

AIFSHE Report

University	University of the South Pacific
Department	Faculty of Science Technology and Environment
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Number of participants	16
Secretary	Roneeta Sharma
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Date of latest assessment	
Date of desired situation	By the end of 2013

The University of the South Pacific's (USP) 2013-2018 Strategic Plan stipulates how to move the University from 'good' to 'excellent'. Being relevant to society is one of the key elements in this Plan. To demonstrate its relevance to the region it serves, USP will need to address strategic areas and challenges such as food security. Food security is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their nutritional needs. It encompasses food availability, accessibility, utilization and food system stability." As the leading academic institution in higher education in the Pacific Island region, USP has a role to play in addressing food security through research, education and community outreach, hence the purpose of conducting a food security audit in higher education.

The food security audit in higher education is perhaps the first step towards the realization of whether USP is really addressing food security and if so, to what degree. If food security is currently being address, the audit will be able to identify where food security is currently located within the university's research, education and community outreach. It will also further assess how food security is being addressed, able to identify gaps and areas of synergy that may help give food security more prominence and identify steps for moving forward.

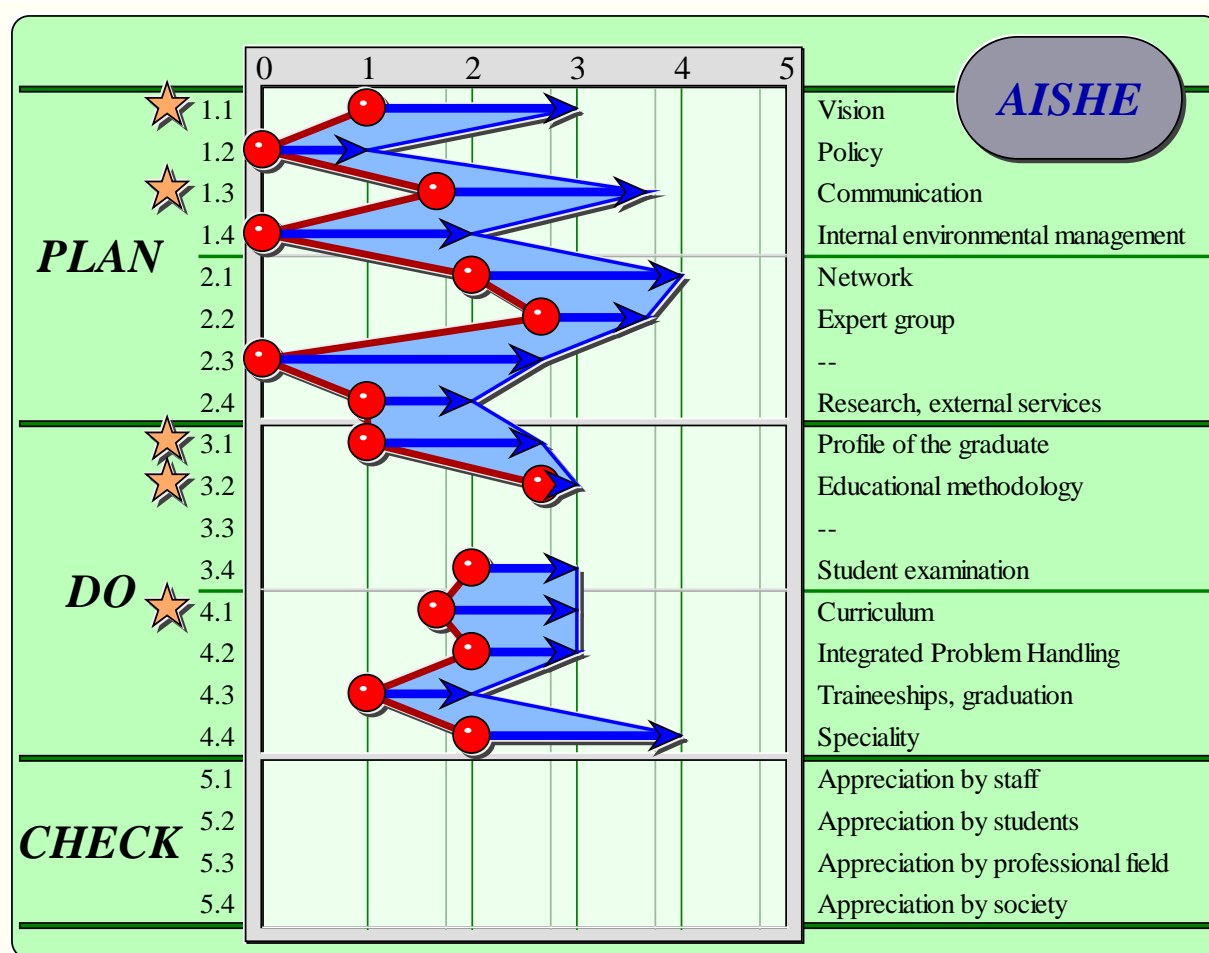
Food security is one of the most pressing issues nationally, regionally and internationally, and with the impact of climate change it has become more visible than before. At a regional level, food security is one of six key areas considered by the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change (2006-2015), under which a number of projects, including the USP Food Security Research Group, are being implemented.

