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PM COMMISSIONS SMART NURSERY AT KORONIVIA RESEARCH STATION



High Commissioner of Canada to Fiji, H.E. Joanne Lemay (left), Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama handing a seedling to a farmer during the launch of the smart nursery in Koronivia Research Station



High Commissioner of Canada to Fiji, H.E. Joanne Lemay (left), Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama launch the new smart nursery

Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama opened a new Smart Nursery at the Koronivia Research Station on 13th April 2022.

While commissioning the New Smart Nursery, Prime Minister Bainimarama said that farmers faced challenges in the form of cyclones or climatic events, which could wipe out their entire harvest and in turn lead to an increase in the price of food in the market, and affect the economy adversely.

“This Nursery is a vital part of our long-term effort to ensure that Fiji has a food supply that cannot be unduly disrupted by climate change and extreme weather events, like the 14 cyclones that have struck us since 2016,” he said.

“When we talk about sustainable agriculture, we are talking about smart agriculture; that is, using technology and the vast knowledge the world has amassed about how plants thrive and adapt, to develop hardy varieties of important crops.”

“Nurseries play a dynamic role in Fiji’s horticultural development. They are where good quality seedlings are raised before being transferred to the field and we simply cannot do without them,” PM Bainimarama added.

Apart from providing seedlings for rehabilitation programs after natural disasters, this Nursery will also work to harden tissue-culture planting materials for mass propagation.

PM Bainimarama also thanked the Canadian Government for injecting more than \$330,000 for the construction of the Koronivia Smart Nursery and other associated activities.

High Commissioner of Canada to Fiji, H.E. Joanne Lemay, said: “the establishment of the smart greenhouse is an example of the work Fiji and Canada are undertaking to respond to the global challenge of climate adaptation”.

“In the past decade, the Canada Fund has contributed more than \$2.1 million Fijian dollars to development projects in your country. The Fund represents a small part of Canada’s overall contribution to development assistance.”

“We are delighted to know that the establishment of this greenhouse facility will support professional pathways for women in agricultural research, management, and science,” she added.

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COMMERCIAL MUSHROOM PRODUCTION PROJECT - BULA MUSHROOM COMMISSIONED



Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy with Mr. Vinit Lal the Director of Bula Mushroom inside the commercial mushroom facility

A collaborative venture as part of a public-private partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture, Votualevu Technical College and Bula Mushroom was launched on 25 April, by the Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy.

The commercial mushroom facility was established to allow for the commercial production of mushrooms as well as act as a learning centre for technical agriculture college students to enhance their skills and knowledge on growing mushrooms.

While officiating at the launch, Minister Reddy said it was a milestone achievement for all parties involved in the venture as it was the first of its kind locally, seeing as the partnership set up between Bula Mushroom and the Ministry of Agriculture would also include the active involvement of students of Votualevu Technical College.

Hon. Reddy also highlighted the project would also positively contribute to the

reduction in the importation of mushroom products into Fiji, as the country imported an average of 60tonnes of mushrooms annually for \$0.9m to supplement the demand from hotels and high-end customers.

“Agriculture is asserting its place in the economy and agriculture is now taking a leading role in earning foreign

currency,” he said.

“We need to save our foreign currency, one way to do this is to reduce imports but we can only reduce our imports in areas where we can. For example, in our mushroom sector, we are importing 31 tonnes of mushrooms per year at a value of \$299,000.00 and these are the 2021 figures, so let’s work to keep that money here if we can and if we have a strategic advantage for that crop, let’s grow that here,” said Minister Reddy.

“Mushrooms are filled with beneficial nutrition which creates lots of opportunities for farmers to venture into. Mushrooms are gradually getting recognition in the Fijian market as studies on mushroom consumption suggest a healthy immune system and lower chance of getting Non-Communicable Diseases thus creating a high demand for fresh mushrooms from health-conscious consumers.”

Hon. Reddy also urged the partners of Bula

Mushroom to adopt a sustainable model to ensure they limited their dependence on external parties for the operation of the commercial mushroom venture, stressing the importance of operating their project as a business.

