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Assessment of organic certification in the ginger value chain in Fiji

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CBI	Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFOAM	International Foundation for Organic Agriculture Movement
ITC	International Trade Centre
NDP	National Development Plan
PGS	Participatory Guarantee System
PoetCom	Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPC	Pacific Community
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
UNCTAD	United Nations Trade and Development
UNFSS	United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards
VSS	Voluntary Sustainability Standards

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This *assessment of organic certification in the ginger value chain in Fiji* is part of the **Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group** (MSG) project,[1] referred to as the MSG Green Trade Project. Conducted by the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the MSG Secretariat,[2] the objective of the MSG Green Trade Project is to identify and strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade promotion and the Sustainable Development Strategies (SDS) of MSG member States – Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu – in a regionally collaborative manner.

This report was prepared jointly by UNCTAD and the MSG Secretariat, with the support of the Government of Fiji. It is an output for Fiji of Phase 1 of the project. Phase 1 comprises all national activities to identify potential synergistic linkages and to promote green trade. The activities under Phase 1 included:

1) Organizing a national workshop in Fiji.

2) Collecting and publishing Non-Tariff Measures (NTM) data for Fiji.

3) Publishing a guide for exporting ginger from Fiji.

4) Synergistic Linkages between Green Trade and Sustainable Development in Fiji

The Phase 1 activities and reports laid the foundation for Phase 2, which entailed the creation of a *Subregional Action Plan for Green Trade Promotion* at the MSG level.

[1] The project website and project document can be accessed at: https://unctad.org/project/green-trade-sustainable-development-pacific-small-island-developing-states-melanesian

[2] For more information, see: https://msgsec.info/about-msg/

Executive summary

This report provides an **analysis of the ginger value chain in Fiji, with a focus on the potential and challenges of organic certification**. The report examines the status of organic certification in the sector, assesses the perceptions of key stakeholders, and identifies opportunities in the organic ginger market. The findings are based on analysis, stakeholder surveys, and expert interviews.

Fiji's agricultural sector remains a significant share of the national economy, contributing 14.5 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2021. Within this sector, **ginger has been a key export product since the mid-1980s.** Fiji exports ginger to several international markets, including Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, and the European Union. The global demand for organic products, particularly in the spice market, presents an opportunity for Fiji to enhance its organic ginger exports. Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) can provide access to high-value markets, promoting sustainable agricultural practices and benefiting Fiji's economy.

The report highlights the **growing interest among stakeholders in obtaining organic certification**, driven by the potential for higher market access and improved product quality. However, significant **challenges remain. These include the high costs of certification**, the time and complexity involved in meeting certification requirements, and a lack of technical knowledge among small-scale farmers. There is also a **discrepancy between the expectations of non-certified stakeholders and the actual benefits realized by those who have already achieved certification**, particularly concerning price premiums for organic products.

Despite these barriers, organic certification presents opportunities. Participatory guarantee system (PGS) certification offers a more accessible pathway for small farmers to enter organic markets, especially in unregulated markets such as Australia and New Zealand. The Fijian government, through its **National Development Plan (NDP), supports the growth of organic farming**, recognizing its potential to contribute to sustainable economic development and diversify the country's export base.

Key policy recommendations from the report include:

1. **Develop a national multi-stakeholder body for organic ginger certification**

   This body would coordinate efforts, promote collaboration among stakeholders, and provide training and information sharing to support organic certification.

2. **Reduce barriers to obtaining and maintaining organic certification**

   Measures include offering subsidies for certification costs, improving access to auditors, and providing training materials to simplify compliance for farmers.

1. Introduction

Fiji has a diverse agricultural sector that plays a vital role in the country's economy. The agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector is the third largest in terms of contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP), estimated at 14.5 per cent in 2021.[3] Furthermore, there is potential for the sector to develop niche and organic products for high-value exports. The agricultural sector could create synergies with the tourism industry through initiatives like promoting agritourism and branding hotels and restaurants that source local food. The high proportion of subsistence farming makes this sector indispensable for the country's food security (FAO, 2020a).

Fiji's 20-Year National Development Plan (NDP) identifies non-sugar agriculture as a development area, with a focus on "competitive, sustainable and value-adding agriculture" (Ministry of Economy, 2017). The NDP further emphasizes that "organic farming practices will be promoted, and the production of traditional crops and niche agricultural and fisheries products will be pursued".

Within the non-sugar agricultural sector, Fiji's ginger sector is important and growing with major export destinations to neighbouring Australia and New Zealand, as well as the United States of America and the European Union. Fiji started producing ginger around the 1950s and by the mid-1980s ginger had become its second agricultural export product after sugar (Sharma et al., 2021). Ginger has remained in the top five exported fresh/chilled agricultural commodities since then (Fiji Agriculture and Rural Statistics Unit, n/d).

Ginger's versatility and demand in various forms, such as powder, oil, and oleoresin,[4] make it a valuable export crop. Additionally, consumer interest in sustainable and health-related products is growing in the international market. In 2021, the global organic spice market was valued at US$ 18.5 billion and is projected to reach nearly US$ 21.75 billion by 2026 (CBI, 2022). Fiji's ginger, along with turmeric and cumin seeds, is among Fiji's most exported organic-certified spices.

However, a significant amount of ginger in Fiji is not certified. Organic certification by Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) could provide Fiji with an opportunity to increase the production and export of organic ginger, as it enhances the credibility of a product's organic claims to buyers. Additionally, VSS adoption and certification process often involve capacity building and knowledge sharing.

This report examines the current state of the ginger value chain in Fiji and assesses stakeholders' perceptions of market opportunities and sustainability benefits for organically certified ginger. Drawing on analysis, a survey of stakeholders, and interviews with experts, this report:

- Describes the structure of the ginger value chain and its stakeholders.
- Investigates stakeholders' perceptions of organic certification within the ginger value chain.
- Explores the opportunities and challenges associated with organic certification of ginger.
- Identifies ways to leverage organic certification to capitalise on market opportunities and benefit farmers.

This report is structured as follows: Section 2 describes the evolution of the ginger sector in Fiji, outlining the different stages of the value chain for various ginger products and identifying the stakeholders involved. Section 3 provides a brief background on VSS, including the organic VSS in Fiji. Section 4 investigates the perception of stakeholders regarding organic certification in the ginger sector in Fiji. Section 5 explores both the opportunities and challenges associated with organic certification of ginger. Section 6 concludes by identifying two policy recommendations that provide ways to leverage organic certification to capitalise on market opportunities and benefit farmers.

[3] Data from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=FJ

[4] Oleoresins are resin-like viscous materials, which result when a spice is extracted with a hydrocarbon solvent.

2. The ginger sector in Fiji

2.1. Ginger production and trade

Ginger is native to South-East Asia but it is now widely farmed in Africa, East Asia, South Asia, and the Caribbean. India is the largest producer, with a production of 2,225,000 tonnes in 2021 (Bhutia et al., 2022).[5] Ginger takes around three to ten months from seeding to harvesting. Depending on its maturity, fresh ginger is termed young ginger if it is harvested at three to seven months or mature ginger when harvested at eight to ten months. Ginger production is labour- and capital-intensive due to its susceptibility to pests and diseases, both in the field and during the post-harvest period. (Sharma et al., 2021; National Agriculture Advisory Services, n/d).

White ginger and pink ginger are the two varieties of ginger grown in Fiji (Fiji Ginger Farmers Association, n/d). Ginger is planted in October, spring in Fiji, and harvested between July, late winter, for young ginger and November, the following year, for mature ginger.

According to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, value added by cultivating ginger was FJD 7,559,589 in 2019 and FJD 8,534,053 in 2020, contributing 0.7 per cent to the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector for both years (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2022b). Table 1 illustrates the growth in the production of raw ginger in Fiji.

Table 1. Production data of ginger (raw) in Fiji 2013-2022

Year	Area (ha)	Yield (kg/ha)	Production (tonnes)
2013	171	34 635	5 908
2014	161	34 524	5 553
2015	244	25 000	6 109
2016	262	25 000	6 548
2017	303	25 000	7 585
2018	395	25 048	9 894
2019	313	30 000	9 398
2020	456	25 000	11 409
2021	553	25 000	13 815
2022	563	25 400	14 290

Source: UNCTAD, based on FAO (n.d.) and Fiji Bureau of Statistics (2022).

