

Demystifying agritourism development in Fiji: Inclusive growth for smallholders

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Abstract

Agritourism has gained traction with a variety of stakeholders within the Pacific to supplement farm revenue, create linkages to tourism and ultimately contribute to sustainable economic development. This paper, with a focus on smallholders, examines the key constraints of agriculture, current agritourism products, policy development initiatives, and proposes an open framework for agritourism in Fiji. Among the key considerations are a careful examination of tourist preferences, the promotion of agritourism on working farms without displacing the key activity of food production, and redefining agritourism as a value for money experience rather than a niche market in the Pacific region.

Keywords

Agritourism, policy framework, agriculture, smallholders, value-chain, tourism, Pacific Islands, Fiji

Introduction

The trickle-down theory, popular during the middle of the 20th century, was gradually replaced by pro-poor growth which emphasised the poor benefitting proportionally more than the rich (Kakwani and Pernia, 2000). Recognising the fact that growth can be pro-poor but can foster rising inequality, the paradigm of inclusive growth is now considered more promising than pro-poor growth. Inclusive growth is a significant departure from the strategy of redistributing existing income, and focuses instead on generating productive employment and entrepreneurship (Bakker and Messerli, 2017). While extending the concept to tourism, Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018), call it transformative and assert that tourism is only inclusive when marginalised groups are engaged in its ethical production or consumption, and share the benefits. Small farmers are one such group that has typically remained

marginalised from the benefits of tourism development (Addinsall et al., 2017b). Agritourism and rural tourism are often propounded as models for economic growth of smallholders. Although the terms agritourism and rural tourism are often used interchangeably, agritourism is a subset within the broader dimensions of rural tourism (Karampela et al., 2016). The two differ in terms of their territorial and service provider characteristics and products offered (Bojnec, 2010).

Since the early twentieth century, agritourism has been a well-recognised activity amongst farmers in the global north and has recently gained prominence in the developing world (Arroyo et al., 2013;

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Choenkwan et al., 2016). Several studies support the economic benefits of agritourism to farmers (Jęczmyk et al., 2015; Schilling et al., 2014), which has emerged as an attractive option for supplementing farm income, through the expansion of existing farm activities, and provision of value-added agricultural products (Schmitt, 2010). Such strategies can promote the consumption of local products, stimulate local economies (Ainley, 2014), mitigate rural outmigration, preserve local culture and traditions (Ciolac et al., 2019), enhance environmental conservation (Mastronardi et al., 2015), and valorise natural resources (Ammirato and Felicetti, 2014).

Despite the potential of agritourism to generate both immediate and future benefits to local economies, most agritourism research has emerged from European and American countries, with little research conducted in small islands (Bhatta et al., 2019; Bhatta and Ohe, 2020; Karampela et al., 2016). However, agritourism has recently gained attention from a variety of stakeholders within the Pacific to supplement farm revenue (Addinsall et al., 2017a; Shah et al., 2020), create linkages to tourism (Thomas et al., 2018), and ultimately contribute to sustainable economic development (Bhatta and Ohe, 2020; Ciolac et al., 2019). Karampela et al. (2016) argue that within the dimensions of new tourism, islands are increasingly becoming relevant as agritourism destinations because of their cultural capital which preserves natural resources, food systems and traditions. In the wake of globalisation and “homogenisation” of tourism experiences, and with an increasing number of tourists seeking “authentic” experiences, there is some evidence to suggest that this is also the case in the South Pacific (Berno et al., 2016; Shah et al., 2020). Using Fiji as a research site, we evaluated the key constraints of agriculture in terms of its contribution to the national economy, rural-urban migration, the preponderance of smallholders and monocropping systems. The potential of agritourism is reviewed and an insight offered into current agritourism products, initiatives and challenges. Thereafter, policy development initiatives in the Pacific are examined, and an open framework for inclusive growth is proposed for Fiji.

Agriculture in Fiji

Fiji's farming systems

Farming systems in Fiji are principally categorised into three: subsistence, semi-commercial and commercial (Ministry of Agriculture, 2014). Most of the farms are owned by the indigenous communities, 65.4% of farms are under the traditional *mataqali*¹ ownership,

17% are under iTLTB lease, and only 7.7% are freehold farms (Fiji National Agricultural Census, 2009). Agricultural land use includes permanent cropland (31.05%), temporary cropland (10.02%), fallow land (13.58%), coconuts (2.78%), pastures (18.46%), natural forest (16.55%), planted forest (1.18%) and non-agricultural land (6.39%; Fiji National Agricultural Census, 2009).

The size of farms is small with around 82.5% of the farms less than 5 hectares in size (Fiji National Agricultural Census, 2009). A study by Fink et al. (2013) reported an average farm size of 2.35 ha for vegetable farms in the Sigatoka Valley. Based on the type of farming, there are three types of farms: crop, livestock and mixed (Table 1). Most of the farms in Fiji (58.58%) practise some form of mixed farming, which involves the integration of both crops and animals on a farm. Whilst smallholders prefer either crop or mixed farms, livestock farms are mainly restricted to larger landholdings where cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, horses and poultry are generally raised.

Some of the key challenges of Fijian agriculture

Contribution of agriculture to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Structural changes are evident in the Fijian economy with the rising importance of urban-based services and manufacturing sectors and a decline in the agriculture sector (Prasad and Singh, 2013). Whilst the contribution of the services sector to the country's GDP rose from 62% in the 1980s to 68.2% between 2010–2014, the share of agriculture Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and livestock) plummeted from 18% to 12% over the same period (Asian Development Bank, 2015; Figure 1).

Table 1. Number of farms by farm size and type of farm.

