

## **The Tonga Growers Federation Inc.**

### ***A case study of a relationship between worker and farmer unions***

*Kevin Hince*

#### **Abstract**

*The formation of the Tonga Growers Federation, examined in this case study, exemplifies two apparent contradictions: a seemingly anomalous juxtaposition of educated elite/intellectuals and small holder squash farmers in the struggle to organise, and an equally paradoxical alliance of labour unions and a farmers' union. The historical survey establishes, in a regional context, the link between workers' and farmers' unions, as well as the role of local and regional worker unions and associated 'intellectual' input in the particular case of the Tonga Growers Federation. Another significant linkage within Tonga emerges: that between the movement to organise a farmers' collective with specific policy objectives, and the movement promoting wider democratic reform in the Tongan political system (the Tonga pro-democracy movement).*

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It seems that two phrases used in the Tongan vernacular to describe that country's small holder squash/pumpkin farmer translate as 'dung consumer' and 'stupid thing'. That description could not contrast more sharply with the group of people—educated, elite, intellectuals—who have provided ongoing and critical assistance and support in the organisation of the farmers' collective and the articulation of grievances. The association of the intellectuals and dung consumers has elements of a paradox.

But this is only one of the apparent contradictions that surface in this case study of the formation and (early) development of the Tonga Growers Federation (TGF). Another apparent paradox is the alliance of labour (worker) unions, both from within Tonga and across the wider region, with the organisation and activities of a federation (union) of ‘farmers’.

In fact, each of these paradoxes is more superficial than substantial, more apparent than real. Intellectuals (middle class liberals, Fabian socialists, Bolsheviks and others) have long been allies in the organisation of workers into trade unions. In the South Pacific regional context this alliance of workers’ unions and a farmers’ union is just another example, rather than the expected exception.

The paper explores the historic worker union/farmer union links, which have been part of labour history in the South Pacific although a contrast could be drawn with more acrimonious relations between such groups in, for example, Australia and New Zealand.

A further strand in the case study is the emergence of a significant linkage within Tonga. On the one hand is the movement to organise a farmers’ collective that would provide farmer input into a specific policy area and on the other, the broader pro-democracy front operating to ‘open up’ input into and promote wider democratic reform in the Tongan political system.

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy and the society is hierarchical, ranging from royalty at the top, through the nobility (33 nobles holding lifetime titles awarded by the monarch, and their families) to the commoner division in society. Land is the property of the king/crown, parcelled out in estates to the noble titles and then further shared to the populace, with approximately eight acres the customary entitlement of each adult male. The parliament comprises nine ministers (the Cabinet) appointed by the king, nine members elected by the 33 nobles and nine representatives directly elected by universal suffrage. The pro-democracy movement promotes the direct election of all MPs by the electorate and an increase in the number of representatives.

The association—the link between those facilitating input by a small group into a specific policy area and those seeking to expand input into the total process—is predictable and not paradoxical. In fact it is the reconciliation

of one of the other prima facie paradoxes, the liaison between stupid thing/dung consumer and intellectual.

The following section introduces the broad context created by the emergence and operation of pumpkin/squash cultivation for export. The historic link between labourers' and farmers' unions in the South Pacific region is also seen as part of the overall context. Detailed material of the case study, including a chronology of events, is then presented in order to establish the role of local and regional worker unions, and associated 'intellectual' input. Several substantive issues emerge from this detail:

- To what extent are workers'/farmers' collectives able to influence policy (in this case agricultural and trade issues) in the Tongan social/political context?
- Which specific matters of policy are of concern to the growers, and why?
- Are the constraints (local and global village challenges) such that only minimal, short term palliative style gains can be achieved? Or, can long term change be brought about by collective action of 'class' based organisation?
- This case provides evidence that farmers' organisations do behave like trade unions.

### **The birth and boom of an industry**

Agricultural exports have dominated trade from Tonga for many years. Small acreage farmers have been dominant in production, selling to agents who transport and on-sell the product. In the mid-1980s production of squash/pumpkin for export to Japan began.

