



enviroed4all® - Family Farm Snapshots-

an educational resource at <http://familyfarms.enviroed4all.com.au/> for the

2014 International Year of Family Farming

“Feeding the world; Caring for the Earth”

Organic *fanua fa’a* farming, Mali, Samoa

Our Family

Talofa! Greetings from our organic family farm, on *fanua fa’a Samoa*, our customary (traditional) land, Mali, on the northern coastal strip of Upolu, about half an hour drive from Apia, the capital.

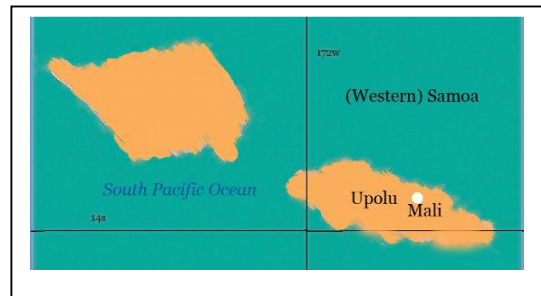
We live in a wonderful place to be **organic farming**. Samoa’s Prime Minister believes that we have **everything we need to grow good healthy food to feed ourselves.....** and we agree!

Our family farm has been registered as a certified organic farm in Samoa for over 10 years. We are proud of **looking after the land** and **providing great food**. We are trying to **help more people** do so.

Our family has **two parents** and **five children** from a toddler to two teenagers. We **grow many of the foods we need** to live well on our ‘garden’ family farm. We can **source seafood fresh** locally too.

I love making and sharing good food, for my family and visitors, especially using my garden and other local foods as much as possible. *(In the photos right of a meal for guests, only the wheat for the bread and rice are not ours or local foods.)*

Everybody in our family works in the garden, from time to time. My husband or other **males** in our extended family do the **heaviest work** e.g. clearing a new area for planting. Many crops continue on, but for introducing new plants, **planning crops and buying seed**, we have help from the **Samoa Women in Business Development Inc.**



Our Farm

Our farm is about 20 acres in size. It is a small sized farm, but we grow just enough from it for our needs. Being **fanua fa'a-Samoa** land, it has been family farmed for generations and will continue to be passed down.

The soil is rich and black, of volcanic origin, so very fertile.

As Samoa is just south of the Equator, our climate does not change much in the year. There is a wet season (November to April) and a dry one, for the rest of the year when there is less rain. So we have both rain and warmth – to fuel plant growth!

Our produce - 'Feeding the world' means 'Feeding ourselves'

It is expensive to buy healthy food here, but from our family farm garden, we grow so many different foods, we can eat well from it.

Ta'amu, False/Giant Taro, (*Alocasia macrorrhiza*) is a native plant, like, but taller than Talo, and only the stalks can be eaten. *In the photos right, you can see green stalks of the Ta'amu right, and red of the Taro, below. Look at the large leaves both have.*



Talo, Taro, (*Colocasia esculenta*) is a very important Pacific Island staple food. It is a root vegetable, like a potato or yam (*see photo right*). We plant **talo** out on to a cleanly weeded plot. It develops the best taste if it is left and not weeded for the first 2-3 months. About 6-8 months after planting, depending on the variety, it is ready to pull up and eat. We eat the root and the leaves.



Talo can be cooked in many different ways, for use in any meal of the day: boil, roast, steam, as chips (*photo right*) or put with coconut cream.



Fai (bananas) are another easy to grow traditional and common food. Once we have planted them, they need no care except for keeping the grass down by cutting it. They grow huge *aufai* (bunches) in many *taifa* (hands) of about 100 bananas (*see photo on last page*). We eat them fresh or cooked in the same ways as **talo**.

Niu, coconuts, are another traditional, common tree and food (*photos right with their tall trees and an unhusked coconut*). We have a small patch of them- about 25. We use them for ourselves and our pigs.



Ulu, breadfruit, is another traditional food, from a very large tree with huge fringe shaped leaves (*photo right. The bright pink plants in the foreground are our native flower- teulia, the Red Ginger- Alpinia purpurata*). Like the **niu**, they do not need much work. There are many varieties. They shoot up from the soil spontaneously. They are used and cooked like **talo**. The ball-shaped fruits are shaded under the large leaves (*photo below right*). When cooked, the white inside has a fibrous texture (*photo below far right*).