Farm size (ha)	Type of farm			Total
	Crop	Livestock	Mixed	
<1	13,765 (48.20)	1565 (5.48)	13,234 (46.33)	28,564 (43.92)
1 to 5	8859 (35.28)	375 (1.49)	15,878 (63.23)	25,112 (38.61)
5 to 20	1867 (18.75)	148 (1.49)	7942 (79.76)	9957 (15.31)
20 to 100	190 (14.89)	134 (10.50)	952 (74.61)	1276 (1.96)
>100	8 (6.35)	28 (22.22)	90 (71.43)	126 (0.20)
Total	24,689	2250	38,096	65,035

Source: Fiji National Agriculture Census, 2009.

Note: figures in parenthesis indicate the percentage.

The contribution of agriculture to the country's GDP has stagnated over the last decade to around 7 to 8% (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Given the rising importance of Fiji's tourism sector and its capacity to deliver multiplier effects, establishing linkages with agriculture through agritourism could facilitate inclusive multi-sectoral development. Utilising both forward and backward linkages between agriculture and tourism, positive impacts including an increase in revenue, livelihood options, and a better quality of life can be achieved (Barbieri, 2013; Drăgoi et al., 2017).

Smallholder farmers. Agriculture in Pacific Island Countries (PICs) including Fiji, depends on smallholder farmers, which impedes efforts to enhance farm profitability (Xing, 2015). Among the major challenges are inconsistency of supply, quality and food safety standards, limited access to capital, isolation from principal markets, poor infrastructure, lack of storage, processing and domestic value-adding opportunities (Rapsomanikis, 2015). Albeit access to credit is available to exporters and large-scale commercial farmers, mechanisms to address the financial needs of small farmers are largely absent (Ministry of Agriculture, 2014). Farmers in Fiji's major agricultural regions travel 10 km or more to sell their produce in markets (Young and Vinning, 2007) with only 10% of farmers meeting the demands of export markets, hotels and resorts (Fink et al., 2013). Agritourism can assist smallholders by channelling revenue directly into the pockets of disadvantaged and marginalised groups of farmers. Lupi et al. (2017), reported a greater probability of small farms engaging in agritourism business as compared to large farms in Italy. Schilling

et al. (2014) reported increased cash income through agritourism on small farms whilst no significant impact was observed on large farms where farmer motivations are principally non-pecuniary. This offers a comparative advantage to smallholders who are otherwise generally unable to compete with large scale farmers in commercial crop production.

Rural outmigration. The migration of smallholder farmers to urban areas in search of more lucrative opportunities as their farms become less viable (De Schutter, 2011) is emerging as another serious cause of concern. The changing demographic profile of family farms, with an ageing agricultural population has been reported from several parts of the world (Glick et al., 2014; Losch, 2016; Rovny, 2016). In Fiji, rural-urban migration due to expiring land leases, and in search of education and employment, has reduced labour availability for agriculture (Phillips and Keen, 2016). Recently, a large number of sugarcane farmers in Fiji have abandoned agriculture and are looking for employment in other sectors (Prasad, 2019). Farmland abandonment has negative impacts on food security and local livelihoods (Khanal and Watanabe, 2006). This reflects a need to retain youth in agriculture since they may be more open to entrepreneurship and innovation, and could promote an array of socio-economic activities (Lupi et al., 2017) including diversification, conservation of local traditions and cultural heritage, rural tourism, food safety, and participation in local organisations (Marzban et al., 2016). Enhancing farm profitability and increasing employment opportunities in rural areas (Asafu-Adjaye and Mahadevan, 2012; Tew and

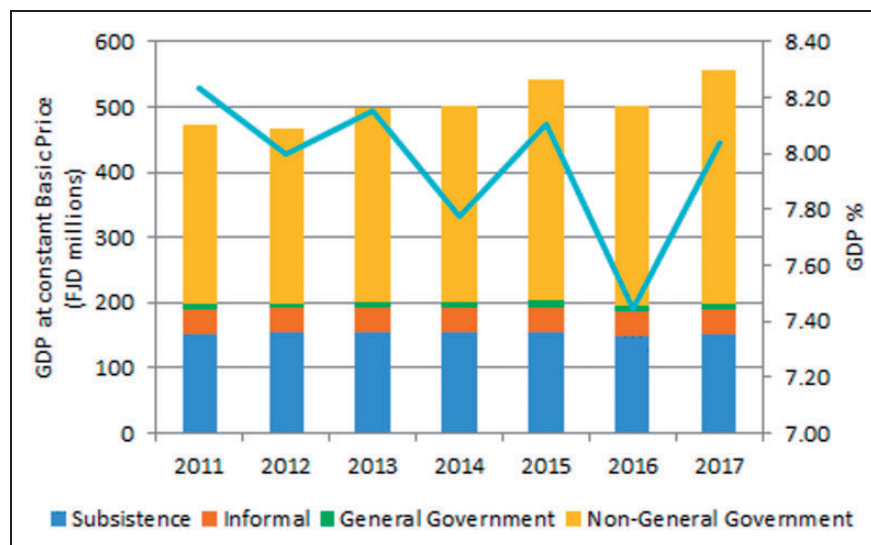


Figure 1. Contribution of agriculture to the national GDP. Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics (2018).

Barbieri, 2012) are viable strategies to reverse rural outmigration through agritourism.

Mono-cropping systems. Traditional Fijian agriculture was essentially polycultural with a diversity of trees and crops integrated by farmers to meet their subsistence needs (Shah et al., 2018). Smallholders, mostly engaged in growing traditional crops, have now shifted to prioritised crops with significant market opportunities for meeting export demands, resulting in intensive mono-cropping of sugarcane and dalo (Cuquma, 2016).

Broccardo et al. (2017) considered agritourism an innovative approach within the traditional agricultural 'Business Model' which can generate revenue and conserve agrobiodiversity. Shah et al. (2020), whilst exploring a market for agritourism in Fiji, reported that agritourists preferred authentic experiences in agricultural landscapes which included forests, water bodies and diverse plant crops. Agritourism can provide a unique opportunity to diversify the farming systems of Fiji by meeting tourist demand in terms of food products, botanicals and handicrafts (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), 2019) whilst conserving landscape characteristics.

