



Young Tucibi Attests To Potential of Agriculture



Young Tucibi Vulimaivulinitu Matavesi at their family farm in Seaqaqa, Vanua Levu.

"Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God has given you."

Exodus 20:12 is 14-year-old Tucibi Vulimaivulinitu Matavesi's guiding principle and favourite Bible verse as he matures into a young man who is adamant on toiling the land for his family's benefit.

The lanky young boy who hails from Qamea in Taveuni dreams to one day earn his wings and fly the skies as a pilot but he knows that this won't

come easy as it requires sacrifice and commitment, the same level of commitment that he is now showing on the family farm in Seaqaqa.

As the eldest in the family of six, he hopes to inspire his younger siblings to work towards their goals, just as he is doing, by sowing the seeds to realize his ultimate ambition.

"As the eldest in the family, I have a responsibility to look after my siblings, to set a good example and to be the Tucibi that my parents envision," he

said.

"Although my parents work, I have always had this thought and feeling that I have to also think of my siblings and although they are providing for us, I always tell myself to think outside the box and that was where the interest in farming grew from," he said.

His younger siblings, who are equally ambitious, have their own goals and aspirations. His sisters Hannah Pearlsienna, Jimaima Rebecca and Amalaini Leinahola hope to each become an Air Hostess, a Doctor, and a Lawyer respectively, while his brother Saula Toni hopes to join the Disciplined Forces with baby Vulaqoro Joseph yet to have a career to aspire to.

Two years ago, Tucibi realized that in order for him to attend the school of his dreams, he had to help his parents pay for his boarding needs.

"I have always dreamt of attending Queen Victoria School and according to my mother, going there was not an easy task as there was boarding items to be bought and the only way to acquire money to buy them was through farming," said Tucibi.

"When I was told by my parents that I have to work on the yaqona farm as it would assist me with my boarding needs, I gladly accepted it," he said.

"The discovery of working on the farm was not easy at first, as we are used to just watching television with my siblings."

"Our timetable changed on the farm, we wake up in

the morning knowing our own chores, while the girls look after the maintenance of the house, I make my way to the farm, beginning by feeding the pigs and going to the yaqona farm," said Tucibi.

Sooner than he realized, he was off to the school of his choice, sailing across Bligh Waters to QVS in Tailevu.

From the 5,000 yaqona plants cultivated by the family, Tucibi planted 2,000 yaqona plants solely for his education.

"10 yaqona plants were directed towards the preparation of the school journey from Seaqaqa to QVS with a total of \$2,500 which was all managed through the yaqona farm," he said.

Now, he looks forward to spending time on the farm with his relatives and family; "I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of my two cousins Samu and Eroni Sarasau, it is delighting to share farming knowledge with them as I look forward to always spending my spare time with them on the farm," he said.

"It is also good to see that they are keen to spend their holidays on the farm and to go up to the yaqona patch instead of focusing on gadgets."

"My siblings are a blessing also, as we learn along the way to appreciate what we have and to learn to earn and sell pineapples in Seaqaqa, these are some of the things that we always look forward to," he said.

"I often tell them that a lot of things can be accomplished from farming as I have experienced it myself, and I proved it as I bought all that was needed for my boarding at school through farming and other expenses that is needed by my siblings," he smiled.

For Tucibi, his future is just a stone throw away but helping his parents whenever he can is a priority for him at the moment; "I know my parents have had to dig deep to fork out the requirements to get me to the school I have always wanted to attend."

"I would like to thank my parents for showing me a path that made me realize not only the potential of the land but also my personal potential as I work towards realizing my dream of becoming a pilot," he said.

"With all the money they used, it is my role to work hard in school and become the person I have always wanted to become in the future."

"Listen and obey your parents, you may not realize it now but the decisions they make are always for your benefit and affect what you become, whether you are successful or not, continue to be respectful to your parents," he concluded.

Tucibi's father Vulaqoro Maimatawai said they will instilling in him good qualities at an early age and to grow to be a mature individual and one that his siblings could look up to in their stead.

Soil Sampling and Testing Services Made Available



Anasa Kamikamica at the Ministry of Agriculture Chemistry Laboratory in Koronivia Research Station, conducting pH measurement in soil.

Farmers are encouraged to take advantage of the soil sampling and testing services provided by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Ministry provides soil sampling services to farmers, private companies, and other interested individuals. Services provided by the Ministry to farmers is free of charge, provided it comes through the agriculture locality officers. However, charges apply to private companies as well as farmers who directly bring the samples to the Ministry's Fiji Agricultural Chemistry Laboratory at the Koronivia Research Station.

Soil testing is an easy and cost-effective way to manage soil for crop or pasture production. It determines the key nutrients and pH levels so that the farmer can make the best choice when

purchasing fertilizers and other nutrients.

The laboratory offers a wide range of analytical services for soils from simple tests that affect plant growth such as pH and moisture to soil fertility measurements such as carbon, nitrogen available phosphorus, and potassium to more detailed testing for trace elements.

The Ministry provides its analysis of the soil samples within two to three weeks. A report is prepared and recommendations are given on how to improve the fertility of the soil.

It is important to conduct soil sampling when first clearing a piece of land for farming and at least two to four weeks before planting or fertilizing the crop for established farms.

The symptoms of pests, diseases, and nutrient deficiency overlap and it becomes difficult to identify the main cause. However, the soil test results confirm the cause of the symptoms and make it easy for the farmers to apply the necessary remedial measures.

The agriculture locality officers are trained to conduct proper soil sampling to ensure the uniformity and true representation of the soil that is sampled.

The Fiji Agricultural Chemistry Laboratory also conducts livestock feed, water, fertilizer, compost, manure, food, and plant testing.

Farmers who are interested in getting soil sampling done can contact the Ministry's locality officers or the Fiji Agricultural Chemistry Laboratory on 3477044.