

## AMA RECORDS SIGNIFICANT EXPORT INCREASE



AMA staff transferring freshly packed taro into the freezer.

Fiji Agromarketing Authority has recorded a significant increase in monthly exports compared to last financial year.

Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, the Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy revealed for the first quarter of the 2019/2020 Financial Year, AMA averaged an export of five containers shipped for export per month.

"For the first quarter of 2020/2021 this Financial Year, AMA has averaged an export of nine containers. Nearly doubling that amount from five to nine containers per month.

"This is an increase of about 80per cent," he said.

The Minister recently made the comments while providing an update of AMA's Rural and Maritime Strategy.

He said it was undeniable that there was a genuine movement for agriculture growth development in Fiji.

He said in the last nine months there had been an increased participation of workers, farmers, households, exporters, and the corporate sector thus realizing the dream of growing and expanding commercial agriculture.

"We have witnessed an increase in exports from January to August this year compared to the same period last year by 15per cent in volume and 29per cent in value.

"That is phenomenal and when you put it into context; you will recall we had lockdowns, we had a curfew in place, there was an increase in freight rates, yet despite that we had this substantial increase. 15per cent in volume and 29per cent in value

are no small increases," he said.

Hon. Dr. Reddy acknowledged all those that helped grow the agriculture sector, which he termed, a national movement.

"But I must thank everyone who have helped make the agriculture sector resilient and growing it, particularly over the last nine months as we pass through the COVID-19 pandemic."

He said expanding commercial agriculture would ensure Fiji could grow with the surplus distributed amongst the production process thereby benefiting the landowner, laborer, to the supplier of plant materials.

"That is the agriculture sector we are proposing; one where we all grow together; it's a collective inclusive development paradigm that we are pushing."

## AFRICAN SWINE FEVER - DO NOT PANIC!



A local piggy farm.

The African Swine Fever (ASF) is a highly contagious viral disease found only in pigs. In its acute form, the disease generally results

in high mortality of pigs. ASF is a different disease to swine flu, which is a respiratory disease of pigs and is caused by type A influenza virus

that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs. ASF does not affect people and there is no impact on human health.

Fiji remains free from both ASF and Swine Flu. Currently, the only country in the Pacific to have reported cases of ASF is Papua New Guinea, and the relevant authorities in Fiji are taking all necessary steps to prevent any inadvertent introduction of the disease in Fiji, through strict control of pork products and pig farming supplies into the country.

The Ministry of Agriculture is closely monitoring the situation and working in consultation with commercial piggery farms in Fiji and Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) to prevent importation of contaminants through pork products and farm supplies.

The Ministry of Agriculture has consistently monitored endemic and exotic animal diseases through its surveillance programs. For pigs, annual surveillance includes pseudorabies, foot and mouth

disease, swine flu and most recently, passive surveillance on African swine fever. At this stage, there are no reports from any of our local pig farmers that indicates presence of swine flu or African swine fever.

An MoU was signed on 19 November 2020 between BAF and PHAMA Plus Program, aimed to strengthen Fiji's preparedness against possible incursion of ASF in the country.

Implementation of this program will also involve their close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure that awareness and surveillance activities reach down to the farmer level.

Ministry of Agriculture will continue to conduct annual screening of exotic diseases and monitoring of endemic diseases in the rural and urban communities of Fiji.

The Ministry will also continue developing the capacity of the Fiji Veterinary Pathology Unit for

early detection of animal diseases of economic and public health importance.

Fiji's main weapon against ASF and other exotic diseases is very stringent monitoring and border control.

In terms of preparedness, awareness and continuous development of laboratory diagnostic capacity, together with strengthening of the country's veterinary capability is an ongoing activity for Ministry of Agriculture.

"The Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, the Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy urged the public not to panic as Fiji had stringent control mechanisms and all necessary and proactive steps were been taken to stop the introduction of this disease in Fiji.

The Hon. Dr Reddy further assured that the Ministry of Agriculture was working in close collaboration with line agencies and partners to ensure the local livestock industry remained safe.

## YOUTHS URGED TO MAKE FARMING A BUSINESS

Youths of Naitutu village were challenged to expand and discover their potentials through farming.

The Permanent Secretary for Agriculture, Mr. Ritesh Dass issued the challenge to the 63 members of the Naitutu Transformation Youth group during the Farm Management training in Naitutu village on Monday (07.12.20).

"This training conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture will broaden your knowledge on the different aspects of farming.

"It is true that farming is a traditional practice that you grew up with, but this is another step to building your passion for farming and turn it into as a business," he said.

He encouraged the youth group to work together to be able to access assistance.

"Working in a group requires dedication, commitment and working together is the key and the onus is on each individual to play your roles for the betterment of the group," said Mr. Dass.

The Permanent Secretary told the youths that communication was also important to sustainable agriculture practices and the preservation of resources.

He also urged them to always work towards their targets and three-yearly plans.

"This initiative is the change that is required in youths, you will go through some challenges and hardships but stay focused, that's key."

"You still have a year ahead of you therefore invest in something that will provide for your future, eliminate poverty and elevate the

standard of living here in Naitutu," he said.

Moreover, they were encouraged to treat farming as a business, develop idle land for sustainability and to get into the habit of Sustainable Land Management practices.

"Broaden your choices to a new level and expand your farming to commercialization, you can start small and grow over the years," said PSA.

Mr. Dass said it was also essential to keep a farm record.

A youth participant, Eroni Turagasau said farming was the only means of income that a young farmer like him could rely on.

"Most of us are school drop-outs and we cannot rely on anything else but the land for our future, we have the resources and that is what

we will utilize to improve Naitutu as well as each individual group member," he said.

The Farm Management training with the assistance from the Research, Livestock

and Extension Divisions of the Ministry was conducted as a lead up to the launching of the Rural Millionaire Concept for the Naitutu Transformation Group later that week.



Youths participating during the Farm Management Training.



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