

seed savers

Work Papers for the one-hour documentary, "Our Seeds" made by The Seed Savers' Network founders, Michel and Jude Fanton.

This discussion can be lead by any person interested in community development, sustainable agriculture, or just plain good eating..

First session

Ask for feedback immediately on the significance of this film - how they felt, what they thought the messages were. Did they feel that the message was relevant to their lives? Would it translate to the lives of others in other countries?

Did they make any decisions? What were they? Anything else they would have liked to see in the film?

What did you learn that you did not know before? Would you explain what you thought before?

Second session

Re-play the film chapter by chapter, stopping at the end of each to discuss some or all of the questions below. Each time ask for their response, verbal and/ or written.

1. Introduction

In Melanesia most food crops are propagated by cuttings or tubers. Think of such food crops and then others by seeds in your tribe / island. List them or just say their names.

2. Food from our ancestors

Is anyone still trading between the coast and the mountains on a swap basis? Trading without money can be a good way when there is no cash around. In other countries people are also exchanging goods. Do you have any example of that in your island or village?

3. Passing on the seeds

Do you have any current examples or do you remember traditional practices in your village where food plants are used in ceremonies or traditions e.g., birth, marriage, etc.

What about where knowledge about foods is passed on to the younger generations?

4. Big changes coming

Have you observed any use of chemical agriculture in your islands or the mainland?

Have you tried to save the seed of hybrid/ F1 maize or other crops? What happened?

Do you think keeping local variety is important to your culture and why is it?

5. Vanishing treasures

Do you think that this kind of loss could happen in your village/situation?

Can you think of varieties of bananas, yams, sweet potato or taro not seen any more?

Can you tell us what would happen if your tribal/language group would lose such a variety? Would that change any of your ceremonies at all? Could you substitute another variety?

What would happen when you language group cannot find a special type of wild forest food? Do you have any type of ritual ceremonies that need certain wild foods or plants?

6. Seeds that need poison

Does this ring a bell? How?

Have you noticed when hybrid seeds are grown that sprays have to be used because of insect or fungal damage?

7. Globalised poor food

Can you give example of this in your tribe?

How would you raise income from processing your own food and beverages?

How would you sell them?

8. Rice comes in different qualities

Were you surprised that there are different varieties of rice when only one is available in the shops?

Can you see a similar pattern in Melanesia with the replacement of local food by imported food?

Do you see a change in the consumption of shop food with the higher costs of transport?

9. Health problems with poor food

Who thinks that there is chicken, beef or prawns in packet noodles? Answer: None, just chemical flavours that taste like the picture on the packet.

Do you see a relationship between going less to the bush gardens and health? In which ways?

10. Bring back the good food

Do you have particular types of food plants and food that are use for specific ceremonies?

What are the traditional practices in your village/region that are saving diversity?

Are any of these varieties used for a special kind of food preparation?

11. Traditional varieties are better

What colourful varieties can you name?

Do you find that traditional varieties have more flavour, are more filling or have other superior qualities?

12. Growing mixed gardens

What sort of plants do you grow for extremes of climate?

13. Sharing keep us strong:

Do you notice a difference in the practice of "sharing food" between people in urban areas such as Honiara, Port Vila and Port Moresby) and those living in villages?

14. The return of the local seed

What surprises you about commercial varieties?

Has anyone seen what Dr Anand Pereira describes about modern varieties of cash crops versus traditional?

15. Joining the seed keepers

What are the traditional ways of spreading diversity in your community?

Do you think that any of the seed groups in India you have seen are applicable to your situation? Which ones and how?

16. Becoming a seed keeper

Do you have examples in your community of people who conserve a diversity of food crops?

17. Celebrating the seed keepers:

What are you inspired to do to keep your culture?

What questions have not been covered that are specific to your culture?

Attention presenters: we would be grateful if you would send us questions from the audience so they can be included in the next work papers for others to benefit.

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Trailer and film clips at www.seedsavers.net. DVDs are available online for AUD\$24 within Australia, AUD\$31 outside. Discounted to AUD\$4 when you buy a copy of "The Seed Savers' Handbook".