It has been a tradition of USP to open its door to the public in one day, hence the event Open Day. This year, the USP Savaii Center opened its door to over 500 visitors consisting of students from 10 different schools, representatives from the government and non-government organizations, private sectors and development partners in the island. The event aims to showcase the programme offerings and facilities of USP to the up-coming undergraduate students and other stakeholders as well as keeping the public informed and updated on the activities and goals of the university for the region.

Hon. Gatoloai Faanu Amataga Alesana-Gidlow, a member of the Samoan Parliament and an alumna of USP was the Keynote Speaker of the invocation program. (cont. in page 2.)

In This Issue...
- SAFT Display during the Open Day...Pg.3
- New Strategic Plan Consultation.....Pg. 4
- Making Agriculture attractive .....Pg.5
- SPC VISITORS.....Pg.6
- SAFT Research Proposal.....Pg.6
- Youth Business Expo……..Pg. 7
- Biosecurity in Samoa……..Pg. 7
- New Staff in SAS….Pg. 8
- Is Samoa ready to Export Banana?....Pg. 8
- Feature Vegetable: SQUASH ..... Pg. 9
- The World of Technology……...Pg. 10
- Library Corner…..Pg.10
- SLS– We Help You Achieve….Pg.11
- Community Service through Skills Trainings….Pg. 12
- Feature Farmer: Aunty Lasa...Pg.13
- JOSPA Call for Paper….Pg14

Student-visitors from the different schools in Savaii attended the USP Open Day in the Center (left) and the Keynote Speaker, Hon. Gatoloai Faanu Amataga Alesana-Gidlow with Assoc. Prof. Mohammed Umar (right)
USP SAVAIİ OPEN DAY!

In his welcome remarks, Assoc. Prof. Mohammed Umar, talked about the importance of agriculture to Samoa and its people. He further encouraged the students to consider agriculture as a career. The event also showcased the talents of USP students through a dance number followed by a Quiz Bowl which was participated by the enthusiastic students wherein 12 of them brought home a token to remember the day of their visit in Savaii Center. (LTU)
A day before the Open Day in USP Savaii Center, 11 Staff from Alafua Campus head to the big island to prepare the display. With the assistance of the Staff in Savaii Center and students the Center was decorated, chairs and tents were installed and displays from SAFT, IRETA, SAS, Library, SWO and SLS were set-up and were all set. (LTU)
Similiarly, on the 9th of August 2018, an in-Country Consultation between USP VC & President Prof. Rajesh Chandra with other USP Stakeholders took place at the Alafua Campus at 2.30pm.

More than 50 people attended representing USP Stakeholders such as the USP Alumni, the Ministry of Agriculture (MAF), the Women In Business Development Inc (WIBDI) just to name a few were all invited to listen and take part in this consultation to help USP generate a strong and relevant plan to guide and support the University’s development into globally-recognised and future-focused research university for the Pacific Islands. (AP)
In this era of Technology and modernization convincing youth to pursue agriculture in the university is a tough task. The USP Open Day both in Alafua Campus and Savaii Center this year were packed with curious and ambitious youth, over a thousand in Alafua and 500 in Savaii. On that day they seemed fascinated particularly during the tour to the displays and their conversations with USP students and Staff. Their energy is so vibrant and brings positive energy to a usually serene Campus. But in the end of the event the question is how many of these 1500 student-visitors will actually and eventually come back and enrol to the Agriculture program of USP? Based on the Semester 1 and 2 enrolments of 2018, the Face to Face mode of delivery registered only over 30 freshmen students although the number has been increasing over the years but apparently there is a need to do more. More marketing and promotion not only for the survival of the programmes per se but for the future of the agriculture sector of the Pacific region which is the major driving force of the region’s economy.

So how will you make Agriculture attractive to the younger generation? USP has started converting F2F to Blended mode and Online lesson delivery. To encourage working students and to cater the needs of the region and resolve limitation brought by distance and cost of sending students to Alafua to pursue Agriculture. This move has proven to be very effective since in Semester 1 and 2 of this year, over a hundred of Online students have enrolled. To make them enroll is one thing and making them stay and finish are another challenge. Providing platform such as Moodle wherein the Learners and the Lecturers can virtually exchange ideas of which a physical classroom usually provides and installation of Lecture Capture System also enhances the learning experience of students both F2F and Online. Continuing construction and renovation of facilities such as libraries, laboratories and lecture rooms is another action the Alafua is doing to keep on track and meet the demands of the competitive education sector. Relevant researches and programmes like Food Technology and Crop Management and competitive Staff in addition to the above mentioned are the main steps of USP-SAFT on “making Agriculture attractive to the younger generation?” (LTU)
THE SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD TECHNOLOGY

