

SMART AGRITECH GRANT HELPS TAIRI VEGES DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE FARMING ON ATIU

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) is pleased to announce it has awarded Atiu family business Tairi Veges a SMART AgriTech Scheme grant to implement an innovative sustainable farming project. Tairi Veges have been running trials for the project, which encompasses poultry farming, organic fertilizer, and vegetables.

Tairi Veges will use the grant to fund equipment for two mobile poultry units. The poultry units, which each hold 30 chickens, will enable Tairi Veges to easily move chickens to different planting areas, where they will run free range. While on the land, the chickens feed and leave their manure. They are then rotated to new areas, and the newly fertilised land is ploughed and used for planting vegetables.

Chicken manure has a high nitrogen value and breaks down very fast in the soil, so the process of rotating poultry and crops significantly reduces the need for chemical fertilizers when planting. It also reduces labour input as the chickens eat weeds while roaming.

For their project trials Tairi Veges designed a small 2.5-metre by 4-metre poultry unit using local materials and carried it manually around different planting areas each year. Production of a liquid fertilizer and potting mix mulch was also part of the project, using chicken manure mixed with mulch. The results of the trial on their vegetable production proved very positive. They also found

that by managing a small number of chickens at the highest level, they could achieve an impressive 90-100% egg production rate.

Tairi Veges' growing model is a new and smart agriculture method that will make fresh, healthy food more affordable for the Atiu community. Eggs will be an additional product Tairi



Veges can supply to the island, alongside their vegetables. The project is reviving poultry farming in Atiu, where there is none currently.

Tairi Veges owner Maaratupuna Mataio Tairi says: "With this new system of poultry we will be able to start testing formulated local feeds using local ingredients with artificial enzymes to help supplement the expensive feed that is imported. This creates not only an income for my family but also an opportunity to include in the agriculture school program to promote smart agriculture to the young farmers keen to learn. We hope to expand the poultry mobile units later on, when the first two new units are running well."

The project will reduce the reliance on produce imported from overseas, which in turn reduces the amount of rubbish entering the outer islands. Tairi Veges' eggs will be cheaper and fresher than the imported eggs, which commonly expire within a short period of time of landing on the island. The small yet high production poultry system design will be available to other farmers interested in supplying eggs for the island of Atiu