

Ministry of Agriculture



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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

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NZ MPI Pest and Symptom Recognition training

A week long workshop was conducted by the NZ Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI). The workshop was part of an ongoing NZAid funded project that supports biosecurity officers in the region to become better at pest diagnostics and symptom recognition. The workshop was delivered by three Scientists from MPI. Dr Disna Gunawardana (Entomologist), Dr Katharina Hoefler (Mycologist) and Asha Thomas (Entomologist).

The workshop involved selected staff from within the Ministry of Agriculture Rarotonga, two staff from the department of Agriculture Aitutaki and three staff from the Niue Biosecurity Department.

The week long workshop included two sections:

- ⇒ Refresher Training on Pest Diagnostics
- ⇒ Symptom Recognition of fungal/bacterial diseases

The newly developed Pest & Disease Manual for Import and Export Commodities by NZ MPI was launched and utilized by the participants to diagnose

pests & disease signs and symptoms during the practical sessions of the workshop.

The outcome of the workshop was that all personnel will be able to recognize any pests or diseases effectively using the manuals during inspections or field visits.

The workshop also included a chance to carry out an ant identification and surveillance work from the Aitutaki Ant Surveillance Program. The two Entomologists from NZ MPI used this opportunity to enhance staff capacity when diagnosing the distinguishing characters of invasive ants.

Overall- the workshop was a success in ensuring the capacity of the staff are improved.

International Air Transport Association (IATA) Training

Four Agriculture staff members left all matters regarding fruits, vegetables and root crops behind to attend a training to become “certified shippers of dangerous goods”. Who knew that you needed a quality assured box that passed a pressure test, a drop test and a puncture test with UN specification marks to send hazardous materials via plane overseas!

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) funded the three days course which was held at the Rarotonga Hospital conference room from the 15th to 17th July. Two lab-staff from the hospital and four from public health completed the team of ten participating in the training.

“Dangerous goods are articles or substances which are capable of posing a risk to health, safety, property or the environment and which are shown in the list of Dangerous Goods in the Regulations (DGR).” The DGR is a thick book that is updated every year. It is now in its 60th edition and a hardcopy cost over USD 1,000.

Courier services and airline cargo staff have to be familiar with all procedures and rules outlined in the

book and only certified shippers are allowed to send parcels containing dangerous goods.

As a shipper you have to know exactly what are you going to send. There might be items that look harmless from the outside but contain hazardous substances e.g.” camping equipment” containing flammable substances or a thermometer containing mercury.

There are different rules and requirements pending on the classification of goods to be shipped, for instance an infectious blood sample from the hospital lab for dengue testing vs a toxic bottle of insecticide. Some goods are even totally banned on aircrafts. Disobeying these rules can lead to hefty fines and imprisonment.

Although the final 2½ hour exam after the two day training was an open book exercise, you could feel the tension as you needed an 80% pass. Only seven out of the ten participants were successful.

All four staff from the Ministry of Agriculture passed their test. CONGRATULATIONS!



Participants from Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture.

Careers Expo Day

The Careers Expo was held on the 12th June 2019 at the Auditorium dome in Avarua hosted by Tereora College and the Ministry of Education. The theme of this year's Careers Expo was "Inspire, Empower, and Encourage". The expo event focused on career pathways that our students can begin and continue here in the Cook Islands. Agriculture's participation this year addressed job opportunities in each department within the Ministry.

Each position had pamphlets describing the type of work they are responsible for. It also highlighted the minimum requirements of qualifications needed so as to encourage our students to study and then apply for a trainee position once their study is completed. A huge Meitaki Maata to all participants and the Coordi-

nator's for a job well done in promoting our small Ministry to our future generation.



Labour Force Training

The Cook Islands Labour Force Survey training was held at the Sinai Hall, Avarua from the 8th to 12th July 2019.

The purpose of the training is to ensure that each enumerator is aware of the model surveys that will be carried out to each selected household. Four members from the Ministry took part in the training to become Enumerators. The Labour Force survey is set to start on the 19th



August 2019. Agriculture relates to module 14

within the survey which highlights Food Insecurity Experience Scale. This is a set of questions that are to be asked for 'Individuals', 'Family' and 'Joint operation' holdings only. The approach aims to measure household food security in a reliable and relatively inexpensive way through experience-based food insecurity scales. These are developed on the premise that the severity of the food insecurity situation of an individual or a household can be inferred from observing typical behaviors and experiences associated with food insecurity. These include, for example, the condition of being worried about not being able to procure food, having to compromise on the variety and quality of foods consumed, and being forced to cut portions or to skip meals.

