



VANILLA

Farming Insights



MORDI Tonga Trust and MDF recently conducted a joint comprehensive survey of vanilla farmers in Tonga to gain insights into their farming and selling practices. The survey aimed to identify constraints and opportunities within the market system from the farmers' perspectives.

In addition to questions about vanilla cultivation & commercial behaviours, the survey also explored the cultivation of other main crops, the roles of men and women in vanilla farming (with a focus on women's economic empowerment), and the impacts of natural disasters, particularly those induced by climate change, on their farming and livelihoods.

The following sections detail the responses received from the farmers.



KEY FINDINGS

58% of farmers have **↓** **1 ACRE** plantation or less of vanilla

It costs **45%** farmers between **T\$100-1,000** to plant an acre

It costs **41%** farmers more than **T\$1,000** to plant an acre

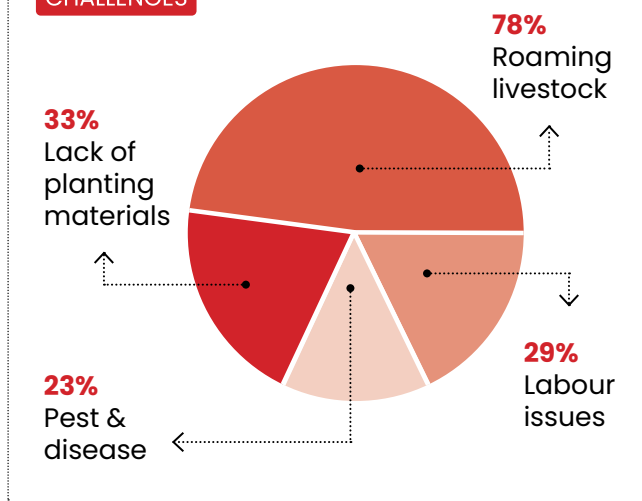
50% of farmers only yield **100kg or less of green beans per acre per harvest.**

83% of **Tongatapu** farmers produce more than **200KG PER ACRE**
63% of **Vava'u** farmers produce less than **50KG PER ACRE**

75% of farmers are only able to **sell less than 20kg** of the beans produced.

24% of farmers are only able to **sell 6-10kg** of the beans produced.

CHALLENGES



70% of vanilla farmers are affected by changing weather patterns.

The impacts include:

- 53%** Low flowering
- 52%** Lower quality of harvests
- 52%** Lower yields
- 50%** Delayed seasons

Natural disasters have **affected more than 50%** of farmers.

The impacts include changes: **52%** selection, timing & spacing of planting support trees

57% vanilla cuttings

46% timing of looping, tipping & pollination

36% timing & selection of bean harvesting





51% Intend to **expand** their vanilla cultivation

Reasons include:



18% Favourable prices



17% Earn good money

What would encourage farmers to plant more vanilla?



86% Would like a stable market



35% Would like extension support



18% Would like a stable price



49% Do not want to expand



Reasons include:

9% They are getting older

10% They have limited land

28% Only manage the current size of plot



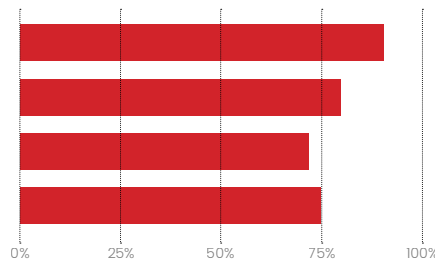
The largest involvement of women are in:

91% Pollination

80% Picking

72% Drying

75% Selling



COMMON PRACTICES



When planting support trees:

- 13%** plant when moon is in waxing gibbous phase
- 21%** plant 1-2 metres apart
- 18%** plant 3-6 metres apart
- 20%** choose young, big, healthy and strong fig branches
- 30%** choose newly growing fig branches



when planting vanilla cuttings:

- 54%** choose vanilla cuttings which are healthy and disease free, big and long and green
- 20%** choose cuttings which are mature and long 1-2 metres
- 16%** choose cuttings once they produce a flower
- 35%** plant 1 cutting per spot
- 12%** plant 2 cuttings per spot



Farmers have **gained vanilla farming knowledge** from many sources. Most common sources are:

- » **87%** Other farmers
- » **58%** Private company
- » **73%** Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests
- » **83%** NGO - prominent source of knowledge on Tongatapu



72% of farmers received formal training at least in the last 3 years

75% of the farmers had changed at least one of the following practices due to training:

- » site selection
- » planting of support trees or vanilla cuttings
- » looping
- » tipping
- » pollination
- » storage
- » harvesting time & selection
- » pest & disease control measures

58% farmers said this resulted in a 25% to 50% yield increase



Most important issues that farmers consider when selecting sites are:

- » **27%** good sunlight exposure
- » **9%** clear and free from falling trees and debris
- » **9%** own or have authority over the site
- » **5%** close and easy to manage