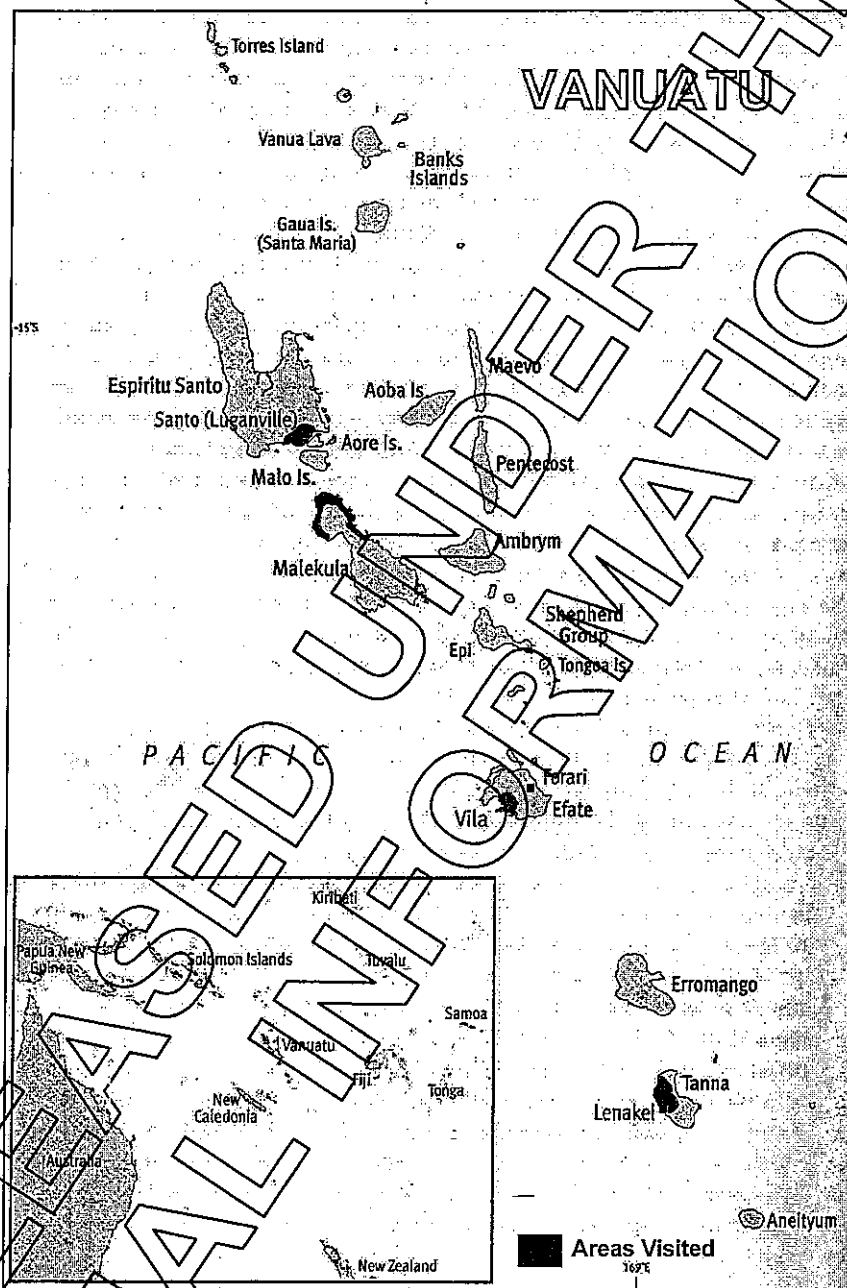


# REVIEW OF THE VANUATU FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION (FSA)



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## Executive Summary

### Background

Agriculture provides employment for the vast majority of people in the rural sector who make up approximately 80% of the total population. In urban areas, where possible, many residents continue to grow a portion of their food needs. Agriculture is and will remain into the foreseeable future the principal field of employment and source of livelihood.

### Positive FSA Achievements

With the relatively small resources at its disposal FSA addresses the broader issues facing the position of agriculture in Vanuatu with vision and determination. Unfortunately it was not possible to make a participatory assessment of the effectiveness of FSA work but activities observed in the field and comments volunteered by reliable informants give substance to the view that "farmers helping farmers" is more than a slogan. Besides fostering a very positive and supportive relationship with DARD FSA has undertaken valuable work designed to:

- promote the standing of agriculture in the wider community;
- off-set rural-urban migration by making it possible for farmers to secure a better livelihood and income from farming;
- develop sustainable agriculture by keeping alive knowledge relating to conservation farming relating to agro-forestry, alley cropping and the use of legumes;
- encourage food security (higher yielding root crops including wild yam);
- mentor cash cropping (spices, especially vanilla);
- secure funds so it can engage in land stabilization and rehabilitation work.

Work on the NZAID funded project with the RTCs 'Increasing Rural Incomes through Farm Innovations (IRI)' has run reasonably well to now. Work commenced with attention being given to FSA funded RTCs and women's groups on Tanna and since then units on Malekula listed under the NZAID GFA have been contacted. Promised visits have been made and inputs provided on time. Synergies with individual farmers explored in the course of field visits illustrated the hands-on approach of FSA and their commitment to building networks, spreading information relating to the processing (curing) and marketing of vanilla (not included in the GFA) and challenging students to take agriculture more seriously.

### Matters for Attention

#### IRI Performance

There are several shortfalls. Staff are being asked to do more than they can easily manage. IRI is not the only project currently on FSA books. Apart from on-going work with the spice programme FSA is running an FAO funded vegetable production project that engages them directly with farmers.

Management is a serious challenge. FSA has not used the GFA grant to optimize either efficiency or effectiveness. Reports are handed in late. Despite the call for more printed information the budget allocation to this aspect of their work is under spent. For reasons that remain unclear the allocation to administration has not been used to employ either book keeping or managerial assistance.

***Institutional Strengthening.***

If FSA had a stronger administrative and managerial capability that was less dependent on a few individuals, a clear ideological foundation provided in the form of a written constitution this would result in better planning. If FSA was a legal entity as a registered trust, association or NGO this would give potential donors more confidence in considering FSA as a partner. If funding became easier, FSA would have greater continuity of work, be able to initiate its own activities rather than fall back so frequently on contract work, its contribution to agricultural development spread more evenly over a longer period and smooth the path toward objectives in a manner that would avoid the start-stop nature of its present situation.

**Recommendations**

**NZAID.** It is recommended that NZAID give serious consideration to further investment in both the current work and future sustainability of FSA.

1. Get FSA to make a quarterly oral report to the programme office in advance of submitting a written report.
2. Negotiate a reduction in the geographical spread of target islands listed in Schedule One of the GFA
3. Clarify for FSA exactly what it must do to meet NZAID Cross-Cutting Issues
4. Provide appropriate managerial advice to enable FSA to better handle administrative tasks.
5. Assist FSA to think through the implications of employing a female extension worker by asking the advice of Dorosday Kenneth.
6. If FSA chooses to consider the future alternatives (below), provide FSA with the wherewithal to seek legal and planning advice to explore the implications of these.
7. Consider employing a consultant who could provide managerial advice and over the term of his/her appointment act as a facilitator to run a series of strategic planning sessions with FSA and its friends

**FSA.** It is recommended that FSA

8. Renegotiate the GFA to reduce the spread of target islands, make a case for including Tanna, and discuss what NZAID could do to help FSA improve their book keeping, report writing and record keeping.
9. Employ a woman extension officer to enhance the effectiveness of their work with women's groups. The implications of such a step should be discussed with Dorosday Kenneth
10. Employ or contract an administration person with book keeping skills who is literate enough in the use of computers to keep accounts, enter monitoring information and store data
11. Occasionally use participatory tools to critically monitor whether their "farmers helping farmers" approach is working in a fully interactive way.
12. Hold talks with Berton Jones of VRDTCA to coordinate the preparation of agriculture resource materials that will enable partner RTCs to do a better job of teaching the subject.

## REVIEW OF THE VANUATU FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

13. Talk with James Wasi about working with DARD to publish agriculture teaching resources, both those developed with VRDTCA and those that are a part of FSA extension work.
14. Seek the advice of NZAID managers on what FSA must do to meet NZAID Cross-Cutting Issues.
15. Make sure the names and skills of FSA staff are included on the national list of experts being prepared as part of the Technical Vocational Education and Training Strengthening Program.
16. Within this year and with the help of a facilitator, friends and colleagues prepare a strategic plan for the FSA and delineate the preferred future of the Association.
17. The current goal and objectives should be evaluated as part of this review and the resulting text written into draft foundation documents
18. With the help of a business advisor adopt a programme management system based on an annual cycle of monitoring, evaluation (learning) and planning.
19. Put in place a new institutional arrangement that will provide both a framework for increased funding and enhance FSA's capacity to take on new work. The following alternatives are offered for consideration.
  - *Alternative 1. Steady as it goes.* FSA continues to work as it does now as an informal voluntary agency, and make the necessary changes to meet basic NZAID and other likely donors requirements relating to matters like basic documentation and Cross-Cutting Issues.
  - *Alternative 2. NGO* The most direct path to establishing a firm professional identity would be to transform the institutional capacity of FSA from the current team of extension workers into a stand alone, fully registered NGO with its own office, administrative and legal infrastructure.
  - *Alternative 3. SAPV Umbrella Proposal,* work with SAPV to build on and formalise the current relationship. Under such an arrangement the SAPV may like to consider establishing two subordinate units. Under this arrangement:
    - SAPV would continue in its present form open to those who wish to pay the joining fee. SAPV would form an umbrella organisation consisting of FSA and a consulting unit.
    - FSA would become affiliated as a semi - independent, not for profit, outreach trust, or agricultural extension organisation with its own board, owned by the SAPV. SAPV would provide accommodation, administrative services such as reception, book keeping and the like for FSA and SAPV might like to also consider forming a,
    - Consulting Unit with registered consultants, listed and approved by the SAPV (and the TVET) who could choose to undertake either paid voluntary work for the FSA and, for an appropriate fee, provide professional commercial services to visiting aid agencies, commercial enterprises and the like. A portion of this fee would go towards meeting the administrative costs of the SAPV and work of FSA.

## Glossary

AGS	Rural Infrastructure and Agro-Industries Division of FAO
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDE	Centre for the Development of Enterprise (Brussels)
CRP	Comprehensive Reform Programme (Vanuatu, 1993)
CUSO	Now CUSO-VSO Canadian member of the North American international VSO Federation
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation, United Nations
FSA	Farm Support Association
GEF-UNDP	United Nations Development Programme small enterprise grant fund
IBSRAM	International Board for Soil Research and Management
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDG	International Development Group, Group within New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade which controls the NZAID programme
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements
IRI	Increasing Rural Incomes through Farming Innovations Project
MAQFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Quarantine, Forestry & Fisheries
MFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
NARES	National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NZAID	New Zealand International Assistance Programme
PSA	Plantation Support Association
PTC	Plantation Training Centre, Montmaro, Efate
SAPV	Syndicat Agricole et Pastoral de Vanuatu
UNELCO	Union Electrique du Vanuatu
NZODA	New Zealand Overseas Development Assistance (Used before NZAID)
PAA	Priorities and Action Agenda 2006-2015
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
POPACA	Projet d'Organisation des Producteurs Agricoles pour la Commercialisation Associative
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
REDI	Rural Economic Development Initiative project
SPC	South Pacific Commission
IPGRI	International Plant Genetic Resources Institute
VAC	Vanuatu Agricultural College
VQLD	Vanuatu Quarantine and Livestock Department
VARTC	Vanuatu Agriculture Research and Technical Centre
VRDTCA	Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centre Association
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program
DSAP	Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific
RPFS-FAO	Regional Project for Food Security-FAO

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## REVIEW OF THE VANUATU FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION (FSA)

### CONTENTS

A. BACKGROUND .....	1
Purpose & Objectives .....	1
Methodology .....	2
B. CONTEXT .....	5
C. FSA: THE ORGANISATION .....	6
History .....	6
The Organisation .....	7
Foundation Documents .....	8
Goal, Objectives and (Activities) .....	9
Contracts & Projects .....	10
NZAID's Six Cross-cutting Issues .....	17
D. EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS .....	20
Objective 1. Responses to Questions about FSA .....	21
Objective 2 What has been learnt about the way FSA works? .....	27
Objective 3 What has been learnt from the current GFA? .....	29
Objective 4 Aspects for Improvement .....	31
Objective 5 Recommendations .....	32
What should NZAID do? .....	32
What should FSA do? .....	33
Concluding Remarks .....	35
Appendix 1 Grant Funding Arrangement, Schedule One (PDF) .....	37
Appendix 2 Participatory Evaluation Plan: Vanuatu FSA .....	38
Appendix 3 Terms of Reference .....	60
Appendix 4 Annotated References .....	65
Appendix 5 People Interviewed and Institutions Visited .....	69

## A. BACKGROUND

1. Arrangements were made for a "joint review of FSA's work [back to 1990 and] within the first year" (Appendix 1, Point 1) of a three year Grant Funding Arrangement (GFA) signed between NZAID<sup>1</sup> and the FSA in November 2008. This review, scheduled for September – November 2009 was delayed by a medical emergency. The task was rescheduled and carried out between 13 March and 10 April, 2010 a total of 27 days in Vanuatu.
2. Rescheduling to the next most convenient time for FSA moved the visit into the end of the wet cyclone season. As a consequence several planned visits had to be abandoned on-route, one to north Tanna (muddy road) and the other Pektel Rural Training Centre (RTC), northwest Malekula (flooded river). Of the six RTCs FSA has worked with using NZAID funding only two were visited, both on Malekula (Ngaim RTC, Uripiv Island; Morobian RTC, Wowo). Three projects visited on Tanna have been funded by FSA from their own resources (Lomae RTC, Napit RTC in Middle Bush; and Lorakou not far from Lenakel). Only one women's group was visited (Brenue, not far from Lakatoro, Malekula).

### Purpose & Objectives

3. FSA wanted the review to make an assessment of their work over the past two decades that would provide them with an independent evaluation that might be used to:
  - recommend FSA's work to other donors and extension agencies;
  - further promote proven innovations developed and/or trialed in Vanuatu over the years and make them more readily available to farmers;
  - lead to the wider use of sustainable agricultural practices that reward farmers with better returns; and,
  - suggest ways in which FSA's work might be improved.
4. NZAID had several objectives (outlined in the GFA Appendix 1) to review the current MFAT funded FSA work plan, where necessary adjust it, and give attention to "informal plans for a longer term partnership between FSA and NZAID". As part of this work FSA activities would be subject to examination under the protocols to which NZAID works including:
  - OECD / DAC Evaluation Criteria relating to effectiveness, efficiency (including timely and optimum use of human and capital resources), relevance to farmer needs and government planning priorities, sustainability of introduced innovations, impact of the investment (Appendix 2: 39-40);

<sup>1</sup> Since 2010 NZAID is used to describe New Zealand's programme for international aid and development rather than the group that manages the programme. The NZAID programme is managed by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). NZAID remains the acronym by which the aid programme is known.

## REVIEW OF THE VANUATU FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

- NZAID Cross – Cutting Issues relating to humans rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability, peace building, conflict prevention, governance, HIV/AIDS and disabilities (Appendix 2: 40-41);
- Meeting the five Objectives written into the proposed *Participatory Evaluation Plan* (Appendix 2: 41-44) prepared in advance of the consultant's arrival in Vanuatu in negotiation with the NZAID Evaluation Unit which includes the rationale to place FSA work in the Bennett Hierarchy in which "Evidence of program impact becomes stronger as the hierarchy is ascended" (Bennett 1975: 10).

### Methodology

5. The review was carried out jointly by Dr John McKinnon for NZAID and Mr Peter Kaoh for FSA. Field visits were made to Malekula (4 overnights), Santo (3) and Tanna (3). The balance of the consultants' time (17 overnights) was spent largely in Port Vila visiting interested parties and writing the first draft of this report for circulation to, and discussion with the Vanuatu Steering Committee<sup>2</sup> before the NZAID consultant left Vanuatu.
6. The visits around Vanuatu were scheduled and facilitated by Peter Kaoh who:
  - accompanied the consultant throughout the visit;
  - arranged village stop-overs and visits to farmers, government officers, NGO staff and other interested people;
  - where necessary provided translation from English to Bislama;
  - listened to critical comments made by the consultant throughout the tour and provided informed feed-back; and,
  - was himself a major source of information on the work of FSA.
7. To allow for open discussion Peter did not participate in most interviews. People interviewed spoke critically and were constrained neither by loyalty nor fear of offence to state their views about what they had received and what they wanted from FSA. Much of the advice given to the visiting consultant was written into this report and first discussed with him.
8. When the review proposal was written it was the visiting consultants opinion that the work of FSA could best be evaluated by following a participatory approach using tools drawn from Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) in which communities of client farmers would be asked to:-
  - Prepare a social map so the socioeconomic and well-being ranking of beneficiary households could be identified to test for bias towards the better off and those most capable of helping themselves;
  - construct a Venn diagram to give an institutional position for FSA, RTC's and women's groups to find out where they sit within the community and what people think of them;
  - use pair-wise ranking and matrix scoring to prioritise and rank FSA's innovations within the context of crop and husbandry choices made by farmers themselves rather than what FSA considers, if not best for

<sup>2</sup> For NZAID: Jimmy Nipo. For FSA: Charles Rogers, Peter Koah.

## REVIEW OF THE VANUATU FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

farmers, what FSA happens to be in a position to offer as proven technologies.

9. Very soon after the consultant started face to face discussions with FSA it became apparent that FSA did not support the use of PLA tools as originally planned and it was agreed that they would only be used selectively as time and relationships permitted.<sup>3</sup> As it turned out the places in which provision had been made to stage participatory exercises could not be reached because of a flooded river (Pektel RTC, northwest Malekula) and poor road conditions (north Tanna). The following observations were made in the course of early visits which anticipated findings and became part of an incremental approach in which the interaction between deliberately pursued tasks and the existential realities of fieldwork constantly changed the platform on which the evaluation was conducted.

- FSA staff may not be familiar with PLA/PRA approaches or tools but nevertheless the attitudes and behaviours they bring to the field and the willingness of field staff to share information, living conditions, and as ni-Vanuatu, respect local customs and practices, is exemplary.
- Field staff visit rural areas as holders of special knowledge, experts whose job it is to share this information with those less well informed: what in participatory discourse is called a top-down approach. The relationship is between the bearer of special knowledge and those who lack it. All interactions observed were marked by a mutual familiarity and respect.
- In the past FSA has worked with clusters of farmers and villages but always as an agency wanting to share special agricultural knowledge rather than as a development agency faced with the challenge of finding out what people want. As a farmers organization FSA listens to farmers and on the basis of this on-going dialogue assumes it knows what farmers want. The consultant would have welcomed the opportunity to check this assumption.
- The FSA definition of the term farmer is open and clients may range from an urban dweller willing to join the Projek Belong Ek and invest in egg layers or isolated vanilla growers looking for help with the curing and marketing of a special crop such as vanilla.
- The Spice Network, a group of more than 200 certified organic producers spread over seven islands is FSA's forte. Within this group the cultivation of vanilla is the most prominent. FSA provides an umbrella organization that links small holder producers as far away as Tanna with a benevolent commercial enterprise Venui Vanilla<sup>4</sup> on Santo run by Piero Bianchessi. Apart from extension advice on cultivation, care and curing of vanilla FSA works as a facilitator and buyer which links producers to the market.

<sup>3</sup> PRA is known in Vanuatu. The NZ funded RSTP (c.1995-1999) used it extensively. The DSAP project in which FSA became an important partner commenced work in 2003 with PRA exercises. It has been used as a planning tool by agencies such as the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP). FSA has always been more comfortable with agricultural work of a more technical nature.

<sup>4</sup> Venui Vanilla subsequently told the visiting consultant that it "is very hard to quantify the international market, particularly the organic one where you have a very large number of small buyers. The last price they were working to was currently fluctuating between "50 to 60 USD LANDED in Europe (packaging and freight included)" (Piero Bianchessi in an email to John McKinnon 23/04/2010)

## REVIEW OF THE VANUATU FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

- Assistance is given without regard for the wealth or lack of wealth of the client but a closer examination of 'beneficiaries' would likely show that it is the better educated, the better off who are most interested in working with FSA.
- The RTC's included in the FSA's International Development Group – NZAID funded project, Increasing Rural Incomes Through Farming Innovations (IRI) were chosen for the priority they give to agricultural training and are largely located in areas in which FSA has worked before.
- At least two field visits provided what could have been an opportunity to work with RTC students to do a scoring exercise but they are young, have little knowledge of previous FSA work, and speeches of welcome, brief lectures promoting a higher profile for agriculture and the silence of students advised against any likely success from such a short term engagement.
- Good participatory work must be negotiated ahead of time rather than announced and commenced immediately. The fact that FSA had several months warning but did not act to prepare the ground for the proposed PLA work is more a comment on how they work than a demonstration of neglect. Their attitude, behaviour and wish to share may stand with the best of PLA values but PLA tools are not listed among the skills they bring to extension work.

10. A decision was taken to work with traditional methods such as direct observation of farmer and trial fields, interviews, focus group discussions and review all available documentation, although this meant largely working with received opinion rather than independently gathering objective data for triangulation. As has been pointed out by those engaged in the evaluation of extension work - 'the difficulty and cost of obtaining evidence of accomplishments increases' as the evaluator attempts the ascent of the Bennett Hierarchy (1975) from basic inputs to implementation, implementation to farmer participation, farmer participation to establishing farmer reaction and opinion of what has been done, farmer reaction to establishing what knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations farmers have acquired and so forth (see Appendix 2: 11). Nevertheless, the consultant believes he has recorded observations of substance in which he holds a high level of confidence and welcomes questions, critical comments and correction.

