

LANDUSE OFFICER HAPPY TO SERVE



Mr Dharmendra (far right) during a farmer training in the North.

In continuing with our week-long Civil Service celebrations, we highlight the story of Mr. Dharmendra, a 48-year old staff of the Land Resource Planning Division (LRPD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways.

The Land Resource Planning Division is an important division within the Ministry of Agriculture

and Waterways and their role is to ensure that whilst the nation achieves high economic growth in agriculture, sustainability of land resources is to be strengthened and maintained.

Whilst they work with farmers on making more land available for productive and social purposes they also ensure that they are promoting

climate smart agriculture.

Staff of the division are based in Lautoka, Labasa, Koronivia and the Ministry Headquarters in Raiwaqa.

Mr. Dharmendra is one of the five staff members based in Labasa and he joined way back in 1997 as a casual labourer in the Pineapple Project at the Sigatoka Research Station.

“In 1998, I moved to the Seaqaqa Research Station in Vanua Levu to also look after the Pineapple Project. From 2005 to date, I joined the LRPD Division as a Field Assistant officer and look after the three Provinces in Vanua Levu,” he smiled proudly.

“I assist my team in the work that needs to be done and work around the clock to ensure that farmers are advised well and their farms monitored every now and then.”

Dharmendra says that the Division has over the years, developed best Sustainable Land Management practices through research based activities in collaboration with internal external divisions.

“We work to develop sloping land technology and agroforestry for both crops and livestock development and also provide quality and timely advice to the management and our partners on optimum land utilization techniques.”

He adds that they continue to conduct awareness sessions through farmer trainings on promoting farming as a business and as a rewarding form of employment.

“We have capacity building in areas of farm business planning and farm business advisory services to enable the sector to stay competitive and remain sustainable. As staff we often have in house staff training and skills development on Farm Planning, Sustainable Land Management & Climate Smart Agriculture,” added Mr. Dharmendra.

“I am grateful to the Ministry for Agriculture and Waterways for instilling in me values of public service and supporting me throughout my career. It has been a wonderful journey for me throughout my 27 years of service in the Ministry,” he smiled.

“My work has enabled me to meet new people, build networks and create bonds that will last a lifetime. I am grateful to be working as a civil servant and will continue to develop my skills and knowledge to benefit farmers in Vanua Levu,” added Mr. Dharmendra.

Mr. Dharmendra joined the north team in celebrating the Civil Service Week and said that it feels good to be appreciated by the Government of Fiji and have a whole week dedicated to all civil servants across Fiji.

VISAVISAWAQA SERVES WITH PRIDE



Ms Sainimili Visavisawaqa crossing a stream to conduct her work in one of the interiors areas in the Western Division.

Civil servants across Fiji celebrated Civil Service Week with the theme: “Celebrating the Contributions of Civil Servants”.

The weeklong celebrations was about recognising and honouring the vital work carried out by Civil Servants across all levels of government.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways also thanks its staff who are serving in the respective agriculture stations across Fiji, Rabi and Rotuma for their dedication and endless sacrifices.

It goes without saying that all their contributions help in achieving the vision and mission of the ministry and Government

mandate as a whole.

Meet Sainimili Visavisawaqa who has been working in the ministry's Animal Health and Production Division for the past 10 years.

She hails from the village of Nasalia in the district of Nagonenicolo in Naitasiri and currently stationed at the Lautoka office.

She is part of a dedicated team that visit farms in the Western Division to conduct Bovine Tuberculosis & Brucellosis (BTEC) tests in cattle.

“So basically we conduct tests and if animals are found positive, they are transported straight

away for slaughter under the BTEC program. This is to ensure that the disease is eradicated and prevented from spreading to other herds within and around the farm,” explained Ms. Visavisawaqa.

“Part of our work is to know the procedure of cattle movements. We have to advise farmers of the notification of herd testing and results, and to know the local plans in place for infected areas that specify the test interval and testing frequencies,” she said.

“Bovine Tuberculosis & Brucellosis in cattle has no cure and it is often disheartening to see the faces of farmers when their stocks have been tested positive. They have to be taken to the abattoir for slaughter and it is the only solution,” she added.

Ms Visavisawaqa added that farmers are always advised and trained on proper management and care of their animals to avoid disease and other mishaps.

“I have learned to enjoy my work and also learn from senior experienced officials.”

The 33-year old hardworking Agriculture Assistant moved to Lautoka to serve the western division when BTEC was decentralized in December 2021 and says that she has enjoyed every challenge and triumph.

“Of the many challenges I faced in the field, one was the trip to the interior of Navosa. We were there to conduct TB and brucellosis testing and our only mode of transport was by horseback. It was very risky as there was no road access at all and we had to trek our way through. That is one experience that I will never forget,” she smiled.

Ms. Visavisawaqa is also part of the Stray Animal campaign and says that more needs to be done by livestock farmers in terms of keeping their animals safe.

“We have been capturing horses and cows on the roadside for the past few weeks and it is sad to see that they are left alone like that. I call on farmers to please care for their animals and ensure that they are properly kept behind fences or tied close to their homes,” advised Ms. Visavisawaqa.

Ms. Visavisawaqa wishes all civil servants around Fiji a Happy Civil Service Week and hopes that we will all continue to deliver quality services to the people of Fiji.



Ms Sainimili Visavisawaqa believes in hardwork and perseverance.