



## COUNTRY UPDATE **TONGA**

JUNE 2022



PIRAS is a collaboration between the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Australian Government that supports economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the Pacific.

Our target is to benefit 20,000 households across the Pacific countries of Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Read about the regional overview [here](#).

Duration: 2021-2024

### WHAT WE DO

The Pacific Islands Rural and Agriculture Stimulus Facility (PIRAS) supports COVID-19 food system and economic recovery by prioritizing food self-reliance, improving local nutrition and developing sustainable, equitable agricultural livelihood opportunities for rural communities.

The exceptional adaptability and flexibility of PIRAS funding is allowing Tongan partners to meet the urgent agricultural needs of 62 communities recovering from the January 2022 Hunga Tonga and Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami. PIRAS Tonga supports local food production recovery and sustainability and improved nutrition by:

- Providing working capital for land preparation
- Establishing nurseries and demonstration plots
- Providing farmers with seedlings, planting materials, labor-saving tools and agricultural inputs
- Providing technical training on vegetable growing, seed and seedling production, direct propagation, composting and improved farming practices

### UPCOMING PRIORITIES

- As travel restrictions ease, expand project reach to outer islands
- Continue seed, seedling, tool and equipment distribution
- Continue the establishment and cultivation of women's home gardens
- Collaborate with champion, large-scale farmers to secure additional planting materials for cluster farmers
- Finalize the print and digital versions of a comprehensive farming manual and 13 crop-specific planting guides for smallholder farmers

### PARTNERS

- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
- Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovations Tonga Trust (MORDI TT)
- Tonga Rural Innovation Project Phase II (TRIP II)



## KEY SUCCESSES IN TONGA

In the aftermath of the Hunga Tonga and Hunga Ha'apai disaster, Tonga also experienced its first community transmission of COVID-19, prompting two lengthy national lockdowns between 2 February and 10 April 2022. In response to these challenges, PIRAS Tonga has responded with actions to strengthen local food production.

- Provided rapid assistance in 4 districts, reaching 38 of 62 targeted communities and benefitting 3,924 people (34% of whom women, and 13% youth)
- Established 37 community vegetable nurseries, including 4 demonstration nurseries, and provided essential farming tools
- Trained 38 community women's groups to manage community nurseries, transplant seedlings and create liquid manure fertilizer
- Prepared 1,225 acres of tax allotment land for planting
- Trained 124 cluster farming groups in improved farming practices, and provided access to improved planting materials, labor saving tools and equipment
- Provided essential fencing to 20 cluster farms to protect crops from damage caused by roaming livestock

### CASE STUDY: Community nurseries speed post-tsunami food recovery

PIRAS Tonga was just beginning implementation when, on January 15, 2022, the powerful explosion of the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai (HTHH) underwater volcano spewed massive amounts of ash into the air and unleashed a devastating tsunami. The disaster caused significant damage in low-lying coastal areas in Tongatapu, 'Eua and the Ha'apai group of Tonga destroying houses, uprooting trees, contaminating drinking water and threatening crop survival.

PIRAS pivoted to effectively respond to one of the most urgent needs: locally available food. PIRAS is now helping to speed post-disaster recovery and build local capacity to increase the supply of valuable planting materials by establishing community nurseries managed by women's groups.

Seedlings raised in the nurseries are enabling members of affected communities to re-establish their home gardens providing an important source of fresh fruits and vegetables that have been nearly impossible to access since the disaster.

So far, PIRAS, through its implementing partner MORDI Tonga Trust, has established and



*Ms. Toakase Vaioleti in front of the Kanokupolu Women's Garden*

equipped 38 community nurseries. The work has involved removing fallen trees and debris, land preparation, fence installation to keep roaming livestock from damaging the nurseries, and training and technical assistance on preparing garden beds, sowing seeds, transplanting seedlings and making liquid animal manure fertilizer.

PIRAS has enabled rapid, targeted post-eruption recovery in 'Eua, Tongatapu and will soon expand to the heavily hit Ha'apai groups as travel resumes.

The Pacific Islands Rural and Agriculture Stimulus Facility (PIRAS) is supported by the Australian Government and IFAD