Note: Production value may differ slightly from (Area*Yield)/1000 due to rounding.

Figure 1 illustrates Fiji's ginger exports to its major markets from 2020 to 2022. During this period, the total export value increased steadily, reaching approximately FJD 11.1 million in 2020, FJD 13 million in 2021, and FJD 16.6 million in 2022 (MOA, 2023). Exported ginger products include crushed or ground ginger; ginger preserved in brine; fresh young ginger; other ginger including fresh mature ginger; ginger preserved by sugar, which includes crystalized and candied ginger; and gingerbread. **Over half the total value of exports came from ginger preserved by sugar.[6] The main export markets – Australia, Netherlands, the United States of America, Germany and New Zealand are unchanged since 2020, although the order of importance has changed.**[7] Fiji is allowed to export

The total export value of ginger increased steadily, reaching approximately FJD 11.1 million in 2020, FJD 13 million in 2021, and FJD 16.6 million in 2022.

[5] As of latest data from FAOSTAT: https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/QCL

[6] The export value share of ginger preserved by sugar out of total ginger products was 63 per cent, 54 per cent and 58 per cent in 2020, 2021 and 2022 respectively.

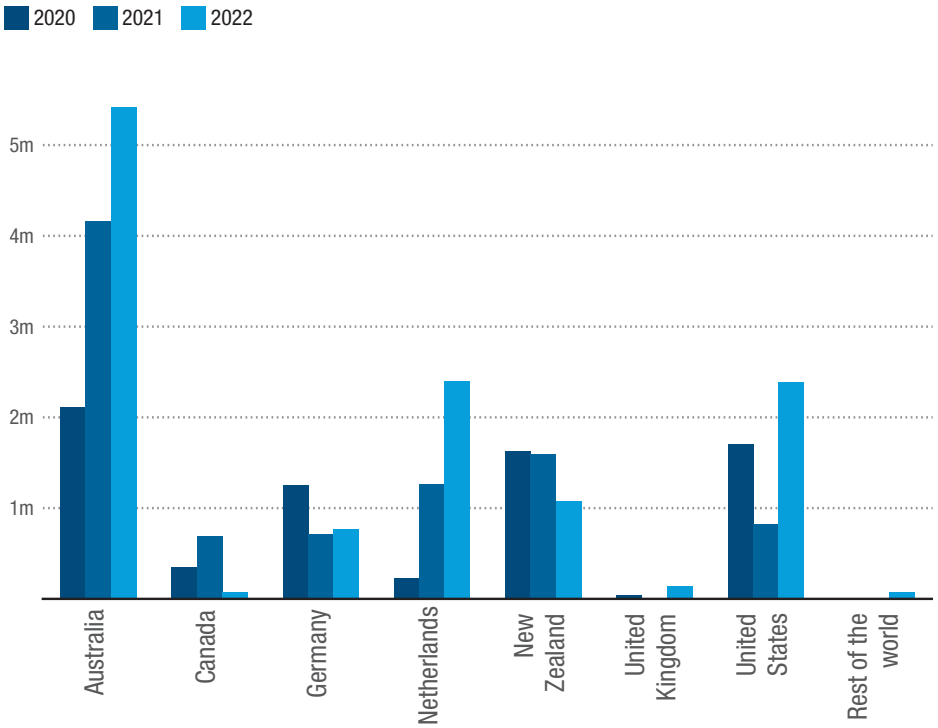
[7] Most of the ginger imported by Netherlands and Germany was reexported and distributed across the European Union.

fresh mature ginger to Australia for further processing, subject to specific import regulations, as well as sugar-preserved, brine-preserved, and powdered ginger (Sharma et al., 2021; Sun Fiji, 2016; Biosecurity Australia, 2007). The rapid growth in exports to Australia is accounted for by growth in the export of fresh young ginger, which the Fijian government has designated as a high-priority commodity to access Australian markets. Organic ginger is also gaining importance as a high-value commodity. The agriculture ministry and the trade ministry have together identified organic ginger as a product with a high potential for growth in production and export, and are actively supporting the sector (Kate, 2017).

Figure 1

Growing ginger exports

Fijian exports of ginger by market (2020-2022, all types, in FJD millions)



Source: UNCTAD, based on data provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways (MOA) in 2023.
Note: The values provided include fresh ginger, both young and mature, as well as "ginger preserved by sugar".

Box 1
Fiji's economic structure and social development

Fiji is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) in the Pacific region with a population of 930,000 as of 2022, of which 44 per cent reside in rural areas (UNCTAD, 2024; Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018). It is an archipelago of approximately 332 islands—110 of which are inhabited—with a total land area of 18,300 square kilometres and a maritime zone of 1.3 million square kilometres. The country has abundant natural resources, including forests, minerals, and fish. Fiji's territory is primarily made up of mountainous islands of volcanic origin, with most of the population concentrated on the two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. Agricultural land covers an estimated 311,600 hectares, representing around 17 per cent of the country's total land area (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

In structural terms, Fiji features an advanced services sector led by tourism industry, a niche industry sector and an agricultural sector with strong potential (World Bank, 2024). With a GDP per capita of US$ 5,804, the World Bank (2024) classifies Fiji as an upper-middle-income country. However, according to a household income and expenditure survey conducted by the government of Fiji in 2019-2020, an estimated 24 per cent of the Fijian population lived in poverty. However, income poverty has been on a declining trend since 2008 (Ministry of Economy, 2017; Fiji Bureau of Statistics, n/d).

Agriculture is an important pillar of the Fijian economy, representing nearly 30 per cent of employment and 9.3 per cent of GDP (FAO, 2022). The sector is a mix of commercial and subsistence farming, with the latter accounting for around 80 per cent of the food supply in the country (FAO, 2020a). The COVID-19 pandemic led to increased subsistence farming practices (FijiTimes, 2021; Randin, 2020; IFAD, 2023), emphasizing the importance of Pacific agriculture in food security, economic development and domestic food systems resilience.

Fiji is highly susceptible to natural disasters, particularly cyclones, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, and drought. Fiji has extremely high exposure to tropical cyclones, costing around 5 per cent of its GDP annually. These are further expected to be affected by climate change, the risks of which are currently poorly understood (World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal, n/d). For example, Fiji's agriculture sector suffered losses estimated at US$ 146.5 million, with 75 per cent crop damage during Tropical Cyclone Yasa in 2020 (The Fijian Government, n/d). In addition, the Fiji National Disaster Management Office has indicated that natural disasters are one of the leading causes of food insecurity (Fiji Government, 2021).

Fiji's 5-Year & 20-year NDP launched in 2017 highlights the country's strategies and aims to achieve development goals under a vision of "Transforming Fiji". It addresses many cross-cutting themes such as climate change, green growth, the environment, gender equality, disability and governance across the various sections recognising the integrated nature of development (Republic of Fiji, 2019; Ministry of Economy, 2017).

2.2. Activities in the ginger supply chain

The set of activities in the supply chain for ginger, from raw ginger harvested at the farm to final products sold to consumers, is shown in Figure 2 below. Value is added to the product at each stage.