The squash is grown by the small farmer/landholder. Murray (1998: 6) noted that by 1994 some 3,000 farmers had plantations of squash, varying in size from one–two acres to the entire eight-acre plot.

Government (through the Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industry) establishes an aggregate export quota, and issues quota permits to exporter agents. The agents buy from growers, and transport and sell wholesale in the export market. Loans to growers, and sources of seed and fertiliser are other services available from the exporter agent.

As Murray (1998: 6) reports, growth in the squash export sector has been breathtaking, from a base of zero exports in 1986 to 23,000 tonnes in 1991, and to 50 per cent of all export earnings in 1994. Subsequently, acreage, production and earnings have declined, mainly on account of falling prices in the principal export market. But the dominance of this single product in the agriculture and export earnings continues. Murray (1998: 6) comments on the magnitude of the boom (especially relative to the size of the Tonga economy) noting that the ‘. . . socioeconomic and environmental implications . . . of this exposure to global economic forces has been profound and controversial’. Later in the same article, he speculates on the likely sustainability of the process (Murray 1998: 6–7).

The core of the current paper throws an indirect light on several controversial aspects of this socioeconomic impact. First, we may note the uneven sharing of risks between growers and agents. Second, we observe the uneven sharing of rewards between growers and agents, or more accurately, the absence of a clear direct relationship (normally expected by capitalist production) between the risk and reward levels. In each of the above situations it has been the growers that have been disadvantaged. Third, and compounding the inherent disadvantage of the growers, was that disadvantaged group’s lack of input into and control of the key decisions of the process.

These factors underlay the gradual recognition of a need to organise, to collectivise grower input. But the catalytic factor that translated underlying forces into articulation of accumulated grievances and action occurred in 1994, when the produce of a large number of growers was not exported. Some 7,000 tonnes of squash rotted and no payments were made to those growers. These events are central to the case study and are detailed later. Before that, it is necessary to outline a further significant contextual factor.

### **Farmers’ unions and labourers’ (workers’) unions in the South Pacific**

Experienced observers from Australia, New Zealand and perhaps the USA would regard collaboration between organised labour and farmer collectives as illogical and unlikely. More often, in these countries, the relationship has been the antithesis, with the respective collectives occupying the opposite

ends of the political spectrum and exhibiting radical differences in key economic policy areas. Organised labour in Australia during the latter part of the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries was fiercely protectionist: large scale wheat, meat and wool farmers (particularly) were fervently free trade. Labour, on the other hand, sought encouragement for small, local, manufacturing industry. Farmers aimed to reduce the costs of imported farm inputs. Labour was socialist, collectivist and welfare oriented. The farmer was an individualist and a market oriented risk taker. The respective organisations mirrored these positions and sought political support for the respective causes.<sup>1</sup> Adversarial relations were the norm, becoming more overt on occasions, for example when industrial action closed down the ‘meatworks’ or the ‘waterfront’ whilst the farmers’ product was waiting for processing or transport.

But this picture is not one that can be extrapolated to the micro-states of the South Pacific. In fact, such an alliance is not a contradiction within the region; indeed, there are a number of historical and contemporary precedents for the alliance of the farmer and labourer collectives.

#### *The Fiji sugar industry in the 1930s and 1940s*

Two organisations in the sugar industry of Fiji emerged in the late 1930s, the *Kisan Sangh* (farmers’ union) and *Mazdur Sangh* (workers’ union). Each emerged on the sugar cane fields of Wailailai, near Ba in northern Viti Levu. The farmers were small leaseholders seeking collective negotiation of cane prices and other conditions of cane supply contracts with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), the owners of the nearby Rarawai Mill. The labourers who worked in the mill—some throughout the year, most during just the crushing season—also sought to negotiate collectively on wages and conditions of work with the employer, CSR. The *Kisan Sangh* came first, the *Mazdur Sangh* followed. Leaders and activists were common to both and membership overlapped, at the individual level and more particularly as between family members. Leaseholding, cane cutting and mill work were complementary, certainly across the kin.