Biosecurity lab launch

On Friday 12th July the Ministry held a small ceremony to officially launch the Biosecurity Laboratory. The lab was kindly funded by the New Zealand Aid Program in collaboration with the Plant Health and Environment Laboratory, Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and Cook Islands Government.

The purpose of the special lab is to ensure that our produce (any produce) is in compliance with New Zealand Market Access requirements. That is, the importing country National Plant Protection officer (NPPO) is obligated to provide assurances that the produce is free of pests such as fruit flies when exported. As this would be a concern to the export country. The Laboratory is part of the export pathway system in terms of our national reporting on pest status and the monitoring and surveillance program dealing with trade facilitation.



Float Day Celebration

Our Secretary was very pleased with the outcome of the Ministry's participation in the 2019 Float Day. She wrote the following email to all staff:

Kia Orana team, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to you all for entering the float this year. Your hard work definitely shone through as you were awarded 2nd prize and a cheque of \$800.

To Ngatoko who took the lead role in organizing the float; the team that secured a truck and adorned the vehicle; the team that carried out the catering to feed the crew; the team that remained in the office, thank you Maata.

I am heartened that you all worked together to enter the parade and I am proud to be your Secretary. Please continue that spirit of teamwork and excellent performance. Through these traits and showing the community what we are capable of, we can change their mindset and have them talking more positively about our Ministry and our sector.

Next years theme is - Te Au Tāura Teretere Moana - Our Traditional Guide to Ocean Voyage. The theme reflects the different traditional guides our ancestors used to travel the ocean, whether it's for fishing or to search for land. That is, the use and signs of the ocean, land and sky to achieve directions in voyaging the ocean. So "PUT YOUR THINKING CAPS ON" to prepare us for next year.

I was sorry to have missed this year's preparation and parade, but what you did, gives me the confidence that I can rely on you all.

Thank you Maata e Kia Manuia.



Biosecurity Awareness & Capacity Training

The Biosecurity Awareness and Capacity training program was held on the 6 to 9 August 2019 and hosted by the Agriculture Biosecurity team on Rarotonga. The purpose of the training was to strengthen awareness and partnerships between Pa Enea Biosecurity officers with a view to minimizing quarantine risks and enhance biosecurity and food security.

In recent months, agriculture staff on the Southern Pa Enea islands were warranted as Biosecurity officers. The biosecurity legislation prompted the need for such training to enable officers to enforce biosecurity standards and conditions on their respective islands.

The training also covered border control management systems in alignment to internal quarantine and international obligations. This related to trade and compliance under the Biosecurity Act 2008, IPPC, OIE, WTO-SPS and CODEX standard setting for sanitary and phytosanitary measures for the protection of food security

and the protection of environment while trading.

The main objectives were:

- To familiarize officers on 'Biosecurity Pa Enea Management Program, Legislation, Operational and Surveillance systems' for the protection of our pristine Pa Enea environment from the introduction of unwanted pests and diseases.
- To enable officers to understand the enforcement of biosecurity laws on internal Pa Enea Biosecurity – (Quarantine) Systems and risks associated with the movement of people, ships, yachts, aircraft, planting materials, fruits & vegetables, live animals and general cargo between islands.
- To encourage the use of the Biosecurity Operational Manual and in harmonisation with the Pa Enea laws and also to build capacity in collaboration with the island council that would enable the officers to perform biosecurity duties upon returning to their respective islands.

The capacity training for the rest of the Pa Enea will continue in the future.



Biosecurity Capacity workshop participants with Ministry Head of Ministry Mrs Temarama Anguna-Kamana.

Aquatic Health Management Training

Biosecurity Deputy Director Pavai Taramai attended this training hosted in New Caledonia from the 5th to 10th August 2019. The training focused on the challenges to aqua-farming in the Pacific. Intensive aquaculture practices tend to provide a platform for the emergence of pathogens, while global trade in aquatic animals and their products, offer avenues for transboundary spread of pathogens. The risk of pathogen transfer is generally considered greater for movement of live aquatic animals than for movement of dead products. Irrespective of the disease risks involved, aquaculture and global trade will continue to intensify and expand. The training provided an opportunity for participants to participate in disease recognition that affects aquatic species finfish, crustaceans and molluscs and learn the types of pathogens that attack aquatic farmed species. Through presentations and farm visits, the participants were shown the disease symptoms that are caused by the pathogens and dissecting of dead fish to look at the internal organs of fish and shrimps to identify the organs that are highly infected by disease. The training also provided an opportunity for participants to see how biosecurity measures are applied on these farms and inside a laboratory.