## B. CONTEXT

11. Farming is of primary importance to the people of Vanuatu. Although government economic summaries highlight the central role of tourism with the principal contribution of 72% made to GDP by the services sector<sup>5</sup> and only 18% generated by agriculture,<sup>6</sup> the monetary bias of national accounts does not indicate the true social and political significance of farming to the nation. Approximately 80% of the population of Vanuatu live in rural areas and are involved in agricultural activities which provide the larger part of domestic food needs. ni-Vanuatu resident in urban and peri-urban informal housing continue, where possible, to farm and supplement what are often quite marginal cash incomes (Chung & Hall 2002).
12. The urban market for agricultural produce is growing with the size of the towns and though limited to Port Vila and Luganville has contributed to monetary economic growth. Vanuatu has a youthful, fast growing population of which 60% is under the age of 25 years. Young people are mobile and fertility rates are high. Movement from rural to urban areas combined with this high fertility rate has resulted in a very high urban growth rate in excess of 4%. In 1999, the urban population was 40,100, or 21 per cent of the national population. In 1989 the urban total reached 26,300 people. Chung and Hall estimated that if the growth rate of 4% was maintained, the urban population would have reach 60,000 by 2008 and 80,000 by 2016 (Chung & Hall 2002)
13. The economic benefits flowing from the growth of the urban produce market is off set by the fact that an increasing number and proportion of people live in informal settlements characterised by substandard accommodation, low income, inadequate access to clean water and sanitation, education, health care and other basic services (Chung & Hall 2002). This is associated with an extremely high Gini coefficient which measures income inequality. According to Blazeley and Mullen (2006) the "Vanuatu coefficient has been calculated at between 0.56 and 0.58 – the highest in the world". These conditions indicate the emergence of a classic dual economy which presents a considerable challenge to the nation to improve links to, an opportunities in, the market or in Port Vila and Luganville risk becoming "overwhelmed by social, economic and environmental problems" (Chung & Hall 2002). High levels of income inequality are "bad for growth ...create conflicts, social tensions and instability" (Blazeley & Mullen 2006: 4)
14. The importance of the rural agricultural sector cannot be measured using only monetary criteria and the systems of analysis which apply to the formal economy. Adequate links to markets in the form of the basic infrastructure of roads, transport, and marketing services are largely absent. In such a situation it makes sense for farmers to focus their attention on subsistence

<sup>5</sup> As referenced in the government report immediately below "Increased tourism has had direct and indirect contributions to the service sector, with the flow on to local labour and producers of goods and services used in transport, communication, wholesale and retail trade, banking and insurance and hotel and accommodation services."

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.governmentofvanuatu.gov.vu/component/content/article/74-2010-budget.html>

<sup>7</sup> The Gini coefficient is used to measure income inequality. Zero represents perfect equality and 1 represents infinite income inequality. A coefficient above 0.5 indicates the potential challenge to stable and sustained growth

production, secure their own food supply and optimise food security. The on-going need for cash to cover costs relating to anything from schooling, imported food and kerosene to the purchase of mobile phones, chainsaws, outboard motors, other vehicles and fuel provides a constant incentive to increased participation in the formal economy and potential innovators can always be found who are willing to try something new.

15. For many reasons it remains worthwhile to invest in agriculture. In Vanuatu FSA has trained young people, found employment for them, placed them in situations in which they can get experience relating to new farming systems, forged links to successful commercial enterprises like Vonui Vanilla on Santo; for a small commission FSA acts as a buyer to whom farmers can sell their cured vanilla. FSA extension workers employed on IRI business keep an eye out for vanilla growers and curers on Tanna who have been unable to find a market and go out of their way to recruit them into the FSA spices network field service. This positive and largely voluntary investment of time and effort is pioneering a place for vanilla in the economy of Vanuatu. It is useful to be reminded on a formal, general international level as Blazeley and Mullen report investment resulting in agricultural growth has a disproportionate, positive impact on the poorest segments of a rural population: "every 1% increase in per capita agricultural output reportedly leads to a 1.6% increase in the incomes of the poorest 20% of the population" (Source: Gallup, Radelet & Warner 1997). Using its limited resources to the full, it is not difficult to see FSA as an important investor in the future of agriculture in Vanuatu and therefore rural wellbeing.

### **C. FSA: THE ORGANISATION**

#### **History**

16. The lean organisation known today as FSA grew out of an earlier group, the Plantation Support Association (PSA). PSA was set up in 1983 with aid and national development support funds to assist ni-Vanuatu landowners run plantations returned to them when Independence was declared. The PSA was set up within a post colonial situation in which the old French planters union/federation/cooperative the SAPV et Pastoral de Vanuatu (SAPV) remained in place though many of its members had departed. The PSA had a constitution and board but was not formally registered as an association. It was committed to providing technical support for farmers unfamiliar with all the skills required to run copra/beef plantations. Financial support was provided by the government, USAID, the Catholic Church and PSA was run by an expatriate manager provided by the Canadian volunteer service CUSO. Gradually it became clear that the new managers were not interested in continuing to run plantations as single on-going enterprises and opted to divide their holdings into smaller units that could be run by extended kin groups or families.
17. This was easier said than done. Traditional owners did not always agree with each other on how the land should be divided and this left a legacy of unsettled disputes which are occasionally manifest in association with public works. For example the Norsup airstrip on Malekula could not be used for some time after it was built because only one of the three claimant landowners had been paid by the government for the land. Following the formal opening of the Chinese donated Agricultural College on Santo in

2007 a similar dispute between landowners delayed the start of teaching. PSA did not become involved in land issues, found it difficult to work with landowning communities and tended to focus on purely technical and managerial aspects of agriculture.

18. By the early 1990s government and foreign funding for PSA was drying up. It was difficult to maintain the overhead costs of a full time manager and bringing the Board together for periodic meetings. In 1992 the Board took an executive decision to continue as an informal, voluntary organization, focus on maintaining field extension work, help individual farmers and families as best they could, cut overheads to a minimum, and operate under a new name, the Farm Support Association (FSA). As financial support further diminished staff took up work with other agencies, FSA activities were scaled back but FSA survived. Over the remainder of the decade, as funding permitted FSA revived their work with projects such as International Board for Soil Research and Management (IBSRAM), Development of Sustainable for Agriculture in the Pacific (DSAP) and Projet d'Organisation des Producteurs Agricoles pour la Commercialisation Associative (POPACA) supported by foreign aid grants.

19. As pointed out by Andrew McGregor in his 1998 review of FSA, the PSA had been closely linked to the Plantation Training Centre (PTC) at Montmarte which was established in 1982 with the help of the USAID International Human Assistance Program. The Director of the PTC was Charles Rogers who was also Vice President of the PSA. Under his influence many PTC graduates became members of the FSA and men like Peter Kaoh and Billy Homai who still work with the organization alongside Charles Rogers remain the key driving force behind the FSA. They and others like John Peter have accepted both redundancy from, and work with, FSA as dictated by the availability of funds. This has built a tough, lean organization with a remarkable cadre of loyal followers who are sometimes employed by FSA and when they are not employed by FSA have found work as government employees and independent farmers. This is not the most effective or efficient way to work and though FSA has reason to be proud of the stalwart manner in which it has gone about helping farmers it also reflects on the severe way FSA staff have been treated rather than managed.

### The Organisation

20. Throughout Vanuatu FSA is held in extremely high regard by all those professionally engaged in agricultural science and extension work. All the senior people in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) have nothing but praise for the complementary role FSA personnel play in extension work<sup>8</sup>. In a country in which by far the majority of citizens are relatively self sufficient, bush fallow farmers who enjoy what has been described as subsistence affluence, then in a general way anybody who cultivates a small garden like many DARD government officials and urban dwellers remain farmers. In a loose way DARD officials can speak not only as experienced professional agriculturalists but as farmers. The banner

<sup>8</sup> This praise is repeated in FAO documents. In reference to how few farmer based organisations are active in Vanuatu a FAO/AGS official writes "Not one of them gets close to the level and capacity of FSA to reach out to small farmers and provide advice." The note goes on to make favourable comments about its cost efficiency and how its good reputation was "confirmed by Government as well as private sector stakeholders". (Rome, Sept. 2009)

under which FSA works "farmers helping farmers" is properly inclusive but what does it mean? Farmers speaking with one voice? From a critical sociological point of view it can also be interpreted as giving agricultural extension workers trained in agricultural science the right to speak on behalf of farmers rather than advising them what to do on the basis of what these clients think. Although the consultant witnessed no such failure in communication the absence of a deliberately interactive approach needs to be critically monitored from time to time using participatory tools.

21. Above all FSA has a reputation for its practical, utilitarian approach to getting things done. Those employed from time to time by FSA have a variable range of academic qualifications and what distinguishes them from formally, usually better qualified senior government extension officers is their apprenticeship training at La Source Plantation at Montmartre, some 5 km east of Vila which on a drastically reduced scale has taken over the function of the earlier Plantation training Centre (PTC). There under the direction of Charles Rogers apprentices are schooled not only in the technical aspects of plant cultivation, animal husbandry and farming systems including alley cropping, sustainable agriculture and land rehabilitation they are taught a culture of "action speaks louder than words".

The role of Charles Rogers as the manager of La Source Plantation in conducting agricultural field trials, providing training for school leavers, setting up and keeping FSA going is absolutely central to what FSA has achieved. Without Charles Rogers it is unlikely that FSA would exist.

### Foundation Documents

22. FSA carried over the PSA Articles of Association (1983). These were to:
- i Provide support and technical advice for types of locally operated farms, who are members.
  - ii Assist members in forming development programmes for their farms.
  - iii Advise and assist members with management and accounts.
  - iv Support and encourage Ni-Vanuatu initiative, including the provision of a forum and lobby for members aspirations.
23. By 1992 PSA had a membership of 60 paid up members. The formation of FSA however marked more than a departure from an agency run under a conventional administrative structure, although provision for paid up membership was retained by FSA this was never core business. The sparse functional culture of the organization which emerged, as if to eschew any form of self promotion came to count all the farmers they worked with as members regardless of whether they had paid a membership fee or not. The objective of spreading good information was more important than financial independence.
24. From the outset PSA worked alongside Syndicat Agricole et Pastoral de Vanuatu (SAPV). Before Independence SAPV, a legally registered organization which largely represented expatriate planters interests to government, imported farm equipment and other inputs and on-sold them where possible, at a price below that of other commercial retailers. Following Independence SAPV membership came to include ni-Vanuatu plantation owners who were new to the business of running plantations. This move was supported by PSA. In a commercial sense nothing had changed. The new plantation managers required continuing access to reasonably priced inputs. With the passing of PSA, SAPV continued to assist FSA clients. Today many on the Board of SAPV continue to have a

close relationship with FSA. The current chairman of SAPV is Charles Rogers who is also the Coordinating Director of FSA. It was a logical extension of this affective tie for SAPV to provide office space to FSA. The relationship of both organisations is closely entwined. For example 'Projek Belong Ek' among the innovations currently promoted by FSA under the NZ sponsored IRI project was first developed on La Source Plantation and recommended to the wider public in a pamphlet issued under the EU sponsored NSA Programme entitled *S.A.P.V. Guide to Layer Management* in 2003. A good case could be constructed to argue that FSA is already an out-reach, not for profit arm of the SAPV.

25. Other agencies provided support for PSA. The PTC at Montmartre had been established just a year before PSA in 1982 with Charles Rogers as director. When it was also subject to budget cuts, Charles Rogers continued to give support to the coterminous FSA by shifting his attention to the La Source Plantation also based at Montmartre to promote the best of science tested agricultural innovations. At La Source work continued on crops, animals, and agricultural technologies and systems that could contribute to the environmental and economic sustainability of farming in Vanuatu. The wide set of activities covered food security to cash cropping: any innovations that would enhance the livelihood of farmers.

### **Goal, Objectives and (Activities)**

In the course of the consultation the following goal and objectives were agreed on. The FSA goal which has been refined over the years has become:

- Under the banner of "farmers helping farmers" make a substantial contribution to the enhancement of environmentally sustainable agriculture in Vanuatu.

26. FSA objectives and (activities) are to get farmers to:

- adopt new, better, appropriate, and environmentally sustainable farming technologies. (Identify, gather and farm trial the best of sustainable, science tested, agricultural innovations and as they are proven make them available to farmers);
- build and maintain a first rate team of agricultural extension advisors (Train agricultural extension staff in the best both technical aspects and practical procedures available so they in turn can become not only excellent agricultural extension workers but also trainers in their own right);
- produce more and better both food and commercial products (Facilitate and support both the dissemination of information relating to sustainable production and marketing of agricultural outputs);
- raise the standing of farming as a profession (Promote a positive attitude towards agriculture by example, through education and concrete profitable achievements that will replace the current negative view that contributes to rural urban migration).
- Achieve (through a sustained engagement with capable farmers) sustained material increases in:
  - rural household incomes;
  - import substitution and/or export of agricultural produce;
  - production of high value commodities.

## Contracts & Projects

27. **Over the past two decades** FSA has sometimes struggled to survive. The number of paid up members has never been great and from time to time FSA has acted decisively to adjust the number of both staff and client farmers to fit its financial situation. What it clearly has achieved by working with outside agencies is an international reputation as a partner NGO with a capacity to deliver inputs on time; place well trained staff in the field who, although they are not paid a per diem, make scheduled field visits; undertake promised tasks and achieve agreed outputs.<sup>9</sup> It has also remained quite small (a extension staff of no more than three at a time); worked well within its capacity; kept overheads to a minimum (no full time administrators, no vehicles). A high price has been paid for this: parsimoniousness: the loyalty of staff has been seriously tested and employees given no option but from time to time accept financial hardship; FSA is not well managed, has not kept good records, does not follow normal NGO management practices, not developed a plan for growth and if anything has deliberately limited its role, and as staff age, may well lose momentum<sup>10</sup>.

The list of contracts entered into and projects completed is impressive though not always rewarding for FSA<sup>11</sup>.

- **Management Advisory Services to Mapbest Plantation (1993 – 1997)** In 1993 the Vanuatu Cooperative Federation bought this copra, cocoa cattle and vanilla plantation in eastern Malekula. FSA was retained to provide technical advice in exchange for 2% of the plantation revenue and a fee of 5,000 vtd/day. Although the financial performance of the plantation improved FSA was never paid for its input. Largely because of the lack of administrative staff to follow the matter up FSA did not pursue the issue and in 1997 discontinued the service.

According to the district agricultural officer based at Lakatoro since then Malekula has become a centre of cocoa production in Vanuatu, small holders produce 80% of exports and the island is home to the umbrella organization the Cocoa Growers Association and the Vanuatu Organic Cocoa Trading group sponsored from the Philippines and certified as a Fair Trade operation. Although FSA did not play a role in this on-going success the role FSA has played in the promotion of cocoa as a Bio-Gro

<sup>9</sup> In the course of an interview Francois Japiot, former manager of POPACA II and currently the French government supported advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, Quarantine, Forestry and Fisheries provided an apt hyperbole, that it would be possible to transform agriculture practice in Vanuatu with an extension service made up of ten Billy Homai's, one of the FSA's three extension workers engaged in ISI work

<sup>10</sup> Two senior extension staff now have wives and children based in Port Vila and this makes it increasingly difficult for them to spend long periods in the field

<sup>11</sup> Not all the projects supported by international aid agencies in which FSA has played a part are detailed. Those left out include: Taro Genetic Resources: Conservation and Utilization Project for IPGRI funded by AusAID and SPC, 1999 – 2002; PEP Project; shared farming arrangement for the production of yams and off season pineapples; North Ambrym fruit fly bait spray project and work with REDI. See McGregor 1998 for a description.

licence holder for farmers on Santo and Malo should not be over looked. FSA has played a central role in a similar project centred on spices especially vanilla which replicates this success<sup>12</sup>.

- Organic Agricultural Certificate for Small Holder Groups: an Internal Control service Offered by Farm Support Association (1998 & on-going)** FSA provides a field service for Venui Vanilla which offers vanilla farmers access to organic certification. This enables farmers to sell on a more lucrative market. Full documentation is required, the total cost of bringing in an inspector (usually from overseas) must be met and "each production unit, or farm, has to be inspected...in order for the farm to become certified by a duly recognized and competent body....[it must be possible to trace a] clear and transparent trail from the point of export back to the point of production". Farms producing large quantities earn enough to cover this cost but individual small producers are unable to do so, hence the service offered by FSA in Tanna as a collaboration with Venui Vanilla on Santo. Since 1998 for a cost recovery fee charged against the price paid for the finished product FSA has located and continues to locate farmers, prepare the necessary documentation for Ecocert to carry out field checks and provide certification. FSA has followed this up by buying and on-selling organic vanilla to Venui Vanilla whose direct purchases before this were largely limited to Malo and Santo.
- Cooperation with Venui Vanilla (1996 & on-going).** The operation described above links growers well to the south (Tanna) with a sophisticated commercial buyer Venui Vanilla<sup>13</sup>. This remarkable example of cooperation could not operate in the absence of Venui Vanilla's strong commitment to growth. The consultant was told that Venui Vanilla has paid and is currently paying for the actual certification and most of what is called the Internal Control necessary to ensure that participating farmers can be traced and checked for organic integrity. In the past Venui Vanilla has received some assistance here and there (ie POPACA). As is pointed out above, being able to brand a crop as organic makes a critical difference to profitability. An organic product sells at approximately 10% higher than its non organic counterpart and this makes it possible to cover the higher transport costs incurred in Vanuatu. Properly processed organic vanilla in good condition is currently purchased from Vanuatu farmers for over 3,000vt/kg. (NZD46). Venui Vanilla told the consultant that it "is very hard to quantify the international market, particularly the organic one where you have a very large number of small buyers. The current price Venui Vanilla is working to fluctuates between "50 to 60 USD LANDED in Europe (packaging and freight included)" (Piero Bianchessi in email to John McKinnon 23/04/2010) [www.venuivanilla.com](http://www.venuivanilla.com)
- IBSRAM (1990 – 1997) Alley Cropping for Better Soil Management** The International Board for Soil Research and Management (IBSRAM) is an international organization with an independent Board of Trustees,

<sup>12</sup> This arrangement with Bio-Gro has apparently lapsed. Other hoped for development partnership such as with the Credit Union which was discussed in 1998 as likely arrangement also dropped out of the frame.

<sup>13</sup> Venui Vanilla has received some support in the past from the Brussels based Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE)

created in 1983 with the aim of promoting soil management research with National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES) organizations in developing countries. FSA was engaged in work as a NARES agency, focused on fieldwork with farmers and trialed alley-cropping on Santo and north Pentecost.

The work in Vanuatu was part of the first phase Pacificland Network project which started in 1990. This first phase was funded by the Asian Development Bank, AusAID and the United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration. Since then additional support and assistance has been provided by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation, New Zealand ODA through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Crawford Fund of Australia, and from the EU Pacific Regional Agricultural Programme. The project set up and pioneered work that was followed up by the EU funded project on the Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific (DSAP) With the help of partners such as the Vanuatu Agriculture Research and Training Centre (VARTC), FSA and the Department of the Environment working with IBSRAM carried out:

- o "Research: to test and validate existing knowledge on soil and land management, to investigate factors determining the sustainability land management, and to assist in the development of appropriate technologies and packages.
- o "Capacity-building: to strengthen the capability of national research agencies in undertaking research on sustainable land management.
- o "Network and information: - to strengthen the existing *PACIFICLAND* Network to provide information on sustainable land management. <http://www.fap.org/docrep/x0625e/X0625e11.htm>

In the second phase extension work with FSA was given a higher profile. Peter Kach prepared written reports for publication in the *PACIFICLAND SERIES*. It was in this second phase that IBSRAM was encouraged to enhance a sense of local ownership by giving more attention to participatory planning (Pretty, J.N., 1996. *Sustainability: people's participation and sustainable agriculture*. In: Proceedings of *PACIFICLAND* annual meeting and workshop on sustainable land management in the South Pacific). FSA has continued to put into practice the sustainable techniques first advocated under IBSRAM.

■ **DSAP (2003 – 2006)** The programme Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific (DSAP) was set up to promote and implement sustainable agriculture that will improve food production thereby enhancing food security and income generation in the Pacific. [http://www.spc.int/dsap/about\\_dsap.htm](http://www.spc.int/dsap/about_dsap.htm) It was funded by the European Union and managed by SPC. The programme commenced in 2003 and was implemented in 16 Pacific countries including Vanuatu. From the literature and information available to the consultant at the time of writing it is not clear when it came to an end but given the three year limit placed on EU projects DSAP most probably closed toward the end of 2005 or early in 2006<sup>14</sup>. The project had three components

<sup>14</sup> Information available on the internet (April 2010) does not indicate a termination date.

- Develop appropriate agricultural technologies based on farmer livelihood needs;
- Improve access to agricultural information and its production by making better use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT);
- Build institutional capacity and partnerships with National Agricultural Research and Extension systems (NARES), NGOs, other information providers and farmer and country groups in order to ensure that improved communications would continue to work after the Project closed down.

FSA played a significant role in identifying appropriate agricultural technologies, through its extension work made better information available in the field and worked closely with VARTC the Vanuatu Agricultural Research and Technical Centre. Over the intervening years FSA has maintained this relationship.

