



Pacific Islands Regional Universities Network and Science Policy Dialogue & Networking Universities and Defining a Regional Science Policy Framework

**A Pacific-led experts' meeting
Fiji, November 5-7, 2012**

Background

In 2009, CTA in collaboration with USP, UNRE and NARI - Papua New Guinea (PNG) convened a regional workshop in Rabaul, PNG for building greater awareness around the critical role that research, innovation and entrepreneurship can play in enhancing the contribution of knowledge to improving agricultural performance and to sustainable socio-economic development in the Pacific region. A cross section of stakeholders representing tertiary education institutes, research and development, non-government and private sector organizations and the wider agricultural community, participated. Matters discussed included:

- Status of agriculture, higher education, research and training and the role of knowledge, science, technology and innovation in development;
- Success stories and new programme initiatives that respond to the challenges and priority needs of Pacific agricultural stakeholders e.g. the Vudal and USP experiences;
- New modalities for research and innovation partnerships, teaching and learning including the development of web-based techniques for facilitating inter-institutional cooperation so that education is relevant to the changing needs of the 21st century.
- New funding mechanisms and modalities for achieving synergy and economies of scale.

One of the follow-up activities identified was the establishment of a coordinating task force to connect academics, researchers and innovative agri-entrepreneurs to develop a road map for achieving a critical mass of motivated academicians and scientists who can contribute positively to agricultural led economic growth. Such a task force was expected to oversee the preparation and piloting of a Pacific Academic, Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship platform / network for sharing information, knowledge, experiences, opportunities and best practices in teaching, research, innovation and entrepreneurship. It was foreseen that this platform would have been virtual with responsibilities for peer review; facilitating mentorship activities for young professionals; marketing opportunities;



identifying solutions and building partnerships so that Pacific academics and researchers can play a leading and more productive role in consultation with other stakeholders in achieving socio-economic development in the Pacific.

In 2012, UNESCO published a revised and updated version of a study commissioned on the state of science policy in the Pacific Islands. The report identified several national and regional level interventions in the Pacific focusing predominantly on sustainable management of marine resources. It was noted that a conflict of interest exists in certain policies and their expected outcomes. It was concluded that there were evident benefits for the Pacific Island States associated with the development of a regional science and technology policy framework that would serve to foster the interests of national and regional agendas.

At a February 2012 workshop of the Europe-Pacific Network for Science and Technology (PACE-NET) in Brussels, participating experts from the Pacific and partners in bi- and multilateral agencies confirmed that a future initiative at developing a science and innovation policy for Pacific Island States must be led by Pacific experts and supported by regional and international organizations. A decision was taken by partners present to combine the CTA support for establishing a Pacific universities network with a UNESCO-led initiative to support the elaboration of the Pacific science, technology and Innovation policy, while building on and linking with existing initiatives including PACE-NET.

The workshop will also consider the outcomes of relevant events held at national and regional level, such as the Association of Heads of Tertiary Institutions in the Pacific Islands (AHTIPI) which was established on 13 Dec 2011 and the PNG National Research Agenda workshop to be held in September, 2012 in order to ensure effective linkages with national and regional Pacific ST&I frameworks and processes. USP and UNPG agreed to take the lead with the support of CTA and UNESCO in the planning and execution of the workshop and with PACE-Net and other organizations in overseeing the follow-up.

Key Dates & Venue

- Ideally in 5-7 November 2012 in Suva, Fiji, to allow further development of outcomes in advance of the STAR meeting in Noumea in mid-November and planned PACE-Net stakeholder conference in Suva, Fiji from 11-15th March 2013.

Objectives

Using the Pacific Plan as the overarching guiding document to help identify and respond to national and regional needs in research, science and technology as well as arts, culture and traditional knowledge, the November workshop will seek:

- To develop the governance structure, mechanisms and work plan (including indicative operational budget) and articulate recommendations on the objectives, structure and modus-operandi for a Pacific Islands universities network to support intra- and inter-regional knowledge creation and sharing in science, technology and innovation (ST&I).



- To prepare succinct recommendations for consideration by appropriate regional forums (STAR conference, PACE-NET final meeting, ministers conferences, etc.) on the objectives, structure and content of a Pacific-owned and Pacific-driven ST&I policy framework – including its contribution towards the Pacific Plan and engagement with other relevant development frameworks and initiatives.

Key Outputs

- Agreement among the represented experts and institutions on proposals for the establishment and structure of a Pacific university network including a work plan,
- A set of detailed recommendations on the objectives, structure and content of a Pacific-owned and Pacific-driven STI policy framework – including its contribution towards the Pacific Plan and engagement with other relevant development frameworks and initiatives (such as for example PACE-NET).

Communication of outputs

- Outputs will be presented to governments at the appropriate regional gatherings – STAR conference, PACE-NET Key Stakeholders Workshop, Pacific Forum, Meeting of Pacific Ministers of Education, etc.) for approval and decision on implementation; and would serve as a basis for strengthening EU-Pacific science, technology and innovation collaboration.

Target Group /Participants

- A relatively small and focused event with participation by 20-25 experts - the final number depending on budget - with the understanding that this is a strategic workshop
- Invited experts will be selected from Pacific universities, national and regional research bodies, CROP agencies, relevant government ministries (research, education, fisheries agriculture, telecommunications); as well as small number of invited Pacific-external experts to share experiences and serve as resource persons