

## MINISTER REDDY CALLS ON CORPORATE BODIES TO PROMOTE LOCAL



*Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment - Dr. Mahendra Reddy during the Food Fair in Koronivia Research Station*

Fiji's heavy reliance on imported goods for domestic consumption, particularly in the food sector needs to be addressed.

Additionally, calls are being made for corporate bodies to more actively promote locally produced foods and products to substitute and minimize imported goods and subsequent import bills.

While speaking during the Agriculture Food Fair in Koronivia on 18 October, the Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy said this is the sole reason Fiji is not spared from the shocks that drove inflation, highlighting that it was about time we developed our locally grown products for local use to help reduce import bills.

"The Ministry of Agriculture has over the years conducted research into a composite flour where imported wheat and local crop

based flour are blended into a ratio that is best suited for local bakery and pastry products. This includes using flour processed from Taro, Cassava, Breadfruit, Kumala, Rice and Maize in composition with wheat flour.

"The production and processing of these flours can very easily be adopted in rural and maritime settings.

"Commercial companies can also take this up as a production concept and make it readily available to our people. Apart from its nutritive value, these flours are gluten free and are therefore healthy and suitable for those who need special diets.

Hon. Reddy highlighted the work being carried out by the Ministry's Product Development Unit based at the Koronivia Research Station stating that experiments conducted by the PDU had shown that a blend

of 80 – 90% local crop flour mixed with 10-20% wheat, could be successfully used to prepare bread and pastry products significantly contributing to major savings in our foreign exchange.

"That is why we are here today, it is to witness some of the products that can be successfully prepared using this blend. If our food processing companies substitute wheat flour with our local commodity flours, the result would be a decrease in the wheat import bill and an increase in local resource utilization in the agriculture sector," said Hon. Reddy.

The estimated food import bill of FJ \$783.4 million in 2021 is a substantial cost driven by Fiji's tourism sector. In 2019 alone, Fiji imported around \$94.6m worth of wheat and in 2021 the import bill increased to \$108m.

"Records also showed that Fiji imported 24,000 tons of wheat in 1971 and in 2021 imported a total of 145,000 tons illustrating an increase of 83% over 50 years and 5.4 % annually. One of the main reasons for the increase is attributed to the change in the eating habits of our population.

"The increase in import bill is a cause for concern in our island nation. Just like petroleum, wheat prices depend on world economic stability and there is no guarantee that world prices may or may not increase further and any further increase would definitely marginalize the average to poverty-stricken citizens of Fiji," said Minister Reddy.

"While we rely on imported food, we must also consider innovation that will revolutionize our agri food systems. We need to consider wherever possible to, substitute imported goods or, produce and manufacture food that can complement our local products.

"This will not only increase agricultural productivity in the country but will also enhance farmers' income and reduce overall food costs ensuring food and nutrition security

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for all Fijians,” he added.

Additionally, he stressed that though there was an abundance of root crops available in the country, Fiji still remained at only 20% self-sufficiency in rice production and more efforts were needed to increase local rice production.

“Public private partnerships give rise to scientific research and academia. The importance of participation of a range of actors in agriculture innovation is increasingly recognized to co-create knowledge and increase capacities to adapt and innovate

throughout agri food systems,” he said.

“With the Food Fair, stakeholders and food manufacturers are encouraged to engage with Agriculture experts for advice on Root Crop flour production.

“This is the time to educate yourselves on nutritional benefits of local agriculture and how such foods can reduce non communicable diseases and increase farmer’s income improving competitiveness, sustainability and resilience of the Agriculture sector,” Hon. Reddy stated.

“I encourage all of you stakeholders to utilize these research findings and work with our local experts and agriculture staffs in increasing the use of local produce in our daily diets,” he reiterated.

The Food Fair Event was organized to showcase the products developed by the Ministry’s Product Development Unit with the theme “Soaring Food Prices - Go Local”, and was aimed at corporate bodies to push local food initiatives forward.

## FIJI COMMEMORATES WORLD FOOD DAY



*Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, Dr. Mahendra Reddy with FAO Officials during the World Food Day celebrations at Uluda Grounds, Ra*

World Food Day celebrations was commemorated on 14 October at the Uluda grounds in Rakiraki marking the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

World Food Day is commemorated on 16th October each year and is one of the most celebrated days in the UN Calendar marking the date of the founding of UN FAO in 1945.