Meanwhile, Director and Partner of Bula Mushroom Ms Chaya Kumar said after attending a two-day mushroom training conducted at the Ministry of Agriculture’s Legalega Research Station, they committed themselves to take up mushroom cultivation as it could provide potential farmers numerous opportunities.

“Bula Mushroom will continue to explore local raw materials that can be used as alternatives for substrates preparations, over the years, through trial and error, we’ve been able to master it and reach this far,” she said.

“Under our community arm, Bula Mushroom Foundation will provide mushroom cultivation training to vocational students here at this premises, forging a long-term agreement with Votualevu College, and this collaboration will be a win-win in supporting their vocational students to develop income-generating projects and this centre is going to be a one-stop-shop since the entire mushroom production process has been set-up as demonstrated,” said Ms Kumar.

The Ministry of Agriculture has trained around 2,000 interested stakeholders on Mushroom production, out of which 535 are actively involved in mushroom production and its value chain. Commercialization of Mushroom Production is in line with the objective of the Ministry’s SDP Strategic Priority 4 which focuses on “Establishment and Improvement of Commercial Agriculture”.

KADAVU FARMERS RECEIVE FARM MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Farmers from the districts of Yawe, Naceva, Nabukelevu and Ravitaki in Kadavu were part of the Ministry of Agriculture’s Farm Management training to assist them better employ their farming skills.

The training which was organized and coordinated by the Farm Management

Unit of the Ministry was held in a bid to develop and boost farm production levels for farmers in rural and maritime areas.

According to the Eastern Division Quarterly Production Report, Kadavu produced 6,795.7mt of Yaqona over the past 5 years from 2017 – 2021 and with a total of 2,452

farmers, Yaqona production accounts for 40 per cent of the total crops produced on the island over this same 5-year period.

The Farm Management training is part of the Ministry’s concerted efforts in directly impacting positive change to the livelihood of farmers by introducing improved farm



Farm Management and Sustainable Land Management Training held at Niudua village for the Tikina Naceva in Kadavu

Business Plans and better farm plans. Senior Agriculture Officer (Kadavu) Timoci Toga said given the geographical location and abundance of unutilized land, the training aims to improve the livelihood

their knowledge and open doors of opportunities.”“Through the training and the assistance of technical officers in Kadavu we are hoping to shape a better Kadavu.”

of the people of Kadavu.

“Majority of farmers on Kadavu are yaqona farmers and although majority have been farming for years, there is a need for them to treat farming as a business,” he said.

“Farmers must know more about Farm Management, how to organize, plan and manage the farm and the training was held to broaden

In addition, farmers were reminded to monitor the impact of climate change to ensure sustainability, changes in prices of commodities and costs of inputs and Sustainable Land Management. Record keeping was also highlighted to assist farmers keep records to measure their performance and improve efficiency of farm production and profitability of farming as a business.

Nasau farmer 27-year-old Eminoni Roko said the training had broadened his knowledge on how he could elevate his farming career and be able to change his farming to farm as a business. For Ruci Serea, a woman farmer of Niudua village from the district of Naceva, the training had provided the opportunity for women to utilize resources such as voivoi for their livelihoods enhancement.

Ovini Seru of Tawava village in the district of Yawe thanked the Ministry for the training as they would now move in a new farming direction towards becoming more commercial and business oriented.

ISRAEL AMBASSADOR PAYS COURTESY VISIT TO MoA



(Left) Non-resident Ambassador of Israel to Fiji His Excellency Roi Rosenblit with the Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment - Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy at MoA Conference Room, Raiwaqa

Non-resident Ambassador of Israel to Fiji His Excellency Roi Rosenblit paid a courtesy visit to the Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy to discuss opportunities and areas of cooperation in agriculture development.

H.E Rosenblit said agriculture was the key

to development in Fiji and that there was room to further enhance cooperation between the two countries in this critical area.

H.E Rosenblit said the two countries could work together to find solutions to enhance agriculture productivity, post-harvest technology and processed fruits for export markets seeing as Fiji had an abundant supply of local fruits.