Brochures prepared in the early stages of the project indicate work was to be based on farmer preferences and the first step in any engagement would be PRA exercises to identify needs and initiate agricultural work on a trial basis. The technologies returning the best development prospects would then be recommended to other farmers. In Vanuatu PRAs were being run as late as 2005 on Aniwa and Futuna.

Whether the results of PRAs had much influence over what experiments were carried out on research stations is a moot point. Alley cropping which was promoted as a part of DSAP work is a sophisticated form of sustainable conservation farming but as Peter Kaoh noted in his final report on earlier work for IBSRAM in the Matantas trials "people will only adopt alley cropping if they see the problems happening and they want to do something about the problems"<sup>15</sup> It is likely that in this particular case a request for conservation farming arose not out of PRA work but from an abiding and not entirely misplaced belief that scientists know what is best.<sup>16</sup>

Additional information on the work of DSAP is available in Danny Hunter (2007) "Improving production and accessibility of agricultural information through capacity building, networking and partnership in the South Pacific" *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (ITEDICT)* 3:3: 132-135

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<sup>15</sup> The Matantas Alley Cropping Project was conducted in the Big Bay Conservation Area of Santo. Kaoh quoted by McGregor 1998: 13. The consultant has a copy of their PRA report and the remark itself is evidence of a fully interactive participatory awareness of farmers talking to farmers rather than a small handful of "farmers helping farmers by telling them what to do."

<sup>16</sup> In a recent publication Rambo, A. Terry (2009) who formerly held a diametrically opposed position, argues that the new orthodoxy which places local knowledge over scientific thinking does not always serve development objectives very well. It is a position which I believe FSA would agree with.

- **POPACA /FSA Technical Assistance to the Organic Spices Network (Pepper) 2002 – 2003**

FSA worked under contract to POPACA on Santo/Malo, Paama, Ambae, Maewo and Southwest Bay Malekula to locate pepper farmers, train farmers to build their own nursery, got each farmer to plant a minimum of 50 plants, got individual farmers to set up nurseries (maximum 200 plants), and after farmers had planted support trees of *Glyricidia* or small leaf narara, provided pepper cuttings, plastic bags and covers. Final report submitted 20 April 2003

- **POPACA /FSA Technical Assistance to the Organic Spices Network (Vanilla & Pepper) 2007**

Service Contract with POPACA to cover extension work on Malo and Ambae including meetings with farmers, preparation of booklets addressing issues of concepts, standards expected of organic farmers and the associated rules. FSA trained 12 leading farmers and two junior members of staff so that they could assist visiting inspectors to check a sample of 245 small holders. FSA also provided on the spot training to farmers on Tanna, Aneityum, Malekula, Paama and Maewo

- **Melanesian Farmer First Network. 2002 – 2005** This network assists participating organisations develop their capacity to plan and manage projects in sustainable agriculture, community health and development. FSA is the sole Vanuatu partner. Other members include Kastom Garden Association, Solomon Islands; Paru Education Development Centre, Bougainville; and Community Based Health Care, Tari PNG. Given its agricultural science bias FSA is perhaps the most specialised partner in the network. The three year project was self reviewed by the partners in 2004 for lessons learned, what works and doesn't work and how the relationship between NGOs and government might be improved. As perhaps the least institutionalised agency with a limited capacity for or interest in planning, the strategic lessons arising out of the exercise held less value for FSA than the other partners. FSA contributed by presenting examples from its practical achievements in taking a long-term approach to developing extension innovations and fostering a spice network.

28. **Current Projects.** Rather than detail each of these I will reference current work which is being conducted alongside on-going work with the NZ funded IRI and work with Venuei Vanilla .

- **Vetiver Grass Projects.** Sustainable land use using *Vetiver* was originally funded by NZAID (1995 – 2002) on Aneityum. This was a follow-on from the long term NZ erosion control forestry project on that island and was funded to revegetate land so inhospitable that even introduced *Pinus caribaea* could not be established. The importance of control of sediment has now been recognised by a French aid program and is being continued by FSA with input from the original consultant Don Miller now working as a VSA volunteer.

This undertaking could more accurately be called a programme of land rehabilitation and stabilization. On the hilly coast of Aneityum serious

erosion of frequently burnt over vegetation on acidic volcanic soils with a high level of aluminium toxicity resulted in a very acid infertile soil and little or no vegetation which left the surface bare and open to erosion. Severe erosion which left the hills looking like loess badlands resulted in heavy sedimentation and smothering of downstream coral reefs. Rehabilitation work commenced with the creation of terraces created by sediment trapped behind contour rows of *Vetiver*. Soil captured behind the *Vetiver* was planted in a native legume *Acacia spirorbis* which further contributed to stabilization and soil fertility. Over a relatively brief period of six to seven years erosion ceased, the reefs recovered and the appearance of the landscape was transformed into a thickly wooded hillside. In some locations near existing planted *P. caribaea* forest the spontaneous appearance of pine seedlings added to the speed of the recovery.

The use of *Vetiver* has since been extended to Ambae by FSA (Ambae Soil Erosion Control Project), but in the different role of preventing soil and fertility loss from steep gardens, under a GEF-UNDP funded project (2009 – 2011). Experience gained on Aneityum indicates that the contour *Vetiver* hedges will survive the shading and subsequent burning associated with cyclic fallow swidden gardening. These hedges will allow natural terraces to form, reduce soil loss and maintain the ecology of the marine environment which are so important to maintaining healthy fish stocks. Nitrogen fixing trees on these terraces will improve soil fertility.

- **Increasing Rural Incomes Through Farming Innovations (IRI) (2008-2011** NZAID bilateral programme funded by the Ministry of Foreign affairs and Trade (MFAT). This three year project (details in Appendix 1), one of the most recent of FSA's investment undertakings is funded under the NZAID programme and works with rural based women's groups (largely with local church affiliations), and RTCs. The latter fall under the umbrella of the generously supported Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centre Association (VRDTCA). Under the IRI project FSA offers ten tried and proven innovations from which their grass-roots partner may choose three or four options. Of these chosen innovations the cost of one or at most two are provided under the Project 'start up' provision. The Project provides an opportunity for FSA to extend its well established policy of making farm innovations developed on La Source Plantation, Montmarte, Efate available to farmers. The Project is part of this evaluation.

The Project has been running since the 12 November 2008. Two six monthly reports have been prepared and the third which will mark the half way point under the current funding arrangement falls due 14 May 2010. Implementation reflects the very sparse, concrete and practical approach favoured by FSA. Work is conducted on a shoestring, office space is provided by SAPV, FSA owns no cars, and in Port Vila personnel may use their own vehicles<sup>17</sup> but everywhere else rely on

<sup>17</sup> The Associate Director Peter Koah runs a small dilapidated minibus. The Coordinating Director Charles Rogers his own farm pick up. Neither charge the running costs of using their vehicles to FSA or the IRI even when they are undertaking work related to FSA business or the project

public transport. They make promised visits (often unannounced)<sup>18</sup>, deliver promised inputs, remain for as long as it takes to place these in the appropriate place,<sup>19</sup> prepare honest and accurate reports, and Peter Kaoh, responsible for running the project, supervising the activities of the two other members of staff and also does fieldwork and prepares the financial reports.

This admirable culture of FSA is a pared down, 'do-it-yourself' view of the world close to the work ethic known in New Zealand as a characteristic of the Builder Generation. It promotes a tough, no nonsense attitude of 'get out and do it rather than talk about it' that is quite different from both the more structured and regulated expectations brought to contemporary NZAID work and the casual behaviour acceptable in ni-Vanuatu culture. It also has its drawbacks. Work remains a personal commitment rather than a formal institutionalized responsibility. Normal administrative procedures may be seen as an unnecessary impediment to getting on with 'the real work'. When a leading figure is no longer in place momentum can be lost. Those engaged in fieldwork may attempt more than is advisable or necessary. This can lead to inefficiencies. Field visits to specific units may become truncated because other tasks emerging at other sites are found to require more attention than the time allocated. Shortened, abrupt visits to some clients may then become a source of frustration. If left in the hands of beginners financial tasks which are the everyday work of bookkeepers and accountants may take more time than necessary. Preparation of written material for publication is also time consuming and could best be undertaken by specialists like those attached to the publications unit of the extension service of DARD.

These are not inefficiencies of neglect. As is discussed below (Section C) cutting back on the extent of planned work, management, and slightly more financial assistance to cover administrative tasks would go a long way towards increasing efficiency.

- **AGS/FAO Fruit & Vegetable Marketing. Action Plan to Enhance the Capacity of FSA to assist member farmers to market fruits and vegetables. (2009 on-going)** FSA signed a Letter of Agreement (28 October 2009) with the AGS Division of FAO to undertake work to promote the development of entrepreneurship in agricultural support services in Vanuatu. Under this small grant (USD20,000) FSA took on the following tasks:

- Submit a report on the FSA's current business model
- Organize meetings with buyers and growers in the fruit and vegetable sector to develop an action plan to improve links between these two groups
- Implement this plan

<sup>18</sup> Although Vanuatu is increasingly well served by two mobile telephone networks people with phones are not always in range of a transmission beacon, given the difficulty of recharging batteries phones are not always turned on and it is not always possible to inform clients in advance of the exact timing and length of visits.

<sup>19</sup> This may be an hour to plant vines or the four days required to construct a chicken coop.

o Report on work undertaken.

This project is currently underway. The first report on the current business model was due 30 October 2009. A copy of this outlining the history of FSA and its mode of operation was provided to the consultant after he had presented the first draft of his report. Under the action plan FSA undertook to extend its normal way of working with a field officer on tour taking plant materials with him, pass these on to "three leading farmers and some to two of the three RTCs he visits" or conduct a special workshop and follow this up with subsequent visits (FSA "Description of Activities/Services" [n.d.]). The consultant did not see a more specific action plan for this undertaking.

The AGS or Rural Infrastructure and Agro-Industries Division of FAO "advocates and supports the development of entrepreneurship in agricultural support services. FAO members are assisted with appropriate policies, strategies and methodologies for strengthening agricultural support systems and the delivery of services as well as technologies for production and post-production activities. The Division aims to assist farms and agribusinesses in developing managerial and technical skills for supporting production, post-harvest, infrastructural, marketing and financial operations related to developing and improving efficiency, effectiveness, competitiveness, and profitability of agricultural and food enterprises" <http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/>. At the moment there 30 farmers mainly on Efate involved in this project and combined with the demands of IRI the FSA is pressed to meet all of its obligations.

## NZAID's Six Cross-cutting Issues<sup>29</sup>

29. The Cross-cutting Issues listed below identify concerns that are a fundamental part of good development practice and guidelines that are mandatory for all activities conducted under the NZAID programme. A conventional NGO negotiating a project with a local partner across a wide range of issues wisely takes such matters into account. As a classic agricultural extension programme conducted by farm advisors focused on agricultural science, knowledge, systems, technologies and innovations which they see as culturally neutral and value free FSA is less inclined to pay attention to many of the issues listed. They know that agriculture changes impact on people in the society in which they work but that it is up to their clients to decide whether or not to work with FSA and take responsibility for what happens to them. The approach might be described as a form of take it or leave it: FSA helps those who are prepared to help themselves. Largely because of this attitude FSA believes with considerable justification that that they are culturally with, of, and for the farmers of Vanuatu, that they operate within ni-Vanuatu values and constraints, that they do charitable work but they are not a charity. In a manner consistent with the informal nature of FSA they have never felt it necessary to develop a comprehensive set of guidelines that explicitly state how they might deal with each of cross-cutting issues below but this does not mean that they ignore them altogether. Far from it, environmental sustainability is central to all the technologies they recommend to farmers

<sup>29</sup> To avoid repetition OECD/DAC questions relating to performance criteria are not dealt with separately and have been integrated into the text under Section C

and they are a leading cadre in that field. However, if FSA is going to give serious consideration to becoming a fully institutionalized Trust/NGO to secure assured sources of funding it will have to seriously reconsider its casual approach to these guidelines.

30. **Human Rights.** Rather than work to abstract rules of affiliation FSA works within a network of contacts, friendships based on respect and a shared interest in good farming developed over the years without regard for "sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property birth or other status." One of their strongest supporters is a prominent civil servant who happens to be a woman and wants them to strengthen their role in advocacy for farmers (some 50% of whom are women) on the grounds that as long as farming and farmers are held in low esteem so are women. The Association attracts the attention of well educated and altruistic minded people who want to do something for Vanuatu; retains the loyalty of staff who no longer work for the organization; contributes to social cohesion across boundaries of ethno-linguistic affiliation and religion and is dedicated to contributing towards maintaining "a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being" of participating individuals and their families. For instance the wild yam project is a significant contribution to food security. Under this project farmers are encouraged to plant yams under a higher and more dense canopy than that preferred by the cultivated yam. The rationale is that a heavy cyclone is less likely to damage such a crop which may remain in the ground for sometime and provide a source of food when there may be little else. Other strategies include providing instruction on how to breed new varieties of taro rather than replanting old root stock; providing stems of new, more nutritious and higher yielding varieties of *kumala* and deliberately planting them alongside established varieties so that farmers can see and measure for themselves the gains that are made. This is the practice of a basic human right rather than the writing of it.

31. **Gender equality.** FSA work involves travelling alone, sleeping where the day ends and addressing fellow farmers in the nakamal. It reflects the strong gender bias of Vanuatu society which allows men to eat first and women last. Farming may be an occupation shared by men and women with some sensible division of labour concerning which tasks are undertaken (heavy cutting and clearing by men, weeding by women) but there can be no question that the culture subordinates women to men. FSA does not attempt to change this and works within it. They do not consider it to be their business to change it. There should be but there are no women extension workers currently on their staff. According to staff this state of affairs is as much to avoid a situation in which they would have to defend the reputation of a woman appointed to such a position who would automatically be labeled a *sol mit* or prostitute. FSA is very much aware of this challenge. They feel it is not they who discriminate, society discriminates. The NZAID funding and the opportunity to work with Rural Training Centres has given FSA the opportunity to both work with schools that accept young women and men and demonstrate the open and even handedness that field staff bring to their tasks. In a context that allows it FSA treats both co-educational RTCs and women's groups (accompanied by husbands and brothers) as neutral 'units'. The same informed blindness is applied across the board to people regardless of gender, age or disability. Their egalitarian manner was pleasing to witness. In the course of all of the consultants rural visits FSA staff treated clients, students and teachers in an unpatronising manner

which clearly assumed they had all the attributes of normal, healthy and intelligent human beings. At RTC meetings with students young women were just as likely as men to speak their minds. The only two village women interviewed in a formal way who also belonged to a woman's group (Brenue, Malekula) had no hesitation in initiating critical comments on a wide range of topics including the difficulties they had experienced with vanilla and their disappointment with what they had earned. However, the consultant believes that the FSA approach is too passive and FSA is strong enough to risk and protect a young woman appointed to an extension role. Such an appointment would greatly enhance their work and the standing of FSA with women.<sup>21</sup> They would do well to consider developing a gender policy to specifically target women

32. **Environmental sustainability** is a major FSA concern. All their work is environmentally informed such as contour planting, alley cropping, use of *Vetiver* grass, *Gliricidia sepium*, *Mucuna pruriens*, *Acacia spirobis* and the technologies and farm systems that incorporate their use.<sup>22</sup> FSA is second to none. Foreign funded projects have come and gone bringing innovations relating to soil conservation, sustainable farming, maintenance of the environment and so forth but only FSA has remained as a link between better management of the environment and agriculture. As one of few, persistent, on-going agencies with a concern for sustainability FSA has a distinguished history of keeping ecologically sound ideas and practices alive. Concern for sustainability is written into both their goal and objectives and if FSA were to lose senior staff, issues of environmental sustainability would remain high on their agenda.

33. **Peace Building**, FSA has a strong egalitarian culture that promotes equality and sharing, and provides an underlying guideline for all activities. They believe they have no mandate to become involved in conflicts they encounter and prefer to work within a network of trusted clients and associates. One informant referred to this quality of FSA as an 'exclusive club' that takes pride in not being 'important'. The modesty with which FSA conducts its fieldwork activities is exemplary. FSA does not create demands. FSA does not publically either judge shortfalls or announce achievements. FSA accepts what happens and tries to do better next time. FSA neither creates tensions between nor within communities, and does not assume that it is able to resolve differences.

34. **Conflict Prevention**, The issue of jealousy was raised, that by default FSA helps the more outgoing, confident and wealthy householders and this could give rise to some people feeling they had been left out. FSA replied that this was never a position they pursued or endorsed and whenever they were made aware of the potential for conflict quickly offered to those who felt they had been ignored the same service/inputs provided to their established client. This is not so much a policy issue, FSA does not have any policy guidelines in place and does not consider conflict prevention to be their business, they rely on the integrity and reputation of their field staff

<sup>21</sup> McGregor 1998 points out how the FSA focus on spices and garden vegetables are of special interest to women (pp.33-34). Anything which interferes with good communication in matters like this should be tackled

<sup>22</sup> FSA participation in IBSRAM and DSAP in particular gave them a role in extending conservation practices. They keep up with on-going work undertaken by VARTC and related farming systems are still being introduced to farmers.

to respond to these sorts of situations in a sensible way. Peter Kaoh, the Associate Director of FSA is in his own right a Tanna custom chief with considerable experience in resolving village disputes and as the team leader of the NZAID funded component of FSA work is available for advice. The overall policy is to clearly identify ownership of issues and to avoid becoming involved in what they consider to be other peoples business.

35. **Governance.** FSA activities contribute to general governance in a very modest manner. In the absence of a strong government agricultural extension service, limited since 1993 by funding cuts put in place under the Comprehensive Reform Programme (CRP), FSA has taken on a flexible outreach role that enables it to punch well above its weight. FSA's on-going commitment to helping farmers has to some extent off-set the low profile of DARD officials whose activities are limited by transport and manpower allocations, and leaves FSA to maintain a sense that somebody in Vila that is also a friend of DARD cares for what is happening in the agricultural and rural sector. DARD extension officials themselves welcome FSA interest in their various patches and FSA personnel go out of their way to maintain good relationships. The governance practices within FSA itself however remain a challenge. FSA needs to formalize its institutional identity in a way that would make it formally more accountable and transparent, keep better records but how to do this without placing its culture of tough care and flexible responsiveness at risk is something of a conundrum. The leviathan, call it administrative procedure or bureaucracy can be a rigid and difficult beast to live with, especially in a society in which it is affective, personal relationships that count. The fact of the matter is that if it is to step up to the mark as a fully registered NGO FSA must face up to the responsibilities and expectations that are a conventional and accepted part of the aid world.
36. **HIV/AIDS & disabilities.** As indicated in previous paragraphs FSA does not discriminate and is largely unaware of these special issues. Their view would be, asking an agriculturalist what to do about a medical condition is not unlike asking a medical doctor how to plant potatoes. Field personnel could provide sensible advice but would nevertheless be surprised to be asked and are not trained to do this.

## **D. EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

37. The review covers FSA's recent history over the years 1990 to 2010. Given the relatively brief period over which fieldwork was conducted (12 March to 7 April) the consultant has used the MFAT funded project and other FSA IRI work as the primary case study of what FSA is and how it works. There are problems with this. FSA pointed out that IRI marks a change in direction for them and is a completely new project so wherever possible cross reference is made to earlier work. The objectives addressed below appeared in the assessment proposal (Appendix 2) as were the related questions. To facilitate discussion the objectives themselves have been rephrased as questions. Although here and there some recommendations may seem out of place they are picked up and repeated under the appropriate heading. This is largely a consequence of allowing the discussion to follow the sequence laid down in the Participatory Evaluation Plan (Appendix 2).

## Objective 1. Responses to Questions about FSA

This review set out to evaluate the work of FSA since 1990 and the principal complex question asked was: what has worked well and less well, for the Association, beneficiaries and stakeholders?