Fiji and tourism

Over the last few decades tourism has become a major driver of economic growth in PICs (Harrison and Prasad, 2013). Notably in Fiji, tourism has become one of the major contributors to GDP and employment. Though Fiji's economy has relied primarily on tourism, agriculture and manufacturing, over the

years, the tourism sector has comparatively increased its size and contribution to the country's GDP. The total contribution of tourism is around 34% of the GDP and it employs approximately 1,18,500 people in Fiji (Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism (MITT), 2019). Since 1989, tourism has generated more foreign earnings than any other sector, and tourist arrivals have increased steadily over the years. Fiji is now the main centre for tourism in the South Pacific region (see Figure 2).

Several studies have highlighted that despite significant potential to contribute to economic development, revenue leakages in the tourism sector have remained a key challenge (Mellor, 2003; Simata, 2019; Ünlüönen et al., 2011; Wiranatha et al., 2017). Tourism has typically been critiqued by social scientists for its exclusive nature; benefitting the privileged and marginalising the poor (Gillovic and McIntosh, 2020). Similar concerns have emerged from Fiji and the Pacific. Prior to COVID19 the tourism industry was the top earner of foreign exchange in Fiji (MITT, 2019). However, due to the capital intensive, foreign-owned and mass resort model of the tourism industry, development has been uneven and has not contributed effectively to poverty reduction. In the past, the majority of tourist resorts and hotels were foreign-owned. More recently such establishments are owned by local companies (Pandey Investments (Fiji) Ltd., Tappoos, Fiji Airways, Gokals, Fiji National Provident Fund, Six Senses and the Vision Group) albeit managed by international brands (Sheraton, Radisson, Hilton, Double Tree, Shangri-La Fijian, Marriott, Intercontinental, Holiday Inn, Ramada, Pullman and Warwick).

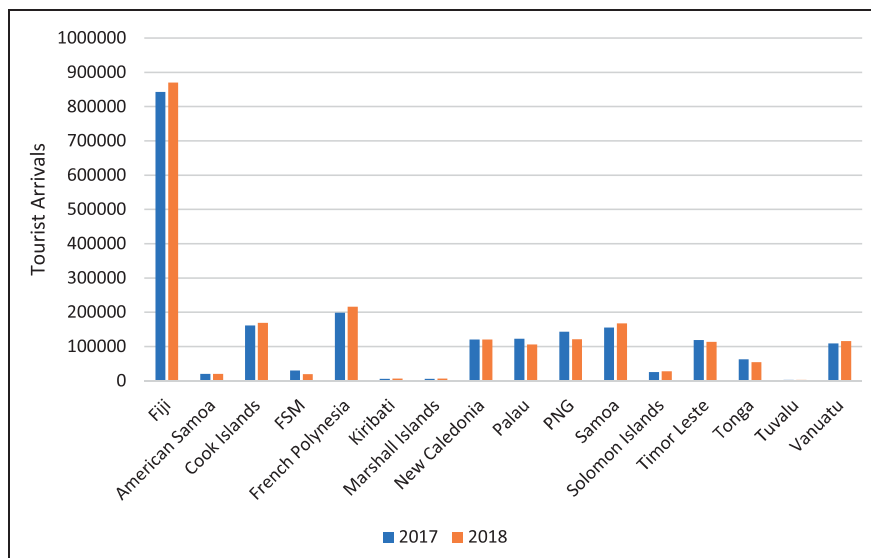


Figure 2. Tourist arrivals in the Pacific. Source: SPTO (2018).

Inclusive growth through tourism

Inclusive growth in the tourism sector can provide a holistic range of benefits to marginalised groups but is under examined in academic literature. Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) proposed seven elements for determining tourism's inclusiveness: addressing barriers to marginalised groups; access to tourism as producers and consumers; self-representation in dignified and appropriate ways; challenging power relations in and beyond tourism; widening participatory decision making in tourism; extending tourism opportunities to new people and places; and fostering mutually beneficial relationships based on respect and understanding between hosts and guests. Bakker (2019), further identified three elements that determine tourism's capacity to foster inclusive growth: growth of employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in tourism; equity of access; and equal outcomes of tourism opportunities. Agritourism therefore can offer a refreshing new perspective of inclusive growth, whilst also addressing the challenges faced by smallholder farmers.

Agritourism policy development in the Pacific

Countries in the Pacific such as the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa have developed agritourism implementation plans (Table 2). Reviewing these plans would assist policymakers understand the processes and features which have worked for these Pacific nations and facilitate the development of an efficient and inclusive agritourism policy for Fiji.

Vanuatu agritourism plan of actions (VAPA)

VAPA established a framework for the integration of tourism and such sectors as agriculture, fisheries and livestock over three years. Furthermore, action plans for three focal areas namely: Productive Sector and Tourism Linkages, Value Added Agritourism Products and Agritourism Attractions and Tours, were developed. These action plans have been developed to specify priorities, roles and responsibilities, and budget requirements (VAPA, 2017). The activities in these action plans have been categorised under two headings: high priority and medium priority. Moreover, the performance measures developed help in monitoring and evaluating the plan.

VAPA heavily relies on agriculture-tourism linkages to limit leakages in its first action plan. The second action plan acknowledges the importance of destination marketing activities concomitantly collecting data on agritourism value-added products and promoting

Vanuatu handicrafts (souvenirs) in the tourism market. The last action plan recognises agritourism as an important tourism product and focuses on marketing, capacity development for businesses, promoting local gastronomy and appraising best practices through a 'Tourism Award Scheme' (VAPA, 2017).