2.2.1 Farming and harvesting

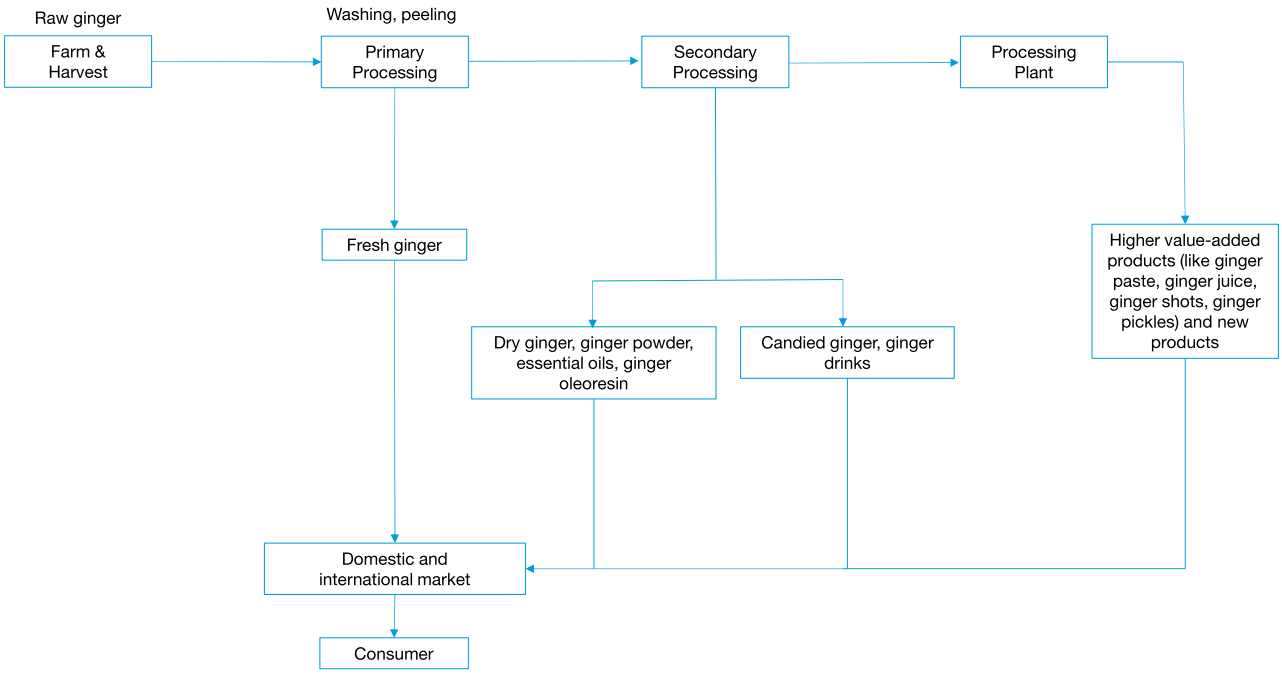
For ginger farming, the land is prepared at least one month before planting as it allows the sun to kill most of the pathogens in the soil. Further, good seedlings are selected for plantation and treated to kill pathogens (Fiji Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, 2014). This is followed by planting, weed control, and fertilising. Then the ginger is allowed to grow bigger in size, which is called hilling, and it encourages the upward growth of ginger. Lastly, ginger is harvested anytime between three to ten months. The price per kilo is highest when ginger is harvested at three months old, but the yields are low (Fiji Ginger Farmers Association, n/d). In Fiji, most of the land preparation, cultivation, and harvesting take place by hand (AECOM in Australia and New Zealand, 2016).

Fiji faces several challenges in farming and harvesting ginger (National Agriculture Advisory Services, n/d; Sharma et al., 2021), including the following:

Lack of quality planting material

Subsistence farmers tend to sell their ginger, for quick money, when it is immature. This immature ginger has lower seed material, making replanting difficult.

Figure 2
Understanding the ginger value chain
A description of ginger value chain activities



Source: Authors' creation based on information from Biosecurity Australia (2007); and AECOM in Australia and New Zealand (2016).

Climatic conditions

Ginger crops require considerable rainfall. In Fiji, ginger grows in the western and central divisions. The central division has excess rainfall, causing issues of compounding pathogens, while the western division has rainfall that falls short of what is needed for a good yield of ginger.

Soil-borne pathogens and pests

Like other ginger-growing countries, fungal pathogens Pythium gracile and Fusanum Oxysporum cause soft rot and rhizome rot. Fiji's prolonged wet weather makes ginger susceptible to Pythium gracile, which favours humid condition. Another problem is pests, including root knot nematode and burrowing nematode, brought in via the planting materials and white-coloured scale insect.

A decline in the intergenerational transfer of expertise

Older ginger farmers retiring and the younger generation's lack of participation in ginger farming have resulted in decreased expertise. Furthermore, there is limited technical awareness of integrated pests and disease management, particularly for replacing non-organic options with their organic alternatives, which is one of the key criteria for organic certification.

Land issues

About 88 per cent of land in Fiji is native land and most farming lands fall under this category. Native land is owned communally by native Fijian groups, and it can be only leased or licensed. Therefore, in common with other developing countries, many indigenous farmers in Fiji lack land title documents and struggle to access financing to expand production (ITC, 2022). Understandably, farmers are hesitant to lease and invest in lands that do not have long-term leasing options.

2.2.2 Primary processing

After harvesting, farmers process ginger by sorting, rinsing, cleaning and splitting the crop before taking it to the market. Two challenges at this stage are: (i) processing techniques remain manual, given the lack of technology; and (ii) when ginger is washed in unclean water or when it is stored in poor aeration or in contaminated sheds, there is a risk of rhizome rot by Fusanum Oxysporum, which may cause huge post-harvest losses. (National Agriculture Advisory Services, n/d).

2.2.3 Secondary processing

Fresh ginger can be turned into processed ginger products by secondary processing. Some of the typical ginger products and their manufacturing process are explained below. Although secondary processed products, such as dried split ginger, usually have a higher price than fresh ginger, few farmers undertake secondary processing. Instead, they sell fresh ginger to exporters and processors who then handle the secondary processing (CBI, 2020). The main options for processing ginger are the following:

- **Dry ginger**

  Generally, drying is done in the country of origin before export to avoid losing flavour. In most cases, ginger is peeled before drying to reduce the drying time and risk of mould or fermentation, although this also reduces pungency. Dry ginger is often used to make other ginger products, including ginger powder by pulverising or grinding (AECOM in Australia and New Zealand, 2016).

- **Essential oils**

  Oils can be produced using fresh or dried ribosomes. While oil is generally extracted from mature ginger, it can also be extracted from young ginger or ginger scraping, which makes the oil free of degradation, enhancing the flavour of the spice. The process of oil

extraction involves steam distillation which captures the volatile fraction. (AECOM in Australia and New Zealand, 2016).

- **Solvent extraction for ginger oleoresins**

  A solvent is used to extract ginger oleoresins. Ginger oleoresins contain more pungent gingerol compounds than fresh or dry ginger (AECOM in Australia and New Zealand, 2016).

- **Boiling, etc. for candied ginger**

  Boiling is the primary form of ginger processing in Fiji currently. The processing for candied ginger requires young ginger, which has low fibre content. The young ginger is first washed, peeled, and cut into the desired size. The pieces are then boiled in a weak citric acid solution and a sugar solution repeatedly until 60 degrees brix is reached.[8] After that, citric acid is added, and the solution is boiled for a few minutes. Finally, the pieces are drained and rolled in sugar (AECOM in Australia and New Zealand, 2016).

- **Ginger in brine**

  Ginger from the commercial flatland farms in Fiji is processed into ginger in brine, among other ginger products. Clean rhizomes of young ginger are stored in tanks of brine solution for a few weeks prior to being peeled, sliced or diced and weighed for the final product (Biosecurity Australia, 2007).

2.2.4 Exporting and market access

After processing, ginger products can be exported to international markets. As detailed in Section 3.1, Fiji exports various kinds of ginger products to a small number of countries – namely, Australia, Netherlands, the United States of America, Germany and New Zealand. Of these export destinations, Australia and New Zealand are unregulated organic markets, whilst the others are regulated markets. Thus, exporters may need to meet different requirements, depending on where they would like to sell their produce. Moreover, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements for biosecurity sometimes conflict against organic requirements. For example, when Fiji exports fresh ginger to Australia, biosecurity conditions require the fresh ginger to be cleaned and fumigated with methyl bromide to address SPS risk, rendering the product ineligible for organic certification (The Fijian Government, 2012).[9] To circumvent this, farmers and processors produce ginger puree and freeze it or process it into powder (conversation with PoetCom).