### Response to descriptive questions

38. The goal, and objectives of FSA have changed over the years from a set of four promises made to members about how the association would serve their interests (1983) to a contemporary, formulated goal and set of objectives (paras 25 & 26). The goal remains the wish to make a substantial contribution to sustainable farming in Vanuatu. For such a small organisation currently with only three full time workers this is an ambitious vision. What has remained constant over the years is a respect for what farmers do, what science can add to indigenous farming knowledge and how the productivity and standing of farming in Vanuatu can be improved.
39. The philosophy to which the FSA is aligned is that of enlightenment thinking, a belief in science and that people regardless of culture and *wantok* are capable of rational thought and if offered ways of improving their lives are capable of deciding for themselves what to accept and what to ignore. The more specific theoretical position to which they hold might be credited to a view of appropriate technology advocated by Mohandas Gandhi and later by E.F. Schumacher in his influential book *Small is Beautiful*. Professional extension work and the promotion of innovation might be traced back to Everett Rogers (*Diffusion of Innovation* 1962 & 1964) but theory does not preoccupy the thoughts of FSA management. Post modern theory might label FSA's belief in scientific empiricism sociologically naïve but for FSA it gives them the confidence to work, produces results and it is results they care about.
40. FSA has an exceptionally strong empirical practical orientation that places most value on working within the limitations and perceived realities of everyday life. They expect their activities and inputs to result in concrete agricultural outputs and they monitor this by paying repeated visits to the farmers with whom they are working, visit fields to see for themselves what has happened. FSA field staff measure outcomes by seeking farmer reactions to, and their opinion of, activities; look at adjacent fields to see if other farmers have adopted the recommended technology and measure farmer response by entering into friendly conversation in which the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations of clients is explored. With so few staff they cannot afford the time to do more than this. The emphasis falls on getting inputs out to farmers, finding out what is going on by direct observation, getting implementation running smoothly and talking to farmers wherever they find them.
41. It is FSA's experience on the ground that distinguishes them from other Vila based NGOs. VRDTCA may support RTC's but from what the consultant was told VRDTCA with a much bigger staff do not visit their field partners very often. Vila based conservation groups may monitor the environment, advocate for better governance to regulate land use and better manage fisheries, report to international forums but it is FSA that is actively engaged in environmental/conservation work such as:
- contour alley cropping;

- advocating practical ways farmers can off-set falling yields from shortened bush-fallow cycles by planting nitrogen fixing plants;
- land rehabilitation and reef protection by planting vetiver grass strips, slowing run-off, reducing erosion and consolidating gains by planting indigenous legumes;

42. Over the years, FSA's willingness to learn from accumulated practical experience has resulted in constant refinement of their aims and objectives, reiteration of the need to keep things simple and make repeated visits to farmers fields. Unlike commentators with a strong academic bias they are less inclined to believe in the power of the written word, formal training sessions and lessons conducted anywhere other than in specific client/farmer fields but this could also be cited as a shortcoming. They may be reluctant to register their skills under T/ET. They may resist wider publicity. They may be critical of organisations that feel a need to advertise their importance. This aversion to aspects of their work that involve elements of self promotion also has negative implications. By not providing more written material (eg. simple guidelines or manuals) to backup visits their clients feel short changed. By not securing the funds to put more extension workers into the field and working with more fanfare towards their goal and objectives FSA has not achieved as much as it could under more ambitious management.<sup>23</sup>

#### Response to effectiveness questions

43. What progress has FSA made towards meeting their stated aims and objectives? FSA current goal and objectives have only recently been written down. In the first few years following its establishment in 1992 FSA working with fluctuating financial support and money made available to serve the needs of projects initiated by other agencies that were consistent with its original FSA Articles of Association (1983 [para. 22]) as a service provider committed to providing support and technical advice to farmers. In succeeding years FSA accepted contractually binding objectives that were specific, measureable, attainable, relevant and time bound but evaluation documentation is difficult to find and what is available is not necessarily helpful. For instance the *POPACA Final Report* records more on the successful delivery of inputs and performance of activities rather than outputs, and outcomes are entirely ignored. As it was not possible to carry out an independent participatory review of the effectiveness of FSAs input the consultant had to rely on personal testimony from past managers of these projects such as Francois Jaipot but here again given the short duration of contracts and high mobility, few such people are available. The absence of an institutional memory is not surprising. Even institutional partner files and libraries (DARD) do not have material readily at hand that provides a measure of IBSRAM or DSAP performance let alone the role played in these projects by FSA. It may not be saying very much if the best measure of effectiveness is that people like Francis Jaipot and DARD officials speak well of FSA, that FSA has survived the past two decades, a period during which the standing of agriculture as an occupation has fallen, the allocation of government funding to extension services has dropped in relative terms, and FSA has continued to work on a shoe string budget but

<sup>23</sup> FSA in cooperation with DARD officials is well set up to run a weekly a radio "down on the farm this week and tomorrow" show in Bislama which if presented in an up-market catchy way could have a very positive impact in the countryside.

this is about as much as can be stated with any confidence. There can be little doubt that FSA fills a need. In association with La Source Plantation and SAPV it has promoted specific innovations such as the *Projek Blong Ek*. This innovation has been taken up by 44 producers on Efate alone and adopted by the Vanuatu National Bank as a model for microcredit. It is largely because of its proven competence that FSA has continued to attract support such as the recent UNDP funding for land conservation work on Ambae. FSA's on-going relationship with Venui Vanilla on Santo is another well established understanding under which FSA is actively linking vanilla growers on Tanna to each other, buying cured vanilla and on-selling to Venui Vanilla for a servicing charge of 10% indicates a sustainable approach to an on-going role. The old service agency criteria stand and FSA's recent work is consistent with both this and their latest goal and objectives

44. These activities keep alive sustainable, conservation minded agricultural practices as well as knowledge of innovations, many of which have commercial significance. What is achieved is not only a livelihood gain for farmers but also a contribution to agriculture in Vanuatu. The answer to the question "What progress has FSA made towards its stated objectives and aims?" is then that FSA is still in the field, has shown an admirable ability to manage fluctuations in expenditure and scale operations to available funding. Through difficult times has continued to work towards its broad objectives and undertaken the relevant associated activities<sup>24</sup>.
45. FSA does not select the farmers with whom they work on any grounds other than they are the most interested and highly motivated: by default they are often the best educated, and the most vocal. Nearly all farmers and RTC directors interviewed stated that FSA would be more effective if their staff could visit more often and stay longer. Many RTC managers and directors commented that FSA staff seemed too busy, how they often arrived unannounced, and how they were reluctant to teach classroom lessons.
46. RTC's also pointed out how they were desperately short of written or published material and curriculum guidance. They wanted FSA to fill this gap and in this context VRDTCA was singled out for not providing enough information modules on agricultural topics. In this regard it appears that FSA has fallen far short both RTC and NZAID expectations. Under the GFA, MFAT grant FSA was provided with a printing grant of Vt 3.8 million of which little has been spent. Other than once again referring to poor management it is difficult to account for the lack of activity.
47. Do women miss out? This is a question of major significance. Women make up approximately half of the people in agriculture. The work of IRI with women's groups did not figure prominently in the review schedule drawn up by FSA. Given the cultural constraints and limitations placed on FSA's exclusively male field staff it was clear that in the field FSA do not get on as comfortably with women as they do with men. A woman extension worker would help them overcome this difficulty. There are women agriculturalists who are prepared to speak their minds. Women graduates working with DARD only reluctantly accept their subordination in a male dominated milieu and generously pointed out that this may have as much to do with their

<sup>24</sup> Current objectives are too broad to provide a measure of evaluation in any but a general way. Objectives that could be described as specific, measureable, attainable, relevant and time bound are not part of the GFA and the monitoring criteria could be tighter.

youth and lack of seniority as their gender. One young women graduate from an RTC and the Vanuatu Agricultural College who was actively seeking work however complained that although she could do the demanding work expected of FSA staff she did not believe they would ever employ a woman. FSA are well aware of how important the role of women is in agriculture not only in domestic but also commercial production (McGregor 1998: 37-38) and as a change agent FSA needs to move outside their comfort zone

48. It can be said at a reasonable, if general level of confidence, that the "farmers helping farmers" approach works for men but does not work as well as it should for women. This is a major shortcoming. Overall however, all the agriculturalists interviewed spoke in a very positive way about the work of FSA and wanted to see its support extended so that it would be ready to take up extension work if, as anticipated, such work is likely to be out-sourced. This view emerged particularly strongly from interviews with DARD officials.

#### **Response to efficiency questions**

49. The innovations proposed under the JRI project fit easily into the indigenous agricultural calendar and demand for labour. As part of the "farmers working with farmers" approach is concerned clashes are unlikely and FSA does not present itself in a way that demands attention when other local priorities are in place. The answers to other questions posed in the Evaluation Proposal under 'efficiency' can be stated in summary form. As far as the consultant was able to ascertain:

- FSA inputs are provided at the appropriate time;
- Critical links to other agencies with the capacity to build farmer knowledge such as the government extension service (DARD) and its research arm (VARTO) are maintained in an exemplary manner;
- The activities and progress of FSA work are monitored in a systematic way by FSA in the form of return visits to farms but because this is a verbal rather than a recorded process details can be forgotten and reporting to the promised GFA monitoring format is unsatisfactory. The gap between the spoken word and the written record remains unbridged.

50. In the absence of information on outcomes it cannot be stated that the NZAID investment used by FSA delivers value for money. However it is valid to say that activities have been implemented at the lowest possible cost and that the money spent has been appropriately used. In the long term it should be possible to get a measure of value.

51. However there are serious managerial shortcomings. FSA does not always make the most of what it has at hand. The under spent grant for printing is one example (para. 46). The annual GFA grant of NZD 18,000 to cover administration and book keeping work has not been used in a way that would enhance efficiency. Instead of assigning the task to a qualified book keeper or accountant the work is being done by a senior agriculturalist whose time would be much better spent on the agricultural extension work for which he is qualified. When it comes to money FSA does not think in a business like way. They shares an office with SAPV which runs a retail operation. It is difficult to understand why the book keeping work was not sub-contracted to the retail manager of SAPV. Even in the absence of a

formal relationship between FSA and SAPV, the consultant believes SAPV staff would be willing and able to provide this service for a small fee.

52. This lack of financial imagination based on a history of making do with less impacts on efficiency. Both the small enterprise development grant made by the FAO (AGS-FAO) for the Fruit and Vegetable marketing plan and the GEF-UNDP Vetiver Grass Project do not include adequate funding for skilled labour inputs and overheads. FSA is neither well enough endowed nor does it have an adequate income from membership fees to make sure the work inputs required by these undertakings can be delivered without leaning very heavily on the personal resources of staff. This type of self-exploitation not matter how worthy is neither efficient nor sustainable.

#### **Is the work of FSA relevant?**

53. The consultant is of the opinion that the work of FSA is relevant. Unfortunately this is based not on a direct and systematic engagement with ni-Vanuatu farmers but largely observations in the field, casual encounters, discussions and interviews with urban based agricultural experts. This may be a subjective but it is not a naive conclusion. The consultant has extensive action research experience with shifting cultivators in the Pacific and the central massif of mainland Southeast Asia since 1969.

- Farmers and RTC trainees were not at all critical, are unaccustomed to outsiders taking any interest in what they do and were pleased to be offered anything at all. In the hands of an interested farmer the FSA recommended innovations can easily find a place in the indigenous agricultural system.
- Although it was not possible to explore and triangulate the specific content of the assertion that FSA are "farmers helping farmers" in any but a general way the manner in which extension work was conducted with friendly collegiality was exemplary. In all the interactions observed there was no hint of other than a shared egalitarian understanding of the farmers situation.
- On the basis of activities followed in the course of this review there is no sure way of saying that FSA work is specifically relevant for women. The members of the woman's group interviewed at Brenue, Malekula intended to drop the cultivation and processing of vanilla because the returns were disappointing. They were enthusiastic supporters of the Projek Belong Ek and welcomed the help they had been given with both alley cropping for their kitchen garden and delivery of improved kumala plant materials. In casual conversations along the way other women were effusive in their praise of FSA. They knew I was there to evaluate work carried out by their friends Peter Kaoh and Billy Homai.
- FSA activities are clearly consistent with government planning priorities as laid down in the Priorities Action Agenda (PAA) 2006 - 2015 and Treasury as well as other senior government officials emphasised its relevance

#### **Is sustainability being achieved?**

54. Results over the long term are variable and depend on circumstances that are largely beyond the control of either FSA or farmers. Early attempts at transferring innovations to farmers in the spice project, especially vanilla has resulted in these activities becoming self sustainable but require on-going

training relating to the rules of Internal Control required to retain organic certification. Farmers are constantly being recruited, learning both how to cure, and maintain production on a fairly unpredictable market. Not all the news is good. Clients make mistakes. People who buy into the Projek Belong Ek, who cannot easily provide their layers with a balanced high protein diet soon discover that their hens will not lay<sup>25</sup>. Not all extension work appeals to farmers. For instance alley cropping is not readily picked up until it becomes necessary and is the best option open to farmers faced with a shortened bush fallow cycle, falling yields and too many weeds to easily manage.

- Successfully transferred FSA innovations will almost certainly contribute to the sustainability and institutionalization of the cooperating RTCs and enhance their reputations. Successfully transferred innovation should also serve to build the coherence of women's groups by boosting their sense of achievement rather than just sharing an activity.
- FSA activities warrant on-going funding and building their profile should help with this. There are plans for some aspects of government extension work to be out-sourced and if it was better managed and could bring on line more experienced staff FSA would be a logical partner.
- Issues of environmental sustainability/ecological security have a high profile in FSA's work.

55. Is the effort FSA puts into the work sustainable? The current work load of FSA, with four demanding projects<sup>26</sup>, has stretched the capacity of FSA to its limit. There is enough field based work to more than take up the time of all three extension workers. How to complete administrative and reporting requirements is becoming a demand that is increasingly difficult to meet. Besides this at least two members of staff are mature married men with children and long absences threaten to disrupt family life. Since its guarded but optimistic launch in 1992 staff have aged, personal responsibilities have changed but FSA has retained the outlook and orientation of keen young men impatient with bureaucratic requirements, willing to get out there and do something for agriculture in Vanuatu: this is admirable but not sustainable.

#### Impact of Investment

56. According to documented trials at La Source Plantation, Montmartre there is clear evidence that FSA innovations can result in increases in both food production and cash cropping. The extent to which this has been carried over into the field has yet to be thoroughly and independently documented. Project reports show that specific tasks performed by FSA were undertaken

<sup>25</sup> Feed remains a problem (See Appendix 3). Many participants rely on imported feed which is imported and subject to a 10% duty. The local supply of milled copra has been unreliable but it is hoped that UNELCO will soon open a crushing mill on Malekula to supplement production from its Santo operation.

<sup>26</sup> As pointed out (paras 56, 57) apart from a component of the IRI grant (MFAT/NZAID) and the 10% servicing charge on vanilla neither the Vetiver (UNDP) nor vegetable production (FAO) grants include adequate provision for necessary overheads but even available funds are badly managed in this regard.

competently and delivered the expected results<sup>27</sup> but in the strict sense of the word impact must be measured at a much higher level. Given the fact that FSA has worked for sometime in areas of Tanna and Malekula where they are well known it was unfortunate that better provision was not made for the PLA work requested in the Evaluation Proposal. This would have created the possibility of mounting a properly participatory, community based triangulation of the impact of their work.

- As stated above, by default rather than design, better off families have benefitted most from FSA work and although the difference between the better off and the least well off is not a critical issue in a country in which there is enough food, and as has been stated, a form of subsistence affluence prevails, the growth of the market economy and an increasing need for commercial products should be kept in mind. The seductive pull of rural urban migration would be greatly diminished if young people were more aware of how they might earn money from farming. In picking up the most motivated and willing partners who are also likely to be the best educated FSA should be careful not to leave less articulate and confident people behind.
- FSA innovations are not beyond the understanding of those least likely to meet their food and cash income needs but FSA does not seek these people out as preferred clients. Given the constraints of both small inputs and the high cost of infrequent visits they need to work with self motivated achievers rather than dependents who would rely on continual FSA coaching and mentoring.

## **Objective 2 What has been learnt about the way FSA works?**

57. What has been learnt about the way FSA works and what does the consultant think could be done to improve the work of the association?

The scattered islands of Vanuatu present a huge challenge to the development of agriculture. The cost of transport, the difficulty of communications make agricultural extension work difficult and expensive. The training of farmers in the special procedures relating to the handling of high value commercial crops such as coffee, vanilla, and pepper requires hours of training and this is made doubly difficult by the distances that must be travelled and the problems involved in getting people together, getting special equipment out to farmers and teaching them how to use it. Although there is a call for land stabilisation and conservation work, techniques to step up the intensification of domestic production of food crops for a future situation in which there will be heavier population pressures brought to bear on land, farmers are reluctant to go along with what is perceived as extra work for no immediate return. FSA maintains a remarkably wide range of options and strategies as well as innovations of more immediate interest and what it has done in the past with IBSRAM, POPACA and DSAP and carried over to the present represents a wealth of information that is of inestimable value. In the past and within the limitations of its own culture FSA has handled work wisely, relied on aid funding to undertake work it could not support from in-country resources readily available to it. The consultant has little to say about how FSA might better run its field operations other than test

<sup>27</sup> For example "POPACA Final Report for Technical Assistance to the Organic Spices Network" 2003pp.18; "An Evaluation of the Fruit Fly Control and Mitigation Measures on Domestic Fruit Production in Vanuatu" 1999 pp. 22

their 'farmer helping farmer' philosophy in a more deliberately interactive, participatory way.

58. Unfortunately the same cannot be said about management and administrative arrangements. It is not as if FSA has not already been advised: the preference for fieldwork is exemplary but the neglect of office management and planning is a major shortcoming<sup>28</sup>. Staff are aging, they have increasing family responsibilities and cannot be absent for long periods as they were in the past. The time has come for FSA to decide whether it wants to accept either graduate decline tied to the aging process, avoid change, take small jobs as they come up and continue to adjust their work load to the diminishing ability of staff to spend long periods in the field; or increase their managerial options and take a serious look at growing FSA as an NGO or a trust in association with SAPV, open the latter's potential to recruit and build a consulting capability to take advantage of the donor run Paris Agreement informed aid market<sup>29</sup>, use SAPV infrastructure and business and accounting skills to run FSA perhaps by making FSA a trust under SAPV management.

59. To get value for money on long term outcomes it is not so much a question of what the farmer clients of FSA think could be done to improve the work of FSA but how FSA with its extremely small staff can maintain what it is already doing and extend itself on the basis of its current strengths. Tensions if not outright contradictions abound. Should FSA do more than provide advisory and material inputs? Of course it should. Pamphlets prepared in the past to prompt innovations should be gathered, redrafted, and where this has not already been done, translated into Bislama and reprinted<sup>30</sup>. Publication of a manuscript in Bislama summarising the work FSA has already undertaken should be available as a reference text for the agricultural college, and all RTCs teaching agriculture. Does FSA have the human resources to do this? No it doesn't. FSA already runs its affairs in a manner guided by the principle to spend carefully but perhaps not wisely. It achieves value for money and if anything makes do with less than it should because it eschews display and blowing its own trumpet. FSA has survived not only because it has periodically made the cruel choice to adjust staff numbers to available finance but because it has deliberately maintained a low profile to avoid being targeted as a tall poppy, promoted close cooperation with government agricultural agencies and donors, avoided conveying any sense of competition and in its own way of thinking shared any and all information it has acquired in an open and free manner while failing to make this available in published form. This complex pragmatism describes a path of least resistance which has a marked negative side. Yes, FSA's relationship with government partners is a matter of utmost importance but invisibility does not serve the interests of donors who want the work they are supporting to be better known. A passive role in maintaining relationships may reduce the chance of conflict but it may also

<sup>28</sup> "a stage has been reached when some minimal additional investment in administration and management overheads are required if FSA is to be efficient in what it does. For example office support is required for the FSA manager" (McGregor 1998:8). Similar observation are made by Ulrich Helberg concerning the Santo vanilla operation (Helberg 2001: Annexe 5)

<sup>29</sup> Under the OECD/DAC Declaration (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action 2008 both MFAT/NZAID and AusAID and many other donors committed themselves to increasing the participation of recipient nations in the identification, design and implementation of aid projects.

<sup>30</sup> A sample of these are described in the Annotated References (Appendix 4)

result in building a stand-off position which may be interpreted as an unwillingness to enter into a stronger cooperative working arrangements. The current invitation from DARD to explore the possibility of publishing extension material through their publication unit is a case in point. If FSA were to take it up this would make information available not only to FSA clients, but also the national extension service, VRDTCA, RTC's and the Agricultural College on Santo. Opportunities like this need to be pursued vigorously rather than just considered as interesting possibilities. For an agency given to direct action in farmers fields it seems strangely inconsistent to ignore the importance of good management.

### Objective 3 What has been learnt from the current GFA?

60. Have the NZAID funded activities gone well? Is the nature of NZAID support appropriate? What lessons if any, have been learnt and how should these be incorporated into continuing support?

The consultant is pleased to report that the MFAT funded field activities have been conducted in a manner consistent with what was written into the description of the project included as Schedule One in the Grant Funding Arrangement (12/11/08) (Appendix 1). FSA put a great deal of care into the selection of RTC partners by visiting and talking to them rather than relying on the records kept by VRDTCA. Work was commenced with partners on Tanna (not included in the GFA<sup>31</sup>) before funding was released, extension work commenced as soon as partners were identified and the promised number of visits, if sometimes of short duration have been made. Shortfalls are however evident especially on the administrative side. There are frequent delays in the submission of reports, financial reports are not up to standard, book keeping is poor and proper receipts are not always provided. Reporting to agreed monitoring criteria could also be better (para. 62). The short fall is management rather than action in the field.

61. Activities undertaken so far indicate that low cost investment has enabled FSA to undertake promised activities but is this value for money? Client RTC's would like to get more out of the visits. They expect more classroom activities, more teaching than FSA believes they have been contracted to provide. The direct hands-on demonstrations which accompany the delivery of inputs provided by FSA can seem abrupt and there is some dissonance between the expectation and delivery of written material. The RTCs lack curriculum module information on agriculture and would like FSA to provide this. VRDTCA is also aware of this shortfall. Berton Jones their senior manager for training and curriculum has indicated his willingness to work with FSA to prepare what is required. Under the GFA, FSA has the funds and an obligation to do this. Spending more money would enhance the effectiveness of visits and in the long run deliver great value for money. FSA has recently appointed an additional member of staff to manage this matter<sup>32</sup>. It is a measure of how far FSA management is stretched that a start on this work was not made at the very beginning.

