

**SOUTH PACIFIC REGION AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
INTERIM SUSTAINABILITY PLAN**

This paper is prepared to assist in the process of ascertaining the institutional sustainability of agricultural teaching, research and extension programs of the University of the South Pacific/Alafua. The desired outcomes of this process are: (1) to improve the utilization of the remaining USAID financial resources devoted to the South Pacific Region Agricultural Development (SPRAD) project and (2) to provide indicators of the areas deserving of continued support through other funding mechanisms and sources.

The SPRAD Project

The SPRAD project, initiated in 1980, will complete Phase II December 31, 1991. Its goal, purpose, objectives and overall focus are as follows:

Goal

Promote agricultural productivity and further socioeconomic development for the rural peoples of the South Pacific Region.

Project Purpose

Strengthen capacity and resources of the University of the South Pacific (USP) in agricultural research, education and extension (REE).

Objectives

Overall, the objectives of the Project are defined on page 3 of the Project Paper: "the following conditions should exist by the end of the project and indicate an achievement of the project purpose:

1. An agricultural research, education and extension (REE) resource base in place at the USP School of Agriculture and Institute for Research, Extension and Training in Agriculture (IRETA) on the Alafua Campus, capable of providing support to the respective island country agricultural development programs.
2. An established academic and in-service training program containing expanded and relevant course offerings, improved curricula and skills development that will provide the region with the necessary human resource base adequate to serve the agricultural sector.

3. An operational system within the USP whereby selected packages of appropriate technology in five major activity areas are available for use throughout the region and which can assist in increasing the productivity, improving the nutritional status and/or in increasing the income of rural inhabitants.

4. A functional outreach program by the USP providing timely, continuing and appropriate dissemination of agricultural information and services to national agricultural institutions, private sector, and community organizations."

Focus

The overall focus of SPRAD is institutional strengthening and development. It is viewed as a Title XII type project emphasizing the interaction of the functions of teaching, research and extension (outreach).

SPRAD Activities

The SPRAD Project employed, by design and through experience, several activities/mechanisms to achieve agreed upon goals and objectives. These are well documented in several reports beginning with the original project paper and including several mid-term and special reviews of both Phase I and Phase II of SPRAD. The following list highlights some of the key activities/mechanisms of SPRAD.

- Development of IRETA
- Establishment of Agricultural Liaison Officer (ALO) network
- Establishment of National Collaborative Research projects
- Development of Agricultural Information Network (AIN) and support for Alafua Library
- Creation of the Advanced Certificate of Teaching Agriculture (ACTA) Program
- Technical support for communications and publications
- Technical support to selected discipline programs
- Degree and non-degree training for USP Alafua staff
- Scholarships for Pacific Islanders to participate in USP Alafua academic programs (degree, diploma, certificate)

Project objectives in the targeted areas, have been achieved, as indicated in the 1990 mid-term review (Clarke).

SPRAD Phase-out Plan

Background

For the past two years, the SPRAD project has operated with

uncertainty about the possibility of a Phase III or any mode of continuation after September 1990. Two years ago, USAID encouraged the development of a Phase III plan. This was developed by USP and University of Hawai'i/Cornell with comments and suggestions (but no firm commitment) by USAID at the November 1989 SPRAD management meeting. In February 1990, both the Mid-term Evaluation (Clarke, et al) and the Sustainability Analysis (Hopkins) recommended to USAID that a Phase III of SPRAD be undertaken.

At the April 1990 meeting, the absence of the USAID project officer and a subsequent phone call to USAID by the Pro Vice-Chancellor confirmed concerns about USAID's intentions for Phase III. The Pro Vice-Chancellor then made a trip to USAID and was told that there would be no Phase III nor any extension of the project. USAID advised that it intended to provide future support to IRETA only in the context of the planned Commercial Agriculture Development (CAD) project. Project planning has focussed heavily on phase-out and sustainability issues since that point.

At the semi-annual management meeting in September 1990, USAID advised that: (1) the grant and contract would be extended three months from September to December 1991, (2) a further no-cost extension for SPRAD scholars at UH and USP would be possible if approved by Washington, and (3) amendments to bring the USP and UH/Cornell allocations to the authorized levels would be processed by the regional office. Program plans were made at that time to phase-out the project.

