



## CHILDREN'S WELFARE DRIVES DAD TO REVIVE DAIRY BUSINESS



Savenaca Nawaisalcake's dairy shed under construction

A father's love for his children has no barrier and this is portrayed in the remarkable farming journey of a father's devotion to his son and how their bond has not only inspired relatives but also farmers in the greater Wainibuka area.

Being the youngest son in the family of seven siblings, Savenaca Vakavotu Nawaisalcake, 25, graduated with Diploma in Agriculture from the Fiji National University's College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests and is amongst those still in search for work.

Determined to give his son every opportunity in life, his father Solomoni Nawaisalcake ventured into dairy farming building a milking shed for his son.

The father and son are amongst the seven new established dairy farms in Wainibuka, an initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture under the Dairy Industry Support program of the Animal Health and Production Division.

Rekindling the dairy idea that spurted from his father's paddocks in his younger days, Solomoni Nawaisalcake who has a stock of approximately 50 cows on 15 acres on the Mataqali Navunibua land is more than happy to revive this

industry with his son.

The 63-year-old father grew up on a ranch in the fertile alluvial soil region of Nayavu in Wainibuka with its richness in agricultural activities.

He learnt a great deal from his upbringing, hustling for survival and his love for the land included planting dalo and banana with the addition of dairy for home consumption.

"I remember rounding the flock for my father growing up and I would witness the revenue my father would get out of farming."

"It paid for education, for family and social obligations and the other advantage is the availability of food to the family, we would never run out of food," he said.

"While growing up we had the land to toil and as a young man helping in the paddocks milking the cows, ideas would often surface on the possibility of expanding our dairy farm but that didn't really go far," said Solo.

"Most of my suggestions would be brushed off by my father and went with the winds as we did not really know how and what to do then," said Solo.

Over the years, the ideal

opportunity of investing in dairy resurfaced when the Ministry of Agriculture strengthened and expanded dairy in Wainibuka.

"I would like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture for this initiative, we have the potential and because we have been enlightened on the importance and how we can generate income from it then I decided to re-venture into dairy," he said.

"There is abundance of milk at home that our animals are also drinking milk and milk flowing is often put to waste."

Surviving on the crops and livestock they tended, the Nayavu man imparted the same agricultural principles to his family.

"I grew up in a farming environment and I know potential when I see one and this is a great opportunity which I know will benefit my family."

In the wake of their livestock rearing, cattle are often also sold for needs and wants and also used for meals in functions."

Parents will always have a soft spot for their children despite the many challenges they put them through and his fatherly love is bestowed upon the youngest of his three children.

"When the establishment of new dairy shed was introduced by the Ministry, I thought it would be best if a milking shed be specifically built for Savenaca to help accompany the dairy quest," he said.

"Save studied Agriculture, engaged in various agricultural courses and has graduated and while waiting for a job could best practice what he has learnt here on the piece of land."

"And I am happy that I am able to pursue what used to be an idea then and I have decided that the youngest of the boys take over the rein in dairy farming for

commercial."

Having experienced the benefitting outcome of livestock rearing from a young age, Solomoni shared his sentiments of its advantages.

"Compared to crops, livestock during a natural disaster can be relocated and saved from being affected and the fatality rate could be low compared to the damages to crops which you will have to restart from scratch to rebuild," he said.

"Cattle will only be affected when they are not fed properly and grazing should be monitored as that contributes greatly to the production of each milking cow," he said.

"For us on this new journey we have mapped out our grazing area and have started to consult in regards to the feed and we are also reserving areas where they can graze," said Solo.

"Fencing has also been considered as cattle are fond of damaging crops and farms and with this dairy venture has enabled us to look into a much commercial angle of things," he said with a smile.

Solomon has such a big heart that he has opened his paddock gates for grazing to other livestock farmers and the milking shed to

those that need milking as he believes assisting others will surely return be returned someday.

"Although we have the tausala variety dalo, cassava, cucumber and other vegetables on the farm, this dairy farming that we have ventured into came at the right time as we have the potential and we know we can produce quality milk," he said

"You might get disappointed not getting where you wanted to be but always remember, farming can also be a substitute for the work you most dreaded for," Solo said with a smile.

"Although I did not go far in terms of academic, I knew what the land did for us and through it I want my children to be better than me and through it I also provided for my children," he said.

"I want my children to see what the land could provide to them, money is not always in urban areas but is also right here in the rural area, in the land," he said.

"Life is all about learning, do not think you have been practicing farming or have reared livestock for a long time you know everything, you might know a lot but with the modernized world we are in, it is better we also ask questions and move to commercial farming and elevate it to another level."



Mr. Solomon Nawaisalcake.

## NA MOMO LEVU NA TUI SABETO SIGNS WITH AMA

Na Momo Levu Na Tui Sabeto has become the latest commercial farmer to sign up with Agro Marketing Authority.

The signing which took place at Sabeto Village on Wednesday (10.9.20) saw the Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment the Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy officiating at the signing between AMA CEO Mr. Alvin Sharma and representing Na Momo Levu Na Tui Sabeto was his younger brother Ratu Josaia Nabukatatavata.

"Today, we are here to support the initiative. I want to thank the Vanua o Sabeto for being part of that commercial cluster farming model," the Hon. Minister said.

"I want to thank Na Momo Levu Na Tui Sabeto for taking leadership in joining the Sabeto cluster and becoming or contributing towards agriculture growth and development."

The signing means that Na Momo Levu Na Tui Sabeto is now contracted to produce about six acres of duruka, tavioka and other cash crops to AMA, confirms Ratu Jo.

Dr. Reddy said the advantages of been part of a commercial cluster farming model were that farmers would grow similar crops; all would share in the same training and knowledge; and there would be consistency in supply and quality for export.

He said this model was applicable to Fiji.

He further stated that agriculture was a sector that did not require too much skills or even an academic qualification.

"Agriculture will provide you with a hands-on skills learning environment."

The Hon. Minister said while other sectors closed down due to the COVID-19 earlier this year, it

was only agriculture that continued and even gained momentum in terms of a notable increase in agriculture production.

"It was agriculture that kept the economy going. It was agriculture that gave hope to a lot of households that they can survive and pass through this particular crisis."

"Agriculture became the fall back for the nation for a lot of households that lost their jobs in the formal sector."

Dr. Reddy said it was interesting to observe the urban population engaging in agriculture practices.

"Interestingly, when you pass through the Suva-Nausori corridor, you will see that a lot of people have dug up their front yard or lawn and converted it into vegetable gardens. Those front yards that used to be empty are now filled with vegetables."



Ratu Josaia Nabukatatavata (yellow Bula shirt) receives the contract from Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, the Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy in Sabeto on Wednesday.