<sup>31</sup> It was FSA's intention to fund the work on Tanna using their own resources and extend their visits to grow the vanilla network. It is the visiting consultants opinion that Tanna should be retrospectively included in the GFA schedule and FSA encouraged in the meantime to curtail the scope of their work by dropping islands in TORBA province and other destinations that are expensive and difficult to reach

<sup>32</sup> The employee appeared in the SAPV office for the first time on 9 April 2010 the day before the consultants' departure. The consultant did not establish whether this was a

62. It appears that detailed monitoring criteria is not being recorded in a formal way according to Schedule One of the GFA. This is not to say that the listed questions are not asked. A deliberate effort is made to determine whether progress is being made and the lack of recording seems more closely related to the amount of work being undertaken, the distance travelled, the haste to get back home and the need to cover all bases over a short period. A simple monitoring matrix could be drawn up to make it easier to keep a proper record. It is also recommended that a few critical details of the GFA should be renegotiated at this stage. Rather than stretching the range of activities even further afield it would make more sense to retrench: attempt less to achieve more. Provision could be made to employ an accounts manager to look after book keeping and compile monitoring data. This would ease report writing and free expertise that could be better used in the field. The appointment of an addition to the extension team, preferably a woman would also help better service farmers, especially women's groups.

### Conclusions drawn from Objectives 1, 2 & 3

63. Over the past two decades FSA has come a long way in a manner that is consistent with its origins. Its preference for scientific-technical work with a strong priority placed on practical undertakings has remained. Over the years it has shown that it is able to cooperate with and learn from other domestic and international agencies, apply this knowledge to different situations and independently carry approaches to sustainable and environmentally informed agriculture forward. FSA has developed a goal and set of objectives that are relevant if a little general. FSA staff get into the field, work in a way that fits into local agricultural cycles, deliver inputs on time, talk to farmers, keep overhead costs to a minimum, and generally perform activities to a competent level and acts as one would expect of an agency that conducts its work under the banner "Farmers Helping Farmers". It has much to promote: cash crops such as spices, particularly vanilla; food crops, improved varieties of kumala; and has enhanced food security (ie wild yam). FSA continues to attract a modest level of support and the greatest complaint its clients have is that they want more of what FSA has to offer: more frequent, longer visits, and more written material.
64. Unfortunately the consultant was unable to establish evidence of high level achievements for effectiveness as measured by outcomes and impacts of extension work and most observations and available documentation was confined to inputs and activities. Isolated subjective observations were made which indicated the level of adoption of advanced aspects of vanilla cultivation and curing related to outcomes. However, the occasional disappointed grower who had decided against continuing certainly dampened any misplaced optimism the consultant may have had about rapid growth. The lack of PLA exercises left a gap in data that might otherwise have been used to get some measure of the impact of investment, the longer term sustainability of earlier FSA work on contour planting, alley cropping and the like.
65. GFA work was of too recent origin to talk about outcomes and impacts but overall it could be said with a good level of confidence that FSA has met the field side demands of its contract. The same cannot be said about meeting its reporting obligations, and keeping monitoring records in a manner consistent with its obligations under the funding agreement. The principal

full or part time position and it was assumed that FSA was meeting the employment cost out of their own budget.

lessons to be learned from this relate to the weakest aspect of FSA: its administrative capacity. In spite of the demand from RTCs for written material the money for printing and publishing has gone unspent. Despite the allocation of money to assist with the keeping and preparation of financial reports, book keeping continues to be a cause of concern.

#### Objective 4 Aspects for Improvement

66. What would improve the GFA between NZAID and FSA? The issues which arose out of the review indicated that the following matters require attention:

- Work with women did not figure prominently in the review itinerary, FSA is not gender aware and given the content of observations recorded under the heading Gender Equality (para. 31) on these grounds alone it can be said FSA's all male team is not entirely comfortable in working with women
- Observations made in the course of monitoring visits are not recorded in a consistent manner and a simple record of these is not currently readily available.
- Despite the brevity encouraged by the present reporting schedule Quarterly Reports are not produced on time, the financial record, mostly straightforward book keeping tasks take too long. The IRI project team leader has not been trained in this work and it would be better left to a qualified book keeper or accountant.
- The current work load exceeds the ability of current staff to easily manage and has resulted in some inefficiencies such as delayed delivery of Quarterly Reports, under spending of budget allocated to publishing and subcontracting book keeping, data storage and record keeping tasks to a competent outsider. This overloading may be impacting negatively on other contract work such as that undertaken with AGS/FAO funding.

67. Consideration needs to be given to some details of the GFA that could well enhance efficiency. According to current plans FSA intends to undertake work at opposite ends of Vanuatu. If followed through fieldwork will extend from Tanna<sup>33</sup> well to the south to the Banks Islands well to the north. Extension work is also planned for Paama/Ambrym, Epi, Maewo and fieldwork is currently underway in Malekula. Flights to the Banks are notoriously unreliable and those making visits might well spend a lot of time waiting for planes to both deliver and pick them up. If visits were focused on fewer places it is possible that field workers would spend less time travelling and more time with their clients. If possible the same overall number of units may be attempted but would be less scattered. The exact extent of the change should be negotiated between NZAID and the team leader Peter Kaoh.

68. The most substantial finding of the review which offers the most radical suggestion for change is focused on ways of building the institutional capacity of the FSA. What might be considered and what might be done is entirely up to the principal members of the FSA. It is not something that outsiders can insist on. The alternatives given in the recommendations

<sup>33</sup> Work is currently being undertaken on Tanna with FSA funding

below are suggestions for FSA to think about: the consultant has no authority to commandeer a mandate for change.

## Objective 5 Recommendations

### What should NZAID do?

69. FSA is a small voluntary sector agency that knows how to conduct agricultural extension work successfully. It provides an important service to the rural community and although the review was unable to independently document its effectiveness, from statements made by reliable informants and direct observations in the field it appears that FSA makes a significant contribution to economic growth, domestic food supply and food security out of proportion to its size. However, the agency is institutionally vulnerable, relies too heavily on a few key, aging individuals, and needs to be strengthened. NZAID should give serious consideration to further investment in both the current work and future sustainability of FSA.

- i NZAID should insist on FSA making a quarterly oral report to the programme office in advance of submitting a written report. The practice would save time and create an opportunity in which issues of special interest could be discussed and the written report itself kept as short as possible. This practice might be extended to establish a dialogue in which there is more interaction between donor and recipient including NZAID staff accompanied visits to the field.
- ii NZAID should negotiate a reduction in the geographical spread of target islands listed in the GFA with the aim of better focusing the work, reducing travel costs and the time spent reaching client villages. It is suggested that the Banks be cut and the GFA modified to retrospectively include Tanna.
- iii NZAID needs to clarify for FSA exactly what it must do to meet the expectations stated in NZAID Cross-Cutting Issues
- iv Consider further investment in FSA as a supplementary part of the current GFA designed to enable FSA to better handle the administrative challenges identified in the course of the review by providing appropriate managerial advice concerning: book keeping, logging monitoring visits, and data storage. The consultant suggests that assistance only be given if FSA is willing to nominate a contracted employee specifically assigned to this role
- Assist FSA to think through the implications of employing a female extension worker and what challenges this might present to the staff and the woman employed.
- vi If FSA chooses to consider the future alternatives (below, para.70) MEAT/NZAID might like to consider providing FSA with the wherewithal to seek legal and planning advice to explore the implications of the suggested alternatives. As outlined below FSA is strongly advised to go through a strategic planning exercise as a first step to deciding on its future.
- vii A comprehensive approach be taken to the challenge of helping FSA develop better management practices by retaining a consultant who could perform these training tasks and over the term of his/her

appointment act as a facilitator to run a series of strategic planning sessions.

### What should FSA do?

70. If they are to improve their effectiveness, what should FSA consider? The consultant believes that if FSA had a stronger administrative and managerial capability that was less dependent on a few individuals, a clear ideological foundation provided in the form of a written constitution, this would result in better planning. If FSA was a legal entity as a registered trust, association or NGO this would give potential donors more confidence in considering FSA as a partner<sup>34</sup>. If funding became easier, FSA would have greater continuity of work, be able to initiate its own activities rather than fall back so frequently on contract work, its contribution to agricultural development spread more evenly over a longer period and smooth the path toward objectives in a manner that would avoid the start-stop nature of its present situation. FSA might like to consider the following recommendations commencing with the most immediate and concrete and then moving to the more general and ambitious.

- viii FSA should renegotiate the GFA to make it easier to manage the work by reducing the spread of target islands, make a case for including Tanna, and discuss what NZAID could do to enhance their book keeping, report writing and record keeping.
- ix Immediate consideration should be given by FSA to employing a woman extension officer to enhance the effectiveness of their work with women's groups. The implications of such a step should be discussed with Dorosday Kenneth.
- x Immediate consideration should be given to strengthening FSA's administrative performance by finding or training a person with book keeping skills who is literate enough in the use of computers to keep accounts, enter monitoring information and store data.
- xi Immediate talks should be held with Berton Jones the VRDTCA training and curriculum development manager to coordinate the preparation of agricultural resource materials that will enable partner RTCs to do a better job of teaching the subject.
- xii Immediate talks should be held with James Wasi of DARD to work out a way of publishing the agriculture teaching resources developed with VRDTCA and those that are a part of FSA extension work.<sup>35</sup>
- xiii FSA needs to take into account the advice of the NZAID managers on what they must do to meet NZAID Cross-Cutting Issues, follow them in the course of GFA funded operations and include them in the planning discussions mentioned below (xiv)

<sup>34</sup> FSA does have standing as a common law association that has been recognized and given quasi legal status by an official letter from the Ministry of Agriculture (10 May 2007).

<sup>35</sup> This might involve consideration given to printing descriptions of each of the innovations offered under IRI and commence publication of other information held by FSA on sustainable agriculture: improving soil fertility through alley cropping, enhancing bush-fallow using legumes both trees and vines, building a spice network, promotion and support of small scale poultry, cultivating 'wild' yams for food security and as appropriate use illustrations to show women doing this work

## REVIEW OF THE VANUATU FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

- xiv As a small step towards formally registering FSA as an organisation serious consideration should be given to getting the names and skills of FSA staff on the list of national consultants being prepared as part of the Technical Vocational Education and Training Strengthening Program.
- xv Before the end of the year FSA should commence and complete a strategic planning round with friends of the FSA and professional colleagues to review past work and decide what the preferred future of FSA should be. FSA must become more proactive. There are a multitude of questions that must be addressed. Where is it headed? Who will succeed Charles Rogers? What do farmers want? What policy and behavioural guidelines must be written into foundation documents if FSA is to meet the expectations of donors? What activities does FSA want to engage in? What sort of funding will be required? How will its office be set up and run? Where will FSA recruit appropriate staff to undertake the work? What sort of skills and qualifications will these people need? These questions and others should be discussed in the planning round.
- xvi The current goal and objectives given above (paras 28 & 29) should be evaluated as part of this review (ix). Are they SMART enough? The resulting text written into foundation documents initially as part of an informal constitution that could eventually become part of the legal papers lodged when, and if, FSA is registered with the appropriate government authority.
- xvii Restructure FSA and adopt a programme management system based on an annual cycle of monitoring, evaluation (learning) and planning. It must also put in place a new set of institutional arrangements which would form the basis for increased funding and enhance its capacity to take on new work. The following alternatives are recommended for consideration as part of this process. Clearly whatever is decided needs to fully meet the wishes of those most directly involved in both the FSA and SAPV. Alternatives other than those which follow may well emerge out of the planning round.
- *Alternative 1. As is proposal* FSA continues to work as it does now as an informal voluntary agency, meet the conditions of Recommendation ix and any other basic NZAID requirements relating to Cross-Cutting Issues and basic documentation. If the current 'common law' status of FSA is not acceptable consideration should be given registering the agency with the appropriate authority.<sup>36</sup>
  - *Alternative 2 NGO proposal* The most direct path to establishing a firmer more professional identity would be to transform the institutional capacity of FSA from the current team of extension workers into a stand alone, fully registered NGO with its own administrative and legal infrastructure.
  - *Alternative 3 SAPV Umbrella proposal* that SAPV consider establishing two subordinate units. Under this arrangement:

<sup>36</sup> FSA does have a standing as a common law association that has been recognized and given quasi legal status by an official letter from the Ministry of Agriculture (10 May 2007).

- SAPV would continue in its present form open to those who wish to pay the joining fee. SAPV would form an umbrella organisation consisting of FSA and a consulting unit. The SAPV Board might like to consider taking on some of the advocacy work of a chamber of agriculture (federation or union) to see that agriculture is given fair consideration in government deliberations and in the allocation of funds.<sup>37</sup>
- FSA as a semi-independent, not for profit, out-reach trust, or agricultural extension organisation with its own board, owned by the SAPV. SAPV would provide accommodation, administrative services such as reception, book keeping and the like for FSA and form a,
- Consulting Unit with registered consultants listed and approved by the SAPV who could choose to undertake either paid voluntary work for the FSA and, for an appropriate fee, provide professional commercial services to visiting aid agencies, commercial enterprises and the like. A portion of this fee would go towards meeting the administrative costs of the SAPV and another portion would go towards supporting the work of FSA.

### Concluding Remarks

71. Each of these institutional alternatives has something to recommend it as well as drawbacks.

- **Alternative 1** Continue as is has the advantage that it offers the least disruption to the demands of the current work schedule. Given both the small number of FSA staff and lean funding this alternative will be attractive. It is also consistent with the pragmatic way in which FSA has handled its affairs in the past and offers a practical way of managing the transition from a nearly completely unregulated, informal agency to an institutionally stronger organisation. However, it should not be allowed to become more than a milestone along the path to a future of better management.
- **Alternative 2** Form a separate NGO. Any attention given to the administrative set up of FSA will make it necessary to assign more resources to management and planning matters. Under current conditions, if a single member of staff was to be reassigned to office work, with so few people on call this would critically reduce the effectiveness of fieldwork. The formation of a fully constituted NGO with the necessary documentation and administrative infrastructure would require a development grant from an interested donor and could best be, if not managed, then strongly advised by an institutional development specialist. This intrusion by an outsider would not be easy for the intensely personal nature of FSA culture and must not be allowed to undermine staff loyalty and the commitment to fieldwork. However an increase in formal procedure and process can be expected. The friendly accommodation arrangement with SAPV might be difficult to maintain. Additional administrative costs must be anticipated. The development

<sup>37</sup> It was not part of the mandate of the review to look into the affairs of SAPV and the suggestion is made without prejudice. Any changes to the set up of SAPV could make it necessary to consider changes to its legal documentation and constitution. Such a process could not be undertaken without the approval of the Board.

task is one that could only work well if it was handled by an experienced, sociologically informed and empathetic consultant.

- **Alternative 3 SAPV Umbrella** This alternative was discussed during the course of the consultants visit. Given the nature of the established relationship between FSA and SAPV staff and comfort with each other it appeared to be the most attractive solution, folding a set of informal relationships into a more substantial, sophisticated organisation that would be able to handle the different but related commercial and voluntary dimensions of agricultural development in Vanuatu. It may appear to be too ambitious, bring members of the SAPV Board into a consideration of FSA as a voluntary partnership which even under the several degrees of separation allowed under a trust arrangement become a liability to their commercial activities. Even with FSA and the SAPV Board's approval formation of such an organisation, like that required for an NGO would require the skills of a singularly well qualified and experienced consultant.

72. What is presented here is just the bare bones of what could be an exciting future for both SAPV and FSA. However, ideas come easy, bringing them into the hard light of day is another matter. If FSA and SAPV are interested in pursuing organisational change either as an NGO or closer, formal association with SAPV, NZAID should consider helping them by providing assistance with strategic planning and facilitation skills, access to the legal and management expertise necessary to formulate the shape and substance of the new organisation. If FSA is not ready for such changes NZAID should still consider providing FSA with the services of a managerial consultant to help them put their office in order, get a simple financial system in place, develop a strategic plan to bridge the transformation from the present informal to a formal legal agency and start serious thinking about forming their own future rather than have it arrive unexpectedly.

**Appendix 1 Grant Funding Arrangement, Schedule One  
(PDF)**

RELEASED UNDER THE  
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

***Appendix 2 Participatory Evaluation Plan: Vanuatu FSA***

John McKinnon

Kinsa Associates

Wellington

15 March 2010

**Contents**

1. Background Information
2. Scope & Objectives of the Evaluation
3. Methodology
4. Schedule for Evaluation
5. Milestones

## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In November 2008 NZAID commenced a three year Grant Funding Arrangement (GFA) with the firmly established Farm Support Association (FSA) of Vanuatu. NZAID funding is enabling the FSA to extend its 'rural based farmer training' where tried and true agricultural innovations are passed to farmers who are willing to learn, and trial new methods. These farmers in turn pass on what they have learned about successful farming practices to other people. "Farmers working with farmers" is FSA's motto and practice.

The provenance of this evaluation can be traced back to two initiatives.

- 1) A request from FSA that their work undertaken over the past 20 years be subject to an independent evaluation which might be used to:
  - recommend what they are doing to other donors and extension agencies;
  - promote the proven practices and make them available to more farmers;
  - lead to the wider use of sustainable agricultural practices that reward farmers with better returns; and,
  - suggest ways in which FSA's work might be improved.
- 2) As part of the Grant Funding Arrangement with NZAID, a document in which it is stated that "FSA and NZAID will undertake a joint review mission of FSA's work within the first year of NZAID funding" It was agreed that "The terms of reference will be jointly developed, but are expected to include review of activities going back several years as well as the FSA organisation itself".

A participatory approach to the evaluation of work undertaken by FSA since 1990 was recommended and agreed to by both NZAID and FSA in the hope that the person and/or persons responsible for providing the consultation would be able to:

- identify ways in which FSA work might be improved;
- optimize the impact of the NZAID investment and how the GFA might be enhanced; and,
- make recommendations designed to carry the success of FSA into the future.

The evaluation will look at work undertaken well before the activities funded by NZAID under the GFA. Although 1990 has been set as the starting date for the period of the review, FSA work goes back a long way before this. Following independence it played a role in developing the skills to localise plantation management. Since 1983 FSA has engaged in agricultural extension work on a broad front which covers the promotion of a productively proven range of subsistence and commercial farming methods which include plant materials, small livestock and sustainable land use practices. As an agency they have been positively reviewed, proven to be willing to learn, flexible enough to extend and

retract activities according to available resources and earn a reputation for providing "technical training for specialist crops (vanilla and pepper), very effectively".<sup>38</sup> On occasion they have worked closely with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). In his report on agricultural extension services Greer noted that FSA is an "established locally-based development partner... a valuable source of expertise for agriculture who have a track record in delivering effective training and support programmes". Over this extended period, above all FSA values its successful achievements in working with farmers.

In the telephone conference that opened the participatory engagement with the Kinsa consultant (9 September, 2009), Charles Rogers and Peter Kaul of FSA strongly recommended that the evaluation centre on field activities and advised early visits to extension units on Malekula, commercial activities on Santo followed by a review of well established activities on Tanna. FSA is concerned to establish the cogency and effectiveness of its field operations and in keeping with this of the total 28 days in country the Kinsa consultant has agreed to allocate 12 days to field visits and the balance of 16 either travelling or based in Port Vila. The Kinsa consultant is required to present initial findings before leaving Port Vila for New Zealand.

Depending on advice given by FSA and the High Commission the many agencies with which FSA has collaborated in the past and continues to maintain a working relationship may need to be visited such as:

- DARD, the Department of Economic and Sector Planning, and Department of Finance, Women's Council.

Other donors may also hold documents of interest and over the years the:

- European Union aid mission (ROPACA), USAID, AusAID.

Non government agencies such as:

- VRDTCA, VANGO, Syndicate Agricole and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Oxfam Australia, Melanesia First, and Port Vila agencies responsible for Rural Training Centres. The Catholic Church has also extended assistance though it is not clear from the documentation held by Kinsa whether an independent NGO was involved.

Several Consultations with the FSA Steering Committee will be held before any field visits are made and feedback meetings to be held before any write up begins. The final report will conclude with recommendations regarding the appropriate type and level of NZAID support to FSA in the short to medium term (up to the next five years) and recommendations for FSA in terms of how their successes can be maintained into the future and any suggested improvements,

Agencies will be ranked for relevance, a priority list drawn up as fieldwork proceeds and visits scheduled as circumstances allow. Further details of the objectives, participatory methodologies, Milestones, Outputs and reporting requirements largely drawn from the Terms of Reference are detailed below.

<sup>38</sup> Greer Consulting Services (2008) *Review of Vanuatu's Agricultural Extension Services* p.vii

## 2. SCOPE & OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

### 2.1 Time, Place and Institutions

As indicated above the scope of the evaluation will include NZAID FSA funded activities since November 2008 and work undertaken before this back to 1990. This will include an assessment of FSA's organisational structure and management capacity to support its objectives effectively.

The geographical focus of the evaluation was decided in consultation between FSA, NZAID and the consultant in the course of a teleconference held on Wednesday, 9 September and will include field trips to Rural Training Centres and Women's Groups on Malekula, similar long standing village based partner agencies on Tanna and a commercial vanilla drying operation in Santo.

As relevant, visits will also be made in Port Vila to the NZHC and the partner government and NGO agencies such as DARD, MoF and DESP, as well as VRDTCA, VANGO, and Syndicate Agricole. As indicated above agencies will be added or removed from the list as advised by the NZHC, FSA and experts consulted in the course of the work and as time permits.

### 2.2 OECD DAC and NZAID Criteria

Professional evaluation criteria used by the OECD / DAC and NZAID Cross-cutting criteria will be referred to and incorporated in the review. A sample of questions related to each of the criteria is listed over the page to indicate what sort of information will be sought from individuals across the rural - urban, government – non government, and aid agency spectrum contacted in the course of the review.

These questions are also relevant to matters raised under the heading "Objectives and Questions" and are listed separately here to show how the review will incorporate DAC criteria.