From the early days leaders sought constituencies in one or other of these organisations, or in the competing organisations that were to emerge later. Many of these key leaders went on to strive for further representation

of their electorate, and their own ambitions, in the broader political field of the Legislative Council of the colony (at the time a mixture of elected and nominated members). Hince (1991) details the close inter-relationships between the workers' and farmers' unions on the one hand and individual leadership on the other, in a biographical sketch of B D Lakshman, one such leader. The political aspirations and careers of leaders of farmer and worker sugar unions, such as Lakshman, Ayodhya Prasad and A D Patel, are documented in that paper and in other labour and political histories of Fiji (for example, Gillion 1973; Norton 1992).

### *The Cook Islands in the 1940s*

Albert Henry was elected the first Premier of the Cook Islands after the special self-governing relationship with New Zealand was established in 1965.<sup>2</sup> Henry, born in Aitutaki in the northern Cook Islands, had left for New Zealand in 1943. He joined and became active in both the trade union movement and the New Zealand Labour Party.

The Cook Islands Progressive Association (CIPA) was formed as a cooperative of small farmer/exporters (initially of oranges) to lobby for and facilitate appropriate transportation for produce to the New Zealand market. The link with trade unions in New Zealand, especially with the then communist-led Auckland Trades and Labour Council, provided encouragement for Henry first, to establish a branch of the CIPA in Auckland (amongst the large Cook Island émigré community) and then, to lead the CIPA into a struggle to gain control of casual stevedoring on the Rarotonga waterfront. Henry-led lobbying resulted in a loan from the New Zealand government and acquisition of a ship to transport agricultural produce to market. Later the Cook Islands Party (CIP) emerged as a political party from the CIPA base. In 1964 Henry returned to the Cook Islands to lead the CIP to victory as the first government in the new era of self-government, and himself to the premiership.

The fact that Henry was later to deny a role for trade unions in the social framework of the Cook Islands does not negate that initial linkage of labourer and small holder farmer collectives. Nor does it undercut the significant role of personal ambition and leadership of such an organisation, also a feature of this early action.

*Fiji in the 1970s to 1999*

In 1979 the International Labour Organisation, intending to spark a programme of ‘organising the unorganised’ in rural areas, sponsored a conference of unions in Fiji. All rural workers—plantation workers and cane cutter labourers—were the intended targets. Funds to support the campaign were made available. Mahendra Chaudhry, then secretary of the Fiji Public Service Association and assistant secretary of the Fiji Trades Union Congress, effectively subverted the process: through the National Farmers Union (NFU), he was able instead to refocus on and further enhance organisation of the small holder tenant cane farmers. (The duality of the NFU membership—small leaseholder farmers and cane harvesters—does, however, need to be acknowledged.) Chaudhry was also secretary of the NFU, which had been established as a rival to the existing farmer unions, whose associations were closer to the National Federation Party (NFP). The NFP, at that time the opposition party in Parliament, relied on Indo-Fijian electoral support but had no links with the worker (trade union) movement.

NFU action characteristically featured a more militant approach to negotiations on price and conditions of supply, together with a struggle to influence, and ultimately control, the Sugar Cane Growers Council (the industry organisation of growers). The NFU affiliated with the FTUC and Chaudhry worked the farmer and worker union allegiance in the development of a power base in union, industry and eventually national politics. He progressed from being secretary of the FTUC to a Member of Parliament, leader of the Fiji Labour Party and in 1999, Prime Minister.

**The Tonga Growers Federation Inc.**

*Early stages*

The first attempt at organisation of Tongan growers occurred in 1993 when a few growers asked for assistance from Futa Helu (Director of ‘Atenisi Institute, an independent secondary and tertiary educational institution in Nuku‘alofa) and Akilisi Pohiva (people’s elected Member of Parliament and former president of the Friendly Islands Teachers Association). Both were leading pro-democracy activists. A committee was formed and an appointment made to meet the Minister for Labour. The Minister, though, refused to meet the group when it was realised that Pohiva was involved.

