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Local Solutions Increase Agricultural Resilience in FSM

In the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), communities in Yap State’s inhabited atolls and islands are often at risk of experiencing drought, as well as sudden onset disasters including earthquakes, flooding, tsunamis, and typhoons.

With support from USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the College of Micronesia–FSM established the “Adaptive Community Transformation (ACT) on Yap” project to strengthen community resilience to natural disasters. In addition to bolstering disaster risk management policy and water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure, the “ACT on Yap” program introduced a disaster-resilient agricultural technique developed locally by the College of Micronesia–FSM’s Cooperative Research and Extension (CRE).

CRS and CRE worked with 345 farmers in Yap to create and use cocopith, an organic potting soil made from shredded coconut husks, promoting a locally available and appropriate solution to encourage healthy crop growth.

Developed and used by CRE since 2006, cocopith retains water and nutrients especially well and promotes good air circulation for the development of strong, healthy root systems. Cocopith’s organic components are also more readily available and less expensive in FSM than commercially imported peat moss and other soil additives.

Using CRE’s portable, 10-horsepower husk shredders and innovative methods, CRS provided on-site training and technical support to the farmers to make cocopith, resulting in the growth of robust vegetables and trees. CRS also distributed cash vouchers worth \$160 for each farmer to purchase accompanying supplies, including garden rakes, seeds, trellising nets, and watering cans.

Since coconut husks—including partially decomposed husks—are already widely available throughout FSM’s islands, farmers involved with the “ACT on Yap” program reported satisfaction with adding cocopith to their planting regimen, expressing interest in using it more often.