**Table 2.1 OECD / DAC Evaluation Criteria and Sample Questions**

	Criteria	Sample overarching questions
1	Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do FSA recommended innovations reflect farmer preferences?</li> <li>What progress has FSA made towards its stated aims?</li> <li>What do farmers think FSA should do to be more effective?</li> </ul>
2	Efficiency, timely and optimum use of human and capital resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the innovations fit easily into the indigenous agricultural calendar and demand for labour?</li> <li>Are FSA inputs provided at the appropriate time?</li> <li>Are critical links made to other agencies with the capacity to build farmer knowledge (Syndicate Agricole, DARD) and assist with the acquisition of inputs and access to transport?</li> <li>Are activities and progress monitored in a systematic way by FSA?</li> <li>Is the NZAID investment used by FSA to deliver value for money?</li> </ul>
3	Relevance to farmer needs and government planning priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do FSA activities meet farmers expressed needs?</li> <li>Are FSA activities consistent with government planning priorities?</li> <li>What changes need to be made to optimise the</li> </ul>

## REVIEW OF THE VANUATU FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

	Criteria	Sample overarching questions
4	Sustainability of introduced innovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• synergy potential of FSA work with government and other agencies doing rural development work?</li> <li>• Have earlier attempts at transferring innovations to farmers resulted in these activities becoming self sustainable? (ie. Santo &amp; Tanna)</li> <li>• Do successfully transferred FSA innovations contribute to the sustainability and institutionalization of the groups cooperating with FSA?</li> <li>• Do FSA activities warrant, and are they likely secure on-going funding?</li> </ul>
5	Impact of the investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the innovations resulted in an increase in food production and/or cash cropping?</li> <li>• Who has benefitted most? Better off families? Women's groups? Young people?</li> <li>• What impact does the FSA investment have on households least likely to satisfactorily meet their food and cash income needs?</li> </ul>

NZAID policies relating to their core business and harmonisation relating to the Rome Declaration and the Paris Accord were negotiated by NZAID with their Vanuatu partner over the period during which the evaluation exercise was set up. The relevant principles of harmonisation have been built into the participatory nature of the approach to ensure that the Ni Vanuatu/NZAID role remains true to a partnership of equals. Vanuatu government agencies engaged in rural agricultural extension work will be fully consulted to ensure that the review recommends strategies that are in keeping with best practice and government policy.

Cross-cutting and cross-sectorial issues of: human rights; gender equality; environmental sustainability; peace building and conflict prevention; governance, HIV/AIDS; and disabilities will provide an underlying foundation on which the review will be built. Questions relating to these issues are outlined in the table below

**Table 2.2 NZAID Cross – Cutting Issues**

	Issues	Sample overarching questions
1	Human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does FSA ensure that human rights issues such as equal rights of access to the opportunities offered by FSA regardless of "sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status"?</li> <li>• What attention does FSA give to the rights of families?</li> <li>• What do the FSA innovations contribute towards "a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being" of participating individuals and their family?</li> </ul>
2	Gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do both women and men farmers as well as young people have equal access to FSA innovations or is access limited on the basis of gender and age?</li> <li>• Are both women and men proportionately represented among FSA field staff and clients?</li> <li>• Are training sessions scheduled in a way that is sensitive to gender roles?</li> </ul>
3	Environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What aspects if any of FSA work can be said to be environmentally informed such as contour planting,</li> </ul>

	Issues	Sample overarching questions
		intercropping, use of vetiver grass for slowing run off and the like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the innovations promoted by FSA likely to lead to the deterioration of the natural environment in anyway?</li> <li>Is the issue of environmental sustainability taken into account in FSA planning?</li> </ul>
4	Peace building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are principles of equitable sharing taken into account in FSA planning?</li> <li>Does FSA work at all in areas where there might be tension between neighbouring communities and what do they do about it?</li> </ul>
5	Conflict prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does FSA have any policy guidelines in place?</li> <li>Are indicators of potential conflict discussed with those involved in the field?</li> <li>What action is taken to ameliorate developing or established disputes?</li> </ul>
6	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do FSA activities contribute to governance?</li> <li>Do groups working with FSA contribute or better village governance?</li> <li>Are the governance principles followed by FSA satisfactory?</li> </ul>
7	HIV/AIDS & disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do those with HIV/AIDS and disabilities given unimpeded access to innovations promoted by FSA?</li> <li>How aware is FSA of special needs and referring these to appropriate agencies?</li> </ul>

## 2.3 Objectives and Questions

The objectives have been copied from the Terms of Reference drawn up by NZAID in consultation with FSA and the related "Issues" edited and added to to highlight the nature of underlying questions to which the consultant is expected to find answers. This section on related issues and questions includes DAC criteria and questions listed under 2.2. Some are repeated

### Objective 1

To evaluate the work of FSA since 1990: what has worked well, and less well, for the Association, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

#### Descriptive questions (and subset)

Related issues and questions that will be addressed include:

- What are the goals, objectives and expected outcome of FSA and how have these changed over time? What theory of change does FSA work to? How do they expect activities and outputs to translate into outcomes and impacts?)
- What is FSA's experience on the ground and how has this impacted on the objectives and approach?
- What key activities have been undertaken and completed by FSA since 1990 and what inputs have been provided?

#### Effectiveness questions (and subset)

- What progress has FSA made towards its stated objectives and aims?

## REVIEW OF THE VANUATU FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

- Does FSA monitor and evaluate on-going work in an effective manner? (How has this information been used?)
- What do farmers think FSA could/should do to be more effective? (Who benefits from FSA work? Who misses out? Does the "farmers working with farmers" approach work?)
- What changes could be made to improve the effectiveness of FSA? (e.g. What do FSA 'staff' and specialists in the wider community think?)

### Efficiency questions (and subset)

- Do the innovations fit easily into the indigenous agricultural calendar and demand for labour?
- Are FSA inputs provided at the appropriate time?
- Are critical links made to other agencies with the capacity to build farmer knowledge (Syndicate Agricole, DARD) and assist with the acquisition of inputs and access to transport? (Do the institutional affiliations of FSA provide adequate support for the activities undertaken?)
- Are activities and progress monitored in a systematic way by FSA?
- Is the NZAID investment used by FSA to deliver value for money? (When a qualitative comparison is made between the total cost of activities funded and measured up against the broad outcomes and changes brought about by FSA's work can it be said that FSA work provides value for money? How does this result apply retrospectively where similar outcomes have been aimed for and/or not achieved? When FSA's own cost structures are analysed to identify cost effectiveness is it possible that savings could be made for instance by using either different methods of management or the design of the way innovations are delivered that would not disproportionately compromise outcomes?)

### Relevance questions (and subset)

- To what extent do FSA recommended innovations reflect farmer preferences?
- Do FSA activities meet farmers expressed needs?
- Are FSA activities consistent with government planning priorities?
- What changes need to be made to optimise the synergy potential of FSA work with government and other agencies doing rural development work?

### Sustainability questions (and subset)

- Have earlier attempts at transferring innovations to farmers resulted in these activities becoming self sustainable? [i.e. Santo and Tanna]. (In the absence of inputs provided by FSA are the innovations which are currently promoted sustainable in rural areas? What outcomes have been achieved including unintended outcomes?)
- Do successfully transferred FSA innovations contribute to the sustainability and institutionalization of the groups cooperating with FSA?
- Do FSA activities warrant, and are they likely to secure on-going funding?
- To what extent have environmental sustainability/ecological security issues been satisfactorily factored into FSA's work?

### Impact of Investment<sup>39</sup>

- Have the innovations resulted in an increase in food production and/or cash cropping?
- Who has benefitted most? Better off families? Women's groups? Young people?
- What impact has the FSA investment had on households least likely to satisfactorily meet their food and cash income needs?

### NZAID questions

- A full list of questions is provided in Table 2.2 (p.5) and will serve as a way of pursuing overarching issues. These have not been prioritised here but the gender implications of what has been undertaken by FSA will be given special attention.

### Objective 2

To identify learning and lessons that would improve the work of FSA

Some related issues and questions to address will include:

- What do the farmer clients of FSA think could be done to improve the work of FSA?
- What are the practical impediments to marketing products of commercial significance?
- Should FSA do more than provide advisory and material inputs?
- Does FSA run its affairs in a manner that enables it to manage its funding wisely? Does it achieve value for money and if not what could be done to improve its performance?

### Objective 3

To assess NZAID funded activities, the appropriateness of NZAID's support, and identify any lessons that should be incorporated into continuing support.

Some related issues and questions to address will include:

- Have activities funded so far by NZAID provided value for money?
- Is the correct type of M&E information being gathered by FSA which would enable them to determine whether progress is being made in achieving objectives? Provide recommendations on how to strengthen or remedy weakness in this area.

### Objective 4

To identify learning and lessons that would improve the GFA between NZAID and FSA.

Issues and questions to address will include:

<sup>39</sup> Questions on impact will be difficult to answer with any confidence at this time. Relevant qualitative observations may be volunteered in the course of PLA exercises but loyalty to FSA may provide a strong subjective bias.

- Is the reporting schedule up to the task of keeping both partners well informed about what is going on?
- Should other forms of reporting such as an oral report to NZAID at the NZHC in advance of a written report become part of the routine along with periodic NZAID field visits?
- Do any details of the GFA need to be renegotiated at this stage?

## Objective 5

To make recommendations for the future.

Issues and questions which need to be answered before recommendations can be formulated include:

- Is FSA set up in such a way that if they lost their current managers would it be able to continue? Are rationale and transparent systems in place that would enable new comers to take over?
- Does FSA have a clear direction as indicated in their foundation documents (e.g. goal, objectives and so forth) and a plan for the future? This documentation should be prepared.
- Is FSA a legal entity? Is it registered with the appropriate government authority? It should be registered.
- Does FSA do enough to document their activities in a manner that might better attract further funding? Does it have the capacity to do this and extend its activities? Does it want to?
- What is needed for FSA is to improve its performance in the future? (i.e. personnel, institutional affiliations, funding)?

## 3. METHOD

### 3.1 BACKGROUND

Over the course of this brief evaluation stretching broadly from early preparation of proposal documentation (September 2009) to the intensive period of fieldwork in Vanuatu (13 March – 10 April 2010) a wide range of methods will be used to collect the information required to meet the objectives. The principal field method proposed here based on PLA tools and thinking will involve more farmers than those involved with FSA. A broad approach is outlined, specific tools or exercises described, and a detailed list of the information required to answer the questions presented in 2.3 Objectives and Questions immediately above was prepared in advance of the final Steering Committee meeting scheduled to take place in Port Vila (15 March 2010). It decided that these details should be placed aside until the consultant was in the field and could adjust his expectations to the situation on the ground. Modifications and changes agreed to at this meeting have been included in this the final copy of the Evaluation Plan

### Donor – Implementing Agency Concerns

At the donor/implementing agency end of the enterprise the major questions relate to preconceived political, technical, economic and administrative issues of harmonisation, efficiency, accountability, capacity, value for money and so forth. At this level participation is about setting up a democratic relationship manifest by good communication between NZAID and FSA, proper management of funds as

judged by established international standards, and wise use of the investment within the terms agreed to between the development partners. These terms and conditions axiomatically place emphasis on donor and implementing agency concerns: the donor assumes that what is being done is for the benefit of the end recipients, in this case the farmers who receive training and innovation inputs from FSA. The FSA is seen to represent the interests of the farmers and by virtue of their (FSA's) informed and privileged position are able with the additional resources placed under their control by NZAID are able to help their farmer clients produce more food, animal and/or plant produce for sale or consumption.

### **Perspective Added by Rural Evaluation**

The additional perspective that will be provided by this review is a view from, the countryside. What do the farmers themselves think of FSA work? Who does it work for? Are the innovations practicable for all, or is it only those who have the resources in terms of prior training, equipment, health, labour and land able to take advantage of what FSA has to offer? In areas like Malekula where FSA work has just commenced do the innovations offered by FSA fit into the annual indigenous cycle of agricultural practices? On Santo and Tanna where FSA has been working for some time has the sustainable transfer of innovations taken place? How do the implemented innovations fit into the environmental ecosystem, the need for forest conservation and to maintain the watershed? What links are made to support services to insure the on-going supply of agricultural inputs, transport and, where relevant, access to markets? As part of "farmers helping farmers" approach, what role is played by the farmers themselves in the commercial vanilla production operation?

Farmers who are both a part of the FSA circle and those outside it will be interviewed and asked for their opinions. So that the evaluation is not limited to FSA insiders with a loyalty that may bias their responses participatory methods will be used to include whole villages so that FSA activities can be evaluated in the wider village context.

The aim of the reviewer is to produce a balanced and well informed assessment of FSA activities from a point of view that fairly represents, and is consistent with views from the countryside.

### **3.2 The Challenge**

This relationship between an implementing agency and their farmer clients is never easy nor unproblematic and the consultant assumes that FSA will be no exception. It is to their credit that by choosing to place the emphasis of the consultants input on village based activities FSA have implicitly asked that this aspect of the evaluation be privileged over other concerns.

In keeping with this preference, and as far as is possible within the time allocated to the task, it is the consultants' intention to use an appropriate selection of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) tools to work out how successfully the FSA menu of inputs fits farmer client expectations and preferences. Not only to assess whether what is offered works, how it works or not, but to what extent it is relevant to the client farmers (and potential clients ie those who are not members) situation and perceived priorities and needs.

Interviews will be conducted with a purposive sample of householders selected from the socioeconomic profile and will include women, men, young and elderly people. The interviews will provide an opportunity to triangulate the socioeconomic profile itself as well as collect detailed qualitative and quantitative information on FSA activities. Farms will also be visited.

### 3.3 Bennett Hierarchy Framework

As the review the must serve the interests of all stakeholders it needs to take a balanced overall approach. To achieve this the Bennett hierarchy framework will be used to guide and maintain a clear view of what level of the FSA operation and achievement is being assessed. This may subsequently be used to provide a summary of findings. A sample hierarchy is presented below.

With FSA agreement it will be used both to review their work and as a basis on which to 'work through' or 'work out' their wider goal and objectives so that their documentation can be made consistent with this widely used evaluation tool in agricultural extension.

The hierarchy is not self explanatory but lends itself to organising evidence for program evaluation. As stated by Bennett "Evidence of program impact becomes stronger as the hierarchy is ascended" but also "the difficulty and cost of obtaining evidence of accomplishments increases "along the same trajectory (Bennett 1975: 10). Given the time and resources allocated to the current evaluation exercise it is unlikely that either hard or soft evidence will be collected beyond level 5.

**Table 3.1 Modified Bennett's Hierarchy**

Level	Description	Examples as outcomes
8	End results. Consequences for wider society	Production increase from island. Shipped to Port Vila for export. Export targets reached.
7	End results. Consequences for target group	Production increase of 25% for those following new practice. Increased farm income.
6	Behavioural changes in target group	After 2 years operation 50% of farmers have adopted new practices
5	KASA changes: Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, Aspirations	Before and after surveys indicate that target farmers have gained knowledge and skills
4	Farmer reactions, opinion of activities	In Venn diagram broad consensus shows that most people hold FSA work in high regard
3	Farmer participation in extension activities	50 farmers attended evaluation meetings. More than 35% were women
2	Implementation activities	Number of FSA workshops held, pamphlets distributed, radio programs broadcast
1	Inputs	Number of: staff trained, village farmers trained, visits made, training sessions held

Source: Based on Bennett 1975; Dart & Straw 1998

Note that in NZAID terminology Level 8 is impact, Levels 7, 6 and 5 are outcomes, Level 3 is outputs, Level 2 is activities and Level 1 is inputs

### 3.4 Overview of Techniques

In New Zealand use will be made of existing documentation relating to rural extension work in Vanuatu

- Greer Consulting Services Report, (2008) *Review of Vanuatu's Agriculture Extension Services* NZAID: Wellington
- Kinsa Associates Report (2007) *Small Projects Scheme* NZAID: Wellington
- McGregor, Andrew (1998) *The Farm Support Association. A Program for a Sustainable Future* ESCAP Report: Vanuatu

Documentation of historical interest held in Port Vila (eg. *Rural Training Skills Project* and VRDTCA, DARD), and academic cultural studies such as

- Bonnemaïson, Joel (1994) *The Tree and the Canoe* University of Hawaii. Press: Honolulu
- McKinnon, John and Jean (2009) "Down to Earth in Wusi (Vanuatu): Women Potters and the Legacy of Lapita" In Walker (ed.) *Pika-Pika the Flashing Firefly* Hindustan Publishing Corporation: New Delhi pp. 139-61

As outlined above special attention will be paid to the Bennett framework for planning the evaluation of extension programmes, namely the seven categories of criteria, a seven-link "chain of events" as outlined in the following two papers:

- Bennett, Claude (1975) "Up the Hierarchy" *Journal of Extension*, March /April: 7-12
- Dart, J., Petheram, R.J. & Straw, W (1998) "Frameworks for Planning Program Evaluation" *Review of evaluation in Agriculture Extension Australia*, Draft Report to RIRDC, Canberra, Australia pp. Section 2 Page 1 to 21

Before leaving NZ relevant NZAID personnel and other interested parties will be called and asked to provide advice on how matters they believe should be taken into account as part of the task (ie Rick Woodham, Ray Greer). In the field parties directly engaged in the administration and operation of both the FSA and GFA will be interviewed, asked for advice and asked questions either directly or indirectly based on matters relating to the issues raised in the context of the Objectives above.

Over the course of fieldwork heavy reliance will be placed on verbal communication including individual and group discussions, semi structured and focus group interviews, and follow the PLA guidelines for sharing, adopting appropriate attitudes as well as using recommended tools

### 3.5 Activities in Port Vila

In Vanuatu extended discussions will be held with individuals with a direct interest in the operations of FSA including the: principals Charles Rogers and Peter Kauh and people in the NZAID office of the NZHC such as Jimmy Nanuman Nipo; related organisations with a strong interest in the operation of Rural Training Centres and Women's Groups such Kathy Solomon; and those directly responsible for extension work at DARD will be sought for semi structured interviews.

Visits to other donor agencies to get hold of both archival material (reports on FSA work going back to 1990), and contemporary advisory work (eg. Marcus Cox

et.al. 2007 *The Unfinished State: Drivers of Change in Vanuatu* AusAID document). Where individuals can be found with experience and a reasonable knowledge of extension work in Vanuatu over the period covered by the review may be approached for interviews.

Port Vila visits will be sandwiched in before, between and following two field visits and the assistance of the NZAID NZHC in collecting documentation and arranging interviews would be greatly appreciated.

Information collected in interviews will be triangulated by referencing documentation and interviewing a wide range of people with different views and backgrounds.

### 3.6 Activities Planned for Field Visits

To meet the challenge outlined above, the work of FSA needs to be contextualised so that a holistic approach can be taken to their contribution to development. Rather than focus just on the unit/groups FSA works with or the technical innovations they promote the broader questions of "Who cooperates? Who benefits? And why?" need to be addressed.

### Questioning Agricultural Innovation

The promotion of agricultural innovations is not a new idea and became part of modern agricultural extension based on the work of Everett Rogers (*Diffusion of Innovation* 1962 & 1964). However, critical evaluations of farmer centred extension work carried out in the late 1970s revealed that the approach was not altogether successful. It was found that pilot farmers privileged under a selective system that favoured those most capable and willing to accept change rarely resulted in wide adoption of innovations. Further, extension menus drawn up by urban experts, while they may have listed items that lent themselves to promotional packaging did not reflect farmer priorities. As long as the expert favoured menu options were on the table and donor support continued to be forthcoming the participation of farmers may have been assured but as soon as donor assistance came to an end farmer interest also lapsed. Subsequent critiques revealed that pre-packaged technical approaches to small holder farmers did not have a good record for sustainability and although these were backed up by solid scientific work failed to find a place in indigenous farming practices. Rapid Rural Appraisal was originally developed in Northeast Thailand (1980s) to improve communication and the flow of information between expert agriculturalists and small holder farmers and given the technical thrust of FSA it is appropriate that this relationship be revisited. Over recent years the development of participatory methodologies and its wide use in evaluation work focused on the interaction between insiders and outsiders facilitated with the use of PLA tools to articulate and appreciate indigenous knowledge has been a major advance.

It is the consultants intention to carry out a Rapid Rural Appraisal using PLA tools, an environment in which the wider issues of village development can be raised and the FSA inputs placed in a critical recipient based context.

The following will be used as advisable and practical and in the absence of farmer interest may be dropped altogether. Three have been written up in full to provide an illustration of what is involved and so that Peter Kauh who will accompany the consultant will be able to make himself familiar with the approach before fieldwork commences.

**Table 3.1 PLA Tools that may be used in this Rapid Rural Appraisal**

	PLA tools	Information
1	Socioeconomic or Well Being Analysis	Baseline household data, demography, financial capital, human capital. Identify position of FSA beneficiaries and most vulnerable groups. Discuss concepts of well being.
2	Agriculture, crops and animals Trends Analysis	Agricultural preferences/priorities and production trends
3	Networks & mobility: Inflow/outflow of people and resources. Mobility mapping	External connections, production, social capital, rural urban migration, trends
4	Venn diagram to profile community institutions	Institutional networks. What institutions work for villagers? What is the nature of the relationship?
5	Identify challenges. Perhaps analyse problems & identify possible solutions	Analysis of assets and vulnerability; causes and solutions. Priority needs

### 3.7 Socioeconomic / Well Being Analysis

#### Purpose

Socioeconomic or Well Being Analysis is used to find out the relative standing of households according to their own criteria. Thus the criteria will differ from one community to the next.

