

Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice

Volume 12, Issue 4

2018

Article 28

2019 STEP-UP SPECIAL ISSUE

Coconut Production for Food Security, Economic Development, and Health: A Comparative Study of Two Communities in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

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Coconut Production for Food Security, Economic Development, and Health: A Comparative Study of Two Communities in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia*

Macmillan Willyander and Nat Tuivavalagi, Ph.D.

Abstract

Coconuts (*Cocos nucifera*) have been beneficial on many Pacific islands for centuries, including the island of Pohnpei. There is a current effort in Pohnpei to more fully explore the potential of coconuts in raising living standards of the local people. This study explores the status of coconut production in two communities of Pohnpei - a community on the main island of Pohnpei and one on the outer atoll of Ngatik. It is hypothesized that coconut-related activities are less intensive on the outer islands due to a lack of marketing opportunities.

This study involves interviewing community members and 40 households that grow coconuts - 20 from the main island community and 20 from the outer island community. In addition, coconut trees and nuts in the two communities will be characterized according to internationally recognized procedures. Data will also be collected to assess the importance of coconuts for food security, economic development, and health.

Data collected so far clearly indicates that coconut indeed plays a significant role in the livelihood of the two communities. However, these data show that it is not true to say that coconut plays a more significant role on the main island. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected.

In conclusion, even though there is less sale of coconut in the outer island, the local outer islanders use a substantial amount of it in other ways especially as human food and drink, and animal feed. This shows that they should also be seriously engaged in coconut development activities.

KEYWORDS: Coconuts, food security; economic development; health; Pohnpei; Federated States of Micronesia

*The STEP-UP HS program is supported by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institutes of Health, R25DK78386-12.



Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice
Volume 12, STEP-UP Special Issue, Summer 2019, pp. 43
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