The School of Agriculture and Food Technology's (SAFT) Crop and Food Technology Laboratories were visited by the Director and the Deputy Director of the Land Resources Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in Fiji, on the 9th August 2018 to have a look at SAFT facilities. In addition, the purpose of the visit was for a potential research collaboration with SAFT and developing an MOU. Assoc. Prof Mohammed Umar took them on a tour to the laboratories including the Campus Library.

SAFT Research Proposal Seminar

Under the Supervision of Drs Nanadakumar Mamle Desai and Jagdish Bhati, Masters student in Agricultural Economics Jean Eroa presented her research proposal on the 2nd of August, entitled “Assessing Profitability and Resource Use Efficiency in Producing Yams, Taro, Sweet Potatoes, Cassava and Maize crops in Solomon Islands: A study in Guadalcanal Province of SI”.

ALL were invited to attend especially students and academic staff. The Lecturers who were present gave a lot of important and useful comments and feedback to help improve her proposal. The same proposal was discussed and reviewed by the members of the School Research Committee of SAFT on the 17th of August. After the discussion, the committee approved the proposal suggesting minor revision. (AP/LTU)
The School of Agriculture and Food Technology (SAFT) was invited to participate in the Youth Business Expo on the 8th August. This event was coordinated by the Samoa Ministry of Women, Communities & Social Development. The SAFT Food Technology section displayed posters and products and information on the programme offerings at the University of the South Pacific (USP). (AP)

Biosecurity in Samoa; Challenges and Improvements

Keeping the island safe from invasive species is one tough job for the Biosecurity Office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Invasive species such as Mongoose, Taro Vein Chlorosis Virus and Taro Leaf Blight have proven to be serious threat to the biodiversity and economy of Samoa. At the moment, there is a lingering threat of the Greening Disease on Citrus that is already present in American Samoa. The disease is vectored by an insect, Psyllid, Diaphorina citri. The proximity and active exchange of goods from two countries makes Samoa vulnerable to the said disease. Another challenge the Biosecurity is facing regularly is the increasing number of tourists visiting the island country such as Cruise Ships although the major concern are the pets these tourists are bringing which is managed by the Quarantine as well. The ACEO of Biosecurity Office of MAF Afiofa Lupeomanu Pelenato Fonoti laid out the mechanisms they are following when facing a potential case of invasive species which consists of Response Plan for crops and animals in coordination with institution like USP and partners in New Zealand particularly in identification of the species. To date, they are using the Remote Microscopic Diagnostic (RMD) and also sending samples in Hawaii and Australia for identification and confirmation. He added that there is a need for the harmonization of policies and laws in the country with regards to Biosecurity citing for example some conflicting mandates between the Custom Act and Biosecurity Act. Nevertheless, the Samoa Government has been actively taking steps in safeguarding the country from the threat of these invasive species. One huge achievement is the improved Biosecurity facilities in the Faleolo Airport which has started to operate since June this year and the ongoing construction in the Apia port. (LTU)
Historically, Banana was one of the export commodity of Samoa to New Zealand as early as 1928. In 1952-1956 bananas have accounted for 13.5 per cent of the country’s exports. According to an article published by R. Gerard Ward in 1959, nearly 20% of the total income of Samoan villagers from agricultural products was received from the sale of bananas. Even then, the fruit has been part of Samoan household food supply along with taro and coconuts which form the basis of the Samoan diet. Because of the local demand, volume for export falls rapidly. To resolve the problem expansion of production area was inevitable which consequently affect the pattern of land use in the country wherein by 1955-1956 30% of the agricultural area was devoted to banana (Ward, 1959). Back then, banana production has encountered many problems including pests and diseases particularly the Banana Bunchy Top Virus, agricultural practices influenced deeply by the village system, lack of research facilities and experts to help the growing banana industry among other factors. Thus, the decline of the banana export industry of the country eventually.