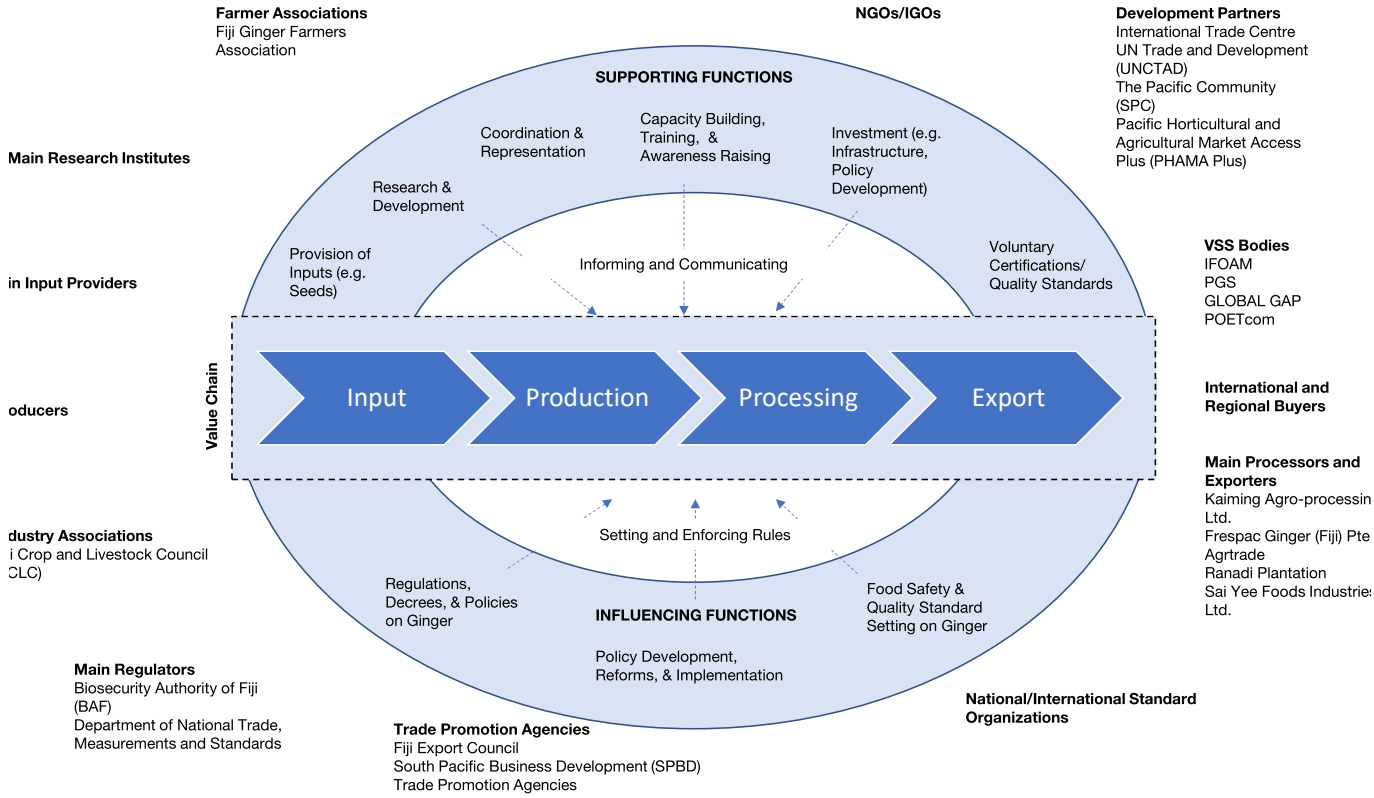
2.3. Ginger value chain stakeholders

A range of stakeholders is involved in ginger value chain in Fiji. They are farmers (including farmer associations and cooperatives), processors, exporters, foreign and national buyers, trade promotion agencies, Fiji government and development partners as shown in Figure 3 below.

[8] The degrees Brix value tells how much dissolved sugar is present in a liquid solution. 60 degree of Brix means that a hundred grams of liquid solution contains 60 grams of sugar.

[9] More information on import conditions and requirements for fresh ginger from Fiji to Australia can be found at: https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/risk-analysis/memos/ba2015-22

Figure 3
The numerous actors involved in the value chain
Ginger value chain stakeholders



Source: Authors' creation based on CBI (2020) and interviews with experts.[10]

Ginger farmers

Ginger farming in Fiji ranges from family businesses at the village level to large export operations. Nonetheless, most ginger cultivation is carried out by subsistence farmers. 661 households are engaged in ginger production, mainly in central areas followed by northern areas (FAO, 2020b). Additionally, as of October 2023, 720 ginger growers are officially registered in the government database (Fiji Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, 2023a). Most of these farmers cultivate ginger for both domestic and international markets (Fiji Ginger Farmers Association, n/d).

Industry and farmer associations

Fiji Crop and Livestock Council is the apex body for the whole of the agricultural sector in Fiji. Under the council, the Fiji Ginger Farmer and Marketing Association was formed in 2019. The association tends to cover a greater range of farmers than the government database because its membership is open not only to the farmers who are currently planting ginger but also to those who are merely interested in it (Fiji Ginger Farmers Association, n/d).

[10] Experts from PoetCom and International Trade Centre were interviewed.

Processors and exporters

In Fiji ginger sector, it is usually the key processors that are the key exporters. The most notable ones are Frespac Ginger (Fiji) Pte Ltd, Kaiming Agro Processing Ltd and Sai Yee Foods Industries Ltd.

Foreign and national buyers

Some foreign buyers in major export markets have a longstanding relationship or financial tie with Fijian processors and exporters. For example, the Ginger People headquartered in the United State of America have imported and distributed Fijian ginger products for 11 years (Fiji Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport, 2023). Frespac Ginger(Fiji) Pte Ltd is a subsidiary of Buderim Ginger Limited based in Brisbane, Australia.[11] National buyers include hotels and restaurants pursuing agritourism or sustainable tourism, and individuals at farmers' markets.

Trade promotion agencies

Fiji export council works for the national export diversification and promotion. In pursuing this goal, the council engages in developing national export awareness; improving market access for exports; providing trade intelligence, export education and advisory services; and facilitating market missions and trade policy.

Government of Fiji

The government of Fiji not only establishes economic, environmental and social frameworks for the country, but also provides targeted support for the ginger sector. The government invested a total of FJD 3 million in the sector over the past 5 years (2019/20 – 2023/24). Also, its ginger farming development plan includes such assistance as land clearing and preparation, procurement of agro-inputs, provision of treatment materials and capacity building (Fiji Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, 2023a). For example, it provided processors and exporters with infrastructure support, such as financial contributions to purchasing machinery (Fiji Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, 2023b).

Development partners

Development agencies and programs at bilateral, regional and multinational levels have been providing assistance to Fiji's ginger sector. Specifically, the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA) Plus Program, supported by Australia and New Zealand governments provides market access support for Fijian root crops, including ginger. The Pacific Community (SPC) works for economic and environmental development of land resources in 27 countries and territories in the region, including Fiji. International organizations, including the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), also delivered projects on the farmers' access to finance and contract farming (FAO, 2018; ITC, 2022).

[11] Frespac website can be found: https://www.fastfind.com.fj/directory/e/exporters/frespac-ginger-fiji-ltd.html


100%
organic

3. Background of organic certification

3.1. Voluntary Sustainability Standards

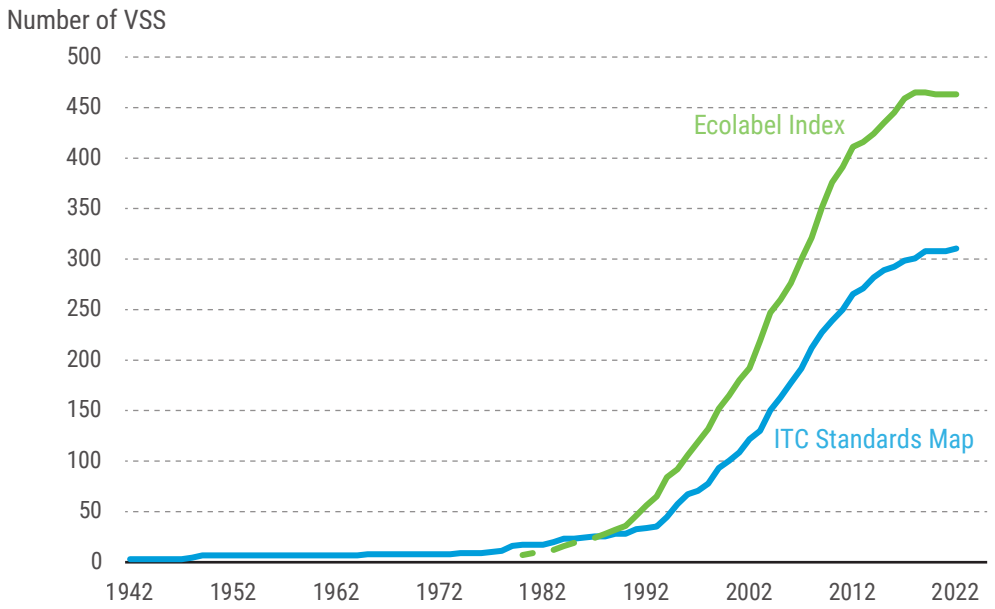
The United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS) defines VSS as "standards specifying requirements that producers, traders, manufacturers, retailers or service providers may be asked to meet, relating to a wide range of sustainability metrics, including respect for basic human rights, worker health and safety, environmental impacts, community relations, land-use planning and others" (UNFSS, 2013).

