



Commercial Duruka Farmer Receives Minister's Commendation



Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy (right) with PS Agriculture Ritesh Dass (2nd from left), Head of Operations & Agriculture Services - Mr. Vinesh Kumar (left) and farmer Mr. Anand Kumar.

Mr. Anand Kumar of Johnson Road in Lautoka, one of Fiji's largest duruka farmers was acknowledged for his contribution and commitment to the sector.

Mr. Kumar was visited by Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy during his most recent tour of the Western Division, stopping by the 26-acre farm to commend him for the 25 years he had dedicated to cultivating the land.

Duruka is Mr. Kumar's primary commodity and he harvests it all year round.

During the main season, he harvests approximately 100-200 bundles of duruka per day, selling it on the roadside for \$5-\$8 per bundle.

His most consistent market is by the roadside, and he also supplied his crop to exporter - Produce Merchant before the global pandemic. "The borders are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and supply to the exporter has stopped at the moment, so I continue to sell my duruka on the roadside," said Anand.

Before the pandemic, he used to supply close to 300-400 bundles of duruka to the exporter during each harvest.

There are other commodities such as cassava, coconut, dalo, ginger, pineapple, yaqona, and 30 beehives on his farm.

Anand harvests honey every three months and sells about 200 bottles of honey per month on wholesale at \$18 per 750ml bottle.

He is preparing to harvest 30 tonnes of cassava, with Minister Reddy having made arrangements with the Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA) to buy his cassava, providing him with a readily available market for his cassava.

Hon. Reddy also advised him to make composts for his crops using Bacterium Culture to assist hastening the decomposition of organic materials in the compost pile.

"It's good to always have other crops planted to sustain the stability of my family because we do not know when natural disasters occur, anything can happen at any time so when something

happens to a particular crop that could affect revenue, there is always a backup source," said the pragmatic Mr. Kumar.

The Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Pacific Community (SPC) under the Improvement of Key Services to Agriculture (IKSA) project assisted Anand with a borehole for irrigation, as water supply was an issue that affected his farm during prolonged periods of dry spells experienced in the Western Division.

Mr. Kumar has achieved a great deal through farming, earning assets such as a digger, tractor, a 7-tonne truck, and a family car. He has also put his children through school with farming, as one daughter is now a nurse, and one who works as a school teacher with his two youngest still in secondary and primary school respectively.

The Ministry of Agriculture continues to assist Anand with technical advice, purchasing duruka planting materials from his farm for other farmers, and has also linked him to other duruka farmers in the Lautoka area.

Fiji Agro Marketing's SAUTU Restaurant Expands Menu



Sautu Restaurant during peak hours of service to the public.

Fiji Agro Marketing's popular SAUTU Restaurant, well known for its traditional Fijian cuisines, is now further expanding its Menu options.

It is no doubt that SAUTU Restaurant

is a popular spot for those around the Nausori/ Nasinu area, as it is always full during lunch hour (11am - 2pm) on weekdays and Saturday's. The Restaurant also receives patronage

from the people of the greater Suva area too. The SAUTU Restaurant's main ingredients are sourced from the Fiji Agro Marketing suppliers, ensuring that the restaurant uses Fijian Grown produce as much as possible.

The Current Menu

Steamed Fish with Miti

Miti is a sort of coconut milk relish that goes well with seafood. The SAUTU Restaurant uses freshly grated coconut for this recipe which means that it is healthier and tastier. This meal comes with boiled cassava. The type of fish used depends on the season and supply.

Fried Fish Lolo

Fried Fish Lolo is a classic traditional Fijian dish made by simmering fish in lolo - which is the Fijian word for coconut milk. Sliced onions and ginger are added to this delicious meal to enhance its flavours even more. The Fish Lolo served at the SAUTU Restaurant is

accompanied with boiled cassava. The type of fish used depends on the season and supply.

Sui

Sui is a Fijian word for bone. This meal contains meaty bone beef bought especially from Yaqara Pastoral Company Ltd, which is the best beef supplier in Fiji. The Beef is simmered in salt, ginger and garlic. It is served with soupy broth with a side of veggies, cassava and lemon.

Fish Batter

This fish coated with a crispy batter comes with cassava, coleslaw and our special SAUTU Restaurant dip. This is a dish which is highly popular with the kids.