A completed profile will enable the consultant to understand local perceptions of wealth and poverty and what constitutes well being. It goes beyond measurement of income and physical assets. It enables outsiders to gain an understanding of the proportion of households in the various categories which the participating community representatives are agreed on. It gives a good over view of local issues related to livelihoods, social assets and political realities.

Well being information becomes part of the baseline with which the impact of intervention projects can be measured or in this case placed and can become an important first step in setting up a Monitoring and Evaluation System.

There are many ways Well Being Analysis can be carried out and the concept of ranking households may be a sensitive issue in some cultures and is not advised. However it is useful to understand what constitutes well being in any community and the approach can easily be conducted in a way that quickly puts aside the issue of identifying who fits where and drops the issue of where specific households have been placed in favour of the overall picture. Emphasis should fall on the challenge of a 'natural' system of differentiation that may place considerable hardship on households without enough labour, access to land and other resources.

#### Materials required

There should be enough cards, big enough to write each householders name on in letters that are large enough to be read by the small, representative group of people who will sort them.

If there is time to share the finished result a wide sheet of butchers paper or poster paper should be taken into the field with felt pens and some way of pinning the image up.

**Time required**

Two or more hours depending on how the session proceeds and how many people are involved. A list of households will need to be prepared in advance.

**Who participates?**

A group of 5 but not more than 10 key Participants works best. If the community has obvious cliques at odds with each other it may be best to conduct separate sessions with each of the different groups. Several results rather than one may be best. For example a separate session with women or young people may provide interesting comparisons for later discussion.

In this case the exercise may have to be limited to a representative group of householders. Special care must be taken to make it representative by age, gender, FSA and non FSA participants and so forth. If there is time in any one community to do the exercise with more than one group it is important that each time the method is used exactly the same procedure is followed.

**Data Collection Method: steps in Well Being Analysis**

1. Consultant/facilitator explains the purpose of the session to the Participants.
2. Helpers working with the consultant write the name of each head of household from the list onto a card, one for each household. Since many people may be uncomfortable with the written word the the helpers or facilitators should read out the householder names and give people time to consider the nature of the household before continuing.
3. The facilitator asks the participants to place the cards in four groups or piles according to the well being of the household from high well being to low. This can be done on a grid drawn on the ground or floor.

OR

If there only a few households the Participants may wish to rank the cards in order from the household with the most secure livelihood and sense of well being to the household with the least secure livelihood and sense of well being.

4. As the exercise proceeds, or if this interrupts the process, leave it to the end to ask why the choices have been made. A list of Well Being Criteria begins to grow and is recorded.
5. Eventually the group will come up with a few categories of Well Being to which they should assign characteristics. Facilitate discussion to list the features of each category. The FSA participants may be in the role of observers. It would be helpful if they were to note everything that is said and provide feed back to the group to stimulate further discussion.

**Basic Data Record: Well Being Analysis**

The final outcome is recorded on paper. This example is from Cambodia and categories like 'Credit' are unlikely to apply in Vanuatu.

**Table 3.2 Villager Well Being Ranking Criteria (Source Kinsa 2000)**

Criteria	Very vulnerable 7 Households, 10%	Vulnerable 10 Households, 14%	Not Very Vulnerable 48 Households, 70%	Well Being Secure 4 Households, 6%
<b>Land</b>	Poor access to land than most. Do not belong to favoured descent group	Have land but not enough to grow all their food needs.	Earn living solely from their fields. Plant some cash crops..	Main land holding descent group. Produce surplus to sell.
<b>Food Security</b>	Produce enough food for 5-6 months. Grow vegetables and wide range of vegetables in backyard.	Produce enough food for 6-7 months. Run short and have to find paid employment	Most households produce enough for their own needs. Bad season may result in shortfall. Have relatives who help them out.	No problems
<b>Assets other than land</b>	Few assets apart from basic agricultural tools. Live with parents'	Usual set of farm tools. Some chickens, no pigs	Own pigs, ducks, chickens, cattle and draft animals. Carts with rubber tyres. A few households own TV sets, water pumps, motorbikes.	A wide range of assets. Includes motorcycles, TV, stereo.
<b>Credit Rating</b>	Borrow food from better off villagers. Payback in labour or twice what they borrow.	Borrow rice from better off villagers. Payback twice what they borrow.	Can borrow rice without interest.	Do not borrow money locally. Have no need to do so.
<b>Size of family</b>	3-4 young children living with elderly grandparents. 8 people			Extended family with many adults and children. As many as 12 people

### 3.8 Matrix Ranking of Preferred Agricultural Activities

#### Purpose

Matrix rankings are prepared largely so that outsiders can uncover the criteria used by people to prioritise the things they do and why they do them. In the Vanuatu case the consultant wants to know what knowledge and values are mobilised by people to explain their preference for different types of agricultural activities. Why are certain plants or animals preferred over others? What would people choose if they had an open list? How do the agricultural activities on the FSA innovation menu fit their expectations? Is it consistent with their interests and capabilities or is an outsiders list that remains strange and foreign to the way farmers think?

Preparing a matrix ranking is an excellent way to analyse a large amount of information. Even though the participants know what their preferences are this exercise can help them, as well as the facilitators, to understand the reasons behind their preferences, and why different groups may have different preferences.

### **Materials Required**

A working matrix can be constructed on soft ground using a stick or drawn on a floor with chalk. At this scale locally available material like seeds, pebbles, twigs and cards of different colours can be used.

The results of the exercise or the exercise itself can be recorded/carried out on a large sheet of butchers paper or poster paper. These items should be taken into the field along with felt pens and some way of pinning the image up.

### **Time Required**

One and a half to two hours may be enough but this depends again on the size of the group and how much discussion is generated.

### **Who Participates?**

If it is possible to draw a large matrix on the ground and if the participants have a good understanding of the challenge involved the exercise can accommodate a group of twenty people or more. In fact the exercise can be scaled to suit conditions and if significant gains can be made by running different exercises for different groups, or by knowledgeable individuals differentiated by gender and age, then this should be done. Male and female preferences can be quite different, young people may be more willing to experiment and the consultant and anybody assisting with facilitation should keep an eye open for differentiation, different results will emerge from different interest groups.

### **Data Collection Method**

- 1 Purpose of the exercise is explained in detail.
- 2 Participants asked to list the various agricultural activities normally followed in their village (these can be depicted with symbols). When the participants have agreed on a list of activities these are placed along the left hand column of the matrix.
- 3 Criteria used to evaluate the attractiveness or otherwise of the activity is generated by comparing each of the given activities, one with the other. A list might be generated as follows: staple diet, high resistance to pests, high contribution to cash income, survives well under poor conditions (dry or very wet). When these have been agreed to they are placed across the top line and a column drawn under each.
- 4 One criteria was taken at a time and participants were given cards with each of the eight activities and asked to rank them in order of importance for each criterion. The top rank was one, the next two and so on down to nine. When everybody had agreed to the most appropriate rank had been given for the first criterion, in this case high resistance to pests the ranks were recorded in the matrix and attention moved to the second column (contributes to cash income) and the process was repeated.

## Basic Data Record: Preferred Agricultural Activities

Table 3.3 Matrix Ranking for Preferred Agricultural Activities

	High resistance to pests	Cash income	Tolerates poor conditions	Male ranking	Women ranking	+ or - area	+ or - productivity
Yam	1	1	1	1	1	↑	↑
Guinea corn	5	6	6	2	6	↑	↑
Beans	8	4	9	6	4	↑	↑
Pepper	4	3	5	9	2	↑	↑
Casava	2	9	3	4	8	↑	↑
Chickens	6	5	7	5	7	↑	-
Beni seed	3	2	2	3	3	↑	↑
Maize	7	8	8	7	5	↓	-
Melons	9	7	4	8	9	↓	-
Legend	↑ = Increase      ↓ = Decrease      - = No change						

## Venn diagram: profile of institutional relationships

## Purpose

Institutional analysis provides a means to understand the relationships between people in the community and the organisations, institutions, services and other entities of significance both within and outside of the village. This PLA Tool will build on insights gained from initial work by examining more closely the quality, intensity and perceived importance or closeness of people's relationships with key institutions many of which will have been mentioned in the agricultural activities ranking exercise. It can provide an indication of institutions or services which need to be strengthened, or reveal where there are weak ties with important institutions and in turn lead to identifying strategies to improve the situation.

## Materials Required

Drawing materials: cards, paper circles of various sizes, marker pens, coloured chalks, sticks for drawing on the ground. Chart paper, scissors.

Where people do not feel comfortable working with paper and pens it may be better to work on the ground with locally available materials: various sized stones, leaves, sticks etc may be used in the first stage.

### **Time Required**

Plan on two to three hours.

### **Who Participates?**

Depending on how the focus of this session evolves invite a group representative for each of the different stakeholders in the community, including those with a specific interest in the FSA and those not involved. If it appears to be useful to make comparisons between different interest groups separate sessions will be organised with small representative groups.

### **Data Collection Method**

- 1 Introduce this session by explaining its purpose. Explain that you want to find out about the institutions and organisations, both within and outside the community, that are important in people's lives. Tell the Participants how much time you expect to take.
- 2 You might begin by asking people what offices they visit, or what officials, church or NGO people visit the community. Institutions may be government organisations and others such as church related agencies, non governmental organisations, etc. A good place to start is to refer to the central village organisation: village head, churches, midwife, health station and so forth working out to off island institutions such as local, provincial government, etc. List the institutions as they are mentioned.
- 3 When people feel the list is complete ask them to represent each one on a separate card, using a symbol or drawing. Write the name of the institution on each card below the drawing.
- 4 To consider the relative importance of each institution ask the Participants to arrange the cards on the ground in order of importance. This provides the first layer of information. When this has been agreed ask the group to assign each one to a circular cards of different sizes, choosing the largest for the most important institutions and the smallest for the least important, and so on. Different coloured cards can be used to indicate different types of institution, for example blue for government, green for health, etc. this will provide another level of information.
- 5 The Participants are then asked to arrange the cards in a circular diagram. This provides the third layer of information. Draw a circle on the ground to represent the community and then ask people to arrange the cards in, around and away from the centre according to the closeness of the relationship and ease of access, not as measured by geographical distance but by the nature of the working relationship. Where there is a close relationship between two institutions or between the institution and the community, this may be indicated by placing the cards so they overlap.
- 6 When the diagram is finished ask if anyone would like to suggest a modification or add another institution.
- 7 The diagram may be interesting in itself but it is the 'why' questions it raises and what people have to say in response to these questions that is of most importance. If these questions have not been addressed during the process of constructing the diagram ask people to tell you why this or that institution, say health or FSA, although shown as important are difficult to access? Etc.

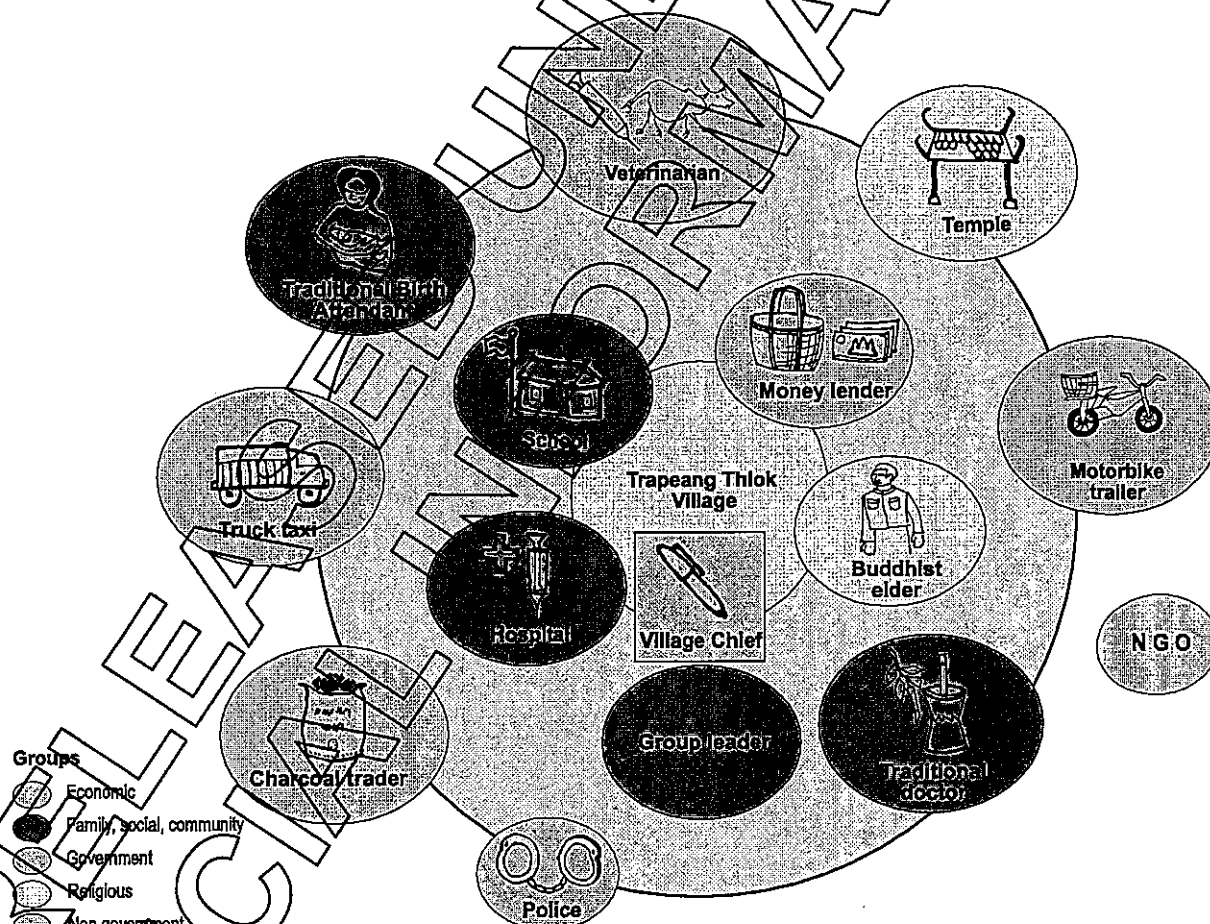
- 8 At each stage of the exercise it is important to note comments made by Participants. Here again although FSA is the primary focus of the visit how it compares to other institutions and how it handles built-in relational matters, problems and challenges is of major interest but this cannot be done in isolation from the broader context.

### Basic Data Record

When every one has agreed that the diagram is complete it can be copied onto a sheet of paper. It pays to take a digital photo of the original so that if the diagram on the ground is disturbed before it is recorded its value as a prompt for the information discussed will not be weakened.

An example of a Venn diagram can be found below.

**Figure 3.1 Example of Venn Diagram, Village of Trapeang Thlok, Kampong Spue, Cambodia**



Source: KINSA, Cambodia 2003

These examples have been detailed in advance of the consultants arrival so that FSA can make themselves familiar with at least three of the PLA Tools that may be used as part of the Rapid Rural Appraisal.

If more information is required the consultants advice is to find Vanuatu PLA specialists and talk to them about what they do and how they do it. There is a considerable literature available and VANGO may receive copies of **PLA Notes** IIED: London which provides up to date information. Useful references include

Kumar, Somesh (2002) *Methods for community Participation. A complete guide for practitioners* ITDG: Southampton

McKinnon, Jean and John 2005 *Participatory Learning and Action. A guide for NGO facilitators* Ministry of Rural Development: Phnom Penh (available as pdf file)

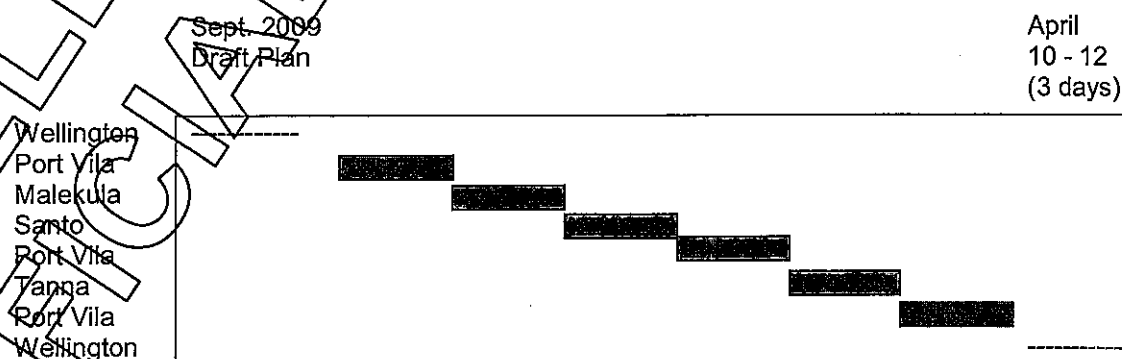
Pretty, Jules et al. (1995) *A Trainers Guide for Participatory Learning and Action* IIED Participatory Methodology Series, IIED: London

### Contingencies

The assumption made in this evaluation plan is that all activities will run to schedule but the world runs to its own schedule and thought needs to be given to contingencies. Rather than list in detail the possible things that could go wrong the consultant will keep an open mind and take a pragmatic approach to the practicalities of any situation he might face. If weather deteriorates or transport is not available then the opportunities created by the situation will be explored. If farmers do not want to participate in PLA exercises the tools will be scaled down to fit the number of people willing to take part or abandoned altogether in favour of focus group or individual interviews or the number of trips to gardens increased.

The NZAID office at the NZHC has undertaken to assist FSA in scheduling appointments with key stakeholders so that over the course of visits to Port Vila critical appointments can be arranged with key people rather than left till the end of the visit and close to Easter when they may not be in town. FSA has provided a list of key people, a formal request including a statement of ethics has been prepared and will be sent out to all those whose cooperation is sought.

## 4. SCHEDULE FOR EVALUATION



## 5. MILESTONES

### NZAID Milestones

	Milestone Event	Specific Deliverables	Due No Later Than	Fee Days Payable
	Draft evaluation plan	Submission of the draft evaluation plan	23 Sep 09	nil
	Final evaluation plan	Final detailed version of evaluation plan	15 Mar 10	Up to 6 days
	Presentation of findings	Presentation of draft evaluation findings to stakeholders	08 April 10	Up to 22 days
	Evaluation report and completion of Form B	Delivery of final written evaluation report (max 30 pages plus annexes) to NZAID's satisfaction and completion of Form B	10 May 10	Balance of days taken to complete services up to maximum of 10 days

### Consultants Milestones

#### Output Milestone

Submit draft budget

Sign Contract

Submit first draft of Evaluation Plan

Submit second draft of Evaluation Plan

#### Output Milestone

Final draft of Evaluation Plan to Steering Committee

Submit first draft of review findings in Vila

De brief with NZAID

Submit draft of evaluation review to NZAID

Final Evaluation Report & Form B

#### Date due 2009

14 September

16 September

16 September

23 September

#### Date due 2010

15 March

08 April

12 April

15 April

10 May

### **Appendix 3 Terms of Reference**

#### **Participatory Evaluation of FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION**

##### **Background information and context**

NZAID entered into a three year Grant Funding Arrangement (GFA) with Farm Support Association (FSA) in November 2008. The purpose of that arrangement is to enable FSA to provide on the ground training and support in the area of farming to rural communities. The goal of the GFA is to increase sustainable production of, and household income from, Vanuatu's agricultural sector products.

FSA was established in 1983 as a small, member-based non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation. It has a membership of over 300 smallholder farmers (commercial and/or subsistence). Until recently, all in-Vanuatu small holder farmers were producing to meet subsistence needs and cultural obligations. As the country's economy has become increasingly monetised, commercial agriculture has been incorporated with subsistence practices, and the majority of these small holder farmers are now regarded to be "semi commercial farmers". A large proportion of their farm produce is used to meet immediate household needs while a small portion is allocated to generating additional cash income, which FSA has found households often find complicated to manage.

FSA uses a number of farming methods and techniques in working with community groups to improve productivity and the value of their produce. FSA's approach is to teach through practical exercises and to work alongside farmers in farmers' own fields where possible. FSA states it has learned through experience which techniques and innovations are most effective. FSA's motto is "Farmers Helping Farmers".

FSA has established regular working relations with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. In the early days when it operated as the Plantation Training Centre it received ten years of funding from USAID and the Catholic Church; and some support from the GoV drawing upon STABEX funds. Following Vanuatu's independence, the organisation changed its name to the Plantation Support Association in the 1980s, but as the community plantation system started to disintegrate and small holder farmers began joining the Association, it changed its focus to 'farming' and its name to the Farm Support Association. For a period of time FSA was an extension arm of a spice company called VENUI VANILLA. During this period, FSA's activities around support for spice production were funded by the EU as part of the POPACA project. FSA has also received funding indirectly from Oxfam Australia through a partner NGO in PNG called Melanesia First.

Through its GFA with NZAID, FSA is working with Rural Training Centres (RTC) and women's groups in Paama, Malekula, Ambrym, Epi, Banks, Maewo and Ambae, to improve farming techniques in order to increase the value of produce by the immediate beneficiaries, as well as wider communities in which the beneficiaries are based. Other stakeholders will be identified through discussion with FSA, through teleconference to be arranged by NZAID.

It was agreed as part of the grant funding arrangement (GFA) that a joint evaluation of FSA's work would take place in the first year of the partnership, in recognition that FSA has not had a formal evaluation of its work carried out to date. The GFA stipulates that the terms of reference for the evaluation should be jointly developed. It also notes it should cover activities going back several years, as well as evaluate FSA as an organisation from a governance and management perspective. While NZAID has taken the lead in developing these ToR, FSA has given input and feedback on the draft and has approved this document as the basis for the evaluation.

