

SROS Media Release  
28<sup>th</sup> June 2013



FAALAPOTOPOTOGA O SUESUEGA FAASAIENISI A SAMOA

## SROS Scientists trained on New Test Methods!



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The Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa is currently hosting trainer Geoff Miles from the Cawthron Institute, a leading scientific and research organisation based in Nelson, New Zealand.

A Cawthron Institute Scientific Officer, Geoff is in Apia for three weeks working with staff to enhance the capacity of SROS staff to delivery new test methods.

“This is a great project to be involved with” says Geoff. “The staffs at SROS are enthusiastic and eager to learn and we are enjoying working together. We have made some huge steps in improving the testing capability of SROS to enable them to provide additional services to local industry and exporters.”

The three week training program is one of several activities using Cawthron to build SROS skills and capacity and is funded by the AusAID Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA) program. PHAMA is a regional aid program working with Pacific Island Countries to develop government and industry skills and capacity to meet the product quality standards of importing countries.

The national steering committee called the Market Access Working Group (MAWG) composed of representatives from MAF, MCIL, the AG’s Office and SROS, as well as representatives from NGO’s and farmers, realised the need for developing industry skills and that SROS is the appropriate organisation to provide this.

SROS Chief Executive Officer Tilafono Leatiogie David Hunter says that the SROS mandate is to add value to products and services in the export industries by providing certified food safety and quality standards both locally and for importing countries.

“We appreciate our relationship with both PHAMA and the Cawthron Institute and this training opportunity emphasizes the fact that we are serious about the services we provide” he says.

Coming from winter temperatures in Nelson New Zealand Geoff is enjoying his first visit to Samoa.

“It is great to be able to share expertise and see the staff take that understanding onboard and go with it,” he says.

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The SROS Quality Manager Kuinimeri Asora Finau is working with Geoff to ensure that the training and testing facilitation sessions run smoothly.

“We are learning so much” Kuinimeri says. “Already Geoff has picked up on things that we need to change. We are learning to work more smartly and efficiently especially given the limited resources we have.”

SROS is Samoa’s accredited Competent Authority to test and certify food safety and quality standards. Much of the work undertaken in the laboratory provides diagnostic services to determine compliance with food quality and/ or food safety services.

CEO Tilafono Leatiogie David Hunter says “Under the PHAMA programme we are working to extend the scope of our accredited testing and build expertise to satisfy the accrediting requirements. We would like to ensure that we have the capacity to answer the needs of those who require our services, both primary producers and exporters.”

“Everything has to be cost effective and we see the development of our testing capacity as a revenue generator for SROS,” Kuinimeri says. “Training is a real need. With our existing clients we would like to improve our turnaround time so that our analytical services are really effective.”

For Geoff Miles, providing the training at the SROS laboratory is an opportunity to contribute to the ability of the available diagnostic services to meet the requirements of an expanding export sector. “There is further work to do” he says. “Cawthron Institute has a pre-existing relationship with SROS and this will continue with ongoing mentoring and support.”

In terms of a vision for the future development of the services offered by SROS, CEO Tilafono Leatiogie David Hunter feels that it is important to find the right research partners for collaborative work.

The laboratory already has IANZ accreditation, which involved a comprehensive assessment of the lab against international standard ISO1702. The current training will look to setup and validate new methods for which the lab will seek accreditation later in the year.

The three weeks training period will finish at the end of June when Geoff will return to the Cawthron Institute in Nelson.