At the meeting in March 1991, USP and UH/Cornell were aware of a possible extension of the project for two years. The level of funding for this two year extension was not known, however, until mid-meeting when a phone conversation with USAID in Fiji revealed their intention to provide a no-cost extension. At that point, current and projected budget balances were reviewed based on plans made in September 1990. The only exception was the prior agreement on the addition of a technical assistance assignment (TA) in Video Media for 6.5 months and an extension of the soils TA from September to December. The latter was justified on the basis of the need to complete work in progress on atoll agriculture.

At the March 1991 Meeting, it was estimated that the UH/Cornell contract would have an approximate balance on December 31, 1991 of \$440,000. USP/Alafua determined that their balance would be approximately \$65,000 on December 31, 1991 for a total of \$505,000. The following phase-out plan was developed based on these projected balances.

BUDGET STATUS REPORT
SOUTH PACIFIC REGION AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
AID Contract 879-0267-C-00-1447

Budget Categories	Life-of-Proj. Budget Phase I & II	Expenses as of 12/31/90	Actual & Anticipated Expenses for 1991	Anticipated Expenses for 1992	Anticipated Expenses for 1993	Balance
Salaries	\$2,390,230	\$2,008,273	280,000	34,000	23,000	\$44,957
Consultants	16,233	16,233	2,100	0	0	(\$2,100)
Fringe Benefits	512,383	428,682	65,000	8,000	5,000	\$5,701
Overhead	1,069,752	844,133	120,000	5,000	4,000	\$96,619
Travel & Trans.	393,560	326,496	30,000	15,000	5,000	\$17,064
Allowances	540,185	426,275	55,000	0	0	\$58,910
Other Direct Costs	219,250	173,986	905	0	0	\$44,359
Equip., Mats. & Supplies	861,100	787,679	85,500	5,000	5,000	(\$22,079)
Participant Train.	767,374	519,804	160,000	73,000	33,000	(\$18,430)
Subcontract	2,440,000	2,067,207	372,793	0	0	(\$0)
Total	\$9,210,067	\$7,598,769	\$1,171,298	\$140,000	\$75,000	\$225,000

Allocation to date (May 15, 1991) = \$9,000,000

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Project Manager

UH/Cornell Contract

The estimated December 31, 1991 balance of \$440,000 in the UH/Cornell contract will be used in the following ways: \$106,000 for degree training, \$30,000 for short-term technical assistance, \$10,000 for equipment repair/replacement, \$69,000 for administration of activities, and \$225,000 for transfer to the grant for projected USP expenses.

The attached budget status report displays UH/Cornell contract expenses to the end of 1990, and anticipated expenses for 1991, 1992 and 1993, as of May 1991.

The UH/Cornell contract phase-out actions are as follows:

1. Long-term Technical Assistance - Staff levels remain as planned in September 1990 with the exception of the TA in Video Media and the three month extension of the TA in Soils which had been budgeted prior to the March 1991 meeting. Therefore, there is no impact on the projected balance December 31, 1991.
2. Training - Rollover funds are earmarked for the completion of degree programs by the 4 students currently enrolled at UH, and one student to come to Cornell for an 18 month Master of Professional Studies (MPS) degree program in education/curriculum development (the latter pending USAID approval). Training requires a total of approximately \$106,000 during 1992 and 1993.
3. Short-term Technical Assistance - Funds are budgeted for faculty advisors of the current students at UH or others, to spend up to one month each at USP Alafua to assist returning staff in establishing research and teaching programs. Estimated cost is \$30,000.
4. Repair/replacement of Equipment - Funds have been allocated for this during 1990-91. However, the process is on-going and \$10,000 has been budgeted for this during the no-cost extension period.
5. Project Management Meetings - No funds budgeted beyond 1991.

USP Grant

The USP grant portion of SPRAD is projecting expenses in 1991 at about the same level as that expended in 1990, and consistent with plans made in September 1990. The projected spending level of \$625,000 would leave a balance of approximately \$65,000 in the grant on December 31, 1991. This plus the \$225,000 to be transferred from the UH/Cornell contract provides a total of \$290,000 for allocation in 1992 and 1993. In essence,

this amount represents less than half the current grant expenses for one year. This makes the timing of the implementation of the regional component of CAD extremely important, to provide as smooth a transition as possible.

