

SEAWEED FARMING IN KIRIBATI: THE 7th TRAINING AND EXTENSION WORKSHOP

The European Union is supporting the seaweed industry in Kiribati through a newly launched four-year Support to Seaweed Industry Project (SSIP). Cottonii seaweed (*Kappaphycus alvarezii*) has successfully been produced over the past 10 years in 12 different atolls within Kiribati, from the far north to the far south of the Gilbert group and in the northern Line Islands. The objective of the SSIP is to increase rural household incomes by supporting the institutional strengthening of the Atoll Seaweed Company Ltd. (ASC) and providing comprehensive research and development services.

ASC is based in Tarawa and buys dry product from its outer island agents, bails it and exports it overseas for processing. The agents on the outer islands are responsible for extension and development work as well as buying sun dried cottonii from the farmers prior shipping to Tarawa.

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The 7th National Training and Extension Workshop was jointly organised between 20 and 26 October 2002 by ASC staff, Océanic Développement (OD) technical advisers and VSO volunteers, targeting the outer island agents from the Gilbert group. A total of eight agents, four fisheries assistants and two top farmers were invited to attend the course. The training aims of the workshop were to improve the role of the agents in farm site selection and villagers' awareness, and implementing the latest farming principles along with environmental conditions.

Theoretical, accounting and quality control sessions were held at ASC in Tarawa, while practical sessions were held in Abaiang, where seaweed is produced. Most sessions were chaired by ASC technical staff as

well as Dr David Luxton, cottonii specialist and OD aquaculture adviser. Agents were taught or refreshed about seedling selection, farm design, plot construction, farm economics and management, and post harvest handling. Evening sessions were open discussions on various topics such as equipment maintenance or outer island budgeting. The SPC video "Grow seaweed, Grow your own money" was also presented, generating great enthusiasm from outer island agents and Abaiang villagers.

Participants were acknowledged by the Minister of Natural Resource and Development in an eventful closing ceremony held on Abaiang. The success of the workshop will be propagated by each outer island agents or fisheries assistant during the SSIP and after, on its own island. With the current local and international support provided on production sites, Kiribati is likely to remain an example for cottonii aquaculture in the region.

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Agents, fisheries assistants farmers and technical assistants: the workshop team in front of the island station, in Abaiang.



Tealoe Seese, ASC Extension Officer, exposing the latest farming activity situation in Abemama, during the opening of the workshop

In ASC warehouse, practicing quality control and post harvest maintenance sessions



In the Mwaneaba workshop, participants received training on the various factors affecting the growth of the seaweed



The agents from Maiana, Tabiteuea and Abemama practicing environmental monitoring

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