



## FROM FRIENDS TO SUCCESSFUL FARMERS IN BUSINESS



Mr. Jason Zhong and Mr. Ifereimi Vasu at their farm.

The land is our greatest asset, make use of the idle land and move towards mechanization to commercialize your farms, get out of your comfort zones and develop the land and move towards commercial agriculture.

Those are the sentiments that two friends religiously follow that has allowed them to expand their farm and become successful agricultural entrepreneurs.

Former Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. Ifereimi Vasu, 61, and his friend Mr. Jason Zhong, 61, are great examples of friends that can actually move beyond

that level and establish a successful business venture together.

Their farm is located in Wainibuku where they plant a variety of vegetables including ginger and root crops on raised beds.

"I have worked in various places and these have opened my eyes to opportunities out there. I have found that nothing is more relaxing and enjoyable as farming," Mr. Vasu said.

"Jason approached me to partner up with him to do this farm and I was glad to accept because I know the potential of the land.

"Having a business partner makes it a lot easier."

"Income has been generating from the sales of vegetables which we are re-investing back into the farm," he said.

Like many successful commercial farmers, most will say that starting out was not all that rosy. The same can be said for the duo.

"We started with two acres of ginger with the help of Jason's brother and moved from there. All in all the resources we have and money saved, went back to developing the farm.

"Most times, when people make

money from whatever business they are doing, they misuse it. That's why it's better to put it away for something useful, like growing your business rather than misusing it."

Tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the developing Nakasi area, is the Qeramailagi Farm that operates on 80 acres of land with another 175 acres acquired in Sawani and an additional 70 acres found in Koronivia.

"We are not boasting about the amount of land we have but merely stating the advantage of re-investing in the land, having a farm plan and using time wisely," he said.

"Anyone is capable of achieving such, all that is required is the heart to be business-like and the passion to feed the nation with vegetables and crops."

Their farm is admirable in that they employ a total of 40 laborers with their doors opened to tertiary students to undertake practical lessons.

"Our laborers are also our priorities, we wouldn't have had all this if it wasn't for their hard-work and dedication therefore their welfare is our priority," he said.

"We have also welcomed those that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with job losses and employ them on the farm," he elated.

"We are running on our own and are willing to help ginger farmers get what they should be achieving in an acre," he said.

As anyone who operates a farm knows, or any business for that matter; challenges come with the territory. The same can be said for the Qeramailagi

Farm.

"Weather is a hindrance to the production of the crops with ginger and vegetables also dropping because of the humidity.

"But we found ways to address that which allows us to continue providing for our customers and the nation," he said.

"One measure we're carrying out is laying out pipes on the farm to water the crops and vegetables," he said.

"We are also applying poultry manure on our farm and lime to improve the soil nutrient and soil pH."

The two-man team have put all their efforts in expanding their farm and the current situation with the impact of the global pandemic of COVID-19, does not seem to faze them at all.

"Agriculture is the steady industry that can drive and meet the demands of people in terms of food security. So it is vital that we develop the land now and see its value," he said.

"We all have our flaws, we all pick up and learn from our past mistakes and we also need to be mindful of the future," he said.

"Plan your work properly, always have a Plan B and invest in something that you know will give you revenue and a secured income."

Apart from the house built from farm proceeds, the duo also plan to export their produce and are working on developing the two lots of land they recently purchased.



The Ministry of Agriculture is currently having a nationwide campaign to curb the growing problem of stray animals in public places. Stray animals can cause excessive damages to crops and road accidents resulting in many road fatalities.

## DO's & DON'Ts for Livestock Farmers & Pet Owners

### DO's

- ✓ Animals must be tethered and confined in owners property.
- ✓ All animals must have official identification (brands, ear tags and / license) Dog license should be renewed every year.
- ✓ Report any unwanted damages by animals to your nearest livestock office.
- ✓ Provide your full support to the stray animal control campaign team.
- ✓ If you have any unregistered brand, visit the Ministry of Agriculture Office.
- ✓ Be responsible and take ownership of your animals.
- ✓ Dogs and cats to be desexed when they reach 6 months old.

### DONT's

- ✗ Leaving and neglecting animals that are either tethered or not, wandering, straying or lying in public places, street, square, quay, wharf or highway.
- ✗ Ownership of unlicensed animals.

### CONSEQUENCES

Animals such as cattle, horses, goats and sheep caught will be sent to a designated pound of the Ministry of Agriculture until the owners claim their livestock.

- ✓ For release of their animals owners are required to provide evidence of ownership and pay associated fees (including any licenses).
- ✓ Animal owners will be responsible for transporting their animals back to their premises.

- ✓ Cattle not claimed within 10 days of impounding will be taken to the abattoir except for horses, sheep, goat and pigs that will be advertised in the media for auction.