Solomon Islands – Agritourism

The Solomon Islands is an agriculture-based economy where agriculture contributes 40% to the country's total GDP. As the sector is predominantly subsistence-based, linking tourism with agriculture would promote environmentally friendly food production and sustainable development (Agritourism Policy Setting Workshop, 2017). The country's national tourism policy also emphasises the need for stronger agriculture and tourism linkages (Trip Consultants, 2015).

The 2017 agritourism workshop, identified key areas of policy strategy and the action plan. The draft outcomes suggested that an agritourism policy should support import substitution, rural livelihoods, and link other sectors such as transport, education, trade, health and environment for accelerated development. Several priority areas were identified and included inclusion of food tourism (farm to table, promoting local gastronomy), developing experiential tourism products for visitors (product development), marketing and branding, quality control and assurance, food safety, capacity building and price control (Agritourism Policy Setting Workshop, 2017).

Samoa – Agritourism

The 2016 agritourism workshop acknowledged that agriculture-tourism linkages provided the economic opportunities necessary for national development. Collaborative and coordinated efforts involving tour operators, non-government organisations (NGOs), health businesses and traditional healers were suggested to promote linkages with the tourism sector. The role of capacity building and promotion of local food for an authentic culinary experience to tap food tourism niche markets was recognised (Samoa Tourism Authority, 2016). The recommendations of the workshop included establishing an Agritourism Action Plan for Samoa integrating activities such as food tourism with a focus on local gastronomy, world food day (buy-eat-cook) experience, health tourism, agritourism parks, and village attractions and plantation tours. It also endorsed setting up an 'Agritourism Coordination Taskforce' (ACT) and an annual agritourism forum to map progress (Samoa Tourism Authority, 2016)

A proposal for 'Promoting Agritourism Development in Samoa' to the European Union (EU) for funding was submitted, comprising four development projects on strengthening linkages between tourism markets and local food production, promoting local wellness and spa markets, developing agri-based tours and attractions, and capacity building for rural business and employment initiatives. An innovative aspect of the proposal was the development of an 'Agritourism Park' incorporating a botanical garden and themed tourism routes (taro, kava, coconut, cocoa). The aim was to showcase traditional knowledge, biodiversity, landscapes and serve as a venue for cultural activities, and culinary experiences (Tilafono, 2018).

Research methods

This paper explored the scope and opportunity of agritourism by focusing on Fiji, an island country in the Pacific. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, examination of selected agritourism frameworks and workshops, review of existing literature and social media reviews on Trip Advisor. The main objective of the paper is to demystify agritourism development in the region by assessing key policy initiatives, and propose an open framework for inclusive growth by establishing value chains and offering alternative tourism products. The research was conducted in Fiji and assists in developing a framework that can be employed by other countries at large.

Semi-structured interviews of four tourism businesses in agritourism, and one organisation involved in agritourism development in Fiji were undertaken. As the focus for data collection was on examining the current status of agritourism in Fiji, businesses and organisations that were currently involved with agritourism, and were interested in participating in the interviews were selected. Furthermore, to provide a holistic overview, agritourism ventures which were 'working-farms'; one each from the four zonal divisions (northern, southern, western and eastern), were covered. It is important to highlight that one of the authors is part of the agritourism policy framework developing committee for Fiji. Though it poses challenges related to bias and loss of objectivity, the insider viewpoint offers an enhanced understanding of the current situation and future development (Shah and Trupp, 2020). Therefore, a combination of non-probability convenience and purposive sampling was applied (Ivanov et al., 2020).

Netnography, allows investigating computer mediated online consumer behaviour (Mate et al., 2019). User-generated content (UGC) from TripAdvisor

reviews have previously been used to study satisfaction-dis-satisfaction and evaluation of services pertaining to tourism products (Limberger et al., 2014). As agritourism is rarely marketed and promoted in Fiji (Shah et al., 2020), all available UGC from TripAdvisor were utilised. In total 21 TripAdvisor customer reviews were collated. This study utilises UGC from Trip Advisor for two reasons: 1. to assess the satisfaction of visitors with agritourism products currently offered in Fiji, and 2. to utilise their suggestions in proposing an agritourism framework.

Manifest content analysis (Kleinheksel et al., 2020) was utilised to analyse qualitative data collected through interviews and TripAdvisor customer reviews. Only two *priori* codes were considered important for this research: first, what agritourism products were offered? and second what was the product experience? The analysis offered an insight into the current status of agritourism, thereby facilitating an understanding of the required agritourism experience.

Current status of agritourism in Fiji

Extant research on agritourism in Fiji suggests that tourists coming to Fiji are not well aware of the existence of agritourism options (Shah et al., 2020). However, independent agritourism venues operating in Fiji exhibit a diverse range within agritourism products (Table 3 Most of the farms involved in agritourism activities are 'working-farms', utilising organic farming practices and offering diverse farm products such as apiculture, traditional agroforestry, poultry, sheep and fish farming, organic beauty products, handicrafts and medicinal plants. Tourism and hospitality-related services include day tours and treks, accommodation, food and beverage, event venues, and activities such as birdwatching, horse riding, team building, farmer workshops and cultural food experiences. These agritourism businesses offer their services from as low as FJ\$18 (farm tour) to as high as FJ\$249 (accommodation).

Agritourism venture 1 – Cegu Valley Farm, Tabia, Labasa, Northern division

Cegu Valley Farm is a coastal farm in rural Vanua Levu utilising permaculture techniques to sustainably farm the land and create a model community within Fiji. Chuck and Sue McKay, the owners of Cegu, feel that "sustainable farming is about more than just eating healthy or being environmentally-friendly, it is a holistic, integrated, self-sufficient system through the strategic design and placement of its components" (Chuck McKay, 2020, personal communication).

Table 3. Snapshot of agritourism businesses in Fiji.