These standards aim to ensure that products and production processes comply with a specific set of social, economic and environmental requirements, thereby making global production more sustainable. As a result, **VSS have become important tools for governing global value chains and addressing related sustainability concerns**. VSS are prevalent in a wide range of sectors, from agriculture and forestry to minerals and electronics; however, they are most widely used in agricultural commodity sectors, including bananas, cocoa, coffee, cotton, palm oil, soy, sugarcane and tea, which are mostly produced in and exported from developing countries. Although VSS are not a new phenomenon, the proliferation of VSS in the last three decades has been huge. Depending on the database consulted, there are between **300 (ITC Standards Map) and 450 (Ecolabel index)** active VSS across the globe (See Figure 4).

Figure 4

The rise of VSS

Evolution in the number of VSS from 1942 to 2022



Source: UNCTAD (2022).

Factors explaining this proliferation include a growing consumer awareness of social and environmental issues; the government's engagement with VSS; a reaction to the failure of multilateral regulatory efforts; firms' motivations such as brand protection, price premiums and market access; and a response to the emergence of other VSS.

As with any other standards, it is essential to consider two key dimensions: the substantive requirements; and procedures to ensure compliance with these requirements. Typically, VSS organisations not only develop substantive standards, but also set up how they would check producers' compliance with their standards. Requiring conformity assessment is the most common way. A successful conformity assessment leads to certification for a particular product. Once a product has been certified, it is allowed to bear a mark that signals its sustainability features to consumers.

VSS organisations typically work in three distinct stages. First, a VSS organisation formulates general principles, and may refer to international treaties and conventions. Secondly, the VSS organisation then refine the general principles into a set of specific standards and criteria. Each principle generally comprises several standards, which makes conformity assessment possible. Lastly, each of these standards is then operationalised into one or more specific and measurable indicators. The indicators enable additional conformity assessment as well as standardisation.

Whilst many VSS aim to cover all dimensions of sustainability, some are more focussed on addressing environmental concerns, and others are more oriented towards social or governance matters. As well as requiring conformity assessment, the VSS organisation may also put in place complaints and grievance mechanisms in relation to its own procedures.

The existing literature suggests that stakeholders in developing countries face several challenges when adopting VSS as follows (UNCTAD, 2022; UNFSS, 2022):

1. **High costs:** Complying with the standards of a VSS and undertaking its certification process entails both direct and indirect costs. These costs include being audited, developing management plans, and addressing non-conformities. The toll might be greater for firms in developing countries because complying with a VSS may require data or technical knowledge that they may lack.

2. **Limited incentives:** The primary motivation for adopting a specific VSS is the anticipated economic gain, such as higher prices for certified products and expanded market access. However, these benefits are not assured and may be small. The consumers' demand for VSS-certified products significantly influences the size of these incentives. Whilst some VSS offer a minimum price guarantee, price premiums are not a standard offering across all VSS.[12] Furthermore, producers might face challenges in obtaining these premiums due to limited bargaining power, especially those who are small-scale and from developing regions.

3. **Sociopolitical resistance:** VSS are sometimes viewed as mechanisms reinforcing existing power relations, especially when they are proposed by lead firms in a supply chain, often located in developed countries. Such firms are more able to define sustainability according to their perspectives and interests. VSS can be perceived as developed countries' standards being imposed on the developing country producers. Such resistance to VSS can come not only

[12] Price premium: it is the extra money that is paid to farmers above the selling price of the product. Some VSS also offer a minimum price guarantee which ensures that a fixed (minimum) price will be paid to the farmer irrespective of the market price but allows the farmer to also take a higher price if being provided by the market.

from individual producers but also from governments.

4. **Governance gap:** Stakeholders from developing countries have been insufficiently involved in the governance of VSS organizations. This lack of involvement can impact the perceived legitimacy of VSS and dampen enthusiasm for their adoption. It also raises issues about the relevance and applicability of VSS to the local contexts.[13] A governance gap can be a significant obstacle in countries with less robust institutional frameworks.

3.2. Organic standards and certification in the Pacific

Founded in Europe as the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement, IFOAM, is one of the most prominent organizations for organic VSS.[14] It provides the following definition of organic agriculture:

> "Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems, and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions rather than using inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation, and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and good quality of life for all involved (IFOAM, 2023)."[15]

The Organic Guarantee System of IFOAM defines what is organic and what is not. It sets standards for every stage of the value chain, from production to processing to retailing, and across the full food spectrum, from crops to livestock to aquaculture. It runs the IFOAM accreditation programme, whereby a dozen organisations are authorised to assess conformity, two of which are active in Fiji.[16] IFOAM has more than 800 affiliates in over 120 countries and territories (IFOAM, 2024).

Besides IFOAM, there are several other organizations that have set up substantive sustainability standards and conformity assessment procedures for organic agricultural products. The Pacific region is not an exception. The organics movement in the Pacific has been driven from the grassroots level: non-governmental organisations, farmer organisations and dedicated individual farmers who have recognised this potential and sought to move the industry forward. This has led to the development of the Pacific organic standard, *Organic Pasifika*.[17] It is the third regional organic standard that appeared in the world (PoetCom, 2024).

Organic Pasifika specifies requirements for organic products. It covers plant production, animal husbandry, beekeeping, collection of wild and aquaculture products, and the processing and labelling of products derived from these activities (Pacific Community (2008)). The standard is administered by Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (PoetCom). PoetCom is a voting member of IFOAM – Organics International as well.

[13] The governance gap, together with the sociopolitical resistance, helps explain the emergence of national and regional VSS initiatives.

[14] Founded in 1972, IFOAM Organics International is a membership-based organization that aims to bring sustainability to agricultural systems across the globe through organic agriculture.

[15] This succinct definition was established at the 2008 General Assembly of IFOAM, following a three year consultation.

[16] The two IFOAM accreditation bodies that are active in Fiji are ACO Certification Ltd of Australia and BIOGRO New Zealand Ltd.

[17] For more information on Pacific Organic Standard: http://www.organicpasifika.net/poetcom/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/POS.pdf

The Pacific Organic Standard takes account of both local agricultural traditions and the international standard requirements from IFOAM and Codex Alimentarius. Thus, while the Pacific stakeholders hold true ownership of the standard, the standard is aligned with international benchmarks. The standard is appropriate for Pacific Island countries and territories' unique social, cultural, environmental and agricultural conditions (PoetCom, 2024).

The conformity assessment is covered separately via the Pacific Organic Guarantee System (PoetCom, 2024). Certification can be done through a robust, PoetCom-registered participatory guarantee system (PGS) or by an internationally accredited and PoetCom-approved certifying body. The former is called participatory certification and the latter is called third-party certification. Box 2 explains these two methods of certification in detail. The products certified under the Pacific Organic Standard are licenced to use the *Organic Pasifika* mark.

Box 2
Participatory certification and third-party certification

Organizations and countries that establish organic standards typically mandate a specific certification process to verify that a product meets their standards. Certification can be achieved either through PGS or via a third-party certification body. The former is known as participatory certification and the latter is referred to as third-party certification.

1. Participatory certification

PGS are locally focused peer-to-peer organic assurance systems that certify producers based on the active participation of stakeholders. They are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange (IFOAM, 2023). PGS are commonplace in situations where a group of people come together and want to leverage the benefits of having an organic guarantee. PGS provides recognition in local or regional markets, as well as unregulated markets such as Australia and New Zealand. Being locally driven, a PGS does not incur the same costs as third-party certification. PGS also reduces bureaucracy in the organic guarantee process and furthers community values, supporting the potential for community development through organic agriculture. Lastly, PGS offers the advantage of belonging to a group and allows for learning from the group members, which can benefit farmers.

2. Third-party certification

Third-party certification is performed by an independent, accredited certification body. The third-party certifiers monitor and audit the internal systems of producers and then provide a guarantee of compliance that is recognised by specific markets. It is more complex than the PGS. Third-party certification is needed to access regulated organic markets, including China, European Union, Japan, Republic of Korea or the United States of America. Each of these countries has its own national standard and organic labelling laws, which can make access to these regulated organic markets complicated and expensive. The certification can be done either for individual farmers or for groups, whereby several farmers work together to get certified.