Meanwhile seven thousand tonnes of rotted squash increased the desirability and urgency of action. In 1994 the Friendly Islands Teachers Association (FITA) was approached for assistance. The then president, Tuamelie Komeatu, accepted the notion of his personal and FITA's organisational involvement. This led to assistance from the South Pacific and Oceania Council of Trade Unions (SPOCTU) and later the Commonwealth Trade Union Council (CTUC). Representatives of the Tongan Nurses Association (TNA) also offered support. The local, regional and international trade union movement was involved.

The first seminar—sponsored, funded and organisationally supported by SPOCTU—was held in Nuku'alofa in December 1994. Local self-employed squash growers made up the audience and the seminar was conducted in the Tongan language, with provision of oral and written translations of the SPOCTU representative's presentation.

The topics of the seminar and speakers were:

Trade Union Links – local and international	(Vice President of FITA)
Why Growers Should Form a Union in Tonga	Futa Helu ('Atenisi Institute)
What are Trade Unions and What Can a Growers' Association Do?	Raghwani (SPOCTU)

Responses from the seminar led to the formation of a (then Tongatapu-based) organisation. District committees were elected and these in turn elected a National Executive Board (president, 6 vice presidents, general secretary and treasurer). Saneli Tuinukuafe, a former priest, became general secretary. A constitution was developed and adopted and the Tongan Growers Federation (TGF) applied for registration under the Incorporated Societies Act. The application was accepted on 8 February 1995, and the group began a process of coordinating demands, and seeking means to express these demands to government.

Issues raised early in 1995 included demands that:

- government refrain from setting quotas for squash exports to Japan in 1996;

- government refrain from allocating quotas to specific exporting companies, instead allowing to the growers freedom of choice between companies;
- a floor price be established before planting (an amount was suggested); and
- payment for squash be made to growers after the produce cleared quarantine (rather than after sale, if any).

Over time, many other grievances were aired and many more demands articulated, including requests for the issue of a licence to export to Hawai'i; for permission to market baby squash; and for compensation for the losses of the non-exported squash of 1994. But the key, underlying thrust was the demand for attention to be paid to the voice of growers in determining matters affecting their livelihood and income.

During 1995 meetings were held between exporters and the Ministry to present the TGF position, with little observable positive outcome. Letters to government went unanswered, although a petition was accepted by Parliament. That, however, failed to produce any specific reaction: it was accepted merely in a formal sense. Nevertheless, some success did begin to emerge. In July 1996 government allocated \$1m to help reduce indebtedness of growers resulting from the 1994 debacle. The TGF, while not ungrateful, responded by requesting, and arguing for, a further \$1.5m for that purpose.

Throughout 1995 and 1996 organisation continued at three levels. First, meetings were held at the village level, spreading the organisation's message and refining the demands of growers. Second, efforts were made at the regional level to extend the franchise of the TGF beyond Tongatapu. Early in 1995 a branch was formed on 'Eua Island (close to Tongatapu). This geographic expansion provided a new issue for the TGF to present to government. A letter went to Cabinet requesting space in the new produce market in Nuku'alofa for growers from 'Eua, or the materials from the old market to be made available for 'Eua growers as a market shelter. These requests were accepted by the Minister of Police. Another small success. SPOCTU had funded a further organising workshop and a district meeting campaign. The third aspect of TGF activity at the time was an extension of the international connection, meeting with and seeking advice from an Australian fruit and vegetable exporter.

SPOCTU sponsored a further series of seminars in Vava'u in April 1996. Three of these were specifically for growers from different areas of Vava'u. One seminar, though, was a combined TGF, FITA and TNA meeting. According to an internal SPOCTU report, this meeting was consciously organised to facilitate familiarisation and cooperation among these local groups.

