

Mati – A Woman of Grit



Mrs. Tara Mati’s residence at Manoca, off Waituri Road.
Insert: Mr Sushil Chand and his wife Mrs Tara Mati.

Grit and determination are what best describe Tara Mati.

As the 51-year-old mother of two reflects on the humble beginnings she and husband, Sushil Chand, had started from, for her it all boiled down to their never say die attitude which has set the solid foundations for her family’s wellbeing today.

They had made a living for themselves in Qelemumu, Macuata before that land lease eventually expired in 2000 and since their circumstances dictated that they relocate, the family had to look for alternative places to settle down.

As the family matriarch and driving force of the family, Mrs. Mati and her family eventually made their way to Manoca in Nausori in 2004 on a piece of land they had earlier purchased in 2002.

“This is also in-line with the family plan for our children’s education in Suva and to be close to them to provide them with support.”

“We had to start somewhere so it was vegetable farming and because of the constant flooding there which led to mixed results as far as income was concerned we had no choice but to plant cabbage alone in plots,” she said.

“We would always be in the garden and our son would go around the neighborhood selling cabbages for a dollar; we never lost hope.

“We saw that the situation we were facing was affecting our plan, we looked into other measures that we can do to alter this,” she said.

“We saved every penny we had from the cabbage selling and we managed to secure another piece of land in the same Manoca area off Waituri road and we decided to relocate my whole family to the new 5 acres land in 2006 for farming,” she said.

With the newly acquired piece of land, they planted a variety of crops like dalo, long bean, rosella, tomatoes, moca, cabbage, bitter gourd, cassava, lemon tree, pawpaw, soursop, coconut, and breadfruit.

She fulfilled her duty as a mother and a wife all the while ensuring the family’s farm is managed to maintain its level best productivity; “I work on the farm as well and before that, I have to make sure that meals are cooked, clothes are washed and the house is cleaned.”

“Farming generates a good income and it is wise that we make good use of the land to cultivate and provide for us,” said Mrs Mati.

Annually the family gets approximately \$5,000 from the sale of the uro-ni-vonu dalo variety, long bean and rosella, \$10,000 from tomatoes and moca, \$2,000 from cabbages and bitter gourd and \$1,000 from cassava.

“It is not that we are boasting about the amount of money we get, it is how

you manage it that also comes into place and we are sometimes faced with the unfavourable weather and other unforeseen circumstances that we have to keep in mind,” she said.

“You can also achieve this and be your managers and bosses if you turn to the land,” she challenged. “We have come across a lot of hurdles but this did not deter me from pursuing my family’s dream and the future of our children.”

The door to door cabbage selling the family used to practice back on our first piece of land paved the way to a much brighter future for the children.

“From all the challenges, we have persevered and endured, we have managed to put our sons through their tertiary education,” she said.

“Now that they have graduated and have families of their own, we are working towards our other plans, the building of another new home,” said Tara.

Added to their assets purchased from farming is a tractor, a Toyota Hilux vehicle, a hand rotavator and farming tools.

“We accomplished all this through farming, we wouldn’t have this had we been in another career and we are proud to be farmers.”

Although all that the couple had planned for the long term has been achieved, the idea to expand their farming is still on the table.

“The first piece of land is still vacant and needs utilizing and is prone to flooding, we have decided to raise the land and start a fish pond and to also venture into Hydroponic farming and expand the

mini nursery that we have,” she said.

“Over the years I have learnt to be independent and I urge all women to push your way through, do not always rely on your husbands because your potential is far beyond your imaginations,” she advised.

“For those of you who have less land, you can always venture into Home Gardening as there is more than one way to skin a cat,” Tara added.

“I would like to acknowledge the hard work of my husband and the perseverance of my sons, we worked together as a team and we managed to pull through,” she said.

“We would also like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture for always supporting us in whatever way they could, be it in terms of seeds and planting materials, manure and drainage,” she said.

Through her family farm, she has also managed to help the needy in her community by contributing in-kind gestures through the purchase of school stationery for children of less fortunate families, a situation she knows all too well herself as she once struggled to make ends meet.

“I know what it feels like to have nothing because I started as one and I would like to help those that are facing similar situations by providing what I can.” Tara Mati embodies the characteristics of a strong-willed woman, and her determination and drive has seen her family enjoy the fruits of their labour on their Manoca piece of land.

Growing Amaranthus for Cash

Amaranthus

(Amaranthus viridis)

Recommended Varieties:

Local Selection

Seed Rate

4kg/ha

Planting time:

All year round

Planting Site:

Plant in an area that is close to a water source

AMARANTHUS

Spacing	Fertilizer/ Manure	Weed Control/ Management	Disease Control/ Management	Insect Control/ Management	Harvest/Yield/ Food Value	Disaster Risk and Climate Change tips
Between rows: 75cm Within rows: 30cm Commercial (Export) Seedlings are raised in seed beds and transplanted. Seeds can also be broadcasted into well-made beds/ plots. Plants are usually pulled out, tied in bundles and sold in local markets. Germination: 6 to 10 days after sowing.	Soil analysis should be done before planting. Poultry Manure: 5 tonnes/ha. Mix well with soil before planting. Urea: 50kg/ha. Two weeks after germination is side dressed in nitrogen deficient soils.	Fusilade at 60ml/15L of water. Or Tzar at Spray at 3 to 4 leaf stage. Point nozzle directly at the weed and use spray shield.	No major disease of economic importance, however in case of wilt-dig out affected plants and remove from field.	Beet web worm: Spray with Acephate 75% a.i at 20g/15L of water (Acephate is sold as Orthene & Sunthene) Leaf miners and Aphids: Spray Phyrethroids at 40ml/15L (Sold as Attack) or Suncis at 12ml/15L of water or Dimethioate at 15ml/15L of water (Sold as Rogor) or Bifenthrin at 15 to 20ml/16L knapsack. Use protective clothing Caterpillar: Apply Steward at 7.5ml/15L or Superguard at 8ml/16L knapsack only when damage is visible. Thrips: Bifenthrin at 15 to 20ml/16L knapsack. Or Super-guard 8ml/16L knapsack	Harvest/Yield/Food Value: Follow the waiting period after spraying. Read label on containers. Harvest when stems and leaves are tender. Weekly harvesting is recommended for larger areas. Yield: About 12 tonnes/ha. Plant a new crop after the second harvest or plant in stages (phase planting). Food Value: Dietary fibre, Potassium, Calcium, Magnesium, Iron, Vitamin A, Vitamin B and Vitamin C	Fast growing good recovery crop. Floods: If flood prone area, plant in higher ground with drip irrigation system. Drought: Intercrop or cover the soil with copra residue or other mulch to avoid loss of soil humidity. Use bucket drip irrigation system.