



Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, the Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy with Ratu Meli Saukuru during the iPlanted50 initiative held in Nadi.

REDDY SPEAR HEADS TREE PLANTING INITIATIVE FOR FIJI50

The Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, the Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy led a tree planting exercise in Dratabu, Nadi that was held simultaneously across 49 other villages to commemorate Fiji's Independence Day.

The Minister acknowledged the immense contribution of past leaders from 1874 till date including those from the United Kingdom.

"Since 1970 there have been a number of leaders in this country who contributed to the growth and development of Fiji to reach where it is today.

"Our first Prime Minister, the Hon. Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, our Statesman, our Governor Generals, our Presidents, Prime Ministers - all of them contributed to the contemporary Fiji that we see today," he reflected.

He also recognized the role of

leaders outside Government, whom he said, also gave their time, resources and energy to help develop the country.

"Our leaders outside Government; leaders of NGOs; Civil Society Organisations; formal and non-formal institutions, religious institutions like the Methodist Church, Sangam, Muslim League, Sanatan Dharam - these institutions have helped shaped Fiji and today after 50 years of independence we reflect on their contributions."

Dr Reddy said the task of institutional development would continue and it was important to ensure the security of future generations.

However, he said, the lesson that COVID-19 taught, was that food and nutritional security was critical, and aligned perfectly to one of the Ministry's strategic objective.

"I want to announce here in

Dratabu Village that as part of food and nutritional strategy we will be launching, the #iPlanted50 initiative where we will be planting 50 fruit trees in 50 villages.

"It is our contribution, it is your contribution to secure food and nutritional security for our children, their children, and future generations."

Taukei Navo, Ratu Meli Saukuru thanked the Hon. Minister and his team for coming to Dratabu Village and said the village was blessed to start off the next 50 years of Independence with Agriculture.

"We are so proud and blessed that one of the Government Minister Hon. Reddy is here in Dratabu.

"We have passed 50 years now. But we are looking forward to start off with Agriculture. That is the life for another 50 years," Ratu Meli said.

OVER 200 FARMERS IN BA SIGN UP WITH AMA

The contract signing of more than 200 farmers in Ba with the Fiji Agro Marketing Authority, illustrates Government's move towards promoting commercial agriculture.

Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, the Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy said the objective of commercial agriculture was to grow for the market rather than growing for consumption and the surplus then sold to the market.

The Minister informed the farmers who attended the signing recently (7.10.20) that there were three types of commercial agriculture models.

"The first model was those commercial farmers that grew the crop, processed, and exported it.

"The second model, involves growing, harvesting or processing

the crop, exporting it and contract farmers as well to secure supply and volume.

"The third model of which AMA follows, is where farmers are contracted to plant a particular crop. AMA then buys these crops," he said.

Dr Reddy said when farmers signed the contract with AMA it did one of two things; guaranteed the price the crop would be sold for; and secondly, it guaranteed a market for farmers.

"With this contract, the day you sign you know the price. That's the base price.

"With that price you can plan your production, plan your cost scenario; you can do the entire production planning.

"That's the notion of contract

farming; it guarantees you a market," he said.

The Hon. Minister also announced that he had come to an agreement with the CEO of AMA, Mr Alvin Sharma.

"I spoke to Mr Sharma and if he finds there was a good period, then AMA will top up on the contracted base price, a special bonus price. But it is only temporary and will depend on the market situation," he said.

He said this was the assurance that AMA was giving to farmers that all commodities contracted for would be bought at a certain price for the next three years.

"Over time, we want to continue to expand and develop the market."



Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, the Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy with farmers after signing the contract in Ba

BA FARMERS RECEIVE SOIL HEALTH CARDS



Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, the Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy with farmers who received their Soil Health Card in Waiwai, Ba.

Farmers in Ba were the recipients of the second lot of soil health card distribution early this month.

While officiating at the event in Waiwai, Ba the Minister of Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, the Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy revealed that Fiji was the second country in the world to have the soil health card.

He thanked the officers working at Koronivia Research Station for working tirelessly in designing Fiji's own version.

"I want to thank the farmers today who took a keen interest in getting the Soil Health Card for their farms and urge all the other farmers to come forward.

The Minister said for the

moment, the distribution focused on large commercial farmers before the attention would turn to medium-sized and small farmers.

He said having a soil health card was important.

"A Soil Health Card will help you critically review it by allowing us to take soil samples from your farms.

"The Soil Health Card will tell you basically, the nutrient status of your farms and how healthy your soil is for plant growth.

"Based on the important information contained in the Soil Health Card, you can better plan your agricultural activity; the crops not to plant; where to plant; and how to plant," he said.

Waiwai, Ba farmer, Mr Iqbal Azam Ali said having a Soil Health Card was useful.

"The Soil Health Card I have, shows what is present in my soil, what fertilisers I should not put in the soil, and what things I should put in the soil to make it better in years to come.

"Basically, I am happy to get this," he said.

Mr. Ali is a pineapple farmer who has 50 acres of land dedicated to the fruit, from the total 100 acres of land under his lease.

Just from the last five years of been a full time farmer, Mr Ali has grown his assets which include his recently built home, a land cruiser, a mini bus and a tractor.