

Manik's Dairy Farm – Gone in One Fell Swoop



Mr. Naresh Manik at his dairy farm in Deepwater, Korovou, Tailevu

For two decades the Manik Dairy Farm of Deepwater, in Korovou, Tailevu has produced fresh, nutritious milk since 1999.

The farm belongs to the Manik family and is managed by their patriarch, 62-year-old Naresh Manik, through the kind support of his wife, son, and brother-in-law.

Their day usually begins at the crack of dawn, sometimes earlier than that, and finishes before dusk, and as the farms' stewards, the care of the farm has been etched in their lives and has become a norm.

"I have been on this farm for 62 years now and started with dairy farming in 1999 through the Community Development

Framework (CDF) of the Ministry of Agriculture," he said.

"This has always been my ambition and my calling and it is also here where I want to retire, doing what I have always loved and farming goes as far back in my family as I can remember."

Manik wakes up to a long list of chores that needs to be completed before breakfast, including milking at 4 am, feeding the cows and calves, and cleaning up the corral.

"I treat them like I treat my children, they are the first thing I remember every morning and last thing I think of before going to sleep," he said.

"Sometimes I have a sick calf or heifer

or a cow giving birth, which I'll need to take care of until about 8:30 or 9 in the morning.

Often after breakfast break, Mr. Manik goes back out to work at around 10 am on his farm to maintain his crops, adding fertilizer when required, and doing maintenance works on his infrastructure and equipment.

By 2 pm, it's back to the barn for more feeding, milking, and cleaning, the last chore of the afternoon before the paddock gates close for the day.

The commercial dairy farmer produced 150 liters per day from his 150 milking stock with the assistance of milking machines.

However, all this is a stark reminder of what he has lost, the 21 years of milk production on the Manik farm collapsed when Tropical Cyclone Harold hit Fiji in April of 2020.

The tornado that came with TC Harold changed the family's farm routine and turned their farming tradition on its head, leaving the family traumatized.

In one fell swoop, the Manik Dairy Farm was gone, a reminder of the ruthlessness of the severe tropical cyclone and mother nature.

"On this morning, my wife made me tea before the usual milk routine at 4 am and what transpired afterward all happened in the blink of an eye," recalled Mr. Manik.

"I am still trying to recollect all that happened because it happened so fast, my family members all ran out for shelter while I lost consciousness," he said.

"Like other natural disasters, I would

have time to secure my stock and machines but for this one, time was not on my side."

Piecing together what transpired that morning, Naresh can only recall that all he and his family could do was watch as their life was uprooted just as easily as breaking a twig.

"When all had cleared, I honestly had no idea how I would rebuild my life and farm but because life must go on, I began with my cows and secured a place for shelter," he said.

"Although I have sustained a wound to my face as a result of a flying mirror fragment, I am grateful that my stock fatality was not high and my family members are all safe."

Seven (7) of his calves died, the milking shed, milking machines and connecting power lines all were damaged due to tornado.

"Because heifers need milking, we had to resort to milking manually with the milk production now decreasing to 60 liters a day with the quality dropping from premium grade to low quality, and that is subject to rejection," he said.

"We cannot whine for long and expect things to return to normal overnight, we have to find our way around it and pick up the pieces from where the tornado had left us, but yes, we will surely revive the farm to its original status, that I am sure of," he confidently said.

The Ministry of Agriculture, following initial damage assessments, has provided Mr. Manik with assistance. Naresh received 4x25kilograms mill mix and 4x25kilograms coconut mill to help sustain his stock for the time being with further assistance to progressively be delivered in phases.



One of Mr. Manik's dairy calves that survived the Tornado

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE FOOD SECURITY & AGRICULTURE GROWTH AND EXPANSION STRATEGY

Commercial Agriculture Ventures

Secure land tenureship for investors in partnership with iTLTB

Provide initial planting material at zero cost to investor for commercial farming

Construct, upgrade, or maintain farm roads and drainage at zero initial cost for large scale commercial farmer

Organise and secure local and overseas market for commercial farmers

Provide full technical support and advisory for large scale farmers, including supply of nutrient enhancing bacterium medium organic culture in substitute for inorganic fertiliser

Securing Village Nutrition

Provide each village with a set of 3 by 12 fruit tree seedlings to bolster their nutritional requirements

Provide full support to village by delivering the seedlings, overseeing planting and provision of required training on good husbandry practises

Long Term Food Security

To further strengthen food security, every single household to receive:

1. One **Coconut seedling** which has numerous health benefits when fully developed.
2. One **Drumstick seedling** which is a highly nutritious superfood.
3. One **Breadfruit seedling** which is rich in fibre.
4. Two **Tivoli cuttings** (wild yam variety) which is an annual crop with natural regeneration ability and is recognised as a climate-resilient crop.

Establishment of Nurseries and Orchards

Establish fruit tree orchards across the country, with commodities such as;

Breadfruit **Mango**

Banana **Guava**

Dragon fruit **Avocado**

Establish a strong, secure, sustainable and extensive seed bank with large nurseries in Fiji

National Rice Programme

Secure 24,000 acres of farming land to achieve 100% self sufficiency in rice

Provide 30Kg of rice seeds to every sugarcane farmer to dedicate one acre plot to rice cultivation

Provide 30Kg of rice seeds to every non-sugarcane farmer to dedicate one acre plot to rice cultivation

Provide 30Kg of rice seeds to every village in Fiji for community-based rice farming

Provide small portable rice mill for clusters to allow processing of rice for home consumption

Farming a Profession

Introduce **contractual farming** for terms of **3 years** with defined commodity, quantity, supply and farm price to be paid to the farmer.

Farmer will get interest free advance to support their farming activities, netted against final payment to farmer for produce

Contract scheme application to current and new farmers, or anyone with access to land and passion for farming

All contract farmers will be eligible to become FNPF members.

AMA will facilitate deductions in consultation with farmers and FNPF.

Ordinary farmers will become members of FNPF, a first for Fiji.