Project Factsheet

Project duration: January 2019 – December 2019
Implementation partner: Pacific Rim Plantation Services Pte Ltd, The Earthworm Foundation
Further partners: Florin AG
Direct beneficiaries: Approx. 6'000 smallholder coconut farmers and their family and community members
Focus areas covered: creating the motivation, capabilities and capacity of farmers; fostering an enabling environment and removing constraints

Improving livelihoods of copra producing families and communities towards a sustainable supply chain for coconut oil
Western Province, Solomon Islands

The project aims to improve livelihoods of copra producing families and communities in the Western Province of Solomon Islands and to develop supply chains of sustainably produced coconut.

Context
Solomon Islands is the second largest tropical island in the Pacific Islands group, which comprises six major islands. The main economic sectors are agriculture, forestry, saw milling, fishing, retail & wholesale, and manufacturing. The coconut tree is known as the ‘tree of life’ in the Solomon Islands, as most communities around the country consume and or sell coconut products on a regular basis. Copra – the coconut flesh used for coconut oil – is the most important coconut product and is a vital source of income for over 40,000 households. Coconut farming in the Western Province (as in the rest of the country) is done in a traditional way with little or no usage of inputs like fertilizers etc. Majority of the coconut farms typically are of a few trees to a few hectares in size, and are individually or community managed. These plantations were mostly established in the colonial period (pre-independence) and are passed on from one generation to the next, with very little replanting or new plantings at present. Logistics constraints, poor infrastructure and transport facilities, lack of consistent and dependable off-take arrangements, inability to achieve a fair pricing for the produce, and insufficient funding are some of the constraints coconut farmers face to improve their livelihoods.

Project content
This is a follow-up project of a project which started originally in summer 2017 in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands. As a first step, a deep understanding of the context was required to design the transformation action plan. The plan considered the geographical spread of the project catchment area with a total of approximately 178 copra supplying villages which were grouped into 16 clusters (approx. 50'000 people living in the area). Out of these villages, 35 villages were pre-selected for the assessment phase due to their volume, production potential and proximity. The findings of the assessment,
which took place in 2017/2018, indicated that the follow-
ing challenges are faced by copra producing communi-
ties: unorganized and highly dispersed farmer network; unrela-
tible and high costs of transport; limited market ac-
cess; low knowledge on best practice, markets and threats, and; limited access to tools and support ser-
vices. Further, the findings showed that many farmer
communities lack access to basic services such as
proper sanitation, electricity, medical clinics, clean water
and schooling, while also highlighting the large potential
opportunity for communities to increase their income
and wellbeing through the copra industry. Basis the
needs assessment an action plan was developed
for which the implementation started in 2018 and will be
continued in 2019.

1) Value creation by mapping and maximizing the
current and potential supply chain
The project’s aim is to record all direct supplying farm-
ers and villages in order to establish traceability as a ba-
sis for the engagement. By end of 2018, 6'941
farmers from 197 villages were recorded and for 57
farmers further baseline data gathered to better understand the
supply chain opportunities and challenges and engage
in form of trainings. Further, satellite image mapping
helped to identify the coconut plantation areas and size
of plantations in the region and will serve to better orga-
nize farmers, their transportation and plan trainings.
In each of the 16 clusters approximately 4 to 5 lead
farmers were identified (min. 2 of them women) basis
their participation in training, engagement, entrepre-
neurial spirit and willingness to do record keeping which
will be used to track progress made through the project.
These lead farmers with entrepreneurial spirit shall be a
connecting point between SICPL and the villages, re-
ceive coaching and support their communities in achiev-
ing change.

2) Reinforce resilience through farmer and commu-
nity awareness trainings
A SWOT analysis was conducted with farmer groups to
identify training needs. 12 training modules around agri-
cultural, environmental and social practices were identi-
fied (e.g. coconut cultivation, intercropping, safety in
copra, financial literacy). Training material for six mod-
ules is finalized and being trained in the 16 cluster hubs

while six additional modules are drafted and the project
is looking for further specialized partners to implement
this training (e.g. on domestic violence). The 16 clusters
are placed at central locations as the farmers of the re-
gion are spread over various islands. Nevertheless, not
all farmers can afford the funds and time to travel to the
respective cluster hub to attend training.

3) Better access to appropriate tools and equipment
Access to tools and equipment was identified as a major
barrier for farming households and at the same time a
big potential for improved productivity effectiveness and
efficiency. Further research has been undertaken to
compare cost/benefit of tools and equipment for farmers
(hours of work saved, costs, environmental & social im-
pacts and access/availability). This informs support and
advice to farmers. The project also facilitates easier ac-
cess to tools by for example selling drums used for dry-
ing in the buying station in Noro or by displaying a list of
locally available tools with cost details, contact details
and access points. The project has also investigated the
effectiveness and efficiency of the solar drying method,
as it is an environmentally friendlier and economic
method for drying copra (vs. the traditional drying on
heat from fire made in drums). The topic of drying, es-
pecially solar drying, is apart from the training a core
topic to be further elaborated in 2019 (e.g. demo dryers,
finding cheaper solar dryer options).

The output and outcome indicators defined in the pro-
ject shall help to measure the progress made on the
ground.

Serving the mission of the Lindt Cocoa Foundation
The project puts coconut farming families from the Solo-
mon Islands in the center, and touches upon two of the
focus areas of the Lindt Cocoa Foundation:
1) Training and capacity building to create the moti-
vation, capabilities and capacity of farmers to im-
prove their farming practices
2) Agricultural and community development activi-
ties foster an enabling environment and remove
constraints farmers face to improve their prac-
tices.

February 2019