What's new?

Beef Steak and Eggs with Cassava

This meal contains Beef seasoned with pepper, chillies, garlic bay-leaf and garnished with sesame seeds and spring onions with a side of two sunny-

side-up eggs with the option of either cassava, dalo or rice.

Mongolian Beef

A tasty dish which contains sliced Beef marinated in sweet honey sauce. It is then cooked with vegetables in a wok and served with rice.

Stir Fry Pork

Pork fried with sesame oil and vegetable carrots, French bean and capsicum and served with steamed rice

Pork Rourou

Stir-fried pork and rourou seasoned with sweet chilli sauce and served with rice/cassava or dalo.

Tea Time Snacks

The SAUTU Restaurant is now also offering traditional snacks such as fried cassava, fried dalo, bhajiya, fried sweet potatoes, fried uto, etc with dips to cater for our morning tea time customers. These snacks will be available on a rotating basis from 8.30am - 11.00pm, from Mondays - Saturdays.

YMCA Backs Home Gardening



Mr. Lee at the YMCA's Home Garden in the heart of Suva.

The silver lining amid the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic is the realization of people's potential.

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Suva took the brunt of the effects of the pandemic as they were forced to close the association's gym, which in turn affected the livelihoods of some of its members and staff due to social distancing restrictions.

Despite this, the association remained optimistic and turned a negative situation into a positive one by

engaging and encouraging their staff to take advantage of the Ministry of Agriculture's home gardening initiative.

YMCA General Secretary John Lee said the seedlings handed over by the Ministry of Agriculture fed the families during this difficult juncture in their lives.

"The Young Men's Christian Association exists to train young men, not only physically, but to become good able leaders.

"We also have health and fitness programmes that people from all walks

of life and age groups come to and make use of to be fit," said John.

"When the pandemic struck, the organization was the first to be affected resulting in its closure on the 19th of March," he lamented.

"It was also during this period that staff took their annual leave with full pay and when it finished, they took leave without pay."

"We would like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture for the timely distribution of the vegetable packages to the public, we acquired nine packages for our staff," said Mr. Lee.

"We did a little bit of community work around the compound and transformed what used to be the kids playing park into our backyard garden. When we got the seeds from the Ministry of Agriculture, we started around the time we had no pay and it has greatly helped our staff and our friends," said Mr. Lee.

Though they considered themselves farming amateurs, the workers of YMCA managed to plant cabbage, tomatoes, French bean, coriander, methi, sarso, and radish.

"Most of the workers were new to farming in general, even to me, this is the first time I've come across some vegetables such as sarso, methi and

radish," he said.

"This is our trial plots and I must say it is a pass for first-timers like us, it has served its purpose and fed our families and friends during a time when we worried about what to put on our tables

"We've divided the ones that we will consume while the other half we will keep and maintain for our planting material, which we will cultivate in the next round, and I would like to commend the Ministry for such a wonderful initiative."

Their workers have begun implementing best farming practices by making use of the little resources available around them.

"We are using bamboo for our tomatoes to hold the plants when it grows, as compared to the usual practice of strings that usually breaks causing damage to the tomatoes," he said.

"Bamboo will hold the plants together when it grows and will creep onto the branches of the bamboo for support, and why buy materials when you can use what is around you to save money."

The belief that taking care of nature and that this same care will be reciprocated is a driving force behind their actions to conserve it; "Nature is

alive, you look after it well and it will also look after you, it will produce what you expect it to whether you are an amateur or expert, it will give you results if you respect it," John said.

"Nothing is free, you need to work for that something and the results will amaze you. Never give up, if you fail the first time, keep trying," he said.

"When you work like our center and keep fit; when you work and realize the fruits of your labour you will have that inner joy that you have gotten something out of nothing, just from a bit of work."

"Engaging work in your backyard will not only make you eat healthy food and live a healthy lifestyle but it will also be combating Non-Communicable Diseases."

"When the gym re-opened on the 23rd of June, we were able to fathom the art of home gardening and farming in general, and it was through the Ministry of Agriculture's assistance that we were able to learn new things," he said.

The non-profit organization has also extended its little garden, planting other fruits and crops with spinach crawling along the fence and shrubs of the organization's compound.