The budget items for the USP grant are as follows:

Line Item	Est. Expenses 1991	Budget 1992	Budget 1993
1. Construction	800	-0-	-0-
2. Scholarship	127,320	25,510	-0-
3. Outreach (+ 2 peacesat)	86,000	50,000	-0-
4. Workshops	79,000	30,000	-0-
5. Administration	4,978	-0-	-0-
6. Regional Travel	45,000	25,000	-0-
7. Consumables	1,000	-0-	-0-
8. Satellite Manager	12,880	13,000	-0-
9. Technician/Casuals	31,600	20,000	-0-
10. Nat. Collab. Trials	40,000	20,000	-0-
11. Grad. Research Assist	122,713	27,000	10,000
12. Coord. NCT	27,412	30,000	-0-
13. Information Specialist	20,000	21,000	-0-
14. Print Shop Manager	26,365	20,000	-0-
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	\$625,068	\$281,510	\$10,000

The following are some notes and comments on the numbered budget items for 1992 and 1993.

2. Scholarships - The amount indicated is sufficient to meet commitments to existing students only. This is a serious issue with respect to the sustainability and development of educational programs at USP Alafua, especially ACTA.

3. Outreach - Funds budgeted for 1992 will cover some operating funds for ALOs, a portion of their salaries, only one of the two regular workshops and limited support for publications. It also covers a prior commitment of \$10,000 for upgrading of vital PEACESAT equipment. The sustainability issue is that several countries must agree to assume responsibility for their ALOs very quickly rather than phasing in as planned.

4. Workshops - Projected funding will cover two workshops if matching grants for participants can be arranged. The absence of funding in the future will reduce opportunities for IRETA initiatives and build dependencies on the interests of donors in using IRETA's facilities and services for regional workshops and training. Appropriate fee structures for services may ameliorate this situation somewhat.

6. Regional Travel - Budgeted funds are for researcher travel associated with the National Collaborative Trials and networking activities in the region.

8. Satellite Manager - Funding is for one year of salary. The current position holder has left for degree studies, and recruitment is underway. See "Core Staff" below for discussion of USP institutional sustainability issues.

9. Technicians/casuals - Funding will allow for support of three technicians and some casuals for the soils lab, crops and the print shop. The research program will need to be projectized and include these positions in the future.

10. National Collaborative Trials - Funds will permit full support of current activities in several countries for only half of one year. This virtually terminates most of the collaborative research program unless selected activities can be fully budgeted by individual countries. The viability of the research program at IRETA is in question unless some research program funds can be generated.

11. Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) - Current support provides for 12 GRAs. The projected budget reduces this to three for 1992 and one for 1993. GRAs are critical to the development of a pipeline of competent regional professionals to staff USP Alafua. This is discussed below as a key institutional sustainability issue.

12. Coordinator of National Collaborative Trials - Funds are for one year of support of this relatively new position. There is a possibility of combining this position with that of the Assistant Director of IRETA for Research in the future.

13. Information Specialist - Funds are for one year only. See below for discussion of key institutional sustainability issues.

14. Printshop Manager - Funds are for less than one year. See keys issues below.

Institutional Sustainability Issues

The management team for the SPRAD project, consisting of representatives of USP, UH and Cornell, have been dealing with institutional sustainability issues since the development of the Project Paper in 1980. The above phase-out plan focuses on the mix of activities which will utilize the remaining financial resources to improve the chances of program and institutional sustainability.

The following are some of the critical institutionally-related sustainability issues as currently perceived. These are presented to help focus on approaches which can be taken both within and outside SPRAD to address them now and in the future.

1. Future support for IRETA

Current USP policy is that all institutes affiliated with USP, including IRETA, must be self-supporting. The result of this for USP Alafua is that neither research nor extension activities are funded directly as part of the normal functions of the University. For the teaching of the agricultural and related sciences, this is a very constraining limitation.

The USP developed IRETA with assistance from SPRAD funded by USAID. This has radically changed the nature and role of the institution in the agricultural and economic development of the region. Today, many staff perform all three functions of teaching, research and outreach. This has widened the audiences and impact of USP. The synergism of activities in these three areas has improved staff productivity. Furthermore, expectations and demand for USP/Alafua services continues to increase.

The probability of institutional sustainability increases if IRETA is perceived as a unit of USP. The funding of core positions and related support is key to that perception. In fact, IRETA has a very high potential of being a "magnet" for external financial support for agricultural research and outreach activities in the region.

