



## ASSISTANT MINISTER PILLAY TO YASAWA DISTRICT: “CONSERVE YOUR RESOURCES”



Assistant Minister for Agriculture Hon. Viam Pillay with villagers of Nabukeru in Yasawa following the planting of an avocado tree.

Indiscriminate burning of land in the Yasawa's is counterproductive to agricultural development efforts.

This was highlighted by Assistant Minister for Agriculture Hon. Viam Pillay recently to villagers of Bukama, Teci, Yasawa-i-rara, Dalobo, Tamusua and Nabukeru that make up tikina Yasawa.

While holding an informal talanoa session at Nabukeru with villagers and the district representative, Hon. Pillay said it was irresponsible behavior to continue on burning their fields, especially during yam planting season.

“Stop burning, here we're trying to develop and as you plant, there are some who are burning and there is a real need to conduct awareness on the matter to improve your understanding

of the issue as it is concerning your livelihoods,” he said.

“We must conserve our resources. It is important that we do our part in protecting and preserving it so that our future generations may also benefit,” said Hon. Pillay.

He reiterated that it was in everyone's best interests to refrain from the practice of burning and that villagers take special care of the environment for their wellbeing.

The villages of Bukama, Teci, Dalobo and Yasawa-i-rara were also acknowledged for supporting Government's 30 Million Trees in 15 Years Initiative spearheaded by the Ministry of Forestry.

Fruit trees were also planted at Nabukeru village as part of the Village

Nutrition Security initiative with additional vegetable seed packages being handed over to the villagers to ensure their nutritional security was met.

The Village Nutrition Security Initiative is one of the 16 initiatives launched earlier this year which targets 50 villages to be supplied with fruit trees every quarter.

Five villages in Yasawa received planting materials ranging from mangoes, avocado, green pearl guava variety, home gardening packages, pineapple suckers, kumala cuttings and vetiver grass handed over to them by Assistant Minister Hon. Pillay.

## ‘FRUIT FLY’ – FIJI’S NUMBER ONE PEST WITH SEVERE IMPLICATIONS



Agriculture officers undertaking practical sessions in identifying pests and diseases on plants.

The fruit fly is the number one pest that the Ministry of Agriculture and the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji are vigilantly keeping a close watch on to ensure that it does not leave the country's shores.

The presence of fruit flies in any of the commodities exported by Fiji to New Zealand could prove detrimental to this established export market and adversely affect bilateral quarantine agreements already in place.

Permanent Secretary for Agriculture Ritesh Dass said it was important that all necessary precaution was taken to prevent fruit fly presence in any export commodity at any given time.

“Four commodities being exported to New Zealand namely pawpaw, mangoes, breadfruit, and eggplant are host to fruit flies but treatment is available to ensure that the fruits are fruit fly free and it is absolutely critical that fruit fly is not found in any of these four commodities that we export to New Zealand because the implications will be significant”.

Of the five fruit fly species in Fiji, two main ones could create the most damage economically.

“The Fijian fruit fly (*Bactrocera passiflorae*) and the Pacific fruit fly (*Bactrocera xanthodes*) once found on any of these four commodities sent to New Zealand, the repercussions will be severe”.

“That's why we together with the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, we're ensuring that these four commodities are thoroughly treated before leaving our shores because we understand the implications of just one larva being found when it reaches New Zealand,” Mr. Dass said.

“We're committed to upholding the Ministry's Strategic Priority on establishing and improving commercial agriculture, a component of which encompasses the export market, tying into responsible production for continued economic growth, and that is why all bases must be covered when it comes to the issue of fruit flies in these export commodities,” he added.

The Fijian fruit fly had a very high risk of hosting to over 45 different fruits found in the country while the Pacific fruit fly preferred to host in commodities like breadfruit, jackfruit,

and itaukei-known nut - vutu.

“So fruit flies are a major horticultural pest especially for those commodities that are exported, and the other reason is that it's a quarantine pest so if any of it is found coming from our shores, all commodities that are potential fruit fly hosts, will be stopped,” he said.

Rotuma has two species (*Bactrocera kirki* and *Bactrocera obscura*), which were not present in any of the islands of Fiji, and as such, fruits from the former were prohibited from entering the latter.

The Ministry's Fruit Fly Unit of the Crop Research Division continues to conduct awareness programs on the pest as well as its management during field visits and agriculture shows.

As part of the Ministry's ongoing efforts to address the issue of fruit fly and plant pests and diseases, a Plant Protection Training and Plant Health Clinic is being conducted in Levuka, Ovalau that stresses this message to participating agriculture technical officers who are currently a part of the week-long training.

## BANNED PESTICIDES NO LONGER ON SHELVES

Its official, banned pesticides of Paraquat and Imidacloprid are no longer found on shelves in any shops in Fiji.

The finding was revealed at the ‘Plant Protection and Plant Health Clinic’ training held in Levuka, Ovalau.

Ministry of Agriculture Senior Technical Assistant Pesticide Registration Mrs Ashveen Lata during her presentation on Monday (14.9.20) informed agricultural officers from the Eastern Division that since 1 January this year, checks conducted found that the two banned pesticides were no longer in shops.

She said another recent discovery they made was noticing that retailers were now complying with the Fiji

Pesticides Act in terms of storage.

“Before, shops selling pesticides were not fully compliant. They used to store pesticides with food products and sometimes, these pesticides were not properly secured or had improper labelling.

“It has taken years and only after continuous awareness with retailers that they are now complying with Act and properly storing pesticides,” she said.

The surveys, she said, were conducted annually with retailers who sold pesticides to create awareness on the safe use and sale of pesticides.

She said these awareness raising sessions were important because of the harmful nature of the pesticides

especially to those who frequently worked with it.

“We have seen the harm pesticides can have on human beings and animals when not used correctly, like skin and nail decay, in addition to causing environmental impacts. That's why we conduct these awareness and surveys so retailers, farmers and everyone else who use these products take the necessary precautions,” Mrs Lata said.

The training is conducted for Agricultural officers based in the Eastern Division specifically from Moala, Kadavu, Cicia, Totoya, Vanuabalavu, Lakeba, Gau, Koro and Ovalau.



Banned Pesticides