Some of our garden grows **vegetables**. We plant them at any time of the year... and harvest at any time too, depending on when we planted. We have many we can choose from and use in our daily meals:

- **Isalaelu (Samoan eggplants)**
- **Kapisi (cabbages)**,
- **Pi (peas)**
- **Tamato (tomato)** – also a ground vine vegetable. They are very sensitive, and rot with too much rain or crack with too much sunshine and heat.
- **pumpkins**, grow as a vine across the ground and even up trees. Pumpkin patches can be very large (*photo right*). Their big yellow trumpet shaped flowers (*photo below left*) develop into large green and white speckled balls (*photo below centre*), with a rich orange colour inside. (*as in the cooked pumpkin, photo below right*)



Following advice from the Women's Group, we have introduced some new crops:

- **Laupele**, Edible Hibiscus, (*Abelmoschus manihot*) - We planted this about 10-15 years ago. It has small leaves that are very healthy to eat as a vegetable. (Photos of flowers and leaves can be seen at http://www.floralencounters.com/Seeds/seed_detail.jsp?productid=92988)
- **Avoka**, Avocado, was planted for the first time on our land 5 years ago. It gave its first fruit last November to February. It is a vegetable you can use in many ways. (Photos of flowers, fruit and leaves can be seen at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg213>)
- **Rambutan**, is a lychee-like Asian fruit. It is very expensive at the market, so as we like to eat it, we have planted it too. (Photos of flowers, fruit and leaves can be seen at <http://www.rambutan.com/AdditionalPictures.htm>)

Every farm also has **meat** animals. They eat leftovers from our meals and cuttings off vegetables and rummage for food in the garden. We have poultry and pigs (*see photo right*). These are **important in Samoan culture** as they are shared in communal meals, **faalavelave** (family celebrations), feasts and visitors. There is a hierarchy of importance in the village for what part of the animal is given: the most respected people get the part around the ribs, while lesser people get legs.



The **hens** are of no particular breed. We have about five at the moment. The chickens grow up with their hen mother until about a year when they are needed. As well as in traditional cooking, they can be made into lovely soups (*see photo right*).



The **pigs** are cross-breeds too, descended from some brought by Europeans when they came to the Pacific. We have five breeding sows. Their piglets are grown up in the garden for four months until they are big enough for celebrations.

The pigs have additional foods besides the **scraps**. We grow a special **grass** for them, and sometimes get them **malt** (a waste product) from the brewery in Apia. What they most like to eat though is the white 'meat' inside coconuts – three **coconuts** per pig every day. They cannot get to this without our help. *In the photo right*, there is a stake on the right used to prize open the outer husks left beside it, a pig drinking water in the centre and a sow with the opened up coconuts on the left.



Sustainability - 'Caring for the Earth'

Organic farming

Our land can grow many food plants ... and weeds. *(Can you tell the difference between the weeds and the plants in the photo right?)* We use large bush knives to cut or pull the weeds out. We do not use any weed killers, so we continue the **tradition of organic production** handed down from our ancestors with the land.

Our soil is so rich that it does not need compost, but plant debris **decomposes** back into it. **Food wastes** are fed **to animals** which we will eat- pigs and chickens, whose **manure** goes onto the soil.

Dealing with pests

Our main pest is the **African Snail** *(see photo above right)*. It came here on ships and has invaded our land. These are **huge** snails – you would be surprised by how big they are – and they eat our crops. We go out and **collect** them, picking them up and pulling them off plants, but they are hard to kill. We put them in a bucket of **salty water** to kill them, which can be used repeatedly.

Providing for your own needs

The **freshest food comes from our garden**, like *fai*, *(photo right)*. We grow most of our own foods and buy others, like fish from fishermen, close-by. So we know where most of our food comes from.

I, HCT, give permission for the information from my interview to be used by J. Clark. Photos by J. Clark of the crops are from Upolu and have been approved by the family, but were not able to be taken on the actual farmland in this snapshot, and map by J. Clark. (cc) J. Clark 2014



For more information about family farming and the 2014 IYFF and IYSIDS go to:

<http://familyfarms.enviroed4all.com.au/family-farm-snapshots/> for more in this series of snapshots

<http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/> <http://www.familyfarmingcampaign.net> for the official IYFF sites

<http://www.sids2014.org/> and <http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?menu=14> for 2014 IY Small Island Developing States