### **Rationale of the evaluation**

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

1. evaluate the work of FSA since 1990 so that the organisation can learn and improve, and so that FSA is more able to be accountable to themselves, their beneficiaries and donors,
2. review NZAID's support to FSA since November 2008 and identify any learning that could make NZAID's support to FSA (and to other similar activities) more effective, efficient, relevant and sustainable.

The evaluation is being carried out at this early stage of NZAID funding because to date FSA has not had a formal evaluation carried out. The evaluation is being carried out in October 2009 to take advantage of the 'down season' in Vanuatu so that stakeholders and FSA staff can more readily be involved in the evaluation.

The results of the evaluation will be reported to both NZAID and FSA, including potentially to FSA beneficiaries. The findings will be used to strengthen mutual accountability, learning and development effectiveness. Provided the final evaluation report meets minimum quality standards, it will be released on NZAID's website.

The evaluation should meet the accountability, learning, and improvement needs of both FSA and NZAID. A teleconference will be arranged by NZAID prior to the consultant's departure to get clear understanding of FSA's needs for the evaluation, including what FSA would like to learn from the evaluation. It is likely FSA will want constructive feedback about strengths and weaknesses of their organisation, and advice/recommendations about how they might improve their effectiveness and efficiency; how to develop staff ability to monitor and evaluate FSA's work; and how to strengthen their (FSA's) relationships with stakeholders.

### **Scope of the evaluation**

The scope of the evaluation includes NZAID funded activities since November 2008, and FSA activities going back to 1990 including an assessment of FSA's organisational structure and management capacity to support its objectives effectively.

The geographical focus of the evaluation will be decided in consultation with FSA and NZAID by a teleconference prior to departure. The target groups will also be decided in consultation with FSA and NZAID, but are likely to include Rural Training Centres, Women's Groups and other beneficiary groups that FSA has worked with since 1990, and DARD, and VRDTCA. Field trips will need to be included in the evaluation plan.

OECD DAC criteria<sup>40</sup> need to be incorporated into the evaluation. For the first part of the evaluation (of FSA's work going back to 1990), all five DAC criteria should be applied although less emphasis on impact may be appropriate. For the second part of the evaluation (of NZAID funded activities) focus should be on the DAC criteria of effectiveness (progress towards outcomes), sustainability (likelihood of sustainability of support) and efficiency, concluding with recommendations regarding the appropriate type and level of NZAID support to FSA in the short to medium term (up to next five years).

### **Objectives of the evaluation**

#### *Objective 1*

To evaluate the work of FSA since 1990: what has worked well, and less well, for the Association, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Issues to address include:

- the goals, objectives and expected outcomes of FSA, and how these have changed over time
- FSA's experience on the ground with stakeholders and how this has affected the objectives and approach
- what activities have been undertaken and completed by FSA since 1990 with what inputs
- monitoring and evaluation
- outcomes and impacts including unintended outcomes of FSA's work
- gender implications
- the extent to which environmental sustainability/ecological security satisfactorily factored into FSA's work
- suitability of governance arrangements
- suitability of management systems such as information and accounting systems, filing etc. Would they pass scrutiny if an external audit was carried out?
- value for money – comparison of total cost qualitatively with the broad outcomes, impacts or changes brought about by FSA's work. Also compare with experience or norms in other activities where similar outcomes have been aimed for/achieved. Analyse FSA's own cost structures to identify cost effectiveness, whether savings could be made (without disproportionately compromising outcomes) through different methods, management, or design etc.

#### *Objective 2*

To identify learning and lessons that would improve the work of FSA

#### *Objective 3*

To assess NZAID funded activities, the appropriateness of NZAID's support, and identify any lessons that should be incorporated into continuing support.

Issues to address should include:

- have activities funded by NZAID provided value for money?
- Is the correct type of M&E information being gathered to determine whether progress is being made in achieving objectives? Provide recommendations for how to strengthen or remedy weakness in this area.

#### *Objective 4*

<sup>40</sup> DAC criteria are: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability and impact

To identify learning and lessons that would improve the GFA between NZAID and FSA

*Objective 5*

To make recommendations for the future.

**Evaluation methodology**

A participatory approach will be taken to the evaluation, and applied to:

- Design of the evaluation, and how FSA will be evaluated
- Information gathering
- Verification of findings
- Development of learning and recommendations

It is expected that the consultant will involve a wide range of stakeholders, and decide together with them, as well as FSA and NZAID, how FSA should be evaluated. The evaluation processes should be open and understood by all parties and stakeholders involved.

A draft evaluation plan will be prepared by the consultant following an NZAID-facilitated teleconference with FSA and NZAID, within one month prior to departure. The draft evaluation plan should be sufficiently detailed to address the following:

- who the stakeholders are and their stake in the evaluation,
- what issues or constraints there may be in involving stakeholders in the evaluation and how these constraints will be mitigated
- what information will be needed to answer the evaluation questions
- options for how the evaluation will be designed to get that information, what methods to use, and from whom the information will be gathered (note that this should be finalised in-country, and the initial draft evaluation plan should say how this finalisation will be done in a participatory way)
- the possible questions that might be asked, guided by the questions in the objectives section, and to be confirmed in-country). The draft evaluation plan should explain how this will be confirmed in-country)
- how will information be verified and cross checked
- how will data be analysed (this will depend on methods used, but some general comments can be made in the draft evaluation plan before the methods are confirmed in-country)
- how crosscutting issues of gender and environment will be included
- how will findings be fed back and learning from the evaluation identified in a participatory way
- what constraints or risks there may be (including those noted in the TOR) and how these will be mitigated
- draft schedule of meetings/workshops etc to be completed by FSA.

The draft evaluation plan will be approved by NZAID and FSA, and then finalised upon arrival in Vanuatu through stakeholder consultation.

The consultant is expected to maximise the following elements of a participatory approach:

- emphasise learning and local ownership and encourage the people who are supposed to benefit from the intervention to play a significant role in the evaluation process
- possibility for exploring different view points and disagreements.

And manage proactively the following constraints, challenges and risks:

- the exposure of conflicting opinions, and of stakeholders holding vastly different view points
- the participatory approach may be more time consuming than stakeholders expect
- the degree of active participation from FSA may be less than NZAID's expectation.

FSA's organisational ability to undertake monitoring and evaluation should be enhanced through the evaluation process, including through involving stakeholders. The consultant will ensure that the evaluation is guided by OECD DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. The evaluation is to be carried out in a way that avoids any adverse effects of political or organisational influence on the findings. The evaluation should be as systematic and objective as possible.

#### **Governance and management of the evaluation**

The evaluation is being commissioned by NZAID for NZAID and FSA benefit. Governance will be discussed between FSA and NZAID at the forthcoming teleconference. One possibility is to set up a small steering committee consisting of one NZAID staff at Port, one NZAID staff in Wellington and two FSA staff. The steering committee will approve the evaluation plan, address issues that arise, ensure evaluative independence is upheld, and sign off the evaluation report as final.

Management of the evaluation will be by NZAID. Wellington staff will contract the consultant, and Port staff in Port Vila will support the day to day administrative arrangements necessary for the consultant to undertake the participatory review.

FSA will be asked at the teleconference if they are willing to be responsible for providing information such as reports and other documents, arranging interviews and workshops, encouraging feedback from stakeholders and ensuring that feedback is adequately addressed by the evaluation consultant.

#### **Skills required of evaluation consultant**

- Expert skills in participatory processes
- Expert skills in evaluations and reviews
- Expert skills in rural development, preferably in Vanuatu
- Excellent communication skills, both written and spoken, and preferably working knowledge of Bislama
- Excellent facilitation skills
- Strong analytical skills

#### **Outputs and reporting requirements**

##### **Output milestone**

##### **Date due**

Submission of the draft evaluation plan

September 3, 2009

Final detailed version of evaluation plan

September 23, 2009

Presentation of draft evaluation findings to stakeholders

By end of October

Final written evaluation report (30 pages maximum plus annexes)

By end of November

## Appendix 4 Annotated References

### Annotated References

Taylor, Donald M. & Raymond Greer (2002) **Vanuatu: Policy issues in the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Sectors** Asian Development Bank: Manila. Provides a review of these different sectors prepared in consultation with the Government of Vanuatu and with the support of the AusAID. A series of policy issues built on an earlier sector review conducted by the ADB (**Vanuatu Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Review** 2000) are presented with recommended development action plans. Details concern specific undertakings, and identify both government and private sector initiatives that might be undertaken. Challenges are placed in an historical context in which land disputes and shortcomings in the internal infrastructure predominate. The writers characterise the traditional bush fallow system one of low productivity and see great potential in the export sector for high value commodities, particularly those that are organically grown in "premium niche markets" (p.2) for spices (particularly vanilla) and coffee. For these to work well the participation of the private sector is seen to be "the paramount factor in sustainable development" (p.2).

Bazeley, Peter & Ben Mullen (2006) **Vanuatu Economic Opportunities. Fact – Finding Mission** Report prepared for AusAID & NZAID. Report available through AusAID Publications: Canberra

Bennett, Claude (1975) "Up the Hierarchy" **Journal of Extension**, March /April: 7-12. the hierarchy first introduced in this paper has been used for more than 30 years as a framework for planning the evaluation of extension programmes, a seven-link "chain of events" from inputs to impacts which should follow from a successfully implemented agricultural innovation. The paper was more recently revised in a joint paper by Dart, Petheram and Straw listed below.

Bianchessi, Piero (2004) **Vanilla: Agriculture and Curing Techniques. A photographic handbook for vanilla farmers** FSA & Venui Vanilla Co.: Port Vila and Santo pp.84. A very detailed and extremely well illustrated booklet on the science of vanilla cultivation with colour photos, includes agricultural and curing techniques. Positive and negative examples given; illustrated with large bold photographs, very impressive. Little on economics other than how price may be influenced by world supply and demand. Growing vanilla and curing it is a sophisticated and demanding activity. After three years and under favourable conditions the plants provide a harvest. They are sensitive to the balance between shade and sunshine and only flower if slightly stressed by dry conditions. They need to be pollinated by hand. About 100 plants produce 20-28 Kg of cured vanilla. Most farmer interviewed in the course of fieldwork had managed to produce only two or three kilograms of beans. Curing vanilla is a demanding process. The beans must be killed and sweated and not over dried.

Chung, Margaret & David Hill (2002) **Urban Informal Settlements in Vanuatu: Challenge for Equitable Development** Report prepared for Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Pacific Operation Centre.

- Dart, J., Petheram, R.J. & Straw, W (1998) "Frameworks for Planning Program Evaluation" *Review of Evaluation in Agriculture Extension Australia*, Draft Report to RIRDC, Canberra, Australia pp. Section 2: 1 – 21. For comment see Bennett above.
- FSA (1999) *In situ Conservation of Taro in Vanuatu: a feasibility study* Taro Genetic Resources: Conservation and Utilisation. AusAID/SPC. See report below (2002)
- FSA (1999) *An Evaluation of Fruit Fly control and Mitigation Measures on Domestic Fruit Production in Vanuatu 1998 – 1999* Report on pilot project funded by AusAID, UNDP and NZODA. Project taken up in response to problem of fruit fall affecting citrus. Observation by a farmer on north Ambrym resulted in preventative fieldwork being carried out by FSA using results of work done by Tobin of ACIAR (1990) using hydrolysed yeast mixed with malathion to attract and kill flies especially on commodity fruit such as guava, mango and breadfruit as well as nakavika principally for domestic consumption). Results considered to be promising.
- FSA (2003) *Projek Belong Ek. Winim Vatu Wetem 20 Faol Nomo* Booklet produced by Vanuatu Development and Training Centers Association (VDTCA): Port Vila pp.39 Detailed guide to chicken raising. Instructions given on constructing fowl house, the cost of feeding hens, 20-week husbandry schedule; what to provide in terms of feed, water, importance of balanced diet to maintain health of birds; a comprehensive budget shows cost and returns; a summary of what has to be done by those buying in to ownership and keeping records.
- FSA (2002) *Taro Diversity and in-situ conservation in Vanuatu: A baseline study* Report prepared by FSA for Taro Genetic Resources: Conservation and Utilisation (TaroGen) project sponsored by AusAID/SPC for the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI). Second study of two (1999, 2002) in which FSA provided consultant skills to ACIL Pty. Ltd. to carry out a survey to work out the extent of taro diversity, its distribution, how diversity is maintained and managed, what influences this, and who does it. The purpose of the study is stated vaguely as being carried out to formulate an on-farm strategy: a strategy to work with farmers to further the research or and an understanding of how indigenous methods of selection and development of new varieties is carried out? The precise purpose is not stated.
- FSA (2005) *Gliricidia. Stret Tri Blog Vanila. Hao belong planem mo prunem* Pamphlet published by FSA which shows farmers who intend to plant vanilla how to layout a plot and plant *gliricidia sepium* for the vanilla to climb on.
- FSA (n.d.) *Information on Organic Farming and Certification* FSA six page pamphlet produced with support from the EU funded POPACA project. A very succinct statement of what is expected from farmers if they are to be certified as 'organic' producers
- FSA (n.d.) *Farm Support Association. Description of Activities/Services* Notes pp.4.
- FSA (2007) *Workhorse Program for Community Based Projects* Proposes the use of work horses to access rural areas where trucks cannot go or are not available, carry loads that are too heavy for people, and lighten the work load of women in particular. FSA have some 30 trained work horses mainly on Ambrym, Tanna and Pentecost. FSA suggests a workhorse network be built up to spread the

knowledge of how to manage them and put them to work hauling two wheel bush carts or as pack animals. The promotional material suggests that donors may be able to help out such as REDI, Peace Corps and VSO., offers a three month training course at La Source Plantation, and suggests how they must be fed. Certification is promised. The total cost before shipping and trainee transport is taken into account was in 2007 321,500vt.

Gallup, Radelet & Warner (1997) **CAER Discussion Paper No.38** Harvard Institute for International Development: Boston

Helberg, Ulrich (2001) **Organic Agriculture in Vanuatu** presents the results of a second mission to Vanuatu, Malo carried out by the author, a consultant supported by CDE Brussels. Helberg outlines basic training, the results of an examination of FSA's Internal Control system and discussions with both FSA staff and Venui Vanilla and outline recommendations made to the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Quarantine. Recommendations included improving office facilities<sup>41</sup> in Santo (Luganville) including half time secretary separate office room with appropriate security, basic office furniture, stationary, telephone and desk top computer. Helberg also suggested that FSA become a member of IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements with initial three year funding from CDE.

Lenfant, Stephen (2007) **Wokem Katimor Kofi**. Extension booklet produced for farmers by DARD/ POPACA/ VARTC which outlines the best way to set up and manage a small scale coffee plantation. Illustrated with very clear coloured photos. Translated into Bislama by Lydia Jacquier and edited by André Pilicki.

Lenfant, Stephen (2007) **Processem Kofi** Extension booklet for farmers produced by DARD/ POPACA/ VARTC which outlines the steps involved in processing coffee from when to harvest, how to pulp, ferment and sun dry the beans. Illustrated with very clear coloured photos and prepared with editorial assistance provided by André Pilicki

Greer, Ray (2008) **Review of Vanuatu's Agricultural Services** NZAID funded report pp.54; Appendices pp.22. Comprehensive review of extension services which comes to the conclusion that current service do not meet the "needs of the rural producers..." do not contribute enough toward meeting "the Governments development goals" and further that "the public extension services are constrained by funding, management and motivation and do not provide a universal coverage" (p.40). The recommendations are more abstract and general than expected of a report like this and the absence of concrete priorities makes the formulation of actions plans difficult.

McGregor, Andrew (1998) **Vanuatu. The Farm Support Association. A Program for a Sustainable Future** Unpublished consultants report prepared with ESCAP support: Vanuatu. A positive and supportive review of FSA activities from an agriculture and management point of view.

Rambo, A. Terry (2009) "Are the farmers always Right? Rethinking Assumptions Guiding Agricultural and Environmental research in Southeast Asia" **Asia Pacific Issues Analysis from the East-West Center** No.88 May pp.12. Rambo argues that four current assumptions that privilege local knowledge over scientific thinking which has become the new orthodoxy over the last few decades does not always

<sup>41</sup> Visiting consultant assumes the office referred to is the SAPV office.

serve us well. "These assumptions – that traditional agricultural systems are sustainable, that indigenous agroecological knowledge is usually correct and valuable, that community –based resource management is effective, and that PRA is the best method of research - form a mutually reinforcing set" (p.12). This set needs to be looked at critically. Farmers like scientists are not always right. He makes the sensible suggestion rather than states outright, that for best results the four assumptions need to be constantly checked for relevance to specific situations, deconstructed, delinked and never treated as an infallible set.

Watters, Ray (2008) "The Village Mode of Production and Agricultural Development in the South Pacific" pp.81-93 & "A Tale of Two Leaders: Independence, Custom and Development in Vanuatu" pp.235-249 in *Journeys Towards Progress: Essays of a Geographer on Development and Change in Oceania* Victoria University Press: Wellington. The first selected text provides a thoroughly well documented if broad review of small holder farming in the South Pacific, including a wealth of detailed empirical studies of a range of bush fallow systems that are usually ignored by macro economists. Watters raises points that off set the more critical comments favoured by urban based commentators like Taylor and Greer (2002) about the "low productivity" of the bush-fallow system by pointing out "The largely non-monetised rural economy in Vanuatu has successfully supported a 90% increase in the rural population since independence (from about 95,000 in 1980 to an estimated 180,000 now)" (p.83). Watters also identifies emerging issues such as that identified by Weightman (1989), areas in which fallow periods are already "too short – west Ambae, Paama, north Pentecost, Atchin, Nguna, south Efate, Middle Bush and east and west Tanna" (p.84) and the "progressive degradation" of regeneration. The "Tale of Two Leaders" discusses the legacy of colonialism and the journey of coming face to face not with "the generosity or welcome they expected, they learnt a harsh lesson about the impersonality of the West and its relentless pursuit of material acquisition and the dominance that it sought to impose on their world." Following Joel Bonnemaison he goes on to argue that "modern changes do not mean a change of identity or the death of traditional culture" what remains is a culture "astoundingly true to itself" (p.251). By implication people remain deeply suspicious of the single minded pursuit of wealth but also retain the capacity to remain optimistic about the structural tensions that can be expected to arise out of the growing socioeconomic differentiation which is such a strong feature of economic dualism (p.253).

SAPV (2003) *S.A.P.V. Guide to Layer Management*

- Vol 1 How to build your chicken house and equipment
- Vol 2 What types of feed to use and how to feed your chickens
- Vol 3 How much money you need, and how much you can expect to make

Each volume is a single A4 page printed on each side with a succinct statement of what you need to do if you want to earn money from your layer hens.

Publication was supported by the EU under the NSA Programme

# Appendix 5 People Interviewed and Institutions Visited

(Repeat visits not recorded)

Name	Organisation	Position	Date	Place
	NZAID NZHC	Programme Coordinator	15 March	Port Vila
	SAPV/FSA	Chairman/Vice President	15 March	Port Vila
	FSA	Project Coordinator	15 March	Port Vila
	FSA	Trainer	15 March	Port Vila
	DARD	Provincial Agricultural Officer	17 March	Lakatoro Malekula
	FSA	Assistant Trainer	17 March	Lakatoro Malekula
	Brenue farm	Farmer	17 March	Brenue Malekula
	Brenue farm	Farmer	17 March	Brenue Malekula
	Farmer	Vanilla grower	18 March	Brenue Malekula
	Morobein RTC	Manager	18-19 March	Wowo Malekula
	Ngaim RTC	Manager	20 March	Uripiv Malekula
	DARD	Provincial Agricultural Officer	22 March	Luganville Santo
	Venue Vanilla	Shareholder	22 March	South Santo
	SAPV	Sales person	22 March	Luganville Santo
	Vanuatu College of Agriculture	CEO	23 March	Luganville Santo
	DARD	Root crops technician	23 March	Santo
	TVET	Team Leader	23 March	Luganville Santo
	DARD	Principal Agricultural Extension Officer	24 March	Tagabe Port Vila
	DARD	Agricultural Extension Officer		Tagabe Port Vila
	VOLD	Director	24 March	Tagabe Port Vila
	VSA/FSA	Volunteer	25 March	Kaiviti Port Vila
	Women's Affairs & Ministry of Justice	Director	25 March	Port Vila
	Consultant & farmer	Consultant & farmer	25 March	SAPV Port Vila
	DARD Coffee specialist	Extension officer	29 March	Lenakel Tanna
	Lume RTC	Manager/Teacher/farmer	30 March	Lomae Tanna
	Napil RTC	Manager/Teacher/farmer	30 March	Napil, Tanna
	Catholic School	Teacher	30 March	Lenakel Tanna

5.9(2)(a)

# REVIEW OF THE VANUATU FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

Name	Organisation	Position	Date	Place
	Farmer	Pastor/vanilla farmer	30 March	Middle Bush Tanna
	Lorakou TRC	Manager/teacher/ farmer	31 March	Lorakou Tanna
	MAQFF	Advisor	6 April	Tagabe Port Vila
	VRDTCA	Senior manager	6 April	Port Vila
	Treasury Division	Civil Servant. Board Member of SAPV	7 April	Port Vila
	DARD	Volunteer	8 April	Tagabe Port Vila

5.9(2)(a)

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