In 2017, the government of Samoa through the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) aims to revive banana production and export to New Zealand. Forty percent of the initial 200,000 suckers funded by the Samoa Agriculture Competitiveness Enhancement Project distributed to banana farmers through the newly established Samoa Banana Growers Association from Israel unfortunately was destroyed by Cyclone Gita in February thus the target date to commence export in September this year was moved to end of this year. Through the Cyclone Gita Banana Recovery Programme funded by Pacific Horticultural, Agricultural Access Programme, additional 30,000 suckers from South Africa were distributed to recover the 40% lost. In the midst of this recovery plan for the banana export industry which was anchored from the lessons learnt in the past experience there are salient point MAF and the banana growers have been able to answer. One is the creation of an association to maintain the export quality and quantity of banana. Two is providing a tissue-cultured planting material from a reliable source. Lastly, MAF is actively involved in the distribution and monitoring of the planting materials as well as involving Biosecurity to ensure the export quality of each banana exported to New Zealand. However, we missed to see in the picture the involvement of banana research facilities and experts in fertilization, pest and disease management, and extension programmes such as training farmers of the good agricultural practices in banana production for export. These factors have proven from the past experience to be very important in setting the course of Banana export industry. (LTU)

A new addition to the growing family of USP Alafua Campus is Ms. Reima Setefano who has joined the SAS Team as the Student Officer—Administration. She is a USP graduate making her very familiar with the Campus and the University system thus she will be valuable in assisting the students in their queries related with their programmes.

Is Samoa ready to Export Banana? AGAIN!
V egetables that come in hues of yellow are packed with antioxidants, vitamins, and other health-boosting components. These include Squash (*Cucurbita maxima* L.), which is thought to be a mix of pumpkin and zucchini. Evidence shows that the consumption of squash started around 75000 years ago in America and Mexico. It is eaten in various ways as fresh salad, cooked, steamed, sautéed and mixed with other vegetables famous around the globe especially in Asia, Pacific Island countries, Europe, America and Mediterranean.

It contains fiber and vitamins such as vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin B6 and minerals and health components such as niacin, thiamine, folate, pantothenic acid, calcium, and iron. Minerals are also abundant in squash, such as copper, magnesium, and potassium. Squash is overall an excellent way of getting a dose of antioxidants, carotenoids and anti-inflammatory agents.

Squash amazing health benefits includes providing nutrition to the body, boosting immune system, managing diabetes, fighting inflammation, fighting infections, supporting healthy lungs, treating neural defects, supports healthy vision, prevents anemia, improves bone density, and supports digestion.

At the USP Alafua, IRETA Farm is growing and selling squash while the Food Technology facility, Dr. Alminda Magbalot-Fernandez developed ten more processed products from squash. The new developed products from squash are pickled squash, squash powder, dried squash, dried squash seeds, squash chips, squash jam, squash candy, squash polvoron, squash lemonade, squash baby food, squash flour and baked products such as muffins, pancake, cookies, etc. (AMF) Photo Credit: Losan and Oliver
The World of Technology!

The Information Technology (IT) Manager was invited together with the University of the South Pacific (USP) Senior Network Analyst (Suva) and Emalus IT Manager as fellows from the USP to attend the Asia Pacific Advanced Network (APAN) conference in Auckland from the 5th to 9th August. During the conference, presentations were of high quality and it has been very significant and useful for the participants particularly us in the South Pacific where new high speed broadband connections have just been established with the installation of new submarine fiber across the region.

APAN is made up of over 17 member economies, including but not limited to China, India, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Bangladesh, as well as Australia and New Zealand. APAN connects people, cultures, research and education - both nationally, regionally and internationally. Individually, they deliver the backbone network that connects the research and education (R&E) networks within their country, to each other, and to over 120 other research networks around the world. APAN coordinates activities related to network technology, services and applications among its members and with global R&E networks and it also promotes and facilitates network-enabled R&E activities such as research collaboration, knowledge discovery and natural disaster mitigation. (AP)

Library Corner

Information Research Skills training were conducted for AG134 and AG165 to assist students to find and reference appropriate resources for their assignments.

Content covered:
- Navigating Laucala & Alafua Library websites;
- Accessing past year exam papers;
- Accessing Reference Help Libguides for reference styles such as APA, Harvard and MLA;
- Identifying different types of information resources such as dictionary, encyclopaedia, book, and journal;
- Searching Alafua Library Catalogue to find resources held physically at the Library;
- Searching ProQuest Ebook Central to find electronic books and book chapters;
- Searching ProQuest Agricultural and Environmental database to find electronic journal articles.
The Student Learning Support (SLS) presented a seminar to the Faculty of Education at the National University of Samoa (NUS), on the topic “Student Learning Support” that focused the Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PEER). It was well received, and the feedback from the participants was very positive. SLS also engaged in a community service activity through participating as one of a panel of 4 judges at the Year-13 Inter-Zone Impromptu Speech Competition at St Mary’s College.

