



The Cocoa Man of Naveicovatu



Timoci Bainivalu (left) with Agriculture Staff Mr. Ilaisa Gonebure in Naloto Naitasiri.

Timoci Bainivalu is the embodiment of determination and strong will as he trusted the cocoa industry would once again be at its pinnacle.

He held on to hope for the revitalization of the cocoa industry following its demise before the turn of millennium and has since then continued to cultivate cocoa with an earnest resolve that the industry would be restored to its former glory.

Growing up in the glory days of cocoa, 68-year-old Timoci Bainivalu of Naveicovatu Village, Naloto in Naitasiri knew the advantages it had brought to his family. "We grew up with cocoa."

"My family operated from acres of land filled with cocoa trees and that was before the construction of the highway, I was allowed in the cocoa field at the age of fourteen and I helped my father in the pruning and

the maintenance of the cocoa trees," he said.

"Land was subdivided here for the development of cocoa and everyone in the village were cocoa farmers," he recalled.

His family uses 2½ acres for farming and cocoa took up 1 acres with a total of 450 plants in a 10x10m spacing.

"We were enthralled in this commodity that we would take cocoa to school as a snack or have it around the village as a meal which got our stomach full," smiled Timoci.

Timoci laments the advantages and disadvantages they face from farming this commodity.

"The difficult bit was the constant maintenance of the cocoa trees, collection of the pods was easy but the husbandry practice was sometimes hard and the collection of

firewood for the drying of the beans, that was really difficult work," he said.

"Now I would tell my relatives, had I continued with that practice of collecting firewood for drying, I would be dead already but I am grateful that time allowed us to now use sunlight for drying."

Things took a turn for the worst when the Black Pod outbreak affected most cocoa farms resulting in declined production.

With the intervention of the Ministry of Agriculture, the then teenager was given a responsibility in the research for Black Pod

Disease eradication.

"Although Black Pod caused the decrease in cocoa beans supply from the farmers and it affected my family too, I was delighted that I was given a task to perform," he said.

"Being a son of a cocoa farmer and seeing the devastation it caused my family, I was happy that the job I was assigned to do would help find a solution and contribute to the eradication of the Black Pod disease, and to top it all off, I was ecstatic when I was told I would be getting paid," he said laughing.

Timoci said the Researchers from the Ministry of Agriculture chose their farm for trial, dividing the cocoa trees into two sets of 12 lines of 12 trees.

"As part of the experiment, one set of 12x12 was looked after with records of R for Rat, B for Black Pods and U for Usual was done fortnightly

with manure added while the other was left unattended and they would compare and analyze," he said.

A solution was found and farmers were instructed on methods to use to lower the chances of their cocoa farms infected by the Black Pod.

"My family kept farming cocoa after this, we were taught on fermentation and drying and roasting and supplied to the then National Marketing Authority (NMA) for \$0.35c for wet beans and \$0.70cents for dry beans," he said.

Wainibuka recorded the highest number of production leading to the formation of the Wainibuka Cocoa Growers to assist farmers in the cocoa industry.

"The formation of this group helped farmers and because of what the industry was facing in terms of price, this was a way to air our grievances," he said.

"As the number of members increased, my elders decided that we form a separate group and name it the Tokatoka Rara Cocoa Growers."

The newly established group operated as the Wainibuka Cocoa Growers, buying cocoa from farmers and selling to NMA and fighting for the rights of cocoa farmers.

"We the cocoa farmers did everything from fermentation to drying to roasting and some cracking and with so much work done to reach standard expectations only to be faced with low prices, it left us disappointed," said Timoci.

"Despite all the challenges, we continued to farm because of the impact it has made in our lives and because it grew well in our province

and was a potential steady commodity for us and we only wanted the buying price to increase because of the hard work it involved.

After the fall of the industry and the devastation of Tropical Cyclone Bebe, despite the lost interest and the reality of ageing, Timoci never lost hope and kept the tradition of farming cocoa.

"After most of our cocoa trees were destroyed and the construction of the highway I planted a few crops but then decided again to re-look at cocoa and that's when I started planting hybrid cocoa plants in addition to the nucleus ones," he said.

"After most farmers ventured into other crops and left cocoa unattended because of price fluctuations which though it kept bothering me, I held on to that little hope and saying I must try one more time."

"Cocoa put my siblings through school, provided for our needs and wants and assisted us in the building of our homes and contributions to the Church and the Vanua and took us to places we never thought we'd go to," he reminisced.

Timoci harvests twice in a year and sells his wet beans for \$1.20 per kilogram and \$7.00 per kilogram for dry beans and is at the moment a dry bean supplier to buyers.

Through the Ministry of Agriculture's Cocoa Revitalization program, Timoci was a recipient of cocoa seedlings under the Cocoa Development Program having received 180 cocoa seedlings and fertilizers.

Cocoa
(Theobroma cacao)



Recommended Varieties:
- Amelonado
- Trinitario
- Keravat

Cropping season:
October - April

Seed Rate:
2500 plants/ha

Planting Time:
Can be planted all year around but best planting time:

Dry Zone: Mid September to December

Wet Zone: October to December.

COCOA

Spacing	Fertilizer/Manure	Weed Control/Management	Disease Control/Management	Insect Control/Management	Harvest/Yield/Food Value	Disaster Risk and Climate Change tips
Between Rows: 2m	Soil analysis should be done before planting.	Alternatives for Paraquat	Black Pod: Spray with at 60g/15L of water every 2 weeks.	Green Semi Hopper: Spray Acephate 75% a.i at 20g/15L of water (Acephate is sold as Orthene & Sunthene)	Harvest @ 3 years after planting.	Plant windbreak trees nearby to protect plants against high winds.
Plants within Rows: 2m	Super Phosphate: Apply 10g per plant, basal application at planting.	Samurai at 75ml per 15L knapsack or Glufosinate Ammonium 90-150 ml/15Lknapsack or Target 10ml/15L knapsack or Za hercide 20-40ml/16 L knapsack. Application done after planting Or	Black Pod: Plant cocoa not less than 3m apart. Remove disease pods as often as possible and bury them. Amelonado is more resistant than any other varieties. Copper sprays every 2 weeks are useful during main season.	Green Semi Hopper: Spray Acephate 75% a.i at 20g/15L of water (Acephate is sold as Orthene & Sunthene)	Yield: 2.5 tonnes/ha Wet beans. Or 2.0 tonnes/ha Dry	Can be a good source of income after disaster.
Planting Materials: Select healthy and disease free as planting materials.	NPK: 13:13:21 200kg/ha @ 2 split application, @ 4 months and 8 months. Apply fertilizer around the plant based on canopy diameter. Soil analysis should be done before fertilizer application.	Glyphosate at 75ml /15L of water Ring weeding [1 m around plants to control black ants			Food Value: Source of Thiamin, Niacin & Vitamin B12.	Consider drainage in low line areas, grow on higher grounds to avoid flooding impact. Good for climate change mitigation as it will absorb CO ₂ .