



NO SUBSTITUTE FOR HARD WORK: SOKO



Sakiusa Soko at his cabbage patch on the periphery of his farm in Wailea, Nausori

The impact that COVID-19 has had on the socio-economic landscape of Fiji is unprecedented, a jarring reflection of this is the loss of income of ordinary Fijians throughout the country.

Even though the loss of income and employment is true for a majority of the population, for 42-year-old Tubou, Lakeba native Sakiusa Soko, the silver lining to his cloud has been returning to the land.

After being dealt this telling blow to his everyday life and the livelihood of his family, Soko was given a lifeline to toil and cultivate a piece of land situated in Wailea, Nausori.

"I am from the Mataqali (land-

owning unit) Naivi in Tubou, Lakeba in Lau and I am farming on this 5 - 6 acre of land here in Wailea which belongs to my aunt," he said.

"Nowadays, with the rate of unemployment being so high and with me also without a job, I have dedicated my time, energy and strength to farming, getting up early in the morning, I make my way to the farm to weed and maintain its upkeep."

For Soko, toiling the land has been a fulfilling activity because he has poured his heart and soul into it for the wellbeing of his family, and through the assistance provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, has opened up a new

found admiration for vegetable farming, which he has just been introduced to through the Ministry's Home Gardening programme.

"I also sought the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture through the Home Gardening packs and other technical advice, and once I received my seed packs, I made it a priority to sow the seeds and plant them immediately as can be seen on my farm today.

He planted the bean, cucumber, tomato, long-bean, capsicum, eggplant, and cabbage seeds straight away.

"I have only ever planted cassava and dalo before but after planting these vegetable seeds, I greatly appreciate it because it grows right here and is available when we need it and I am very happy to have been assisted with the Home Gardening package," he said.

Sharing on his experiences as a farmer, Soko attests to the immeasurable opportunities that abound in utilizing the land.

"I am currently farming on 5-6acres of land which belongs to my uncle and aunt, seeing as I had lost my employment, I was fortunate enough to be given an opportunity by my aunt to come and use her land to farm on, which I am currently doing now and I am thankful to her for this opportunity.

"I urge all Fijians if there is any vacant piece of land available around your home, use it. If there is anything we can do now during these trying times, we should look to the land, to my fellow Fijians, if you find yourself in the city and towns without any means of income, return to your villages, throw yourselves into farming because everybody needs to eat," he said.

"With the current restrictions in movement and with COVID-19, something that cannot be restricted is the need to eat, so return to the land because a lot of Fijians have lost their jobs and I don't believe in using the loss of employment as an excuse to justify your struggle, there is land available to us and Government is also on hand to provide assistance," Mr Soko emphasized.

"The assistance being provided by Government, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture is helpful indeed to us,

you just need to do your part when you have received any kind of assistance and be truthful in what you do, uphold your end of the bargain when you have received the assistance because it is part of the Government's investment in the lives of its citizens and I am so grateful and thankful to the Ministry of Agriculture for the assistance it has provided so far because our livelihoods have been impacted but the onus is on us to turn our fortunes around.

And as Soko aptly puts it; "There is no substitute for hard work!"



Chinese Cabbage (*Brassica chinensis*)



Recommended Varieties:

- Pak Choy
- Kwang Moon
- Wong Bok
- Joi Choy

Seed Rate

300 grams/ha

Planting Time

Best if planted during the cool season but can be grown throughout the year.

Planting Methods:

Seeds are sown in well prepared seedbeds or seedling trays and transplanted in the field after 3-4 weeks or at 3 leaf stage.

CHINESE CABBAGE

Spacing	Fertilizer/Manure	Weed Control/Management	Disease Control Management	Insect Control/Management	Harvest/Yield/Food Value	Disaster Risk and Climate Change tips
Between rows: 0.5- 0.75m Plants within rows: 0.3m Germination: 4 to 6 days after sowing. Transplanting: Transplanting can be done during cloudy days or late in the afternoon. Seedlings raised in seed trays can be planted any time of the day. Water the plants after transplanting and continue afterwards.	Soil analysis should be done before planting. a) Poultry Manure: 5 tons/ha Broadcast and mix well with soil 2 weeks before planting. b) NPK: - 13:13:21 200kg/ha broadcast and work into the soil before transplanting. c) Urea: 100kg/ha. Side dressed in 2 split applications i.e 2 -4 weeks after transplanting.	Practice manual weed control. Hand weed with hoe Fusilade at 45ml/15L of water. Spray at 4 to 5 leaf stage of weeds.	Soft Rot: Avoid planting during wet weather; remove any sick plant as soon as you see one; avoid damaging the crop during weeding and use disease-free seeds and seedlings. Remove (bury or burn) all diseased plants after harvest. Maintain good drainage	Lepidopteran pest, Diamond Back moth, Large cabbage moth, Centre grub, Greasy cutworm: Apply Superguard at 7.5ml/15L knapsack Steward at 5ml/10L of water only when recent damage is visible. Or Prevathorn at 10-15ml/10L of water Or Bt 8g/16L knapsack Or Multiguard 8-10ml/16L knapsack Aphids: Dimethioate at 15ml/15L (Sold as Rogor) or Bifenthrin at 15 to 20ml/15L of water.	Usually takes 30 - 60 days to get ready depending on variety. Yield: 10- 12 tonnes/ha Food Value: Source of Vitamin A, Vitamin B & Vitamin C.	Can be a good source of food and income after disaster as Chinese cabbage is very quick to mature and has good market value.