Agritourism businesses	Size of farm (ha)	Classification	Products and services offered	Type of visitor	Price
Waimakere Forest Farm, Colo-i-Suva	4.86	Organic Forest Farm 'Living Museum'	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational Tours by appointment <p>Products include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional agroforestry Traditional Fijian crops e.g. wild yams Native Fijian plants and medicinal herbs Apiculture Organic farming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families Chefs Academics Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FJ\$135 per adult FJ\$68 per child
Nabogiono Farm (Bobby's Farm) Waiyevu, Taveuni	27.11	Organic Farm	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day tours with lunch, Accommodation Birdwatching Hiking Snorkelling Fish feeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day-trippers from neighbouring resorts Backpackers Students Visiting friends & relatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation Single room FJ\$128 with meal plan Double room FJ\$148 with meal plan FJ\$198 double per cottage with meal plan Day tour including lunch FJ\$150-200 per adult Accommodation FJ\$159 per person with food
Cegu Valley Farm, Tabia, Labasa	12.95	Working permaculture farm	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tours Accommodation Food & beverage Educational visits <p>Products Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apiculture Poultry and sheep farming Sandalwood and fruit trees Crops – pineapple, vegetable and herbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International students Families Solo travellers 	
Gaiatree Sanctuary, Taveuni		Organic spice garden	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day tours Accommodation, Farm to table gourmet vegan dining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foodies Chefs Day-trippers Solo travellers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foodies tour of edible garden FJ\$155 per person

(continued)

Table 3. Continued.

Agritourism businesses	Size of farm (ha)	Classification	Products and services offered	Type of visitor	Price
Aviva Farms, Sabeto, Nadi	21.85	Organic farm	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tours • Accommodation • Food & beverage • Horse riding • Event venue, e.g. horse races, farmer workshops and team building <p>Products include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous trees • Fruit trees, e.g. papaya, cocoa, avocado, citrus • Herbs, e.g. vanilla • Tobacco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local corporates • Families • International and local students • Conference & meeting delegates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horse riding Adults FJ\$50 • Children FJ\$25 • Locals half price • Farmer workshops FJ\$10 per person • Nursery tours FJ\$25 per person
Bulaccino Garden Farm, Nadi	12.14	Working farm	<p>Services include (work in progress*):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tours* • Accommodation* • Food & Beverage* • Supply Bulaccino restaurants <p>Products include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poultry and sheep farming • Fruit trees • Vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International & local students • Corporates • Families • Cruise passengers • Workshop participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prices available on request
Garden of the Sleeping Giants		Orchid farm	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day tours • Meetings and events, e.g. wedding • Food & beverage <p>Products include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International & local students • Corporate • Families • Cruise passengers • Workshop participants • Visiting friends & relatives • Locals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orchid tours • Adults FJ\$18, • Children FJ\$9 • Families FJ\$45 • Events FJ\$22 • per head not including food & beverage

(continued)

Table 3. Continued.

Agritourism businesses	Size of farm (ha)	Classification	Products and services offered	Type of visitor	Price
South Seas Orchids Gardens, Nadi	3.64	Orchid Farm and heritage tour of family home	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day tours (morning & afternoon tea) Events, e.g. wedding Food & Beverage catering <p>Products include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International & local students Corporate Families Cruise passengers Workshop participants Visiting friends & relatives Locals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home and garden tours with morning and afternoon teas FJ\$30 per head Lunches & dinners from FJ\$50–70 per head
Flavours of Fiji, Nadi		Cooking school	<p>Services include:</p> <p>(Farm to table)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market tours Cultural food experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International & local visitors Chefs Television cooking show participants Foodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market tour & cooking class Adults FJ\$190 Children FJ\$140 Cooking class Adults FJ \$160 Children (8–16) FJ \$115
Nadi Bay Herb Farm, Nadi		Organic herb farm	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day tours Supply to hotels, resorts and local and international markets <p>Product include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herbs, e.g. basil and lemon grass Vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local corporate Families international and local Students Conference & meeting delegates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free tours on appointment
Namosi Eco retreat		Eco retreat – back to nature	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day tours Accommodation Cultural agritourism, e.g. harvesting and preparing local food Horse riding Water activities Food & beverage Event venue, e.g. corporate retreats <p>Product include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handicrafts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local & international visitors Backpackers Families Independent travellers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation Double FJ \$249, Single FJ\$211 Day tours FJ\$94 per person

(continued)

Table 3. Continued.

Agritourism businesses	Size of farm (ha)	Classification	Products and services offered	Type of visitor	Price
Vee's Organic Farm, Sabeto, Nadi	4.86	Organic Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treks Farm tours Product include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apiculture Jams and pickles Seasonal fruit Organic beauty products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local corporate Families international and local Students Conference & meeting delegates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day tours FJ\$65 with lunch
J Hunter Pearls, Savusavu		Pearl Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm tours Diving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International & local visitors Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational tours Prices available on demand
Teitei Permaculture Farm, Sigatoka,	12.14	Farm and homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm tours Accommodation Food & beverage Product include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apiculture Poultry farming Fish farming Fruit and nut trees, e.g. papaya, banana, guava, cashew and coconut Root crops and vegetables Sandalwood Handicrafts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local corporate Families international and local Students Foodies Chefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults FJ\$110 per night inclusive of meals Children 5–12 FJ\$64 per night inclusive of meals Day trips FJ\$94 inclusive of lunch
Bobo's Farm, Ovalau		Organic farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treks Guided tours – cultural heritage Accommodation Food and beverage Water activities Product include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floriculture Root crops and vegetables Medicinal plants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International & local families Visiting friends & relatives Independent travellers Backpackers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation Single with meals FJ\$128 per night Double with meals FJ\$148 per night

Source: Authors Compilation adapted from Shah et al. (2020).

Cegu reinvests a substantial portion of their earning back into the farm and the community to teach, train, and support other local farmers who wish to diversify their farms. Most of the farming practices in Fiji today cause soil degradation which can lead to low wages and generational cycles of poverty. They aim to change this cycle through education and training in sustainable farming techniques including bee-keeping.