Protecting plants from pests in the Pacific Islands

Biosecurity Director Ngatoko Ngatoko as focal point for the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) in the South West Pacific region, represented the Cook Islands in a workshop that was held in Fiji for Plants protection from pests in the Pacific Islands. From 26th to 28th August 2019, the organization of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) held regional workshops as priority for the IPPC Secretariat. These workshops help participants understand the phytosanitary realities and challenges of each region. Participants and the Secretariat also received input on how to better integrate these realities into the IPPC work plan.

Recently, the IPPC Regional Workshops have been re-organized as a forum to exchange ideas and feedback between NPPOs, Regional PPOs, FAO offices, cooperation institutions and the IPPC Secretariat. New alliances have been established with the organizers and more interactive activities have been included in the agenda. These new ways of operating allows the IPPC Secretariat to get a better understanding of NPPOs concerns and to promote synergies and collaboration between all interested parties.



Biosecurity Mission Program to Mauke

The Ministry of Agriculture conducted a two day workshop in Mauke on Food Security and Biosecurity Awareness. Presented by the Director and Deputy Director of Biosecurity, the workshop was attended by the Ui Ariki, Member of Parliament, Island Council members, Growers, Vainetini, Church members, sports, youth and uniform organization, NGO's, Government Ministries and the tourism sector. Following the completion of the Biosecurity awareness component, the Pesticide Management training program was delivered by the Director of Crop Research William Wigmore. This covered the various types of pesticide, the appropriate use and storage of pesticide and the use of safety gear while using pesticides.

Senior Biosecurity Officer Piri Maa presented a session on pest management. "Everyone" has a part to play in Biosecurity and a key role is to protect our livelihoods and the things that we value. These values include: environmental – our biodiversity, ecosystems and valued species; economic - trade and tourism; cultural – our cultural values; and social – our lifestyles, health and well-being.



Mauke Biosecurity workshop with the Mauke Community.

The purpose of the workshop was to strengthen institutional arrangements for the effective delivery of the Pa Enea agriculture food security program, training of Biosecurity officers on internal quarantine procedures, understanding the enforcement of the biosecurity laws on internal Pa Enea Biosecurity (Quarantine) Systems, the risks associated with the movement of people, ships, yachts, aircraft, planting materials, invasive weeds, fruit & vegetables, live animals and general cargoes between islands and finally the warranting of Agriculture Officers as Biosecurity officers.



Newly warranted Mauke Biosecurity officers with Agriculture Head of Ministry Mrs Temarama Anguna-Kamana.

Warrant of Appointments for Mauke Biosecurity officers

As alluded above, the final part of the mission to Mauke had the Secretary of Agriculture award the Warrant of Appointments to the Agriculture officers giving them the authority to be Biosecurity officers. The warrant gives the officers the "power in accordance with the Biosecurity Act 2008" to conduct inspections of passengers luggage and cargo and to remove any plant materials which is imported illegally. The three officers warranted were Tuaine, Tua and Teatai Junior. Vainetutai Moetaua was unfortunately in Rarotonga at the time of presentation and therefore his warrant will be provided at a later stage. The three received their certificates, id and uniforms to conduct their duties.

Pacific Plant Protection Organization (PPPO)

Regional e-Phyto Workshop

The Pacific Plant Protection Organization (PPPO) Regional e-Phyto workshop was held over two days in Fiji from 29th to 30th August 2019. Biosecurity Deputy Director Pavai Taramai attended the workshop on behalf of the Biosecurity division of the Ministry.

The purpose of the workshop was to introduce the concept of ePhyto, GeNS and the ePhyto Hub to the National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPO) of Pacific Island Countries, and where the system can be of assistance to help both the NPPO and the Industry through transfer and exchange of phytosanitary certificate security in electronic format. “ePhyto” is a short name for electronic phytosanitary certificate. In simple terms, it is the electronic data of export commodities for international travelling passengers contained in the certificate.

The diagram illustrates how GeNS works;