Finally, there are two kinds of organic markets – one is a 'regulated market' and another is a 'unregulated market'. Some countries regulate the use of the term 'organic' by law. Each regulated market has its own national organic standards and conformity assessment procedures, using mostly, third-party certification. Only products that conform to the national standards and procedures can be labelled and sold as 'organic'. In unregulated markets, labelling and selling a product as 'organic' is up to individual retailers. Thus, it is the retailer that decides which organic standards and conformity assessments to request of exporters.

3.3 Organic agriculture in the Pacific and in Fiji

Pacific Island states are well-positioned to leverage organic VSS. The Pacific organic standard offers the easily adoptable PGS certification. Nearby unregulated markets, such as Australia and New Zealand, recognize this certification, creating demand opportunities.

In the same vein, the Pacific organic standard has a strong presence in the Pacific region. There were over 18,000 producers on 36 million hectares[18] in the region, constituting 9.7 per cent of the region's total agricultural land and nearly half the world's organic land (as of 2023). The highest organic shares of all national agricultural land were in Samoa (29 per cent), followed by Australia (10 per cent), Papua New Guinea (7.4 per cent) and Fiji (7.1 per cent) (Willer et al., 2023). Table 2 shows the major products that are organically certified in the Pacific Islands states.

In Fiji, the reported organic agricultural land is 30,194 hectares. Most organic production is for export purposes and on a relatively small scale using the PGS certification. In 2021, **organic exports from Fiji to the European Union were around 43 million tonnes**, an increase of 15 per cent compared to 2020. The growth of PGS on the supply side and improved recognition of the value of organic products on the demand side have also contributed to creating organic agricultural produce markets within the country, for example, in form of organic farmers' markets and supply agreements with supermarket chains or restaurants (Willer et al., 2023).

There are over 18,000 producers on 36 million hectares of organic land in the Pacific region.

Table 2

Organically certified agricultural products in the Pacific Islands countries and territories

Products	Economy
Vanilla, turmeric, ginger, and other spices	**Fiji**, Vanuatu, Niue, Samoa
Cocoa	Vanuatu, Samoa, Papua New Guinea
Virgin coconut oil	Samoa, **Fiji**, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu
Coconut meal	Vanuatu
Nonu/noni (Morinda Citrifolia)	Cook Islands, Samoa, **Fiji**, Niue, French Polynesia
Honey	Niue, **Fiji**
Bananas (including processed)	Papua New Guinea, Samoa
Coffee	Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Vanuatu
Livestock (beef, goats, and sheep)	**Fiji**, Vanuatu
Fruit and vegetables (including processed)	**Fiji**, New Caledonia, Samoa, French Polynesia, Cook Islands, Republic of the Marshall Islands
Forest Nuts	Solomon Islands

Source: Willer et al. (2023).

[18] Australia represents 99 per cent of the total.

4. Perception of ginger value chain stakeholders regarding organic certification

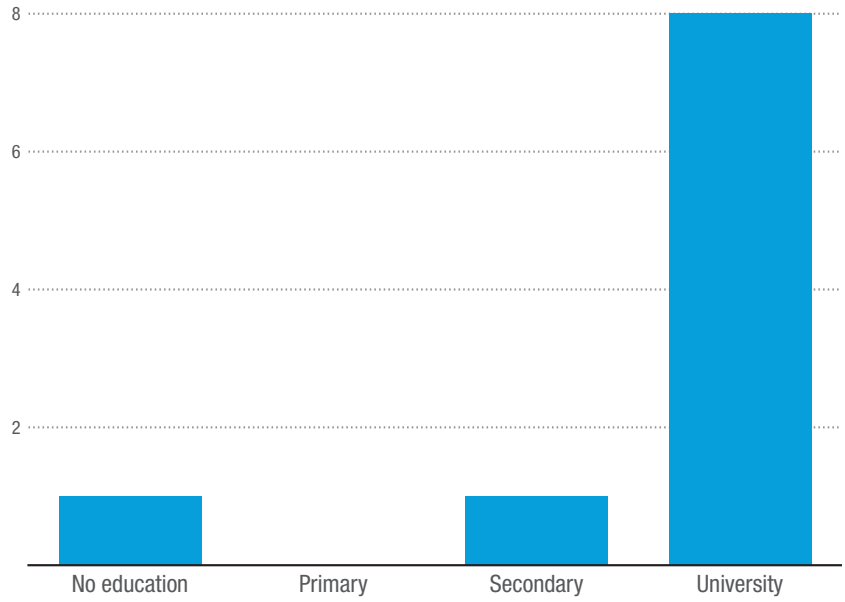
Stakeholders in the ginger value chain in Fiji are becoming increasingly aware of the international and regional demand for organically certified ginger.

This section presents key findings from a survey assessing stakeholders' perceptions of obtaining organic certification for their ginger produce. The data was gathered primarily from stakeholders that completed the survey online. This method was chosen due to time constraints and the lack of personnel to conduct surveys and interviews in-person in the country. Further information on the methodology of the survey is given in Annex 2.

4.1. Characteristics of the survey respondents

The survey consists of 10 responses.[19] Among the 10 respondents, five were farmers, one was a processor, one was an exporter and the remaining three were managers, financial providers and agri-value chain specialists. The respondents were divided into two groups: those with organic certification and those without. Only one respondent was certified, while the others

Figure 5
Who answered the survey
Educational level of the surveyed respondents, percentage



Source: UNCTAD analysis based on data from the survey.

[19] The statistics may not be representative since the number of responses is relatively low.

were either not certified or not pursuing certification. Additionally, 70 per cent of the respondents were male and 30 per cent were female. Regarding education, 80 per cent had a university level education, while 10 per cent had secondary education and the remaining 10 per cent had no education, as illustrated in Figure 5. However, given the limitations of the survey conducting process, the respondents' education level is skewed toward those with tertiary education.

4.2. Perceptions of the survey respondents on organic certification uptake

The survey included a set of questions designed to highlight differences in perception between the certified and non-certified groups. Annex 1 lists the questions used in the survey and identifies the target groups. This section reflects the perceptions of these groups regarding organic certification.

Despite their limited knowledge of the certification process and the challenges involved, all non-certified respondents expressed a desire to obtain organic certification in the future.

Awareness of the non-certified group about organic certification

According to the survey responses from non-certified respondents, there was limited awareness of certification. Non-certified respondents indicated that obtaining certification could open doors to specific markets and gain customers' trust in the sustainable production of their product. Further, they replied to have some knowledge about the certification process which was largely to align current practices with the ones mentioned by the standard and then get an audit.

Interest of the non-certified group in obtaining organic certification

Despite their limited knowledge of the certification process and the challenges involved, all non-certified respondents expressed a desire to obtain organic certification in the future. They considered it very important for the following reasons:

- There are customers who think organic is important so it would be good to consider going into this process.
- Organically certified produce has a niche market, and people are being more health conscious now and being wary of what they eat.
- Sustainable production is important for the long-term economic viability of the farm.

Motivation to get organic certification

The survey presented seven potential motivations for obtaining organic certification and asked stakeholders to select all that applied. Figure 6 illustrates the motivations of non-certified stakeholders. All non-certified respondents were motivated by the desire to increase access to export market, improve product quality and learn better farming practices. Additionally, two thirds sought certification to a higher income, while one-third were interested in better domestic business opportunities or product knowledge. On the other hand, the certified respondent was motivated to get organic certification for better domestic and export market opportunities, improved farming practices, and enhanced product quality. None of the respondents identified reduced income fluctuation as a motivation for getting certified.