A noticeable feature of this programme was the extended involvement of local (FITA) union activists, TGF officers and other local Tongan activists. Over the two days, Raghwan (SPOCTU) presented two sessions and Krishna Datt, Fiji-based secretary of the Council of Pacific Education (COPE, the regional organisation of teacher unions), presented a further two papers. But Tongan leaders made eleven of the presentations.

Moreover, geographic expansion of the TGF brought a further need to broaden the federation's mandated role, this time to encompass the needs of growers of vanilla, kava and staple root crops in Vava'u. A single-purpose organisation had quickly broadened the representation base, albeit with a commonality of small grower representation to government.

### *The collective demand*

Several isolated gains have been noted above. The major issues necessitated further collective action. Parliament agreed to receive a list of growers' proposals for the 1996 season and these were submitted to the Prime Minister on 14 December 1995 (see appendix). These requests were an extension of the initial rationale that had provided the catalyst for TGF organisation.

Meetings did occur with officials late in 1995 and early in 1996 but virtually no progress was made. The inter-union cooperation and education programme had raised grower consciousness and expertise but civil servants and local business people lagged behind in absorbing the type of change—both procedural and substantive—that was envisaged by the TGF.

Conspiracy-style theories also emerged. Whilst only one exporting firm was owned by a noble, speculation exaggerated the significance of the influence of this connection, suggesting that it could explain the slowness and the more conservative 'no change' position of the authorities. It should

also be noted, however, that the pace of change in Tongan society in all respects has been limited: thus inherent conservatism is a plausible, even the more likely, explanatory variable. Some have regarded such adherence to older ways as a strong and positive virtue; others (including the pro-democracy campaigners) have decried this inertia.<sup>3</sup>

Grassroots organisation and consultation continued and a further set of collective demands (this time for the 1998 season) was developed during this process and refined at a meeting in April 1997. FITA, by virtue of the presence of the current president, was still involved. The same core issues were raised, including the following:

- Growers should be contracted to an exporter *for 1997 only*: should dissatisfaction arise, the grower should be free to change allegiance.
- Payment should be made to the grower after release of the produce from quarantine in Tonga, thus shifting the risk of no sale/damage from grower to exporter.
- Only exporters with sufficient funds (in banks) to meet this payment should be licensed by the Minister, to reduce, or preferably eliminate, repetition of past cases of default by exporters.
- Growers should be free to buy seeds, fertiliser etc. at the lowest available price, rather than be tied to the exporter/contractor as the sole supplier.
- Exporter licences should be issued only after consideration of complaints by growers.
- Growers should have access to CIF statements of exports to ensure fair treatment of price and payment.

It is noteworthy that this list expands the earlier list of core issues by the addition of assurance of exporter financial capacity and grower access to information. What is striking is the degree to which giving the growers a voice was a *process*, as the following account will demonstrate.

The agreed set of demands (requests) was to be forwarded by letter seeking tripartite discussion (Ministry, exporters and TGF) on these and related issues. Irregular meetings of the Ministry, the TGF and the Exporters Association did occur and some progress of substance was made. The major advances, however, were procedural and occurred prior to the final

drafting and submission of the document. A new Minister of Labour, Cooperatives and Industry welcomed the involvement of growers and promised action. The Minister agreed to investigate the extent to which exporters met or failed to meet obligations to growers. Further, he indicated that the results of the investigation would influence the allocation of 1997 (and future) export licences. Licences were to be given on a 'one ship cargo' basis. The Minister requested the TGF to draft a model agreement for the grower–exporter relationship.

The Minister also indicated (in advance) that a request for payment before sale could be part of the minimum conditions of any such model agreement. Payment could be expected after clearance of quarantine in Tonga. As a consequence, the requirement of an adequate capitalisation check on exporters became part of TGF demands. In one sense the 1997 demands became a statement of concessions emerging from informal discussions, followed by further requests. Grower collectivism was, it seemed, beginning to produce dividends.

