

## Agriculture sector continues to stamp its mark in the Fijian economy: Dr. Reddy



A local dalo plot.

The Agriculture Sector continues to record its positive and upward trend following the recent release of the 2019 National Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics.

Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy said the official release once again demonstrated the sector's significant role to growing the Fijian economy.

"It's fantastic news indeed to know that the agriculture sector achieved positive growth in 2019 compared to 2018.

"Agriculture was identified as one of the industries that contributed positively to economic growth, unfortunately, it together with other sectors were not enough to compensate for the declines

recorded in others," he said.

Dr. Reddy said the agriculture GDP, exclusive of growing sugarcane grew by 5.5 percent.

"The higher real growth was attributed to yaqona and taro. Yaqona and taro contributed 29 percent or \$208.2m and 7 percent or \$52.9m respectively to the total agriculture GDP," he said.

He said yaqona was again identified as a major contribution to the growth of the sector and the commodity to mark as a possible major contributor to Fiji's National GDP in the near future if production continued to increase and price remained constant.

He said, crop commodities showed a positive GDP growth rate of 9.2 percent, which excluded the growing of sugarcane. However, a

decline in livestock commodities of 4 percent was recorded in 2019 compared to 2018 mainly due to impact of Brucellosis diseases which affected the dairy industry.

"There was an increase in GDP contribution from 5.6 percent or \$597.2m to 5.9 percent or \$630.2m in 2019, exclusive of sugarcane," he revealed.

The Minister said the statistics were again proof that agriculture would cushion the global impact of the pandemic of COVID-19 and it was critically important that all attention should focus on growing this sector in the different areas, which would in turn take care of the other aspects of the economy that were lagging behind.

## Agriculture exports relate to Fijian Made-Buy Fijian Campaign

In 2019, more than 87,000 farmers produced approximately 327,000 metric tonnes of agricultural commodities compared to 315,000 metric tonnes in 2018.

This was revealed by the Minister for Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport, the Hon. Faiyaz Koya while officiating at the Western Agriculture Show in Nadi on Wednesday (28.10.20).

He said for the past five years, agriculture's contribution to the GDP averaged around 4.2 percent.

"In 2019, agriculture (only Crop and Livestock) contributed around \$725.8 million," he said.

Hon. Koya said Fiji's agriculture exports continued to grow in the first half of 2020 with exports of fresh and chilled commodities growing by 15 percent in comparison to 2018.

"This growth is attributed to Kava exports to the US, Taro to New Zealand and Australia, Tumeric and Ginger to the US, Spices to the

Netherlands and fresh produce exports to Pacific Island Countries."

Hon. Koya said it was important to maintain consistency of supply and quality of produce to enable Fiji to maintain existing markets and explore new ones.

"With quality comes packaging and branding. This is why, I want to use the platform of the Agriculture Show to remind you of your very own national brand the 'Fijian Made-Buy Fijian' initiative.

"The Fijian Made brand provides opportunities, especially for farmers to get brand recognition locally and globally," he said.

The Minister said there was great potential for more Fijian farmers to join the Campaign and strongly encouraged them to do so, if they had not already.

He said being licensed as 'Fijian Made' or 'Fijian Grown' provided leverage to marketing farmers produce in the domestic and global market.

"Over the years, the licensed businesses have benefited from this consolidated branding approach. It has given them a national brand platform, which depicts quality, authenticity and standards."

"As part of the national branding, the Fijian Trade Commissions based in the critical markets, such as Australia, New Zealand, China, the United States and Pacific Island Countries, provide technical support and guide businesses on procedures to be met to enter the markets," he said.

Hon. Koya said the 2020 Agriculture Show highlighted the need for a collaborative effort to ensure that Fiji sustained its food system and a timely reminder that coordinated actions, today would definitely determine the country's future.

The Western Agriculture Show was at Koroivolu Park, Nadi with the National Farmers Awards held on Friday.



(From L-R) Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport, the Hon. Faiyaz Koya and Assistant Minister for Agriculture Hon. Viam Pillay at the 2020 Western Agriculture Show at Koroivolu Park, Nadi

## MoA North Agriculture Show a Success for Fiji Agromarketing



The Farm Advisor Mr. Wailena Vugakoto attending to the farmers during the Agriculture show at Subrail Park in Labasa.

The Fiji Agromarketing Authority (AMA) received positive response from farmers during the 2020 Northern Agriculture Show.

The two-day event was held at Subrail Park in Labasa and was opened on Wednesday 21st October 2020 by Chief Guest, Minister for Fisheries Hon. Semi Koroilavesau. The Fiji Agromarketing representatives at the show were overwhelmed with the inquiries that were received at their booth during the two-day event. Farmers turned out in numbers to the AMA booth that was represented by Farm Advisor Wailena Vugakoto and the Fiji Agromarketing Northern Team.

Mr. Vugakoto had the opportunity to assist forty-two (42) farmers that came from different parts of Vanua Levu to inquire about the role of AMA to farmers and also receive clarification on the processes

involved with respect to produce production at the Fiji Agromarketing Authority. A total of seventy-five (75) farmers from both the Central and Northern Division have been assisted and informed of the services offered by the Agricultural Marketing Authority.

Since its establishment in 2004, the Fiji Agromarketing has expanded its operations to Vanua Levu in a bid to access remote parts of Vanua Levu and purchase from local farmers to supply to domestic and international markets.

This has allowed for AMA to stimulate economic activities for the rural population that solely depend on agriculture and marine based resources for their livelihoods.

The Fiji Agromarketing collection center in Savusavu was opened in 2009 and employs 21 personnel from neighbouring communities.

AMA has representative field officers in Savusavu, Bua, Wainikoro, and Taveuni.

With this strong presence in these remote areas, it allows farmers to have accessibility to consultation with field officers and work with field officers on purchasing their produce once it is ready for harvesting.

Fiji Agromarketing Authority is fortunate to be part of the Ministry of Agriculture team to the North as it allowed the AMA and the Ministry of Agriculture team, along with other key stakeholders to work holistically in creating awareness on an industry that has great potential to grow in the coming years.

The Fiji Agromarketing was also present at the Western Agriculture Show from Wednesday 28th-30th October 2020 at Koroivolu Park, Nadi.