He added that Israel had training programs in agriculture and they would sponsor an initiative that would enable 30 students from Fiji to travel to Israel to learn new agro-technologies. The Government of Israel also assisted the Ministry of Agriculture in establishing a local Biogas

Supply, having handed over 10 kits of home biogas worth \$3,600 each.

“The kits of bio-gas assistance are environment friendly using all the waste to create energy and create more waste recycling,” said H.E Rosenblit

In his response, the Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy thanked Ambassador Rosenblit for his support to the Ministry of Agriculture in developing young champions in learning traditional and practical knowledge.

“Your presence here and your offer to take the second lot of 30 students is very much acknowledged and Fiji continues to have enormous admiration and respect for Israel and we look forward to exploring more areas of cooperation to strengthen our Fiji – Israel relations in the future,” said Hon. Reddy.

Hon. Reddy also expressed his appreciation to Mr Guy Jakobi from Pacific Grow Company for helping assist the Ministry in establishing our local biogas supply.

COCONUT TRAINING HELD TO REVIVE INTEREST IN INDUSTRY



Assistant Minister for Agriculture - Hon. Viam Pillay, PS Agriculture - Vinesh Kumar with Senior Officials and MoA Staff after the training in Nailaga, Ba

A week-long training to promote and create interest to rejuvenate the ailing coconut industry ended in Nailaga, Ba on 2 April, 2022.

With the theme of economically empowering and enhancing coconut knowledge base in communities in the rural communities, Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Hon. Viam Pillay said the training would provide knowledge and skills in whole nut processing and value adding.

“Apart from generating income, the

coconuts help to sustain food and nutrition and alleviate poverty. “The training also focuses on productivity on productivity and product diversification from traditional copra production to whole nut processing,” he said.

The Assistant Minister explained new market opportunities had emerged in high-value products such as virgin coconut oil (VCO), coconut water and coconut sugar, which became increasingly popular due to newly identified health benefits.

“A greater demand for these products,

along with actions to address industry constraints, could pave the way for local economies and producer groups to benefit directly from higher whole-nut prices at lower production costs, when compared to copra sales,” Hon. Pillay said.

“Using the most appropriate technology and approach will enable producers, women’s groups in particular, to have a more integral role in coconut-related value chains, or even to sell to the final consumer market directly.”

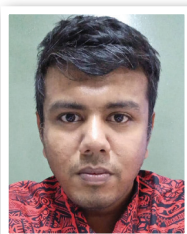
Further, he said while coconut was by far an important agriculture crop in Fiji, the industry was far from reaching its full potential.

This shortcoming, the Assistant Minister added, had deep historical roots but was commonly associated with the decline of prices offered in the global market resulting in a drop in interest in the global market for copra, the crop’s main by-product.

“Other constraints to the industry’s development include, the age and productivity of coconut plantations, access to information and financing services for smallholders, the need for improved risk management, and a more supportive and coordinated national policy environment,” he said.

Almost 30 participants from Ba, Tavua, and Lautoka including staff from the Ministry of Agriculture attended the training.

NEW APPOINTMENTS



Ravneel Kumar
Senior Research Officer (Horticulture)
SRS, Crop Research



Semi Cagibula
Labourer (Seaqaqa) AH&P



Rajinish Rishi
Fieldman II (Seaqaqa) AH&P



Sales Naidu
Assistant Accounts Officer (Payments)
Accounts, HQ

PHOTO GALLERY



Ministry staff with certificates after the completion of Small Ruminant Husbandry Training in the West



Ministry staff during the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (ICAT) workshop at the Pearl Resort



Assistant Minister for Agriculture Hon. Viam Pillay with the recipients of the Nursey kit at Yaloku village



Ministry staff posed for a photo during the Easter celebration



Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy's visit to KRS Dairy



HQ Staff clean up during Wellness Day at Raiwaqa.



Embryo Transfer program for Wagyu and Drought master beef breeds at SRS



The first meeting of the Project Steering Committee for EU Budget Support with key partners chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Agriculture & European Union Head of Cooperation and attended by the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development, and the Ministry of Civil Service and senior officials of the Ministry