Nutrition and Food Security: Root Crops Provide

According to the Samoa Bureau of Statistics (2018) the production of taro, yam, ta’amu increased with price. In fact, Taro is being exported to various countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii and USA (Ministry of Agriculture in Samoa 2017). This implies economic boost and food security for the people of Samoa however, the School of Agriculture and Food Technology of USP in Alafua Campus aims to not only secure the food supply in the country but also provide nutritious food to the Samoans. Root crops are the main sources of energy and nutrients and are excellent sources of fibre, calcium, iron, vitamins and minerals. Through the Food Technology laboratory of SAFT headed by Dr. Alminda Fernandez, the newly appointed Lecturer in Food Technology, is working on different innovations to optimize the nutritional potential of root crops. Food innovations provided modern methods of preserving foods. Food processing for longer continuous supply is a wise alternative. It is indeed vital to develop instant foods that are healthy and made from indigenous natural ingredients. According to Dr. Fernandez, one of the health problems they want to address is the increasing number of individual with obesity, overweight and diabetes.
SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD TECHNOLOGY

AG383 Research Proposal Presentations!!

The AG383 students presented their Research Proposals on the 14th, 16th and 21st of March. Research problems are on from Animal Science, Crop Science, Soil Science and Agri-Business. The activity was attended by students and Lecturers of SAFT. All research proposals are supervised by Assoc. Prof. Diarra for Animal Science, Mr. Falaniko for Crop Science, Dr. Kader for Soil Science and Dr. Bhati and Dr. Lameta for Agri-Business. After each presentation, the audience were given a chance to ask questions. In addition suggestions and feedbacks were also given by the lecturers for the improvement of the proposals.

Postgraduate SAFT Seminars!

Two Master of Agriculture students, Randy Carlie Pierre-Louis and Luaiufi Aiono presented their research proposals.

Randy’s research is on “Evaluating the effectiveness of vermicompost on tomato cultivation in short-term perspective” and supervised by Dr. Md. Abdul Kader.

On the other hand, Luaiufi’s research is on the “Use of grafting techniques to improve crop performance of tomato in protected cropping systems”. Supervised by Dr. Kader and Co-supervised by Mr. Falaniko Amosa. These research proposals are now being considered.
Soil Science team bid farewells Kepa!

The Soil Science Laboratory team hosted a farewell lunch for Tanielu Kepea Siose on the 29th of March! Dr. Md Kader on behalf of Soil Science Lab team spoke highly of Mr. Kepea’s involvement in lab. He said, it is a big loss for both their team and SAFT but very thankful to Mr. Kepea for choosing him as his Supervisor as well as choosing USP, Alafua Campus to do his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and all his qualifications. Mr. Kepea has been a great help for many of Dr. Kader’s research groups and other students. Dr. Bhati on behalf of the HOS thanked Mr. Kepea for being an inspiration to current students and wished him all the best. Mr. Kepea acknowledged the presence of all staff of the Soil Science Lab team and current Master students who are present.

School Research Committee meetings!!

Lead by Dr. Md Kader, the FRC met twice in March to discuss and review the proposals that are being submitted by PostGrad Students and SAFT staff.

The proposals were as follows:

1. John Moenga - Evaluation of Copra Meal Supplementation on steers in Vanuatu
3. Dr. Leslie T. Ubaub - Occurrence and Distribution of Entomopathogenic Nematodes and their Bacterial Symbionts in Samoa for Biological Control Agents against Important Insect Pests of Crops in the Region.
**Vaiola College Career Day!!**

Three undergraduate students namely: Douglas William, Tolofai Niealele and Howard Paulo represented the School of Agriculture and Food Technology at the Vaiola College career day. They shared their experience as students at university level, on becoming a successful agriculture apprentice. The career opportunities offered after studying a degree in Agriculture and the scholarships offered for student that are applying for agriculture study, plus the criteria's for getting the scholarship. They encouraged the young people to choose farming as a viable career path, farming is not all about dirt, it is research, teaching, nursing and so much more. They also talked about how to apply to the University of the South Pacific and other courses offered in USP other than Agriculture.

