverse industry contributes positively on its social-cultural, economic and environmental development. However, it is pivotal to ensure tourism sustainability so that our current development efforts and aspirations do not adversely impact on the needs of future generations.

The latest figures review for the financial year 2015/2016 highlighted growth in terms of earnings by 12% to SAT\$389.3 million compared to the last financial year. Moreover, a 9.54% growth in visitor arrivals which is an equivalent of 145,388 visitors. Furthermore, occupancy figures for all accommodation categories recorded growth trends when compared to the previous financial year. Overall, the results indeed offer positive progress and towards an environment of optimism for the industry.

The agricultural sector however, showed progress at the subsistence farming level especially in rural communities in contrast to commercial entities. In comparison against the tourism development, the rate of progress is considered relatively slow. A recent report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) highlighted that the agricultural sector performed relatively poorly in the last decade which resulted in stagnated outputs and continuing decline in exports. Furthermore, whilst agriculture continues to play a pivotal role in ensuring food security, our population is highly dependent on food imports. Overall, food and fish imports were amongst the highest in 2009 at an estimated SAT\$165 million tala, an equivalent of a total 30% in imports. Fruit and vegetable imports reached 9 million tala a few years ago, and it is believed that the figures to be further accumulated as per recent import reports. Aside from crops and livestock, employment decreased quite significantly as well.

Donor assistance especially from the World Bank has provided much needed support in terms of human capacity building, capital and financial assistance for the agricultural sector. Such will indeed improve the outputs and more importantly short, medium and long-term outcomes. However, sustainability in the long run requires close partnership with other sectors to ensure a balanced equilibrium between primary and secondary producers, and more importantly, local and potential regional and international consumers.

Aside from donor aid, government policies and regulation through the Ministry of Finance, Ministry for Revenue, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Samoa Tourism Authority, Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Health, are all in place to assist local entrepreneurs with potential investments in the agricultural and tourism sectors. Moreover, non-government organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Samoa Association of Manufacturers and Exporters (SAME), Samoa Farmers Association, Samoa Culinary Association, Samoa Hotel Association, Women In Business Development Inc., as well as the local banking institutions policies and programs will not only further assist both sectors but also support sustainable economic, environment and social linkages.

The Samoa agritourism policy-setting workshop was the first for Samoa. However, it was built upon a similar agritourism workshop that was recently held in Port Villa, Vanuatu, and the gaps and way forward outputs from the recent agribusinesses workshops that were held on Denarau Island, Fiji in 2015 and Apia in 2016. The three days' workshop highlighted key areas in addressing the linkages between agriculture and tourism not only to improve food supply but also nutrition security. The tourism involvement will potentially promote more value addition in the agricultural products, increased marketing efforts in term of product awareness campaigns at the local and international level as well as increased economic benefits in terms of exports, taxes, employment, rural empowerment in addressing pro-poor tourism in beach fales and attraction sites.

The workshop was coordinated by the Samoa Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The expected overall goal was to promote the use of local food by the tourism industry through strengthened sector policies. It will be addressed by ensuring a better understanding of the opportunities through current ongoing efforts to avoid repetition of actions from both sectors. This will include awareness on the international, national and local policies, frameworks and ongoing works to build upon identified gaps, improved processes and ensure opportunities.

4. Samoa agritourism development context – regional & national

The regional approach towards the development of agritourism highlighted a coordinated effort approach as pointed out by Mr Sakiusa of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and based on the previous work done with CTA and PIPSO under the agribusiness development