USP was fortunate to be one of eight universities that took part in an inception workshop on 'Mainstreaming Tertiary Education in ACP ARD Policy Processes: Increasing Food Supply and Reducing Hunger' that was conducted in September 2012 at CTA/Wageningen University and Research centre in the Netherlands. Dr Jimaima Lako and Dr David Rohindra represented USP at the workshop. One of the key areas that was discussed was the food security and food and

nutrition policy developed by governments in the countries from which the eight universities originated from. The workshop also examined whether higher education institutions were addressing these policies in their teaching, research and community outreach and services. In order to confirm assumptions that were made, the food security audit was proposed to be conducted at each of the eight universities to assess how they are addressing food security within the regions they serve and to assess the possibility of (re)orienting education, research and community outreach towards food security.

The higher education food security audit in USP was timely because the University is currently undergoing restructuring to move from 'good' to 'excellent'. Further potential benefits of the food security audit will be the realisation of a new food science programme, planned for 2014, as well as bringing agriculture to the forefront of the education system.

Figure 1: The USP Food Security Audit Summary Diagram



The five stages of AIFSHE are:

Stage 1: Activity oriented

Stage 2: Process oriented

Stage 3: System oriented

Stage 4: Chain oriented

Stage 5: Society oriented

=== PLAN ===

1. Vision and policy

Criterion 1.1. Vision

Present situation: Stage 1

Food security is embedded in the 'sustainable development' section of the University's vision statement but only implicitly. The importance of food security is evident within University-wide research clusters for climate change and human security research.

Desired situation: Stage 3 - High Priority

A holistic view of food security needs to be expressed in the mission statement and translated into concrete policies. USP needs to find a niche in terms of food security that is relevant and unique for each of the 14 countries it serves.

Criterion 1.2. Policy

Present situation: Stage 0

There is no policy on food security.

Desired situation: Stage 1

The University needs to develop a top-down policy on food security based on a clear mandate from all stakeholders.

Criterion 1.3. Communication

Present situation: Stage 1 going to 2

Very limited communication about food security takes place between individuals or within University groups, centres or organisations.

Desired situation: Stage 3 going to 4 - High Priority

USP management needs to know more about the four elements of food security and the education of staff and students, and use this information to shape communication in a broader sense and through a wider range of disciplines.

Criterion 1.4. Internal management of food security

Present situation: Stage 0

No staff or students are responsible for food related issues on campus. The cafeteria is leased to outside vendors.

Desired situation: Stage 2

If food security is taken seriously at USP, food related issues need to be included as part of the policy and management where certain aspects of internal catering are managed by staff and students within their area of expertise. By rethinking food security management, the University can set an example to the community, i.e. as an educational institution the University should implement good practice("walk the talk").

2. Expertise

Criterion 2.1. Network

Present situation: Stage 2

The University has established contact with companies and other professionals at an individual level who are invited as guest lecturers, but more stakeholder engagement is required.

Desired situation: Stage 4

Regular engagement needs to take place between USP and food security professionals within the Pacific, where secondments or attachments are recognised as staff development or project implementation. This will bring practical knowledge and experience directly to students.

Criterion 2.2. Expert group

Present situation: Stage 2 going to 3

Certain staff members teach food security in their respective programmes and a specialised group within University research clusters conducts research and community outreach in the area. The Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development looks after climate change research; food security is one of the components.

Desired situation: Stage 3 going to 4

There is a lot of interest in having an integral vision on food security where the formation of a food security expert group at University level is identified. This group could participate more actively in educational development and interact directly with stakeholders when required.

Criterion 2.3. Research, internal services (inserted by USP)

Present situation: Stage 0

Aspects of food security are present in education and research but not in internal services.