Further progress continued in the 1998 negotiations for the 1999 season. In particular, the TGF request for grower freedom to select the exporter of choice was accepted. The proviso was that the grower must be free of debt. Growers with debt (for seed, fertiliser etc.) to a specific exporter would not be able to exercise a choice to shift. The TGF saw this as a strong incentive to become debt free.

## **Synthesis**

The story of the emergence, development and achievements (and by prediction, the future) of the TGF is a story of the inter-relationship of workers' unions and a farmers' union. It is a story of the inter-relationship of labourers and intellectuals. It is also a story of the political, social and working life of a significant group of Tongans, the commoner squash growers who, at the beginning of the story, were at the 'bottom of the pile'.

In his paper 'The logic of union growth', Joseph Shister (1953) provided a framework for the analysis of the emergence and development of labour organisations in specific and comparative cases. That framework, valued by a generation of labour scholars, focused on the three major explanatory components: the work environment, the socio-legal framework,

and leadership. An important sub-variable within the work environment was the proximity influence.

In the cases of Tonga, Fiji and the Cook Islands the work environment was one of small holder farmers. An actual or quasi-monopoly buyer and/or single market was the other aspect of that context. In two situations (Tonga and Fiji) the internal proximity of the worker union and farmer union afforded support. A regional connection existed in all three cases. The regional proximity of the Fiji connection was an extension of this support for the Tonga case. Both Raghwan (education officer for SPOCTU) and Krishna Datt (secretary of COPE) brought the specific expressions of their own Indo-Fijian heritage to the Tonga arena. SPOCTU brought experience of a decade of organising and education campaigns in many countries in the region, as well as knowledge of international standards.

It must be accepted that the socio-legal environment of Tonga in the 1990s was averse to 'challenge from below' and (specifically) to the emergence of collective activism. This proposition could be tenable if viewed in an absolute sense. But in a relative sense, in a dynamic analysis, the position is somewhat different. Change, albeit slow, was underway and the close association of the political pro-democracy activists provided the TGF with support. The key role of intellectual leadership is the link variable. The formation and actions of the TGF emerged from these broader rationales, and in turn became part of the future change.

Leadership, Shister argued, sets the course within the broad parameters of the more material contextual factors. In Fiji in the 1940s and the 1980s, the Cook Islands and Tonga evidence can be adduced to illustrate this quasi-truism. Two points are obvious. First, the search for a constituency is a key force influencing behaviour of potential leadership. Subsequently, the strength of that constituency to achieve a congruency of leadership and organisational goals becomes paramount. Mayer (1963) in his study of Indo-Fijian society used the phrase 'leader of the gang' to encompass this duality.

In the Cook Islands Albert Henry rejected collectivism after achieving success in the political arena. Leadership shifted to individual goals, or (to be more charitable) to an alternative delivery mode for the constituency. In Fiji in the 1980s and 1990s, the association of the National Farmers Union,

the broader trade union movement and the Fiji Labour Party, under Mahendra Chaudhry's leadership, took Fiji first to a new constitution and then to an historic, albeit subsequently truncated, electoral victory for the Labour Party and the People's Coalition.

In the Tonga case the leadership of the commoner squash growers has created a political constituency that can achieve benefits from collective action.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, that constituency could facilitate the achievement of wider goals of that leadership, the enhanced democratisation of Tonga society. Change will continue to be slow, in both the industrial and broader political fields within Tonga. This feature—a tolerance of, in fact a preference for, slow, considered reaction and change—has been noted earlier. It can be reinforced by a final relevant anecdote.

At the time of writing (1999) both FITA and TGF have extended their activism to wider industrial issues than have been the central focus of the paper. One such issue is the raising of political pressure for the promulgation of regulations to the Trade Union Act, and the enactment by Parliament of the Terms and Conditions of Employment Act. That Act would provide base cover for both private and public sector workers.