**Australian Education Roadshow comes to Samoa!!**

Students and young staff of the University of the South Pacific, Alafua Campus took interest in the Australian Education Roadshow program that was held at Taumeasina Island Resort on the 13th of March. Ten different institutions from Australia made time and effort to participate in this roadshow and discuss with the public what they offer. The Participants also filled and signed forms with their details, contacts and courses they are interested in from the different institutions and when they are successful the institution will contact them.

In the photos are USP, Alafua staff and student (Photo: Michael Sefilino)
SAFT ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE CAMPUS

New Strategic Plan Workshop!

The New Strategic Plan (2019—2024) Workshop 2, that was held on the 26th and 27th of March 2018 at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji was attended by USP, Alafua Campus Director and Head of the School of Agriculture and Food Technology (HOS-SAFT), Associate Professor Mohammed Umar.

Young Samoan children at the Nuanua o le Alofa who are blind or visually impaired will now have the chance to easily learn Braille, following a kind donation of two Eye-Slate devices from the University of the South Pacific’s Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment on the 27th of March. Mr. Singh and Vinaal Prakash, third year students at the School of Engineering and Physics, guided by Senior Lecturer, Dr. Utkal Mehta are the inventors of such devices. Their aim of having a device for low cost solutions to teach braille language to visually impaired students.

In an official handover ceremony, the Samoa Blind Persons Association (SBPA) was gifted with the Braille Eye Slate devices by Senior Lecturer, Dr. Utkal Mehta and USP Engineering Masters student, Nikhil Singh, who are based at the USP Suva Campus.
Library Corner: Alafua library staff farewells Alakalaine!!

Alakalaine Alatise, known to many as “Laine”, has worked at the University of the South Pacific (USP), Alafua Campus Library as a Library Assistant since 2011 serving the information needs of students, lecturers and the public. On the 9th of March, the Alafua library together with USP staff hosted a farewell tea to thank Laine and wish her all the best with her new job as the Principal Librarian at the Ministry of Education.

The World Of Technology: USP-Alafua CISCO Academy Graduation!!

The first ever CISCO graduation took place at the University of the South Pacific (USP), Alafua campus on the 23rd of March. The graduation was attended by the staff, students, parents, and friends of USP and the 16 of the 2017 Cisco Academy graduates. In 2011, the Alafua Campus IT Manager Le Mamea Sia Matalavea, implemented the CISCO Academy, to meet the request for a program of such a nature. And since it started it has, according to USP, Alafua Campus Director and Head of the School of Agriculture and Food Technology (HOS-SAFT), Associate Professor Mohammed Umar, attracted many students including those “who had completed foundation studies or other basic ICT programs, who wanted to study CISCO to find jobs or look for promotions in the ICT and computer networking area”.

In closing, Prof Umar wished the graduates the best of luck in their future endeavours, advising them to make momentumous contributions to Samoa’s growth and her people in the realm of IT.
Campus Life: USP students benefits from Rotary Club Apia!

The Rotary Club of Apia’s (RCA) mission is “MAKING A DIFFERENCE” and this year they have again put focus and emphasis to help sponsor University of the South Pacific (USP) students to have an opportunity to achieve their academic goals through this sponsorship.

Ten more students are currently benefitting from the scheme, four of whom study at the USP Savaii Centre, and six, are at Alafua Campus.

A lunch-meeting was held at the Tanoa Tusitala Hotel, by the President of the Apia Rotary Club, Ms. Louise Main to present the scholarship and free laptops to the students. The RCA will also travel to Savai’i soon to present the laptops to its beneficiaries studying from the USP Savaii Centre.

Additionally, a past beneficiary of the scheme, Tasman Milo who is currently a first year Law student was announced as the selected RCA student beneficiary to attend the Rota Pacific Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) Tour in New Zealand. USP expresses its appreciations to RCA for its partial fee sponsorship scheme which has been benefitting USP-Alafua’s pre-degree students for the past three years.

18th USPSA Federal Council Meeting

The University of the South Pacific Students’ Association (USPSA) Federal Council is the governing Student Body and central student representatives for the Students’ Association in USP. Their role is to improve and protect the general welfare and the academic, social and cultural interests of all students studying at USP.

