



## 7,500 FARMERS IN VANUA LEVU RECEIVE PLANTING MATERIALS UNDER TC YASA REHAB PROGRAM



MoA staff in the North working on planting materials for distribution to farmers affected by TC Yasa and Ana.

Almost 7,500 farmers in Vanua Levu have been assisted with kumala and yaqona cuttings and dalo suckers.

Ministry of Agriculture Permanent Secretary, Mr Ritesh Dass said the assistance was part of the TC's Yasa and Ana Rehabilitation Programme.

"The Ministry had committed its assistance to farmers following the devastation caused by TC's Yasa and Ana late last year and early this year.

"Despite the current restrictions of COVID-19 we are ensuring that our farmers in the North will receive the planting materials they need to re-start their farms," he said.

Mr. Dass said the planting materials would help the Vanua Levu farmers get back on their feet and re-start the northern economy.

As of Wednesday (26.5.21), the Ministry has assisted a total of 7,457 farmers.

A total of 2,546 farmers were provided with 78,270 kumala cuttings. The kumala cuttings were provided by ten suppliers.

In terms of yaqona cuttings, 127,121 were distributed to 2,508 farmers. The yaqona cuttings were provided by five suppliers.

Finally, the Ministry distributed 242,883 dalo suckers to 2,403 farmers. Six suppliers provided the dalo suckers to the Ministry.

## AGRICULTURE EXPORTS INCREASE BY 58% IN LAST 5 YEARS

Fiji's fresh and chilled agriculture exports have been performing remarkably well in the last five years, revealed Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy.

He made the comments at the announcement of the Ministry of Agriculture's 'Cash for Cultivation' Program support of \$800,000 by the Australian Government to Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), who would be partnering with the Ministry of Agriculture team in disbursing the funds to the farmers.

"Since 2016, we have grown in exports of fresh and chilled produce by 58per cent. The increase has been from \$67m in 2016 to \$106m last year."

"In 2020, we grew exports revenue by 25per cent compared to 2019," the Minister said.

Dr. Reddy said in terms of volume for the same period of 2020 compared to 2019, Fiji's exports of fresh and chilled produce grew by more than 16per cent.

Australian High Commissioner to Fiji, H.E. John Feakes commended the Minister on the performance of the agriculture export statistics.

"I congratulate you for the very impressive figures that you've just unveiled in terms of the improvement of agriculture production in Fiji. They are very significant improvements in growth, for that, you and your Ministry need to be commended," he said.



## SOTUTU YOUTHS BACK HOME GARDENING



Divisional Manager Community Policing (Southern Division) Pio Sovalevu (left) receiving the seeds on behalf of the Sotutu youth group

The Home Gardening initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture has enabled the Sotutu Youth group of Nabua to further engage in agricultural activities.

Sotutu Youth President Neori Buli said the provision of seeds will assist the youth to engage in constructive activities.

"We have a total of 30 youths in the group and all vary from primary, early, and mid-secondary school students to school leavers," he said.

The Sotutu youth group has communally been working together in the development of a piece of land in Nabua for agriculture purposes.

"Some are committed to this idea that we have initiated while others are still into peer pressure, there have been crop thefts and all other kinds of activities within the area," he said.

"We want them to come and be

part of the program so that they, in turn, can help to feed their families and this can also minimize the theft of crops and vegetables we have planted."

"As a youth group located in the urban area, there are positive impacts we can create in our lives and we can also find solutions to problems challenging our youths - farming is one of them," he said.

Neori Buli is grateful for the assistance provided by the Ministry of Agriculture through the seeds.

"Some here have been laid off from their jobs, and are without work, we are grateful that we've been given these seeds for home vegetable supply as it will supplement the group's existing initiative of crop farming," he said.

"We're also very keen to participate in other agriculture programs provided by the Ministry of Agriculture because that will assist us to grow as a youth group

determined to bring change to our community."

Divisional Manager Community Policing (Southern Division) Pio Sovalevu who received the seeds on behalf of the group said it would greatly benefit the youth group and the 28 households in the area.

"We have seen a turning point in the Sotutu youth group as they have started land preparation on a crown reserve land opposite our road and they are working together daily, fostering teamwork and unity as they grow."

With the increased crime rate in the area, Mr. Pio Sovalevu said, "This is something that will divert their attention away from peer pressure, and help them commit to something that will benefit not only them but their families as well during this pandemic, the ensuing lock-down, and curfew in place."