

Promoting sustainable horticultural value chains in the South Pacific Islands - a review

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Abstract

The South Pacific Islands have a long history of short-term but ultimately unsustainable successes with horticultural export development. Reasons for this lack of sustainability include the islands' location, poor transport linkages and high costs, poor scale economies, natural disasters, plant disease and the quarantine requirements of major markets. Despite significant donor support, horticultural exports from the region remain at disappointing levels. This paper considers the factors necessary to address the many constraints to export development but also stresses that increased farmer income, as well as returns to donor investment, may be best achieved by emphasizing domestic market development. Following a brief review of the Pacific Islands agricultural economy, the paper considers past experiences with exports, including bananas from Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands; squash from Tonga; kava from Fiji, and vanilla from Papua New Guinea. It then attempts to draw lessons from these experiences, to identify areas where improvements are necessary to avoid repetitions.