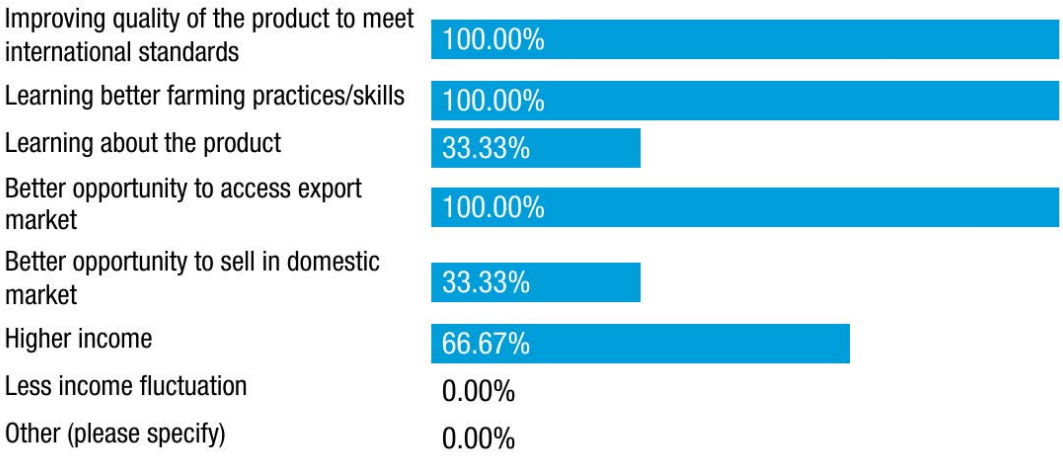
Ease of getting organic certification

All respondents, both certified and non-certified, answered that it would be easy to obtain an organic certification. Nevertheless, they identified several hurdles to obtaining organic certification. As shown in Figure 7, for the non-certified respondents, the amount of time spent on getting certified was the biggest challenge, followed by costs of getting certified, complex paperwork and lack of

Figure 6

Why is there interest in certification?

Non-certified stakeholders: motivation for obtaining organic certification

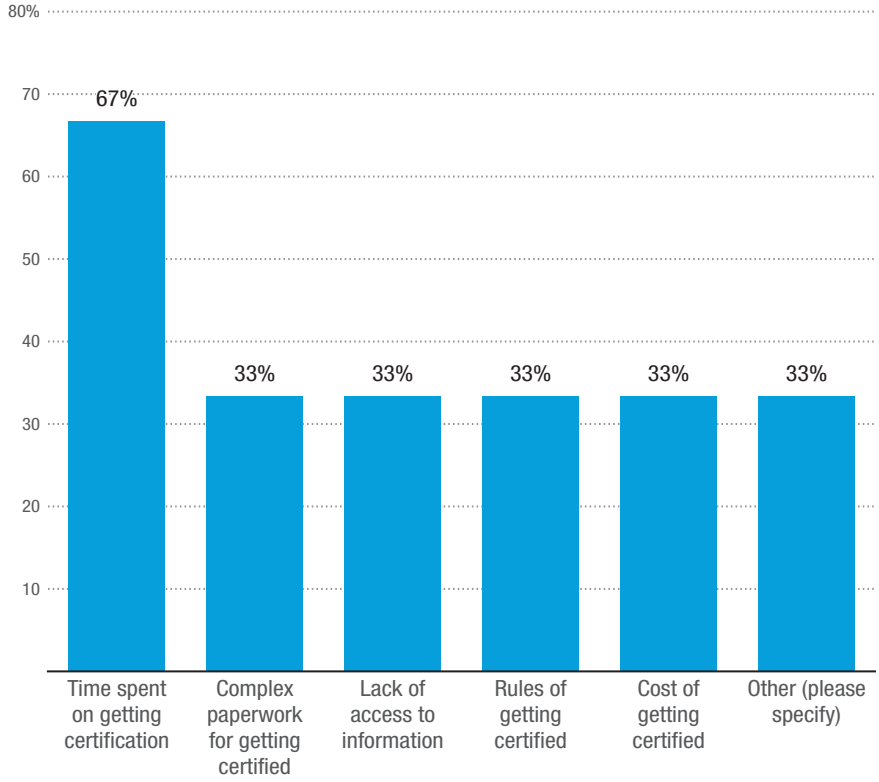


Source: UNCTAD calculation based on data from the survey.

Figure 7

The challenges of certification

Non-certified stakeholders: barriers to get organic certification



Source: UNCTAD calculation based on data from the survey.

access to information, among others. The certified respondent identified the same as barrier to organic certification. In addition, the certified respondent mentioned the lack of understanding among farmers about the benefits of the certification as another barrier.

Local certification

All respondents, both certified and non-certified, recognized the Organic Pasifika mark, which is granted to products that have been certified as compliant with the Pacific Organic Standard, which demonstrates that local certification available and effective in the region. 66 per cent of the non-certified respondents said that they would prefer to get an international certification, while 33 per cent aspired to both local and international certification. They mentioned that international certification opens lucrative markets such as the United States of America and the European Union, which are closed to products that have received only local certification. The certified respondent answered that they found it preferable to obtain both local and international certification, as local certification is a helpful steppingstone to acquire knowledge and practice before seeking international certification.

4.3. Perceptions of the survey respondents on contribution to the SDGs

The survey posed a series of questions to assess whether and to what extent stakeholders value the potential contribution of organic certification to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Table 3 lists the SDGs that organic certification can help achieve, together with the potential ways it can do so. The survey respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that organic certification could contribute to these SDGs through the channels listed.

Both certified and non-certified respondents agreed that organic certification can contribute to the SDGs.

Table 3
Organic certification, the SDGs and their channels

SDGs	Potential channels through which the organic certification can contribute to the SDGs
SDG 1 No Poverty **SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth**	Higher price for the product Increased wealth Higher quality of the product Improved workplace conditions
SDG 2 Zero Hunger	Improved food security Higher agricultural yield
SDG 5 Gender Equality	Economic empowerment of women
SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production **SDG 13 Climate Action** **SDG 14 Life Below Water** **SDG 15 Life on Land**	Improved conservation of natural environment

Source: UNCTAD (2020).

5. Opportunities and challenges for organic ginger in Fiji

The desk study, survey and interviews with experts helped to identify the opportunities and challenges for producing and exporting organically certified ginger in Fiji.

A couple of factors point towards opportunity. First, certification through the PGS is widely present, growing, and increasingly accepted. PGS certification is useful not only because it opens the unregulated markets of Australia and New Zealand, but also because it can be a steppingstone to third-party certification. By participating in the PGS, farmers are encouraged adopt good agricultural practices and gain experience in dealing with conformity assessment procedures at a relatively low cost and with more flexibility. Experts stressed that PGS certification is generally less expensive than the third-party certification as it can save the costs of getting an external auditor to the field. Moreover, PGS groups, as self-governing groups, are flexible with a better community or country understanding. While the third-party certification offers limited opportunities for consultation and noncompliance yields nothing more serious than a prescription for corrective actions, the PGS allows farmers get to share information and learn from each other about how to implement the corrective actions in a straightforward yet effective way. Aiming first for PGS certification helps farmers assess their readiness for third-party certification, reducing the risk of failure and saving time and resources.

Secondly, stakeholders are motivated to adopt organic certification and convinced of its usefulness. As reported in section 4.2, the non-certified respondents perceived that organic certification would provide access to niche organic markets and customers demanding organic products, as well as enable sustainable production which can help ensure the long-term economic viability of their farm. Also, all respondents, both certified and non-certified, answered that, based on farming practices, it would be easy to obtain an organic certification. The priorities of the government of Fiji also echo this positive perception. The NDP considers organic farming and produce as not only a means to achieve food and nutrition security but also an emerging economic growth sector. One of its concrete strategies is to “develop and introduce organic farming methods to farmers and provide incentives for organic farming” (Ministry of Economy, 2017). The NDP also mentions developing and facilitating linkages to the tourism industry, such as by promoting the manufacturing of packed organic goods (Ministry of Economy, 2017). However, the existing literature and the survey of stakeholders conducted for this project indicate that the ginger value chain faces several challenges which may hinder a rapid take-up of organic certification. One of the obstacles identified was the time and cost involved, both to achieve certification for the first time and then to and maintain certified status, as the status usually needs to be renewed every year. For third-party certification, the management, reporting, training, complex paperwork, and internal auditing are particularly time consuming. Furthermore, the fact that there is no auditor in the Pacific SIDS increases the cost of auditor travel and ultimately, the costs for third-party certification. The certified respondent in the survey mentioned that the farmers usually pay the full cost of obtaining certification, although sometimes there is support from government organizations and development partners.

Non-certified respondents perceived that organic certification would provide access to niche organic markets.