Officiating at the event, Minister for Agriculture Hon Dr Mahendra Reddy said World Food Day is especially celebrated by organisations that play a pivotal role in the provision of safe and nutritious food security and assist in the achievement of zero hunger! Such organisations include, UNFAO, World Food Program (WFP), Ministry of Agriculture and Live and Learn and other organisations.

“This year the theme for the celebrations is, “Leave No One behind” and the priorities set to achieve the theme are, better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life.”

“The Agriculture sector continues to reflect growth over the years. From 2018-2020, the value of non-sugarcane Agriculture GDP grew at a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 4.9%. This was an increase from FJD686.8 million in 2018 to FJD756.1 million 2020” said Hon. Reddy.

Minister Reddy elaborated that this growth was influenced by commodities such as Kava, Dalo, Ginger, and other vegetables.

“Trade on fresh produce also performed positively in the last 3 years (2019-2021). Since 2019, value and volume of total export of fresh and chilled produce continue to grow at an annual average growth rate of 16.8% and 11.0% respectively. In 2020, for the first time, agriculture fresh/chilled export surpass the \$100m mark and has continued to increase to \$123m in 2021. Agriculture production also continued to increase in the last 3 years (2019-2021) by an average rate of 5.4%,” he said.

“The Ministry is committed to support agriculture development that will continue to accelerate the process of transitioning small holder farmers to commercial level.

“At the end of 2021-22 financial year, the ministry had recorded an additional 15,598 farmers in the database which makes up the

total number of farmers in Fiji to be 98,993. The increase indicates that more and more people are resorting to Agriculture as their source of livelihood hence, the Ministry is committed to review and refine its approaches to meet this upsurge,” Minister Reddy said.

An Agriculture Show was also organized concurrently with the World Food Day celebrations to further highlight the significance of the sector in Fiji’s food systems.

“The Agriculture Shows are the country’s leading food exhibition platforms that has been connecting buyers and sellers (mostly farmers) within the agriculture food systems chain, food service, and hospitality and retail industries for over twenty years. Today’s event is aimed at show casing the Rakiraki communities and the Agriculture food systems value chain to the world.

“I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to our partners involved in organising and supporting this event. To the Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), European Union (EU), Embassy of the People’s Republic of China to Fiji, Ministry of Health and National Food and Nutrition Centre (NFNC), Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts and the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport (MCTTT) and Live and Learn, thank you so much for your overwhelming support.

Additionally, Hon. Reddy called on development partners to dedicate resources and funding towards building more resilient agriculture infrastructure to boost the sector to realize its full potential.



*AH&P Officers manning the livestock booth during the World Food Day in Ra*



# NORTHERN FARMERS RECEIVE ASSISTANCE

A total of 37 farmers of Vanua Levu received assistance on 4 October from the Ministry of Agriculture as part of ongoing efforts to elevate the livestock industry in the country. 29 farmers received a pair of improved sheep breeds with 8 farmers receiving a breeder buck each to help improve on-farm genetics of the small ruminant farmer holdings. On the same token, 18 bee farmers were assisted with bee equipment which saw 6 farmers receiving a solar melter and wax embossing machine while 12 farmers were assisted with a wax melter.



# FIJI DAY IN THE WEST

For the first time ever, celebrations commemorating Fiji's 52nd Independence were held in the Western Division. The 2022 Fiji Day celebrations, which were held in Lautoka City on October 10, saw the attendance of thousands of people from all walks of life from the Western Division.

The day's program included booths from various government agencies in Lautoka displaying work for the public.

According to Ms. Kasanita Ratu, Regional Manager West, the patriotic spirit of Ministry staff in serving the people of the Western Division was evident. "It is a national event, and farmers and the public flocked to the ground for the celebrations. It was also an opportune time for them to learn about the work of the Ministry of Agriculture and to be aware of the

programs, initiatives, and assistance provided by the Ministry that could benefit them," she said. "This year's celebration is unlike any other Fiji Day celebration because we see the excitement of people from the western division in Lautoka all coming in to celebrate the National Fiji Day."

The Ministry of Agriculture's booth included the crop, livestock, and research divisions, with farmers coming in from as far away as Yasawa and the highlands of Ba to receive technical advice and receive services.

Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama, while touring the display, also wished the staff of the Ministry well as they celebrated Fiji Day and acknowledged their contributions and service to farmers in the Western Division. As the noble blue flag flew high over the

sea of blue and white in Lautoka, the happy citizens and Ministry staff were treated to entertainment and marches from the country's disciplined forces.