Desired situation: Stage 2 going to 3

The University needs to develop a range of research and internal services in which food security is clearly expressed. A clearly defined policy may be required to enable teachers and educational programmes to bridge the gap and implement a common goal.

Criterion 2.4. Research, external services

Present situation: Stage 1

Aspects of food security are present in education both at tertiary and secondary school levels. Research and external services are present within the Ministry of Agriculture where individuals or groups are able to access and benefit from funds.

Desired situation: Stage 2

The University needs to develop a range of research areas and external services in which food security is clearly expressed at the policy level. This will enable lecturers and educational programmes to bridge the gap and work towards to a common goal.

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3. Education goals

Criterion 3.1. Profile of the graduate

Present situation: Stage 1

In certain areas, such as food and nutrition and agriculture, graduate profiles contain some aspects of the major elements of food security, but this is limited.

Desired situation: Stage 2 going to 3 - High Priority

Food security is to be mentioned explicitly and recognized in graduate profiles. Both staff and students

should be actively involved in the determination of such profiles. In this case, a review of programmes such as agriculture and agribusiness, and the development of the new food science programme, need to be in place to fulfill the four elements of food security. It is also important that regular evaluations and adjustments of the profile take place to ensure relevance.

Criterion 3.2. Educational methodology

Present situation: Stage 2 going to 3

Learning outcomes of certain courses in different disciplines such as geography, food science, biology and agriculture do allow for the development of a reflective attitude towards food security, but this is limited.

Desired situation: Stage 3 - High Priority

The education methodology and the learning setting are to be designed in such a way that the student meets realistic situations in which a reflective attitude is encouraged and adopted. This may also help lecturers to provide feedback to students on a regular basis.

Criterion 3.3. --

This criterion will be removed from the instrument, as it has no direct relationship with the theme of food security (part of the fine tuning of AIFSHE within this pilot phase).

Criterion 3.4. Student examination

Present situation: Stage 2

Only courses that have food security elements in the curriculum examine relevant aspects of food security in some way during the course.

Desired situation: Stage 3

The University needs to clearly identify programmes and courses that contribute to the fulfillment of the four elements of food security and to ensure that a systematic examination of food security subjects are spread over the curriculum in a carefully considered way, taking into account the increasing complexity of food security. This is to be formulated explicitly in examination regulations.

4. Education contents

Criterion 4.1. Curriculum

Present situation: Stage 1 going to 2

Certain programmes and courses contain some aspects of food security but are limited and also taught in isolation.

Desired situation: Stage 3 - High Priority

There is a great need to do a scoping study in order to identify gaps in different disciplines in terms of food security. This will allow food security to be implemented systematically through the entire curriculum, in accordance with the profile of the graduate. The relationship between education units with respect to food security will be made explicit. The educational modules containing knowledge on food security can be organised and placed within an appropriate framework.

Criterion 4.2. Integrated problem handling

Present situation: Stage 2

Curricula in certain programmes and courses have some elements of food security and while the opportunities for a student to develop a reflective attitude are limited in some disciplines (i.e. agriculture, agribusiness and food science), there are opportunities to develop all four elements of food security.

Desired situation: Stage 3

The curriculum must be designed systematically and have compulsory units from different disciplines to produce an integrated curriculum to address food security. The STAR (strategic total academic review)

project should be able to address this deficiency in food security elements within the University.

Criterion 4.3. Traineeships, graduation

Present situation: Stage 1

Some programmes and courses do have practical projects that address some elements of food security but this is limited.

Desired situation: Stage 2

Internships for students need to be mandatory, which means creating a food security system for the University and liaising with industrial stakeholders to enable the system to work.

Criterion 4.4. Speciality

Present situation: Stage 2

A Bachelor of Agriculture and Bachelor of Science in Food and Nutrition are available but specialization in food security is absent.

Desired situation: Stage 4

There is an opportunity to develop a food security major or increase the emphasis on food security, where relevant courses from various disciplines are combined. This provides a multidisciplinary approach to addressing the four elements of food security within a programme, and offers a uniquely South Pacific flavour in the addressing of food security.

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Conclusion

USP has recognized some aspects of food security, but only implicitly and in isolation. There is a great need to explicitly highlight and share the four aspects of food security in various disciplines through teaching, research and community outreach, and to unify them under one common umbrella through an open communication network. In this way, USP may be able to address food security issues better in the 14 countries it serves.