Cegu has farms stays, and a close partnership with institutions such as Bridge the Gap Vorovoro and Auburn University. It is visited by students, lecturers and families as well as the local land-owning Mali community. In terms of product offerings, the owners state that, “we are very simple. Please don’t expect the Hilton. We’ll feed you well, and you’ll have a mattress or hammock and clean sheets to sleep in and a mosquito net if you’re lucky! We live in a communal way, eat together, share bathroom facilities, and there are the joys of the composting toilet” (Sue McKay, 2020, personal communication).

Agritourism venture 2 – Teitei Permaculture Farm, Sigatoka, Southern division

Austin Bowden-Kerby and his wife Kim established the Teitei Farm in 2015. *Teitei* is Fijian for ‘farm’ or ‘plantation’. Teitei farm has been developed using permaculture principles. Rain retaining terraces, mixed cropping, chop and drop, chicken tractor, composting and layering of plants are some of the important farm features. The family is focusing on establishing accommodation (currently offers homestay), farm activities and cultural experiences. They offer a wide range of activities including visits to local communities, cooking classes, chocolate, vegan cheese, soap, handicraft and virgin coconut oil making, Fijian and Indian cultural experiences, preparing herbal remedies and lessons on permaculture ranging from FJ\$40–60 a head (children at half price). They also have a pavilion that they lease for weddings and small events.

Guests provide numerous positive reviews on TripAdvisor such as:

... Terrific food, comfortable lodgings and genuine interaction with the locals. A great organic farm environment with great lessons in permaculture and future directions for our planet. . . But the best thing was not the place, it was the people. (Jon, TripAdvisor, September 2017)

“We were very impressed by the nutritional meals provided, largely from produce from the farm. A nice get away for locals wanting a break from the city or for tourists wanting some down time” (Zoleykate, TripAdvisor, March 2017). “Junior gave us an

interesting and entertaining farm tour . . . Staying at Teitei farm was the PERFECT way for us to get acquainted with the culture and gain an understanding of Fijian life” (Karen, TripAdvisor, March 2020).

Agritourism venture 3 – Aviva Farms, Sabeto, Nadi, Western division

Aviva Farms strengthens the connection between indigenous Fijians (*i-Taukei*) and their land. It offers visitors an opportunity to explore the complexities and interconnectedness of this relationship through participatory activities. The farm practises sustainable agriculture, which they believe creates a socially and economically stable environment. Currently the farm employees 60 locals from nearby rural and remote communities.

One of the main attractions of the farm is its horse-riding tour which includes a history of the farm, Sabeto Valley, and the local sugarcane industry. The farm also offers itself as an event venue and hosts quarterly horse races which attract local participants and both local and international visitors. Furthermore, the farm offers other activities such as workshops for farmers, landscapers and people interested in sustainable farming techniques and guided indigenous species nursery tour. TripAdvisor reviews of the farm state: “My daughter wanted to do horse riding while in Fiji. I looked on TripAdvisor and Aviva was the best, not too pricey . . . I would recommend this place . . . go there as a tourist that’s what you want to see” (Chris Briggs, TripAdvisor, January 2018). “We didn’t go horse riding, but the handicrafts are lovely and the community initiative is awesome. Employing women from local villages. . . There is also a new vanilla plantation and pawpaws” (Michelle Tiana, TripAdvisor, March 2017).

Agritourism venture 4 – Waimakere Forest Farm, Colo-i-Suva, Eastern division

Waimakere Forest Farm is a family-run forest farm on the outskirts of Suva. It is home to diverse varieties of native Fijian plants and medicinal herbs as well as a small apiary producing honey and beeswax. The farm has been developed for four main purposes: 1) conserving traditional Fijian crops, 2) traditional agroforestry, 3) organic farming, and 4) enhancing knowledge and self-sufficiency. The farm houses traditional cultivars of vegetatively propagated crops and trees. Visitors to the farm vary from families to chefs, scientists, academics and students both local and international. An indigenous forest in the farm offers nature walk and an insight into the ethnobotanical importance of plants. They are welcomed with fresh juice

Table 2. Timeline of agritourism consultations and initiatives.

	Focus	Date	Location
Pacific Community Agritourism Week		29 June to 3 July 2015	Nadi, Fiji
1st Agribusiness Forum	Linking the agrifood sector to tourism-related markets	1–3 July 2015	Nadi, Fiji
Policy Setting Workshop	–	25–27 May 2016	Port Vila, Vanuatu
2nd Agribusiness Forum	Linking the agrifood sector to local markets for economic growth and improved food and nutrition security	29 August–1 September 2016	Apia, Samoa
1st Agribusiness Festival	Promote linkages amongst productive sectors	9–11 November 2016	Port Vila, Vanuatu
Policy Setting Workshop	–	14–16 December 2016	Apia, Samoa
Focused Agritourism, Workshop	–	18 October 2017	Port Vila, Vanuatu
First Pacific Week of Agriculture	–	16–20 October 2017	Port Vila, Vanuatu
Policy Setting Workshop (Solomon Islands)	–	21–22 November 2017	Honiara, Solomon Islands
Policy Setting Workshop (Fiji)	–	23 February 2018	Nadi
		26 February 2018	Suva
Policy Setting Workshop (Tonga)	–	7–8 August 2018	
Policy Setting Workshop (Tuvalu)	–	7 and 10 September 2018	
Policy Setting Workshop (Cook Islands)	–	25–26 September 2018	
Policy Setting Workshop (Kiribati)	–	15–16 January 2019	
Regional Policy Setting Workshop (Fiji)	–	1–2 April 2019	

Source: Compiled from CTA, 2020.

or homemade tea and snacks made from local farm produce.