agenda. Ongoing strategic works focused on the promotion and the sustainable production of indigenous food. The expected outcomes under IFAD will lead to the substitution of imported food and beverage with indigenous food. This will create numerous economic opportunities for the local communities. This is further supported by Ms Mereia Volavola of the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO) and Ms Isolina Boto from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA). Numerous efforts by both government and non-government organisations such as adopting a cluster approach to ensure strengthened and improved collaboration between agri-producers, tourism industry, government and academia were discussed. Success will lead to numerous opportunities such as an increase in private sector investments, publication of numerous technical and industry focused studies to aid decision making and business investment development on a sound economic sense. Ms Kelera Cavuilati of the South Pacific Tourism Organisation emphasized on the importance and benefits of strengthening the links and partnership between the two sectors and highlighted some positive work done with PIPSO and CTA for example in training chefs in the use of local food and promoting Pacific cuisine. Agritourism especially the authentic culinary-tourism niche market has grown significantly in numbers and overall expenditure at both the global and regional level. The promotion of the Pacific region as a healthy and authentic food destination is ongoing, with growth recorded in Fiji and New Caledonia.

Donor assistance in the region especially in Samoa has shown positive progress. The Samoa Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Project, funded by the World Bank, has according to Afuamua Enoka invested significantly in the agricultural sector in terms of capacity building, capital, strengthening agricultural sector coordination, policies, legal and institutional frameworks. Visible progress included improving hygienic meat preparation as well quality control through a state of the art mobile abattoir. Other regional funded programs as reported by Ms. Volavola include the European Union Agrifinance project, value chains training programs and the IFAD funded climate, technological and insurance initiatives. Additional regional project assistance with a separate focus include that from the Asia Development Bank, Pacific Island Farm Owners Network, Food and Agriculture Organisation and the United Nations Development Program.

Similar to the regional development work, local efforts by implementing agencies have progressed and improved through the years. The nutritional frameworks as led by the Ministry of Health in terms of nutritional awareness and promoting physical exercise projects have grown significantly in both the rural and urban communities. Rural communities' development projects in terms of providing financial assistance to ensure economic growth, growth equity, gender balance for small and commercial farming is being promoted and coordinated by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. Furthermore, tourism has made efforts to incorporate agritourism into annual work plans by encouraging tourism operators to purchase locally produced food and beverages, promote value addition efforts in attraction sites and accommodation providers as well as marketing Samoa as an organic and authentic destination.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries further supports the above-mentioned in ensuring and incorporating quality control, crop variety, sustainable supply and investment into new agricultural products. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour continues to work with non-government organisations to ensure the business side of agri-business is sustainable by gaining access to government subsidies and assistance, quality and process assurances, and enhanced relationships between entrepreneurs at the local and regional level. Overall, to ensure agribusiness adopts best practices and is environmentally sustainable, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has ongoing monitoring frameworks for climate change in terms of climate proofing activities and weather data analysis.

With all the efforts by each government agency, donor partners and nongovernmental organisation, a more coordinated effort and pragmatic approach is required at all levels to ensure these efforts are driven at the same direction to deliver on sustainable agri-tourism and especially its beneficial components. Many improvements are required.

5. Samoa agritourism –Involvement and Opportunities

The development progress, in terms of economic returns from commercialized farms and manufacturers, against subsistence entities have shown mixed results, with positive growth in commercial entities and a continuing decline in subsistence farming. Significant growth and diversification of farming products from Ah Liki Investment has shown unlimited possibilities and opportunities in terms of a commercialized endeavours. Sustainable supply of vegetable products and eggs has greatly substituted similar imported goods for the Ah Liki retail store chains. Such efforts are quite similar to the cocoa and coconut farms by the Vaai family which has not only catered for the local markets but in partnership with the global Whittaker chocolate producers. Value added products entrepreneurs such as the Misiluki Skin care with locally made oils, have shown positive potential. Innovative ideas as supported by sound scientific research together with a well-researched business investment plan will lead to production of leading and affordable competitive products that can compete against the international brands.

Effective collaborative efforts by WIBDI are addressing the gaps between subsistence farming in rural communities and urban commercialized entities. Development of various products not only from the farm-to-table program and organic farming as well as certification is a step forward. With such positive drive, and working together with the MWCSO, SROS, STA and MAF development programs to synergise and complement each organisation efforts, economic opportunities will be realised and gaps reduced.