The USPSA Federal Council Meeting was held this year at the USP Kiribati Campus on the 27th and 28th of March. The Council meets twice a year to discuss student, financial matters, reinforce procedures, raise concerns each branch have been unable to clear at Campus level and present reports from Presidents/Reps of different Student Associations/branches. Ms. Eloi Alatimu was USPSA Samoa’s Rep. The Council meeting ended on the 29th of March with a farewell dinner co-hosted by USPSA Kiribati and USPSA.
Let ZUMBA fitness be your stress reliever!!

When you are feeling good, doing good, thinking good, good things happen! Our SWO Coordinator, Ms. Ronna Lee together with Ms. Eterei of the late Allan Alo’s SPACE has offered FREE ZUMBA, every Wednesday from 5.30pm to 6.30pm at the USP, Alafua Campus Fale. Staff, students, families and friends are all welcome to join. The main aim is to keep healthy and fit.

School Tutorials provided by SAS

USP Alafua Campus is offering tutorials for Year 12 and 13 students. This is part of the community outreach programme of the university serving the people of Samoa through affordable and quality education. This year, students from twelve local colleges inclusive of government, mission and privately owned institutions attending these tutorials.
Student Learning Support:

The Student Learning Specialist Ms. Niseta facilitated a workshops for 4 Master and 2 Postgraduate Diploma FSTE’S ACIAR-sponsored Students on Literature review, Tips on Thesis presentation and proper way to address queries and comments during the presentation.

In addition, she also teaches the course UU14: English for Academic Purposes and write Press Releases whenever required.

True to its name, SLS is striving to cater all students needs in their academic life by conducting different workshops and consultations as follows:

Drop-in Consultations:
- Confirmation of supervisors’ feedback/edits
- Unpacking and analyzing assignment/assessment questions
- Critical review
- Annotated bibliography
- Brainstorming ideas for oral presentations
- Research proposal
- Clarification of some difficult course specific concepts
- Essay writing: paragraph development
- Summarizing
- Effective presentation skills
- Introduction to a proposal

Daily Workshops:
- Critical review
- Effective Oral Presentations
- Summary writing
- Reading: Skimming
- Reading: Scanning
- Reading: Intensive
- Note-making
- Time Management
- Avoiding Plagiarism
The IRETA Lodge is ready to serve you!

The IRETA Lodge equipped with Fale for functions such as conventions, seminars and workshops and the 14 bedrooms to accommodate guests and other clienteles from Samoa and abroad. For more information and reservation please contact IRETA Office thru Ms. Senira Su’a (sua_s@samoa.usp.ac.fj).

Photos of the newly renovated IRETA Lodge and pruned Citrus Lime (Photos: Alice Papalii)

SIT visits IRETA farm!

The SIT visited the IRETA Farm Livestock as an additional learning experience for them. Associate Professor Siaka Diarra took them around the farm and visited the different animal units such as Poultry, Piggery and Goat/Sheep Units. (Photos: Oliver Cris C. Ubaub)
Agro-ecology Farming in Samoa.

Good farming practices and modern techniques, boost resilience to climate change.

The President of the Komiti a Tina Tulivae of Samatau, Ms. Aumua Karolaine Taulealo Ane expressed their gratitude to the UNDP’s Global Environment Facility (G.E.F.) Small Grants Programme (SGP) for the grant received, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of MAF Mr. Leatiogie Tilafono David Hunter for this partnership and the outstanding support from Crops Division team of the MAF.

Providing a constant seasonal supply of vegetables for the community along with producing income from the sales of harvested crops is one key output of this project and according to Ms. Ane they have managed to sell their first harvest of cabbages, lettuce, and tomatoes to the neighboring village of Manono. Although the project concentrates on the issue of climate change and its impact on farming, it also covers the introduction of modern farming system to fight the prolonged drought and heavy rain and the main problems in the development of small farmers in the village.