The USP management is currently considering support for key IRETA positions, either as identified with IRETA or with USP/Alafua and legitimized to focus on research and outreach activities. These may include: the Director of IRETA (currently supported by USP), the Associate Director for Research, the Agricultural Information Officer, the Satellite Manager, the AIN Information Specialist and the Print Shop Manager (or some recombination of these).

The issue is whether the USP Governing Council (composed primarily of representatives of Ministries of Education) will consider a separate policy on institutes for USP/Alafua. One possibility is for them to simply incorporate and provide core funding for research and outreach along with teaching, and let USP/Alafua define the appropriate mechanisms for using the resources. Without some mechanism for giving official status to research and outreach, donor and other external agency funding support to USP/Alafua may be restrained.

2. Institutionalization of ALOs

Recognizing that USP/Alafua needs to serve the region's agricultural audiences efficiently, SPRAD support was used to create a system of linkage between the resources at USP/Alafua and the audiences represented by the Departments/Ministries of the countries served by the USP. The system consists of Agricultural Liaison Officers (ALOs), communications mechanisms, training, and documentation and search support.

Currently, the ALOs are predominately supported (including salaries) by USP/Alafua through SPRAD. Also, they are placed in variable positions depending how they are viewed by their respective departments. Attempts are being made to have countries place them on their payrolls. The willingness to do so has as much to do with their current integration into their departments as it does with perceptions of their value.

SPRAD is currently funding a study of the function of information gathering and dissemination in support of agriculture in several countries in the South Pacific (Currie). The study is looking at ways in which countries can establish positions/units to strengthen research/extension/information linkages. When completed in mid-1991, it is anticipated that this study will provide useful information for country-level and USP planning the future role and support for ALOs.

The Regional Advisory Board (RAB) should be encouraged to review this report and to stimulate its respective governments to maintain an effective linkage with USP/Alafua as a knowledge source. With this system in effect, it can also serve as a mechanism for prioritizing regional problems and influencing the research agenda. USP/Alafua will need to maintain the information sources, communication mechanisms and the means to provide both process and substantive training for the ALOs.

3. Organization of research relationships

USP/Alafua has limited but regionally significant facilities and capability for agricultural research. Several external agencies have provided facilities and organized research programs at Alafua in recent years. Alafua staff are increasingly involved with research. This is, in part, stimulated by the recent incorporation of post-graduate, research-oriented degree programs and the SPRAD funding of graduate research assistants at USP/Alafua.

The comparative advantage of USP/Alafua in agricultural research is to function in the applied and adaptive research mode. In order to serve the region, the development of working

relationships with country programs is essential. This prompted the development of the National Collaborative Research Trials program within IRETA. The further development and maintenance of this program is key to the sustainability of the research function at USP/Alafua.

Issues that need to be addressed relate to: (1) the appropriate mix of linkages with the wide variation of research capabilities in the region; (2) the process for setting the collaborative research agenda for IRETA; (3) linkages with the ALO network in both defining problems and diffusing information; and (4) collaborative funding mechanisms for future activities.

4. Future support for outreach resources/services

SPRAD and CTA have facilitated the development of significant regional resources for accessing information relevant to agricultural development in the region. The Alafua Library, a prime educational resource, includes the Agricultural Information Network (AIN) as a specialized mechanism for serving the region. The link of AIN to the ALOs facilitates its institutionalization.

Another key outreach area is the training program of IRETA. This program and the use of the IRETA facilities by other agricultural development agencies has been growing rapidly and appears to be meeting real regional needs. Support for training can come partially from user fees (agricultural programs only), but some internal resources are necessary if IRETA is to remain pro-active and responsive to regionally perceived needs.

Other resources include the satellite system, print-shop and various publications (including the future possibility of an expanded regional agricultural journal). All of these are used by the ALO network as well as a basis for outreach in the region. They are, therefore, critical to the functioning of USP/Alafua as a regional institution.

The critical issue now is future USP support for key positions outlined above in Item 1. Additional issues relate to the arrangements that can be made to improve the satellite capabilities which have recently deteriorated. Increased user fees and charges may have to be assessed for training and printing/publications to maintain their sustainability.

5. Recruitment, regionalization and retention of staff

SPRAD has made a significant investment in staff development at USP/Alafua, especially through the US degree training of several regional professionals. At the beginning of the project, there were very few regional staff at Alafua. Early problems of

identifying regional persons for training were dealt with by filling a pipeline of potential candidates through the establishment of GRAs. This mechanism has produced some excellent candidates for training, but the USP has yet to develop a dependable mechanism for hiring them upon return to the region.