Other nongovernment organisations such as SAME, Samoa Hotel Association, Samoa Culinary Association, Samoa Farmers Association and the Chamber of Commerce are continuing efforts and programs have shown notable progress in terms of capacity building, technical advice to members, capital investments and continuing growth in membership. However, greater success will be achieved once the substantial number of subsistence farmers, unemployed rural communities and well-established farmers are tapped into. Indeed, this is a potentially underutilised resource pool which will reach its full potential through awareness, training, capital investment and expertise guidance.

Overall, as with section four (4), more coordinated efforts are required to address, promote and provide awareness of linkages with other wide components of the tourism sector. Such will include tour operators, health businesses, traditional and cultural medicines and healers. Current coordination and collaborative efforts between government and NGO's can be further improved and strengthened.

6. Agribusiness financing – commercial lending institutions

Current development of agritourism in Samoa is in a stage of “work in progress”. A key component to ensuring all aspects of agritourism are result driven and productive will require accessibility to finance. As aforementioned, commercialised farms and successful manufacturers have invested not only personal funding but also lending from local commercial banks. The final day of the workshop gave local banks an opportunity to inform the participants on their current lending products that will suit each farmer's ability to re-pay. Current lending policies have improved compared to previous years from the participating farmers' perspectives. However, as similar with previous sessions, awareness of loan schemes and especially the technical knowledge of a subsistence farmer in terms of business

and repayment plans remains a challenge. Coordinated efforts by local banks, MAF, MWSCD and potential farmers will address these issues.

7. Conclusion

Overall, a robust agritourism plan will significantly assist in development efforts. Resulting equal opportunities and economic growth will positively influence the national level, and filter down to the urban and rural opportunities. However, success is measured on various parameters. The continuing expansion of commercial farms and increasing numbers of manufacturers and exporters, tourism growth, established agriculture legal frameworks and nongovernment organisation policies, are indeed viewed successfully.

However, the limited ability to influence positive changes at the community levels in terms of transforming subsistence farming into successful commercial entities, seasonal and quality inconsistencies, heavy reliance on imported food and beverages, inability to substitute imported goods with locally grown ones, high unemployment rate in rural areas, poor nutritional intake and poor accessibility to local subsidies and donor funded projects as well as expensive local produces are all areas which require improvement.

Government has to continue pushing forwards with its national and community programs and more importantly, consistently apply monitoring mechanisms and synergies of actions, in order to avoid the relatively poor results of the last decade. Inter government collaboration and partnership especially with the tourism and agriculture sectors must be strengthened. Inclusiveness of communities and the private sector in policies and programs requires significant improvement by all.

CTA, PIPSO and IFAD committed to support this agenda and join forces in developing fundraising proposals towards concrete projects in the ground.

8. Recommendations

At the end of the workshop, recommendations were drafted to ensure a way forward for Samoa's agritourism agenda;

- i. To establish an agri-tourism Action plan for Samoa supported by sound and integrated policies from the Agriculture, Tourism and Trade sectors. It will also be supported by a cross-sectoral and multistakeholder task force composed by public and private sector representatives. Activities will include Food Tourism, health tourism, local culinary; a marketing funding scheme, attraction tours, agritourism park, village tours and private plantation tours;
- ii. More training opportunities from the STA, MAF, MOH, SROS and other research institutions;
- iii. More awareness on available funded projects especially at the community level;
- iv. Improvement of government policies, branding, marketing, certification, food protocols, research, monitoring and evaluation, inclusiveness especially of village youths;
- v. Improved accessibility on financing opportunities as well as low interest rates on lending;
- vi. Improved relationship between farmers, chefs and tourism operators;
- vii. Farm visit tours and hands-on training for all farmers;
- viii. An agritourism forum annually to ensure outputs and outcomes progress;
- ix. Marketing and branding of locally produced goods through Samoan overseas celebrities to educate visitors;

- x. Incorporating agritourism as part of the annual excellence awards;
- xi. World Food Day – Tours for visitors – buy-eat-cook” experience concept;
- xii. Further investments into food technologies, processors, food safety, plant varieties;
- xiii. Private-Public Project proposals for funding to be developed.