

# Pacific women in agriculture

Many Pacific island and Timorese women come from families with generations of semi-commercial and subsistence farming experience.



## Generations of experience

Research from 6 of the countries participating in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme shows that as many as 40-67% of women in rural areas work in farming.<sup>1</sup>

This makes women ideal candidates for jobs in the agriculture industry in Australia.

## Valuable transferable skills

While the farming tools, technology and types of produce vary across each country, Pacific and Timorese women often have valuable transferable skills and experiences that are well suited to the Australian agriculture sector.

These include planting, harvesting, grading and processing crops, animal husbandry and selling fruit and vegetables at the local markets.

In addition, many Pacific women also play an important role in the informal economy of their local community.

This includes domestic duties like collecting water and fuel, cleaning, shopping, food preparation and caring for children, the elderly and their extended family.

Through the PALM scheme, Pacific women have demonstrated the skills and experience they have developed in their home country can translate into semi-skilled roles in Australia, such as:

- supervisors and team leaders
- fruit and vegetable pickers and packers
- machinery operators
- on-farm computer operators.



## Farming experience

Rosa is a single mother and farmer from the Papua New Guinea (PNG) highlands.

In her village (pictured left), she grows sweet potatoes, onions, corn and avocados.

Rosa has worked for 2 seasons picking fruit at Ironbark Citrus in Queensland.

1. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's 2019 country gender assessments of agriculture and the rural sector shows the following data on women's participation in subsistence work: Papua New Guinea 67%, Solomon Islands 63%, Vanuatu 49.5%, Fiji 40.5% and Tonga 40%. The UN Women and the East Asia and Pacific Gender Innovation Lab policy brief issue 4 (November 2018) shows women's participation in subsistence work in Timor-Leste is 66%.



### Semi-skilled roles

Pictured left: Laurel from Vanuatu joined the PALM scheme in June 2019. In her role as Dispatch Officer at Simfresh, she oversees exports and country-wide supermarket orders, assessing fruit quality and sending reports via an iPad throughout the day.

**“** You have to keep up with the speed of the work, you have to be ahead all the time and on the ball.



▲ PALM scheme workers from Kiribati.

**“** They are resilient, and have good character and attention to detail.

### Simfresh

Simfresh is a family owned and operated farm in the Sunraysia region that has been operating for more than 25 years. The business employs more than 100 workers through the PALM scheme, and around 60% of these are women.

Owner-operator Amanda Cini said Simfresh has recruited a number of female Pacific workers through the PALM scheme, and this has been a great success. There are now Pacific women employed in a number of semi-skilled roles across the business.

"We have women working as pickers and packers, as line leaders using small machinery and on iPads running all the quality and dispatch programs in the packing shed," Amanda said.

"The advantage of employing these women is that they are very well suited to the work.

"They are also very resilient, and they have good character and great attention to detail."

### Find out more

Pacific island and Timor-Leste sending countries have pools of workers who are ready to work in Australia.

To enquire, please contact the PALM scheme support service at ([palm@dewr.gov.au](mailto:palm@dewr.gov.au)) or visit [www.palmscheme.gov.au](http://www.palmscheme.gov.au).



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