



COUNTRY UPDATE

TONGA

November 2022

PIRAS is a collaboration between the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Australian Government that supports economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the Pacific.

Our target is to **benefit 20,000 households** across the Pacific countries of **Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga** and **Vanuatu**.

Duration 2021-2024

Learn more about PIRAS in the Pacific [here](#).



What we do

The Pacific Islands Rural and Agriculture Stimulus Facility (PIRAS) supports COVID-19 food system and economic recovery by prioritizing food self-reliance, improving local nutrition and developing sustainable, equitable agricultural livelihood opportunities for rural communities.

In Tonga, PIRAS complemented the Tonga Rural Innovation Project Phase II (TRIP II), in the form of a COVID-19 recovery intervention across 62 communities, to tackle the urgent agricultural needs emerging from the January 2022 Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami by:

- ✓ Providing working capital for land preparation
- ✓ Establishing nurseries and demonstration plots
- ✓ Providing farmers with seedlings, planting materials, labor-saving tools and agricultural inputs
- ✓ Providing technical training on vegetable growing, seed and seedling production, direct propagation, composting and improved farming practices

Key successes in Tonga

- ✓ Tackled vegetable and seed shortages across 62 targeted communities
- ✓ Exceeded the original country target of 3,200, reaching 3,653 farmers
- ✓ Indirectly benefitted more than 19,000 people
- ✓ Established and equipped 92 home gardens across Tongatapu, 'Eua and Ha'apai
- ✓ Established 62 community farms, 4 community nurseries and 6 multiplication and demonstrations plots
- ✓ Prepared 1,810 acres of land to establish 134 cluster farms and to support 718 individual tax allotment farms
- ✓ Anecdotal evidence is emerging that PIRAS in Tonga increased the availability and affordability of healthy foods



Spotlight: Tonga's Community Farms: Harvesting hope and health

When Tonga's January 2022 Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami destroyed Selu Taufu's home in Kanokupolu, Tongatapu, her family moved into the community hall. Here, Selu, her husband Tali, their three children, and other displaced families are beginning to rebuild their lives after the disaster.

Selu belongs to a women's group that received assistance from PIRAS to establish a community farm behind the hall. Through MORDI Tonga Trust, PIRAS Tonga's implementation partner, farms like these have been established in 62 communities. PIRAS provided land preparation activities, fencing materials, quality planting materials, tools and technical training.

Selu explained that prior to COVID, it was already expensive to buy vegetables at the market. Now, fewer import shipments coupled with rising fuel costs have increased vegetable prices even more. PIRAS community farms are proving to be an important remedy—increasing availability, affordability and access to vegetables across these islands. "At harvest time we had so many vegetables. We shared it with the families we live with here at the hall, and other families and friends in the community," said Selu. Like her, PIRAS community farmers across Tonga have prioritized the health and food security of their communities by sharing their harvest with those most vulnerable: the elderly, single woman-headed households and people living with disabilities.

Importantly, community farm members across 'Eua and Tongatapu report that they are now



Selu Taufu on the women's community farm in Kanokupolu.

consuming far more meals that include vegetables—from about two per month to *one to two per day*.

Not only are community farmers spending less on purchased vegetables, but they are often able to sell their surplus. One community used sales profits to purchase a copy machine for a local school, another created 20 scholarships to enable young people to attend school.

The relatively small investments in community gardens have had outsized impacts so far: economic savings, improved diets, community cohesion and resiliency—and hopefully—tangible health benefits.

Partners

- ✓ Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
- ✓ Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovations Tonga Trust (MORDI TT)
- ✓ Tonga Rural Innovation Project Phase II (TRIP II)

The Pacific Islands Rural and Agriculture Stimulus Facility (PIRAS) is supported by the Australian Government and IFAD