

Framework for Agriculture Expansion Critical for Sector



Minister for Agriculture, Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy with the senior management and respective commodity officers

Commodity officers of the Ministry of Agriculture who specialize in each agricultural commodity have been told to ensure their technical knowledge impacts the framework for agriculture expansion and further development of the sector.

This was reiterated by the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy while meeting with technical staff from the three technical divisions within the Ministry of Agriculture at its Legalega Research Station in Nadi.

During the two day workshop, commodity officers presented strategies on each crop and livestock to increase production of respective commodities in the country to meet supply and demand.

“I want you to take ownership of the specific agricultural commodity, be it livestock and crop production, because this is your area of expertise and you’re responsible for impacting it to ensure agriculture expansion.

“I want us to move the sector, and in this very limited time span, we need to show visible signs on the ground of what you specialise in,” he said.

“You have been chosen to lead these particular commodities. You should clearly indicate how you will take the sector forward, what frameworks will you develop in that particular area to ensure we deliver our services and realize its results, the onus is on you to deliver,” added Hon. Reddy.

Teams have been chosen to work on different commodities on Crop Extension, Crop Research, and Animal Health and Production Services whereby they will work collaboratively on their specialised Agriculture commodity.

Presentations on strategies on Beef, Rice, Goat, Sheep, Extension Services and Research Services were delivered by each commodity officer to drive the sector and increase production for local and export markets.

Research Stations to Strengthen Service Delivery



Minister for Agriculture, Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy with the Deputy Secretary for Agriculture Mr. Jone Sovalawa at Naduruloulou Research Station

The Ministry of Agriculture’s Research Stations will continue to increase production of selected planting materials with contracted farmers on the fields to increase the supply of planting materials to farmers awaiting assistance.

This was highlighted by the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy during his visit to the Naduruloulou Research Station this week.

“We will continue our agricultural research to release high yielding varieties. Farm-level productivity is quite low and one of the factors is low yielding traditional varieties. We will continue to do this over time, given a particular variety builds susceptibility to pests and diseases thus needing replacement.

“The Ministry is also organizing farm land to raise seeds and seedlings on which will then be distributed to contracted farmers to improve their production, with the development of an integrated production system focusing on promotion of cover crops, green manuring- mucuna,

nitrogen fixing plants and pulses; fruit tree orchard package of practices; and fertilizer/pesticide management,” said Dr. Reddy.

Plans are also in place for the implementation of management practices to control the outbreak of pests and diseases which would be coordinated by the Research Division through the use of recommended integrated pest management to reduce its population to a more manageable level.

Dr. Reddy elaborated that farmers training would also be conducted in all geographical divisions by the Ministry of Agriculture Research Officers to help familiarize farmers with the current best practices.

“The Ministry, through the Research and Extension divisions, will continue to assist farmers through various trainings in all the divisions on the new research techniques in order for farmers to have a better understanding of the research activities while at the same time, they could learn and practice the same techniques on their farms,” he said.

Commitment to Revitalize Rice Industry Reiterated to Naselai Farmers



Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy with Duavata Rice Farmers in Naselai during his Central Division Tour

The revitalization of the rice industry continues to be a priority of the Ministry of Agriculture in its ongoing efforts to improve efficient production through continued research for a self-sufficient and sustainable rice industry.

This was highlighted by the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy while addressing the Naselai Rice Farmers Group in Naselai, Tailevu during his two-day Central Division tour this week.

Hon. Reddy said strategies to ensure a revived and strengthened rice industry was in progress by the Ministry of Agriculture, some of which included the introduction of high yielding improved rice varieties in Fiji, increasing the capacity of the Ministry’s Research Division and continued production and supply of more certified seed and planting materials to farmers.

He also highlighted planned strategies for the commercialization of the rice industry, which would require close collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture, rice farmers and stakeholders.

“Rice farming can be labor intensive, hence the Ministry continues to mechanize many of the husbandry practices, including providing access to various types of rice machines which were available to farmers on subsidized rates and the formation of rice clusters where possible to achieve economies of scale which ensure machine optimization,” said Hon. Reddy.

“The Ministry will also consolidate rice development in areas where land improvement and irrigation work is carried out and will focus on rice breeding and promotion programs which involves research and seed production of quality rice seeds which will be supplied to the farmers for better yields,” he added.

While responding to issues and questions raised by the Naselai Rice Farmers Group, Hon. Reddy clarified the Ministry’s plans for the industry, as the foundations and ground work had already been initiated.

Naselai Rice Farmers Group currently consists of 9 members who plant rice mainly for food security and are also supplying rice for their market.