The above agritourism ventures highlight a new-found interest in drawing visitors to farms by offering diverse products and services. With the present interest in agritourism in Fiji and the Pacific, these ventures and those listed in Table 3 are used by government ministries, development organisations and NGOs such as Pacific Agribusiness Research in Development Initiative Phase 2 (PARDI 2), Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON), Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO) and South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) as locations for site inspection and training.

Limitations of agritourism development in Fiji

In the PICs, growth and development in tourism and agriculture have been pursued independently. Policy and institutional support, fostering linkages between the two sectors, have been inadequate (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), 2012). Extant research indicates that there exists very little awareness regarding tourist

motivation for agritourism experiences (Shah et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is no standard definition of experiences related to agritourism, which has resulted in most of the discussions and dialogue concentrating on agriculture and tourism linkages (Addinsall et al., 2017a). In the case of Fiji, agritourism forums have centred around utilising local agricultural produce in hotels and resorts, and farm to table restaurants (Shah et al., 2020). However, services related to accommodation and activities within agritourism do not get the required attention. Agritourism is still not acknowledged as a tourism product and the Fiji Tourism (FT) 2021 plan only emphasised the linkages between agriculture, aquaculture and tourism focusing on limiting leakages and strengthening the local economy through import substitution, promotion of local gastronomy, buying ‘Fijian Made’, and creating a consistent value chain (MITT, 2019).

At present Fiji does not have an agritourism policy. Previous research by Shah et al. (2016) state that for Fiji to have a successful agritourism orientation, work needs to be done on four fronts for policy creation. These include statutory, operations, marketing and incentives. Though agriculture and tourism linkages have been prominently stressed and promoted as an

area that needs development, challenges pertaining to production, supply and storage still need to be addressed. Around 52% of the demand for fresh produce from the main tourism areas including meat, seafood, dairy products, fruit, vegetables and packaged juice is met through imports. The key factors which restrict hotels and resorts from purchasing local produce are seasonality of local produce, inconsistent supply, poor quality of products and lack of food safety standards. Furthermore, it is suggested that Fiji could reduce FJ\$24.1 million (US\$11.8 million) spending on imports if it focused on growing specific agricultural produce locally (International Finance Corporation (IFC), 2018).

The way ahead

Agriculture and tourism linkages can be strengthened through: 1) integrating agriculture in tourism’s supply chain, 2) farms offering tourist attractions and activities, and 3) promotion of local gastronomy. In Fiji, agritourism forums have acknowledged the need to create efficient supply chains and promote local cuisine. Despite significant deliberations, the development of an agritourism policy is still in infancy. In view of the agritourism policy initiatives in other PICs and the agricultural constraints of Fiji, we propose a policy framework for inclusive growth incorporating four key elements (see Figure 3).

(i) Linkages

Policy framework and workshop recommendations in the region have all recognised the significance of creating high-value supply chains to contribute to the national development goals of food security and import substitution. Agriculture and tourism linkages have also been emphasised within the Fiji 2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda and Fiji Tourism (FT) 2021, for meeting the rising demands of the tourism market for fresh farm produce.

An open agritourism framework should ensure efficient supply chains linking farmers with hotels and resorts, concentrating on three core areas: 1) quality of produce, 2) consistency of supply and 3) adequate volumes as per demand. To mitigate challenges associated with small farmers working in isolation, and increase farm profitability, various measures such as clustering, Farmer Organisations (FOs) and Participatory Guarantee Schemes (PGS) have been adopted. In Fiji, cluster farming has been successfully initiated by the Drekenivuci Ginger Farmers Cluster in Naloto district, Tailevu. FOs (Fiji Beekeepers Association, Nature’s Way Cooperative, Tei Tei Taveuni) and networks (PIFON, PARDI, PIPSO) are focused on coordinating capacity building, information exchange, transfer of technical expertise and securing livelihoods of rural households in the Pacific. In Cicia, an island in Lau Province of Fiji PGS for virgin coconut oil has assisted in delivering environmental, social and indirect economic benefits.

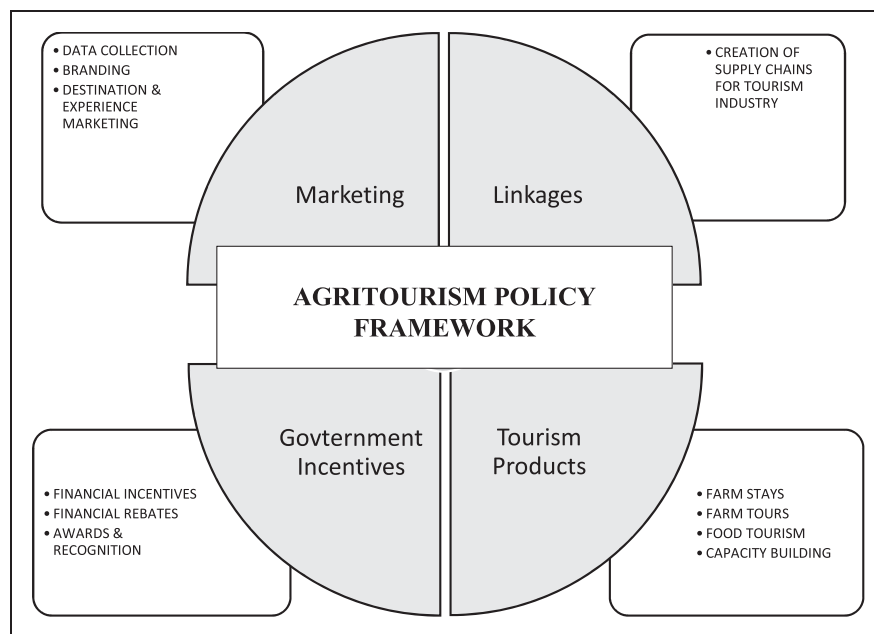


Figure 3. Guide to policy framework. Source: Authors.

