



Ministry Receives Seeds Under PS4L Project



Australia's High Commissioner to Fiji H.E. John Feakes with Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy and New Zealand High Commissioner to Fiji H.E. Jonathan Curr and Deputy Director-General of SPC- Suva Regional Office, Dr. Audrey Aumua during the official handing over of seeds Source: SPC's Land Resources Division (LRD)

The Ministry of Agriculture recently received over 350kg vegetable seeds and 400 tissue culture plants from the Pacific Community (SPC) as part of the Pacific Seeds for Life (PS4L) project.

This donation marked the PS4L project's first contribution towards the Fijian Government's Tropical Cyclone Harold relief efforts and the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The batch of seeds and planting materials are part of a consignment of 500kg vegetable seeds worth

FJD170,000 (NZD120,000) facilitated under the PS4L project and 9,500 tissue culture materials worth FJD70,000 (AUD50,000) facilitated under the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) support to the Pacific's Regional Genebank, CePaCT (Centre for Pacific Crops & Trees).

SPC with the support of its key partners, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), and the Australian DFAT will provide the remaining seeds and tissue

culture materials to the Ministry of Agriculture, in this year and the next.

Upon receiving the assistance, Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy said the continued support shown by the Australian and New Zealand Governments was indicative of the history, and commitment the two countries had with Fiji and other Pacific countries.

He said the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had allowed the Fijian Government an opportunity to

go back to the drawing board and to create opportunities out of the crisis.

"The Agriculture and the primary sectors like forestry and fisheries will continue to play a dominant role in the growth and development of Pacific island countries and we cannot afford to ignore the significant role primary industries can play in the growth and development of the economy and we should continuously invest on the fundamentals," he said.

"For some reason for the past two decades the agriculture sector was treated like a welfare sector and whenever justification was made to get additional resources from government, that was on the basis that so many people were engaged in it, the livelihood and employment dimension, but I would say, we should treat agriculture as an economic sector and therefore once the agriculture sector is developed, the surplus created will then trickle down to those involved in the sector."

The Deputy Director-General of SPC- Suva Regional Office, Dr. Audrey Aumua said, the handover comes at a crucial time when a significant portion of the Pacific population needs support in meeting their immediate food security needs due to disruptions in food supply chains caused by COVID-19 and widespread destruction of food gardens by TC Harold across parts of Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

"The Pacific Community remains

committed to working with our member states to achieve their development aspirations. Agriculture and forestry play a significant role in sustaining livelihoods, food and nutrition security, and enhancing resilience for most of our vulnerable Pacific communities," she said.

The handover also marked the official launch of SPC's regional initiatives- The Pacific Seeds for Life (PS4L) project approved in March this year with a total value of NZD 4.8 million and funded by the Government of New Zealand (MFAT); and the support to the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) funded by the Government of Australia (DFAT), valued at AUD 2.3 million over four years (2019-2023).

The Pacific Seeds for Life (PS4L) project will run for five years (2020-2024) and is implemented by the Manaaki Whenua LandCare Research (MWLR), NZ in partnership with the SPC's Land Resources Division (LRD).

The ultimate aim of both projects is to have a resilient seed system in place to facilitate the access to and availability of a diverse portfolio of quality plant genetic resources at all times for farmers and growers.

This work is crucial to ensure sustainable food production in the face of natural disasters and climate change and for the health of Pacific people from broadening crop diversity.

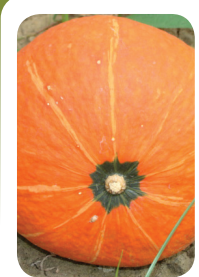
Source: MOA/ SPC's Land Resources Division (LRD)
Joint Press Release

GROW PUMPKIN FOR CASH



Pumpkin
(*Cucurbita maxima*)

PUMPKIN



Recommended varieties:

- Queensland Blue
- Butternut
- Local Selection

Seed Rate
1.5kg/ha

Planting Time:
All year around

Spacing	Fertilizer/ Manure	Weed Control/ Management	Disease Control/ Management	Insect Control/ Management	Harvest/ Yield/Food Value	Disaster Risk and Climate Change tips
Between row: 2m Within row: 1m Germination: 3 to 6 days after sowing.	Soil analysis should be done before planting. Poultry Manure: Apply 10 tonnes/ha to the soil, 2 weeks before planting. NPK: 13:13:21 200kg/ha basal at planting. Urea: 50kg/ha Side dress 4-8 weeks after planting.	Hand weed or hoe and do not damage stem. Inter-cropping with maize to control weeds and provide additional income	Powdery mildew: Apply Benomyl at 15g/15L of water (Sold as Benlate)	Pumpkin Beetle: Malathion 30ml/15L water or Spray Acephate 75% a.i at 20g/15L of water (Acephate is sold as Orthene & Sunthene).	Harvest 15-17 weeks after sowing. Yield: 15 to 20 tonnes/ha. Food Value: Dietary Fibre, Vitamin C, Potassium and Vitamin A.	Storm surges, floods: Plant pumpkin on raised beds to protect against salt intrusion and uprooting. Tolerant to most soil types including sandy and rocky soils.