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FARMERS SIGN UP FOR FNPf'S VOLUNTARY MEMBERSHIP SCHEME



Minister for Agriculture - Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy hands Rajjeli Lawaca of Naivorati farmers cluster her FNPf membership certificate.

Twelve members of mataqali Naivorati farmer cluster in Lomaivuna, Naitasiri have become members of the Fiji National Provident Fund's (FNPf) Voluntary Membership Scheme.

These farmers, who had initially signed on as contractual farmers of the Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA), now have the opportunity to build up their savings for their pension through the FNPf's scheme after they officially became members of the superannuation fund last week.

While officiating at the event in Lomaivuna, Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy said it was the Government's priority to ensure inclusive growth, an aspect of which involved making every farmer socially and financially secure before retirement.

"Regardless of your geographical location and social status, the Government's development policy must address everyone's concerns. Oftentimes we'd receive complaints

from those living in rural communities regarding the lack of social security, and the Government has stepped up to address that concern.

"Following Cyclones Winston, Josie, Harold and the current COVID-19 pandemic, whereby the members benefited from their FNPf fund, the majority of the farmers were not eligible for these benefits because they are not members of the institution," said Dr. Reddy.

So far the Ministry of Agriculture and the AMA have signed contracts with farmers of Nubu Farms in Nadarivatu, Naivorati Farms in Lomaivuna, Naitasiri; Sabeto Cluster Farms in Nadi, Waito Farms in Tailevu and Nataleira Cluster Initiative at Dawasamu, Tailevu.

"Given the nature of the agricultural product and its importance in securing the future for members, AMA through the Ministry's support will continue to encourage farmers/suppliers to become voluntary members. We want all farmers to become members of the

FNPf to secure your future."

"This will ensure funds are set aside for retirement purposes. They should be able to access health, education, housing and other social benefits that are currently enjoyed by compulsory members," said Dr. Reddy.

The Voluntary Membership Scheme is an inclusive retirement savings arrangement that targets individuals (including farmers), who have made enormous contributions towards the informal sector.

"Together we will continue to pursue the notion that being a member of the FNPf Voluntary Membership Schemes will be the way forward for our farmers/ clusters while taking advantage of the significant benefits and incentives it provides," said Dr. Reddy.

Meanwhile, head of mataqali Naivorati, Mr. Tomasi Nasuikau praised the initiative as it would help secure the future of members of the mataqali.

KAVA TASK FORCE GAINS MOMENTUM TO GET INDUSTRY READY TO IMPROVE EXPORT



A yaqona farmer drying his yaqona roots.

Despite the global pandemic of COVID-19, the export of kava from Fiji continues.

Kava is one of the country's top export commodity raking in \$32.5m in exports in 2019. Also significant was its impact on the local economy (local sales) where it generated over \$300m as quoted in the Kava Value Chain Analysis Report.

The Task Force met on 6 August at the Ministry of Agriculture and continued its plans to up skill farmers with a training to be held early next month. The two-day Quality Standard Farmers' training will be held in Bua on 1 and 2 September, 2020 after which the Task Force will then hold its next meeting.

The training has been conducted in other parts of the country with primary focus on the main kava producing areas such as Kadavu,

Lomaiviti and Cakaudrove. Farmers will be trained on quality standards in improving the way kava is produced, harvested and prepared for consumption and for export.

The push to ensure the industry is ready with all the necessary infrastructure in place and farmers are thoroughly prepared, are the priorities of the Task Force.

It comes on the back of the Task Force waiting on the outcome of the decision to be made by the Australian Office of Drug Control, following its call for public submissions in May to allow the commercial importation of kava into Australia.

The Task Force considered the proposal a welcome step in the right direction and an increase in the volume of export of non-medicinal kava. This work has been

paused due to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 but will continue after this pandemic period.

The Task Force will continue its work to provide the central coordination, planning and consultation mechanism for the development of the industry in Fiji.

Members of the Task Force include representatives from government's Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transportation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, kava exporters, Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, Farmer representative, Fiji Crop & Livestock Council, University of the South Pacific, Pacific Horticultural Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA), and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

LATEST SURVEY FINDS PRICES OF LEAFY VEGETABLES AND LOCAL FRUITS REASONABLE



Local fruits and vegetables

Prices of fresh produce available in the market had little price movement last month.

A market survey conducted last month found prices of root crops had increased.

The Market Survey Report for July put together by the Ministry of Agriculture stated the movement in prices was triggered by the abundance of fresh produce in the market.

It added the national average market price for root crops was around \$2.80/kg with an average 14.65% increase all root crops.

In terms of leafy vegetables, Ba Market has the lowest prices in most of the vegetable produce compared to other municipal markets. Given most are in season, there was an

abundance of vegetables in the market at reasonable prices.

However, prices for leafy vegetables varied, for instance Chinese cabbage averaged around \$1.55 compared to \$1.33 per bundle in June, which meant an increase of 0.25%, the average market price for English cabbage was \$2.32/kg and Eggplants was \$2.60/kg.

With respect to the fruit basket, the Market Survey for July found the prices of pineapples was the cheapest at \$1.86/kg.

Like the leafy vegetables, local fruits were plenty in supply like pawpaw, lime, and jackfruits.

The decline in prices reflected an improvement in supply for the fruit basket.



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