The perception gap between certified and non-certified groups regarding organic certifications is another challenge. According to the survey results, the non-certified respondents replied that organic certification would contribute to achieving SDGs to the greater extent than the certified respondent. Moreover, it was identified that non-certified producers tend to expect higher price premium on organically certified ginger than the actual price premium.[20] The views on local and international certification also diverged. While two thirds of the non-certified respondents said that they would prefer to get an international certification, the certified respondent answered to get both local and international certifications by using the former as a steppingstone to the latter. This different expectation of organic certification needs to be verified because otherwise, both private and public sectors may make misplaced investments towards organic certification, turning the existing interest in and motivation for organic certification into disappointment and distrust.

[20] This was mentioned by an exporter during the "Fiji national Green Trade Project and joint IMPACT-SAFE workshop on non-tariff measures (NTM)" on 12-13 June 2023 (https://unctad.org/meeting/fiji-national-msg-green-trade-project-and-joint-impact-safe-workshop-non-tariff-measures).

6. Conclusions and policy recommendations

Drawing on the information collected, two policy recommendations emerge that could help increase the uptake of organic VSS:

1. Developing a national multi-stakeholder body for organic ginger certification; and

2. Reducing barriers to obtaining and maintaining organic certification for ginger.

Some practical suggestions on how to implement each of these policy recommendations are presented below.

Policy Recommendation 1. Developing a national multi-stakeholder body for organic ginger certification

The literature notes that for VSS to be utilized effectively, the existence of supportive national institutions is essential. This suggests that a well-structured domestic governance environment would be conducive to the uptake of VSS. A national multi-stakeholder body could be established to govern organic certification that encompasses both third-party and PGS certification. This body would foster collaboration between private and public stakeholders along the value chain, both certified and non-certified, to address challenges associated with organic certification as well as to establish a country-level long-term plan to promote and utilize organic certification. The establishment of such a national multi-stakeholder body could be done in collaboration with PoetCom, considering the substantial role that it is already playing in the region. The mandate of this body could expand to cover organic production and trade of agricultural produce in general.

The national multi-stakeholder body could begin by addressing the following imminent issues:

- **Share information and facilitate trainings for a wide range of stakeholders involved in the management and support for organic certification in Fiji.** Many stakeholders have limited or no access to information and no training related to organic certifications. Also, there exist a perception gap between certified and non-certified stakeholders. A national multi-stakeholder body could be an outlet to disseminate information, provide training opportunities and function as a forum where stakeholders come together and build common understanding.

- **Leverage the already existing PGS groups to foster sharing and learning via a multistakeholder framework.** A considerable number of PGS groups have been established in Fiji. Participatory certification through the PGS cannot only provide an entry to unregulated markets, but also serve as a bridge to third-party certification, an entry to regulated markets. A national, multi-stakeholder body could strategize the expansion of PSG groups and participatory certification and foster the transition from participatory certification to third-party certification.

- **Identify possible opportunities to collect data on organic producers and produce in Fiji via existing online platforms.** Evidence-based decision-making relies on having adequate data. Currently, information on organic ginger production, processing and trade is limited. To address this, a national multi-stakeholder body could explore the collection and sharing of data through online systems. This approach would help identify areas facing challenges and enable national management bodies to take targeted action based on identified needs. Some existing data systems,

such as the customs system, the national statistical system, or the recently launched "VitiAgriDataHub" – a database for farmer information and agriculture statistics – could be used for efficiency.

- **Coordinate development assistance on organic certification coming to Fiji.** Various development partners at bilateral, regional and international level have provided support to Fijian agriculture, including the ginger sector, and some of them have touched upon the issue of organic certification. The national multi-stakeholder body can engage in all stages of development projects and programmes to ensure that these efforts complement each other and create synergy.

Policy recommendation 2: Reducing barriers to obtaining and maintaining organic certification for ginger

The high cost of obtaining and maintaining organic certification is a challenge common to all developing countries and across agricultural products. The small size and remoteness of Fiji makes these cost particularly high, compounded by the structural characteristics of Fijian agriculture, with its high proportion of subsistence farmers and small-scale farmers. Actions that could help lower key hurdles include:

The high cost of obtaining and maintaining organic certification is a challenge common to all developing countries and across agricultural products.

- **Provide training material to farmers, enabling them to easily understand organic certification, including both good agricultural practices and conformity assessment procedures.** Farmers are at the root of the ginger value chain. Fulfilling substantive and procedural requirements for organic certification starts with farmers. They should be equipped with basic understating on organic certification, including that 'organic' is not self-declaratory. Moreover, farmers need to be aware of integrated pests and disease management, for replacing the non-organic options with the organic alternatives, which value chain analysis has revealed is limited. Development and dissemination of training materials could be done in collaboration with PoetCom.[21]

- **Ensure the presence of internal and external auditors in the country.** Encouraging an internal auditing system within the county can provide ongoing support for farmers, helping them improve their compliance with standards. A higher level of compliance would mean less time and money spent on going through rigorous external audits. Moreover, the presence of national external auditors is also important. The lack of external auditors in the Pacific SIDS raises the cost of certification because the auditors need to travel from Australia, New Zealand or Asian countries, at the expense of farmers.

- **Identify possible subsidies for the cost or partial cost of the annual fees associated with third-party certifications.** While the Fijian government has provided support for the ginger sector, third-party organic certification has fallen outside its scope. Introducing subsidies to cover the yearly certification fees would create more favourable conditions for producers and processors to adopt formal organic farming systems. These subsidies would specifically aid smaller businesses in managing the costs associated with certification and potentially encourage the private sector to extend their certification programs to include small-scale farmers. By doing so, subsidies would enhance opportunities for organic farming adoption and promote inclusivity within the private sector's certification initiatives. Moreover, allocating dedicated resources to support and train certified producers would alleviate the challenges faced by producers and processors, leading to enhanced sustainability of third-party certification.

[21] PoetCom supports farmers in setting up the PGS groups and guiding farmers with the corrective actions for noncompliance. They have also developed the Pacific Organic Standard guidebook which offers guidance and clarification on the standards.

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Annex

Annex 1
Survey Questions

Motivation of getting certified

ONLY for – NON-CERTIFIED producers/processors/exporters

1. Would you like to get certified in the future? (YES / NO)
    a. If yes, can you tell us what would be the motivation to get certified?

ONLY for – CERTIFIED producers/processors/exporters

2. Can you tell us what was the motivation to get certified?
3. What was the process to get certified?
4. What were the main challenges in getting certified?
5. Are there any benefits that came out of getting certified?

For – ALL producers/processors/exporters

6. How do you see the importance of getting certified in the future?

For ALL: Impacts of certification

7. Do you think the impacts of certification are positive? To whom?
8. What do you think are the main benefits of certification?
9. Are there disadvantages of being certified too?
10. Going back to benefits, what types of benefits from certification schemes would most likely be important to producers?
11. Along the value chain, who do you think benefits most from certification schemes or standards? Why? Please explain your answer.

ONLY for – CERTIFIED producers/processors/exporters: Maintaining certification

12. Please identify up to three challenges in maintaining certification.
13. Are there any farmers who obtained certification earlier but are now not certified? Why?
14. Who is responsible for covering the costs of certification?

ONLY for – CERTIFIED producers/processors/exporters: Coordination and grievance mechanism

15. How do you get information for your production and market (for example production methods, market info)?

16. What have been the main challenges in collaborating with or contacting buyers?

17. Who can you go to with problems regarding certification? Please give examples.

18. Does the standard body provide a grievance mechanism? (YES / NO)

    a. If yes, is it easy to access and is complaint resolution effective?

For ALL: Multiple types of certification

19. Is there also a local/national certification available?

20. Do you think compliance with one certification can make it easier to comply with another?

21. If there is a local/national certification, would you prefer to be certified by that or an international one? And why?

22. Are producers interested in getting multiple certification? why/why not?

Annex 2
Methodology

Survey:

The survey was distributed to stakeholders in the ginger value chain online with the support of PoetCom representatives. A small number of responses were collected. The outcome of the study provides a useful snapshot of the preparedness and perception of the stakeholder in ginger value chain regarding the organic standard. The survey findings are therefore to be taken as indicative of perceptions and knowledge within communities, but not as statistically representative of the entire ginger sector in Fiji.

The questionnaires were developed and adapted to the context of Fiji. Two sets were prepared: one for non-certified actors and the other for certified actors. The primary purpose of this division was to explore certified actors' experience of the certification process and its impact on their activities; and to identify any areas in which the perceptions of uncertified actors differ from the perceptions of those that have already gone through a certification process.

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