

## Introduction:

- TeiTei Taveuni Farmers organisation
- Formed by farmers in 2009 , challenged by MOA to address problem of declining yields in our TARO production

## Go back 15 yrs mid 90's

- Neighbouring country Samoa stuck by Dalo leaf blight, variety of dalo planted for export Tau sala very susceptible to leaf blight  
6months wiped out the Taro industry
- ` FIJI TAKES OVER- lucrative market NZ and AUSTRALIA
  
- Taveuni known as the garden island of Fiji for our fertile volcanic soils Well known for taro production in FIJI
- Farmers rushed in, from subsistence farming and supplying a small local market, scaled up production to meet the huge export demand.
- Taveuni supplied 75% of export market by early 2,000's
  
- By 2010 Taveuni had the highest rate of deforestation in Fiji, and we didn't even have a timber industry, YES, we were cutting or just ring barking trees to plant more Taro,
  
- The island of Taveuni is basically a cigar shaped ridge 40km in length and 15km at its widest point, so the arable land is all sloping, downward to the ocean
  
- In their ignorance, farmers were indiscriminately using chemical fertilisers and weedicides in their quest to improve and increase their yields
  
- THIS WAS THE CHALLENGE THAT WE FACED IN 2010
  
- We were informed by the Agriculture Dept., that we had degraded our soils and we needed to change our farming practices, to try to build up soil fertility.
  
- Along came a someone who was promoting mineral based fertilizer and what he called Biological Farmer or Farming with Nature.
  
- TeiTei Taveuni worked together with Mike Smith of Organic Matters Foundation to develop Soil Schools for our Taveuni Farmers
  
- Series of 12 soil schools were held over a 2-year period 2011-2012 for interested Farmers (paid \$20 to attend) Funded through a UNDP GEF grant
  
- 2012 we partnered with AVI, and a volunteer who was with us for three years, he established farm groups throughout the island led by farmers who had completed

**soil school and their interested neighbours. These groups have been the foundation for TeiTei Taveuni.**

- **2012 - 2015 we were annexed to the Pacific health project participatory research into dalo production**
- **Soil tests throughout the island as part of the Pacific soil Health Project.**
- **2015 Australian Aid (Fiji community development fund)- grant to finance a Farmers Resource centre and a rotating fund which allowed us to import mineral based fertilisers which we then sold to Taveuni farmers.**
- **The Farmers resource centre building was provided by the Ministry of Agriculture.**
- **2010 we were part of the founding members of PIFON Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network**
- **2012 MTCP project**
- **2013-2018 MTCP2 Project (IFAD)**
- **2019- COVID 2021 AAD (FAO)**
- **2019-2024 FO4ACP**
- **2022-2024 Landcare (ACIAR) FNU, MOA, Farmers group**
- **2024 -DFAT (AusAID) Climate Resilient Farming Project**

How have we built partnerships to scale up sustainable farming practices on Taveuni?

1. Having a core of dedicated members who have the passion to help themselves and others
  2. As a group always manage to come to a consensus, through respect for each other ,our core group are made up of farmers with different size farms, racial, religious and educational backgrounds
  3. As farmers we have hands on knowledge and experience of the problems faced by farmers, as we live and are part of the same community.
  4. We try our best to deliver on time and within budget, have our accounts audited yearly
  5. With the MTCP-F04ACP projects having developed the capacity of the farm organisation as one of the core activities we have been able to computerise our accounts system, which has given our organisation credibility with donors
  6. We have worked honestly and fairly with our farming communities and have developed trust with them
  7. Always listened to farmers and have planned our activities to meet these needs.
- BOTTOM-UP APPROACH**

**HAVE DEVELOPED TRUST AND CONFIDENCE OF THE DONORS AND THE FARMERS.**

**Changing Farmers mindsets** is a huge challenge as the opposing forces of doing right, **FARMING SUSTAINABLY** and **the need to provide for their families**

- Farmers will more likely change practices if they have actual examples
- We have a system of lead farmers in each of our farmer groups
- **WE NEEDED TO HAVE EXAMPLE or MODEL FARMS**
- Within each of our projects have developed and added to our **model farm** in each of the farming areas with the idea of these farms becoming learning HUBS where farmers can come and witness and learn sustainable farming practices
- These model farms are encouraged to plant a diversity of crops rather than just the **2 major crops TARO and Kava which has been the norm**
- **SHORT TERM CROPS (VEGETABLES ), MEDIUM TERM CROP (TARO 6-7months), different varieties of Taro, Fruit Trees ( Banana, Papaya, Guava – 1 year), longer term crops , Fruit Trees and Timber trees.**
- **Integrate Livestock into their farming system: chickens for eggs and manure, goats, cattle meat manure**
- Each farm will differ due to its terrain and size, but general principle remains= focus on building soil organic matter
- Agro forestry principles, cover crops, crop rotations, minimise use of weedicide, mineral based inputs according to soil test results
- We promote farmer to farmer sharing exchanges, locally as well as regionally as farmers learn better from each other
- We will work together with researchers, financial institutions and with groups who have soil regeneration as one of their pillars.

**FOR FARMERS SEEING IS BELIVING, we have to have successful examples, not specifically financially successful, But one who you know whose legacy is leaving behind a healthy, biologically diverse environment for future generations.**

**Vina'a (Thankyou)**