



NAITASIRI FARMERS PRAISE MINISTRY'S OPERATION WESTCROSS 2



Farmer Benny Sami with his Agro inputs.



Farmer Janoop Sharma with his Agro inputs.

More than 17 tonnes of Agro inputs worth around \$24,000 was supplied to Naitasiri farmers yet again through 'Operation Westcross 2' in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and its partner South Pacific Fertilizers earlier this week (21.6.21).

Following a successful 'Operation Westcross' that had took place earlier this month, the Ministry again facilitated logistical support to transport agro inputs for farmers in Naitasiri.

Agriculture Permanent Secretary, Mr Ritesh Dass said the successful collaboration between the supplier – South Pacific Fertiliser, the Ministry, and farmers ensured a smooth transition of the agro-inputs from Lautoka to the Sawani, Naitasiri border on Monday (21.6.21).

"This exercise is the third of its kind that the Ministry facilitated on behalf of farmers since the lockdown occurred. You may remember, that we had carried out the first agro-inputs at the Logani, Tailevu border for farmers in Tailevu North."

"Facilitating the requests of farmers during these difficult COVID-19 restrictions demonstrates the Ministry's current modus operandi of

'Grow Beyond' in other words, we have modernized the way we operate so if it means going beyond our usual service delivery; then so be it."

"We recognize the vital contributions our farmers and exporters continue to do for the Fijian economy and the Ministry stands ready to assist in any way we can to ease the burden of COVID restrictions off them," Mr. Dass said.

Such an operation, Mr Dass added, required a lot of planning and team work.

"Apart from this it required redeployment and prioritization of resources out of the Ministry's normal operations," he said.

Muaniweni Settlement District Advisory Councilor, Mr. Maan Borick, 69, said he tried to help his farmers who needed fertilisers by contacting the Agriculture locality officers and was grateful when this assistance arrived.

"I am thankful to Government and Agriculture for helping farmers. It is not enough fertilisers but we're told we might be getting more sometime next week."

"Because of COVID I am grateful that Government is trying to help us,"

Mr. Borick said.

Pundit Janoop Sharma, 50, of Muaniweni who plants dalo and kumala said for some time they were not able to receive fertilisers and pesticides.

"But we are thankful to the Government of the day and the fertilizer supplier from Lautoka. Most probably our crops will be laughing and we're thankful," he said.

Pundit Sharma added it was encouraging to see Government focusing on agriculture and urged youths to utilize the available land around them to keep them healthy and ensure a bright future.

Mr. Benny Sami, 64, of Muaniweni echoed similar sentiments of gratitude for the assistance provided by the Ministry.

"I would like to thank the Ministry for supporting us and arranging the manure for us. The fertilizer I bought will be helpful for my crops. I bought six bags of Urea for my dalo farm," Mr Sami said.

The agro-inputs that were supplied were 50kg of NPK, Blend C, Urea, 20kg of Hydrocomplex, 5litres of Glyphosate and Gluphosinate worth a total of \$24,238.47.



Ministry staff facilitating the farmers at the Sawani border.

FIJI THANKS INDIA FOR SUPPORT DURING TOUGH TIMES



Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy with the Acting Indian High Commissioner to Fiji, Mr. Saifullah Khan (2nd from right) with a delegate from the Indian High Commission and senior staff of the Ministry

India's support during Fiji's challenging times has been highly commended by Government following the virtual signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for agriculture support early this week.

Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, Hon. Dr. Mahendra

Reddy acknowledged India's support in sending a consignment of 7 tonnes of seeds to Fiji as grant assistance for restoration of affected communities earlier this year, following TC Yasa.

"Furthermore, during the devastating aftermath of TC Winston in 2016, Fiji was fortunate to have

received assistance of 5 tonnes of seeds from India which was specially transported on board Indian Naval Ship [INS] Sumitra to support and provide rehabilitation to victims," he said.

He also highlighted that in 2018 to support development of agriculture infrastructure, the Indian Government donated tractors to support farmers in the Central Division.

Hon. Dr. Reddy explained India's continuous support to Fiji dated back to the 1800s.

He said Fiji and India relations was an on-going commitment that had grown steadily with continued arrangements that strengthened both country's development cooperation.

Dr. Reddy highlighted in 2006, Fiji signed a Development Cooperation with India through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which covered areas such as agriculture, fisheries and industrial waste management.

"The Ministry of Agriculture Fiji, signed its first Memorandum of Understanding with Ministry of Agriculture India in 2014 on cooperation in the Field of Water Resource

Management. Also in 2014, the Ministry signed an Agreement with India's International Crop Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and in that same year commenced collaboration on the Memorandum of Understanding that we will be signing off today," he said.

In addition, Minister Reddy explained between 2016 and 2020, through Research and Scientific support, India provided the Ministry

with the following technical experts – Coconut specialists to help revitalize Fiji's coconut industry; a Spice consultant to review spice cultivation practices and a Food technologist to assist with Value addition.

"The dedication and confidence shown by the Indian Government today to sign this agreement to improve Agriculture Development Services and lives of Fijians is highly acknowledged and appreciated."



Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy signing the Memorandum of Understanding at the Ministry's conference room in Raiwaqa.