What is the relevance of this matter to the issue of Tongan society and inertia, or reluctance to embrace change? First, the Trade Union Act was passed providing conditions for registration, the rights and responsibilities and operative guidelines for trade unions. It was a standard British package of the time. It was passed as one condition in a deal for the British government to fund the construction of Queen Salote wharf. The year was 1964. The regulations that would make the act operative have never been presented to Parliament.

A revision of labour legislation was first mooted in 1979, and the Terms and Conditions of Employment Act first drafted by an ILO expert in 1980. Parliament rejected the draft. In 1988 it was reported that further attempts were to be made to redraft the draft. Such a redraft was available at an ILO seminar in 1993, and again presented to (but not passed) in Parliament in 1998. The intention is to present it again in 1999. The saga continues.

The case study of the TGF is one of organisation and development of a union of small farmers in a location that is, even today, geographically remote. Despite this, the forces of far greater magnitude associated with

world trade impinge on the day to day lives of its citizens. But as the TGF case study has clearly demonstrated, despite an innate internal inertia and the scale of external forces, collective action is occurring in Tonga, and succeeding.

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### **Notes**

At the time of writing, I was Visiting Professor, Department of Sociology, School of Social and Economic Development, the University of the South Pacific. Thanks to my many friends in Tonga who helped with the original field work and subsequent demands related to the development and completion of this paper. KWH

1 In the 1950s and 1960s the Country Party, the political organisation representing rural interests in the ruling conservative coalition government, did develop a pro-local manufacturing protectionism stance. In many ways this was to support the post-war goal of full employment. Significant schisms in the rural political approach were minimised by a heavy subsidisation of rural input costs and price support schemes for rural produce. This variation of policy did little to ameliorate relations, political or industrial, with the dominant core of urban labour.

2 See Roth (1977) for a detailed study of the person, the period and the key actions noted here.

3 Primary data for the Tongan section of this manuscript were collected by attendance at meetings, and through informal and structured discussion during field work research in Tonga. Respondents prefer to remain anonymous, but my thanks are not diminished in any way by the absence of names.

4 The Tongan system of land tenure has created some (potential) conflict of interest. Some civil servants, teachers and other salaried officials utilised a land entitlement to become small holder farmers as well. Some of these individuals became players in both parts of the relationships detailed in this paper.

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**Appendix–TGF list of requests for tripartite discussion**

Tonga Growers Federation  
PO Box 1092  
Nuku'alofa

14<sup>th</sup> December 1995

Baron Vaea  
Prime Minister of Tonga  
Prime Minister's Office  
Nuku'alofa

Your Honour

Tonga Growers Federation Incorporated wish to recommend the following proposals for consideration with your cabinet of Ministers with regards to planning for the approaching 1996 squash pumpkin season:

- (i) that the government refrain from limiting the squash pumpkin quota to the Japanese markets for 1996
- (ii) the government refrains from allocating quotas to exporters but that growers exercise their freedom to choose the exporter they decide to sell their commodity to
- (iii) that growers be given the liberty to register with the exporting company they choose and trust to associate with.
- (iv) that growers deal directly with the banks on their squash season and subsequently growers ought to freely choose to purchase their squash pumpkin seeds, fertilisers and chemical products from companies with lowest affordable costs.
- (v) that bank and growers collaborate to accelerate the approval of growers' loans in order to allow soil preparation to begin no later than early March 1996.
- (vi) that the government issues licenses to exporting companies on the ground that such companies have been proven to hold adequate funds, thus enabling them to remunerate squash growers immediately following the completion of quarantine requirements.
- (vii) that a license be issued to an exporting company willing to export squash pumpkins to Denpah Exports in Hawaii, thus utilising this marketing opportunity to further assist in the edification of the economy of our poor country.

Tonga Growers Federation Incorporated is only too grateful for the given opportunity and looks forward to a harmonious and prosperous economic venture in the approaching 1996 squash marketing season through tripartite collaboration and goodwill.

Yours respectfully

General Secretary  
Tonga Growers Federation