Furthermore, IFC (2018) suggests the need to prioritise high-value agricultural products for cultivation during low production season. This could substitute part of the 63% of fresh food imports in Fiji's principal tourism centres and ensure consistency in agricultural product supply. Therefore, within the agritourism framework (Figure 3), there is a need for integrating high-value agro-products through farmer networks in Fiji and the Pacific.

(ii) Tourism product

A holistic 'Agritourism Experience' entails lodging and board-on farm, farm activities, traditional and cultural exchanges, and educational experiences (Flanigan et al., 2014). Vanuatu and Samoa have also incorporated the 'entertainment' aspect of agritourism in their policy framework and discussions, emphasising food tourism (local gastronomy) and farm tours; Samoa has already started work on its 'Agritourism Park' project (Tilafono, 2018).

The agritourism framework should focus on developing and improving agritourism products including farm stays, farm tours and organised local food experiences. Shah et al. (2020), suggested that tourists preferred easily accessible working farms, offering accommodation, food and farm activities with value for money experiences. Trip Advisor reviews also suggest that tourists are interested in cultural interactions, educational and culinary experiences, and on-farm activities on affordable packages. This highlights the need to redefine agritourism as a value for money experience rather than a niche market, and judicious examination of tourist preferences for agritourism product development is needed.

Venturing into hospitality services with prescribed standards may be an arduous challenge for small farmers, particularly in developing countries. This necessitates initiation of capacity building programmes enabling farmers to operate successful and competitive tourism products. The policy framework should also specify the type of farm (working or non-working), and classification codes for ensuring proactive development. Such measures would integrate quality control, safety (food, and hygiene especially post-Covid-19) and price control. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) which govern service quality and offer product heterogeneity are required for informed purchase decisions, since quality tourist experiences lead to positive recommendations, repeat business and loyalty to the product (Lu et al., 2014). Taking a cue from ongoing agritourism discussions in PICs, the framework should incorporate performance measures to assist monitoring and evaluating product development.

(iii) Incentives

Since agriculture in PICs is dominated by smallholders, many of whom practise subsistence agriculture (Addinsall et al., 2017a), the policy document should incorporate incentive schemes for assisting these landholders/farmers. The incentives may be broadly classified under the following categories;

a) Financial assistance. Financial incentives are a motivating factor for agritourism entrepreneurship and product development (Theodoropoulou, 2004). Agglomeration for development and gaining incentives through co-operatives or community-based schemes could support food value chains and agritourism products (FAO, 2017). The policy document must offer clarity regarding the nature and extent of diversification further recognising agritourism as a supplementary activity. Therefore, incentives should not stimulate the conversion of a farm completely to a tourist attraction.

b) Tax incentives. Previous research on farmers' motivations for agritourism entrepreneurship and farm diversification have suggested tax incentives as an important factor which can promote business/activities for sustainable development (Drăgoi et al., 2017). Financial incentives through tax credits, reduced taxes, liability protection or tax-exempt bonds with lower rates of interest for financing equipment purchase or infrastructure development, can be utilised. Tax rebates can also be offered to increase the purchase of local food and beverages (Martyn and Caniogo, 2016).

c) Awards and recognition. Personal recognition and monetary rewards have been effectively used as tools for motivation (Daft, 2008). Since the 1st Forum on Agritourism in the Pacific, 'Excellence Awards' for chefs using local ingredients to produce popular menus, and farmers supplying resorts with fresh local produce have been discussed. This implies that agritourism framework development has already acknowledged the need to recognise best practices and achievements as an incentive, although agritourism venues (farm tours, farm stays) are yet to be considered. In the Pacific, focus has been more on creating supply-chain based linkages and ensuring food security rather than agritourism product development (Addinsall et al., 2017a).

(iv) Marketing

Tourism product development entails understanding consumer preferences. Extant research suggests that

tourists are unaware of agritourism products in Fiji (Shah et al., 2020), highlighting a need to advertise products. However, advertising is only a small part of the marketing strategy, and thus the need for a well-developed marketing mix (Schilling, et al., 2011).

Data collection (economic, behavioural) is a key process that assists in understanding the consumer. The collected data can infer consumer behaviour, attitude and satisfaction/dissatisfaction with products and services (Victor et al., 2018). Marketing plans can assist in branding products, emphasise local food as a marketing dimension, include local people in tourist food experiences, and create awareness regarding their role in marketing products (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019). Unique selling propositions such as the organic nature of produce, freshness of ingredients, local cuisine, 'authentic' cultural experiences, intangible and tangible agricultural heritage, storytelling around food totems, medicinal properties, and value for money experiences, can be developed.

Conclusion

South Pacific islands are relevant agritourism destinations because of their cultural capital, food systems and traditions, and potential for authentic experiences. Productive employment and entrepreneurship opportunities generated through agritourism can foster inclusive growth for smallholders. Recent agritourism discussions in the PICs have recognised its potential to reduce food imports, increase farm profitability, generate alternative livelihoods and contribute to sustainable economic development. An agritourism framework should focus on aspects largely side-lined in current agritourism debates in the region, notably on developing and improving agritourism products and activities including farm stays, farm tours and organised local food experiences. A careful examination of tourist preferences and their alignment with agritourism product development is essential for successful agritourism businesses. However, consideration of the difficulties encountered by smallholders in venturing into hospitality services that meet visitor preferences, stresses the need for relevant capacity building programmes. It is important to acknowledge that agritourism is a supplementary source of income which should not displace the key farm activity of food production. Such an approach ensures that national development goals of food security and import substitution are not compromised. It is also for this reason that agritourism should be promoted on working farms. Considering extant research on tourist perceptions we strongly believe in the need to redefine agritourism as a value for money experience rather than a niche market in the Pacific region.

Authors' Note

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Note

1. Land owning descent group structure. Several *tokatoka* form a *mataqali* or clan.

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