## MINISTRY CELEBRATES FIJI'S 52ND INDEPENDENCE



Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Dr Mahendra Reddy with Ministry staff during the Fiji Day celebrations at Headquarters, Raiwaqa



AH&P staff celebrate Fiji Day in Vatuwaqa



Ministry staff in Lautoka with Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama during Fiji Day celebrations



# MINISTRY CELEBRATES DIWALI



*The Ministry of Agriculture celebrated Diwali, Prophet Mohammed's Birthday and Pinktober at the Koronivia Research Station on 19 October*



*Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Waterways staff celebrated Diwali in Labasa*



*Team Serua/Namosi celebrating Diwali at the Navua Mechanical Depot*



*CEO AMA Mr Ajay Singh leads the musical team during the Diwali celebrations at KRS*



# MINISTRY CELEBRATES PINKTOBER



*The Economic Planning and Statistics Division celebrated Pinktober with a fourth stage cancer survivor Mele Koroi as a special guest.*



*Ba officials celebrate Pinktober month*



# EU FUNDED TA-SRL CONDUCTS MEETING

The second meeting of the Project Steering Committee (2nd PSC) of the European Union funded 'Technical Assistance for the Support to Sustainable Rural Livelihoods programme (TA-SRL)' was held on 5 October 2022 to assess the progress of the program and plan for the next six months.

The meeting was co-chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Agriculture, Vinesh Kumar and the Head of Cooperation at Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific (EUD) Michal Krejza. The technical

assistance team presented the activities and outputs contained in the 2nd Progress Report of the TA-SRL programme.

At the conclusion of the 2nd PSC, representatives attending the meeting praised the work of the TA-SRL for the milestones achieved in areas such as the mid-term review of the MoA's Strategic Development Plan, and capacity building of the staff of the Ministry. One notable mention was for the disbursement of the final tranche of the EURO 18 million in

budget support funds from the EU to the Government of Fiji.

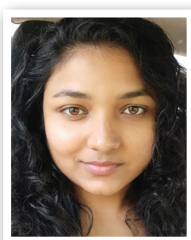
The 2nd PSC was attended by representatives of the European Union Delegation, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Civil Service, the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and the Technical Assistance Team from PROMAN. David Smith, a results-oriented monitoring expert from the European Union, also was in attendance as an observer.



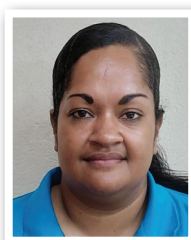
**Agriculture Assistant Nadarivatu, Joseva Vuidreketi with a farmer of Nadala Village, Savatu in Nadarivatu during the monitoring of high value crops under the Highlands Program**



# OCTOBER NEW RECRUITS



**Komal Karishma Lal**  
Clerical Officer  
(Cashier - Payments) HQ,  
Main Accounts  
Headquarters, Raiwaqa



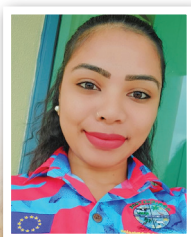
**Makereta Regu**  
Field Assistant (Plant Protection)  
Koronivia Research Station,  
Crop Research  
Central



**Anmol Datt Maharaj**  
Agricultural Assistant  
(Nabobuco/Noemalu)  
Crop Extension  
Central



**Suliasi Naibuka**  
Agricultural Technical Officer (Vu-  
nidawa, Upper Naitasiri, Nabobuco,  
Noemalu, Muaira, Nadaravakawalu,  
Matailobau, Nagonenicolo)  
Crop Extension



**Achal Ashwini Kumar**  
Economic Planning Officer  
(International Relation)  
Headquarters,  
Raiwaqa



**Kushal Raj**  
Labourer  
Wainigata Research Station  
Northern Division



# PHOTO GALLERY



Ministry staff during the World Food Day celebrations in Uluda Grounds, Ra



MoA Staff celebrate Diwali in Levuka



MoA Senior Officials and staff from Central and Western at the Rakiraki Office during World Food Day celebrations



Central Team celebrate Fiji Day with the Assistant Minister, Viam Pillay at Nausori Office.



Plant Health Clinic Team serving the public with their awareness materials



Eastern Division conducting their 4th Quarter Meeting at Headquarters, Raiwaqa



PS Agriculture Vinesh Kumar opens Leadership Team (Agriculture Central Division) 1st quarter 2022/2023 meeting at Dawasamu Agriculture Station.



MoA Lautoka staff attended the anti-bribery awareness conducted by FICAC  
Source: FICAC FB Page