

AgKnowledge

Quarterly Newsletter

Family farming is not just a technical concept; it stands for a way of life, a flexible and complex strategy to deal with the (often harsh) environment; it means resilience and a struggle for independence and dignity.

Read more ...

Small Farm Outreach Project

Project activities of our second round Small Farm Outreach Project kicked off in November. The project's mission is to enhance the coordination of outreach, technical assistance and education efforts for socially disadvantaged community

to engage in small farm activities. The project is particularly designed to meet the needs of target audience – neighboring islands community – residing at Abluul, Daboch, Ruu and Makiy to empower them with sound

advice and information for prosperity through small scale farming. The project has the following objectives:

1. Provide necessary training and assistance in small scale farming for the production of vegetables
2. Increase the availability of fresh vegetables and thus to improve the health, nutritional status and quality of life of displaced families
3. Help the families organize and operate small farming enterprises to improve their income and living standards – ensuring food security and income generation



Small Farms are the backbone of a community

The project is funded by the Office of Advocacy and Outreach, United States Department of Agriculture under Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program.

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Community Supported Agriculture

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) refers to a model of farming in which farmers sell harvest shares (vegetables, flowers, meat, etc.) directly to people in the local community. It was adopted in America from Japanese and European models, largely as a response to the disappearance of the small farm. CSA represents a shared commitment - shareholders commit to the farm for the season, providing farmers with a secure customer base, and farmers commit to doing their best to provide shareholders with high quality, nutritious food. The direct connection between farmer and consumers bypasses middlemen (e.g., marketers), benefits the farmer by increasing farm revenue, benefits the environment by decreasing packaging and pollution, and benefits consumers by providing fresh, high-quality produce at competitive prices. Family farms of many small islands fit in this category.



Small Farm Outreach Project



Encouraging community engagement

Outreach is the use of formal and informal educational presentations, materials, Website materials etc., that are designed to inform socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers about USDA programs, other relevant and pertinent programs, and improvements in farm and ranch

management in its many dimensions with the purpose of increasing participation in USDA programs and rates of ownership and operation of farms and ranches by members of socially disadvantaged groups.

Technical Assistance is providing hands-on educational and technical assistance through workshops, site visits, and other means of contact with socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to enable them to understand the application

process and to apply for, and increasingly participate in, USDA programs.

Socially disadvantaged group means a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. Socially disadvantaged groups include, but are not limited to, African Americans, Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asians, and Pacific Islanders.

Small-scale farming has the potential, especially for the vulnerable populations, respecting local cultures and local ecosystems ensuring food security

Small Farms, Big News

Small farms play a vital role in sustainable development and reducing hunger and poverty. Small-scale farming has the potential, especially for the vulnerable populations, respecting local cultures and local ecosystems, and ensuring food security. Small-scale farming is not only defined by its smaller size, but even more by the fact that it is better adapted to local conditions.

Small farms are big news these days. Food and Agriculture Organization and World Bank are rediscovering small-scale family farming as the most important source of development, and target for investments to fight hunger. The next peak in oil prices will cause an acute crisis and famine of global magnitude. Increasing small

-scale farmers' yields through low input methods is simply the cheapest way to prevent food crisis getting out of control.

In 1998, the US Department of Agriculture's National Commission on Small Farms published a landmark report on the importance of small-farms agriculture, and the necessity of both preserving small farms and promoting them for the future. Coming from one of the world's most pro-globalised farming governments, the report, *A Time To Act*, was extremely significant. Benefits of small farms include:

1. Diversity: small farms represent a diversity of ownership, of cropping systems, of landscapes,

of biological organization, of culture and traditions.

2. Environmental benefits: responsible management of the natural resources of soil, water and livestock in small areas produces significant environmental benefits.
3. Community empowerment: decentralized land tenure tends to produce more equitable opportunities for rural people.
4. Personal connection to food: farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture and other plans bring home to consumers where their food comes from, and what effect its production has on land and environment.

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Small farms, contd.

Strength of small farms: The elements of a small farm include soil, water, plants and animals and people working on it. These elements interact with one another to function as a farm — a place from which to gain livelihood, to produce food and other products. Small farms possess unique potential to “produce” not only foodstuffs, but a variety of economic, social, and environmental goods. Small farms are in a better position to respond to specialty products for a narrow consumer taste than larger, more standardized farming operations. When small farms optimize their small land areas with a variety of crops farmed in rotation and integrated with livestock production, they produce a source of biological diversity and ecological resilience not found in larger, monocropping systems. When they directly market their production

to consumers through farmers markets, pick-your-own or Community Supported Agriculture methods, they provide community with a social connection to farming, farmers, and a healthy, fresh food supply.

What do small-scale farms have in common?

Small farms do share some common features. They are small (this is a relative term and varies with region) and usually family-based, with the farmers considering the farm to be more than simply a business. In spite of their small size, these farms have an important role to play in terms of their contribution to alleviating poverty, to producing for local food systems, and to environmental and other services.

Usually family-based: those farms (agroforests, home gardens etc). run by a family whose household members do the

bulk of the work and make the farming decisions. For this reason, these farmers are often also called “family farmers.”

Small size: For developing countries, small-scale farmers are usually defined as those farming two hectares or less. In small islands, the size of individual farmlands is considerably less and, therefore, income varies.

More than a business: Small-scale farms are more than a business. Most of them are family-run activities that provide the main source of livelihood. A large number of people in the small islands depend on small farms.

Low status: Small-scale farmers often do not fully own the land they farm and depend on local natural resources to supply most of their needs. In small

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“Strong rural economies based on efficient small-scale farming allow workers to remain with their families instead of migrating”



Policies that support sustainability of small-scale farming need to be implemented and safeguarded

Small Farms, Big News

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islands, their problems are further compounded by little investment support from the government.

“Helping the poorest small-holder farmers grow more crops and get them to market is the world’s single most powerful lever for reducing hunger and poverty”

Bill Gates

Importance of small-scale farms

Despite their size, small farms greatly contribute to food security, economic development, well being and survival of people and ecosystems. These farms greatly help to address two of the Millennium Development Goals: Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.

Contribution to local food security: Small farms produce a significant percentage of world’s food needs.

Productivity: Small farms are often among the most productive farms in terms of output per unit of land and energy, while at the same time generating social benefits in terms of equity and inclusive economic development.

Important role in maintaining agrobiodiversity and other environmental services: Traditional small-scale farms depend on a high degree of biodiversity. Small scale farmers usually maintain diversity as an insurance to meet future environmental change or social and economic needs.

Contribution to viable communities: Communities surrounded by small farms generally have healthier economies. Strong rural economies based on efficient small farming allow workers to remain with their families instead of migrating.

The recognition that the world needs multifunctional family farming is gaining ground. Family farming is about improving livelihoods. It is about the rights of families to produce food on their own terms.

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Yap Agricultural Experiment Station operates within the College of Micronesia-FSM and is mandated by College of Micronesia Land Grant Program. It generates knowledge through strategic research to enhance agriculture, natural resources and communities in Yap. Its mission is fueled by close ties with extension, State agencies, community groups and other stakeholders as well as support from local government.