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**PAPER 4:  
THE ROLE OF FARMER ORGANISATIONS IN TROPICAL FRUIT RESEARCH AND  
DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDY OF NATURE'S WAY COOPERATIVE IN FIJI**

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**ABSTRACT**

Farmer Organisations (FOs), once a rarity in the Pacific, are emerging as key players in the agriculture sector, making valuable contributions to the livelihoods of smallholder farmers through such areas as agricultural extension, input supply, access to markets and agricultural research. FOs involved in agricultural research utilise a decentralised research model which has proven to be more efficient and effective at meeting their specific needs than the traditional centralised research station model found across the Pacific. Following a number of low output years, Nature's Way Cooperative (NWC) realised that there was a need to assist their farmer/exporter members in addressing a number of the bottlenecks affecting the supply of produce for export. NWC concluded that if they did not help address these issues the quarantine treatment business would be at serious risk. In 2009 the NWC Research and Extension Service became involved in implementation of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) – funded Fiji Papaya Project and later the ACIAR funded Pacific Breadfruit Project. Through a partnership approach, NWC has fostered research relationships with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji and the Pacific Community.

NWC works directly with its member farmers and exporters for all applied research work and has achieved a number of major successes using this model including: (1) Papaya: (a) Establishment of a certified seed producer's scheme for Fiji Red Papaya based on research findings. (b) Investment in a commercial hot water dipping treatment available to Fiji papaya exporters through NWC. (c) Encouraged commercial investment at the farm and exporter level in organic papaya production based on research findings and economic analysis. (d) Development of technologies supporting sea freight of papaya from Fiji to New Zealand. Research findings indicate a 50% saving in freight costs with no reduction in fruit quality; (2) Breadfruit (a) A package of best practices for mass propagation of breadfruit using various methods including: root suckers, marcotting and tissue culture. (b) Longterm trials established evaluating performance of trees derived from different propagation types. (c) Investment at the farm level in commercial orchards. (d) Developing intercropping systems with breadfruit.

**Keywords:** farmer organisation, de-centralised research, papaya, breadfruit