The viability/sustainability of USP/Alafua will be greatly improved if it is able to recruit and retain highly qualified regional staff. These are the professionals who have an understanding of and potential commitment to the region. If given an adequate professional environment and remuneration package, they can be expected to build long-term, relevant agricultural education and research programs.

It is recommended that USP earmark positions now filled by contract with non-regional staff for qualified regionals at contract termination. Three of the four regional persons currently in SPRAD degree programs at UH could be hired by USP when such positions become available. (One of the degree students already is a staff member.) The sustainability of USP/Alafua is, in part, dependent on building up the percentage of regional, committed staff.

Salaries, amenities and facilities also need to be addressed to improve the chances of staff retention. The maintenance of a critical mass of GRAs (8-12) will permit opportunities to identify candidates for advanced degree training and future employment by USP/Alafua.

6. Diploma/degree programs for targeted groups

SPRAD has assisted in the development of educational programs for targeted groups. In the case of vocational agricultural teachers in the region, the ACTA (certificate) program has enabled teachers to improve their educational programs. In some countries, the ACTA program has been so institutionalized that vo-ag teachers can only be promoted if they take the ACTA program or other advanced training.

USP has the opportunity to develop other targeted programs for the region. Under active discussion now is such a program for agricultural extension workers in the region. If such a program is developed, it too needs to consider how it will be received by civil service agencies for advancement.

The future viability of USP/Alafua will be improved if it can find ways to institutionalize the basis for its educational programs in the countries in the region.

Future Investment Opportunities

The institution building task at USP/Alafua is at a critical stage. Several institutional components have been put in place (reference page 1) and are still maturing, while others are at very early stages of development (for example marketing research and extension). The two-year, no-cost extension for SPRAD has a very limited scope in providing for completion of degree training for five persons and about one-half year of grant support to USP/Alafua.

External support for USP/Alafua, and specifically IRETA, is essential for the next several years. The following are some areas which will strengthen the delivery capability and responsiveness of the institution to serve the agricultural development needs of the region, in general, and the development of future human infrastructure, in particular. Some of these areas are particularly relevant to USAID's new Commercial Agriculture Development (CAD) and Market Access and Regional Competitiveness (MARC) initiatives.

1. Information/Communications Center

USP/Alafua has the information resources, basic infrastructure and systems and most of the trained human resources to serve the agricultural information needs of the region. USP has approved a plan for the development of an information/communications center which would facilitate organization and delivery efficiency. The Center would contain the Library, AIN system, satellite facilities, printing and publication handling facilities, and other communications support. External funding is being sought by USP for a building, some equipment up-dating and some training of staff. USP has given preliminary indication of its willingness to support basic staff costs. If the search for building funds is successful, Alafua's ability to serve the information and communication needs of the region will be greatly improved. In the meantime however, other support is still needed to underwrite information services and materials development, and this should be of special concern to USAID's CAD project.

2. Training Capacity

IRETA has developed the capacity for conducting regional training. Funding has recently been acquired for the expansion of the IRETA living quarters and training rooms. Some modest assistance would improve the number and capability of staff to develop training activities on a demand basis. The support of commercial agriculture will require a range of training activities relating to marketing analysis, quarantine procedures,

packing and grading, and agribusiness management. Every effort should be made to capitalize on the past investment made in IRETA for training.

3. Analytical Support

Future agricultural development will require continuous capability for analysis at all levels. Some areas for which support is needed at USP/Alafua include: (1) soil, tissue, and water quality analysis for production purposes and water pollution control; (2) insect and disease analysis for both production and marketing; (3) market analysis for determining viability of export and local marketing of diversified crops and products; and (4) food safety analysis for new products development and marketing.

4. Staff and Program Development

The advent of new programs to expand production and marketing of horticultural and other high-value, commercial crops in the region will require educational and training programs for regional staff at USP/Alafua and in the countries of the region. The development of market oriented education and training programs, and applied research on important crops can be an important regional component of CAD and MARC, supported at USP Alafua by USAID.

In general, IRETA is an institution worthy of continued support to meet regional need to improve agriculture and the incomes of the agricultural producers and business people in the region.

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