SLS also went to Savaii for the 2018 Open Day at the Savai’i Centre as well as to run workshops for the Savaii-based USP students on Essay Writing for two days after the Open Day. During the Open Day, SLS put up display and received students at the SLS stall where explanations of SLS work for students were given. (NB)

### Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) aim to:
- To help students who are currently struggling with a course
- Senior-peer-mentoring program
- 4x1-hour weekly sessions
- PASS Leaders (those that aced or completed successfully in the past) Courses are:
  1. UU114 (Suliana Lefaoseu)
  2. AG111 (Tusiata Lemuelu)
  3. AG213 (Evangeline Potifara)
  4. PLP01 (Tasman Siamomua)

### Activities
- Drop-In Consultations (Face to face to sort students learning difficulties)
- Study Guides (study guides on different topics produced for students’ free use)
- Teaching and marking assessment tasks and final examination for UU114.

### Workshops
- Various study and academic skills
Community Service through Skills Trainings Spearheaded by SWO

“The Empowerment of Women is the most effective tool for development” (Kofi Annan)

The University of the South Pacific (USP), Alafua Campus hosted four days of Skill-Based Training for Women on Siapo, Elei and Pale Making on the 21st and 22nd of August at the IRETA Fale and in Savaii from the 30th to the 31st of August. The training was $45/day or FREE if you bring your own material and flowers, that got you two days of observing, discussing, practicing and enjoying learning the Pacific Samoan natural way of JUST DO IT. Both days the trainers were the beautiful hard-working professionals and mothers, Pearl Blakelock and Faapito Lemuelu, who practice and do this for a living. They trained and shared their experiences and expertise to kindred spirits who wished to develop and improve their lives by learning transferable skills they can do and repeat at home.

These trainings resulted in deeper understanding of the value chain in making Siapo and how a community can benefit in all the different steps from growing and selling mulberry, to creating and selling the tools, making and selling the inks as well as making and selling the Siapo. Also, instead of spending hundreds of tala on funeral wreaths when a loveone passed away, you can make one using natural (surrounding/environment) or recycled materials at home. Furthermore, save extra cash and make more from Elei printing. (AP)
A mother and a farmer, she starts her day before dawn and ends after dusk. A third generation farm owner, diligent matai and a leading farmer in the community. She works towards getting more people in the community see that there is potential in farming and to use many of their idle lands to farm.

Growing up in a household with both parents being hardworking farmers, she inherited the passion for farming. With much bigger land available, she is even more excited and dedicated to continue farming. Over the years she encountered a lot of changes from cost of inputs and labour which is increasing over time to solve challenges on pest and diseases, and with the onset of climate change, it takes more effort and commitment. Auntie Lasa’s farm is located at Tanumalala which comprises of a mixture of crops, ornamentals, fruit trees, and timber. But for the time being she is focusing on green pepper, tomatoes and watermelon as these have very good market plus they are her most consistent in terms of profit.

Auntie Lasa has viewed farming both as a business and a lifestyle especially floriculture which has provided for family, especially her children. The farm is a lot of work and thankfully to her late mother and her children help her from the beginning. During holidays when her siblings come over for holiday they get to help out with the farm. With loyalty and consistency of labour being very hard to find now in Samoa, she finds it very hard to keep on to the same people/ labour even up to a year.

She is hoping that in the next 15 years or so there will be more markets domestic as well as exports, the value adding of primary products, more mechanized innovations on the farm which are dependable and would mean less labour will be available and affordable. Also she is hopeful for more youths (male and female) to get involve in the Farming Industry.

Her advice to all the young apprentices interested in getting into farming, “There is a lot of opportunities in there, but you have to have commitment and determination to succeed”.
The Journal of the South Pacific Agriculture (JOSPA) is a peer reviewed, online, open accessed Agricultural Journal which publishes research articles, critical reviews, general papers and short communications in tropical and sub-tropical agriculture. It has highly qualified editors and a transparent peer review system which normally takes about 6 to 8 weeks from submission of manuscript to the decision with reviewers’ comments. We are inviting contributions relevant to agriculture in the tropics and sub-tropics for JOSPA’s Volume 20.

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