There have been regular agricultural trainings onsite and workshops provided by Crops Division team of the MAF, under the technical guidance and supervision of Mr. Tuuamalii Tommy Tuuamalii. introducing appropriate modern farming techniques to this project and his hands-on technical trainings provided has added a lot of value to the successful implementation of this agro-ecology project. Since December 2017, Mr. Tuuamaalii and his team have completed five hands-on practical trainings and workshops for the Komiti a Tina Tulivae of Samatau with the aid of World Bank’s SACEP project.

**Proud Samoan, Pride of Samoa!**

Dr. Ramona Sulifoa, daughter of Samoa, is a Fulbright scholar, recently (January 2018) receive her doctorate degree (PhD) from the University of Hawaii and did her thesis in Agri-science a specialized research in the Oceania. She is the first Samoan, Polynesian to receive a PhD in this area. The title of her thesis is: "An analysis of the non adoption of an introduced Conservation Agriculture system by village farmers in Samoa." According to Samoa Planet, Ramona believed that “Farming isn’t everyone’s first career choice, and that maybe – to a certain extent – it’s even looked down on by our communities as something reserved for the optionless, “The general perception of the area as a career path is very poor, from my observations growing up, people who do not or cannot do anything else are encouraged to become farmers or take up agriculture as a career path.”

Ramona’s drive to go all the way to PhD level was so that one day she could teach and inspire the younger generation to take up agriculture as it is more than just about ‘planting taro. Ramona will be teaching, as a Professor, at the Solomon Islands National University. She acknowledges her appreciativeness and gratefulness to all the farmers who supported her throughout her PhD journey, especially Unasa Ulu and his family from Siufaga, Savaii, and Muliagatele Joe Reti and his wife Selesitina-Reti from Savaia, Upolu.

**World Water and Forests Day was celebrated in Samoa**

The International Day of Forests (March 21st) and the World Water Day (March 22nd) are annual events celebrated across the world to highlight the significance of, and supporter for the sustainable management of our freshwater and forest resources, specifically growing natural and human induced pressures. The two-day event, themed “Water & Forest Resources for Sustainable Urban Development”, was held at the Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi Convention Centre.

If the natural forest cover in the uplands removed, this will affect the water availability during the dry season and would also allow flash floods and landslide that would affect the coastal areas. The changes of our wetlands and natural water ways in the plains, has added to flood waters not being able to escape into the intertidal zones.

As such, the theme for this year delivers a great platform to involve with the general public in raising awareness and promoting sustainable development planning processes, specifically with communities within the area of the major urban waterways and those developing the upland forests.

50th Anniversary of USP Preparations

Dr. Jacqueline’s visit!!

A ssociate Professor. Dr. Jacqueline Leckie has been appointed by the USP’s 50th anniversary committee to write a book on the university history. She visited our Alafua campus on the 15th to the 21st of March 2018 to interview staff and students.
THIRD ANNOUNCEMENT

1st Symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops – Pacific Branch (ISTRC-PB)

Theme; “Improving Root and Tuber Crops in the South Pacific Region”
24-27 April 2018 at the Tanoa International Hotel in Nadi, Fiji

REGISTRATION

The Registration fee will be FJ$400 which will cover the partial cost of the venue, symposium bag, 4 lunch, 4 morning teas, 3 afternoon teas and other Symposium costs. The registration fee can be paid in cash in FJD on arrival at the venue to the ISTRC Secretariat.

KEY THEMES AND SPEAKERS

Several key themes in root and tuber crops in the South Pacific Island Countries will be covered in the Symposium including aspects of:

I. Agronomy
II. Production
III. Plant Protection
IV. Value Chains
V. Food Technology
VI. New technologies
VII. Marketing including Export, Economics and Future Challenges

Papers for oral presentation and poster presentation will be organized under appropriate headings after the Registration process is complete. Several internationally recognized and highly skilled root and tuber crops scientists will give keynote addresses on their current work and future challenges.

For more information, please contact the Secretariat of the ISTRC-PB by sending an email to Dr. Nandakumar Desai (nandakumar.desai@usp.ac.fj) or Ms. Senira Su’a (sua_s@samoa.usp.ac.fj).