

Ministry Releases Genetically Improved F1 Sheep Cross Breed to Farmers



Recipients of the F1 Sheep Cross breed with Hon. Dr Mahendra Reddy and the Ministry staff

Local sheep production is set to significantly improve following the release of the genetically improved F1 Sheep Cross Breed at the Ministry of Agriculture's Nawaicoba Quarantine Station in Nadi today.

Speaking at the handing over of the F1 Sheep Cross Breed to sheep

farmers in the Western Division today, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy said the release paved the way for improved sheep genetics and production at the farm level.

"The improvement in the genetic

make-up will create impacts such as improved weight gain, reproductive efficiency, and better production performance. According to the breed evaluation studies at Nawaicoba Research Station, F1 Cross Breeds have an average birth weight of 3.5kg compared to 2.68kg in the Fiji Fantastic breed," said Dr. Reddy.

"They also have a better average body length and low mortality rate when compared to the Fiji Fantastic sheep and a better twinning percentage than Dorper Sheep breeds."

With 120 male breeders and 60 female breeders being released today for farmers in the Western Division, Minister Reddy highlighted that the F1 Sheep Cross Breed was a product of cross-breeding between Dorper and Fiji Fantastic Breeds and would significantly contribute to improved production.

"The introduction of these F1 breeds on farms will boost the genetic make-up of the existing population and contribute to improved performances of these animals on local farms.

Hon. Reddy has also urged farmers to take advantage of this genetic improvement

program to improve the current condition of their stocks.

He added that the Ministry of Agriculture Research Stations would continue with its breeding program and evaluate the productive and reproductive parameters of various crossbreeds.

The release of the F1 Sheep Cross Breed is the culmination of decades of quarantine, monitoring, and

natural breeding as a result of two way crossbreeding between various imported sheep breeds based on the compatibility features that could sustain performance in tropical conditions.

The crossbreeding program between Fiji Fantastic ewes and the imported Dorper Rams led to the breeding of these improved genetics, which has 50% features of Fiji Fantastic and 50% of Dorper Rams.



F1 sheep cross breed

Kadavu Kava Farmers Praise Government Assistance

The Ministry of Agriculture's assistance through the facilitation and recent opening of a kava processing shed and pounding machine at Vunisea, Kadavu has been praised by kava farmers on the island.

Kadavu Kava Farmers' Co-operative Limited (KKFCL) Chairman Roko Seru Nabalarua said the project has strengthened farmers' passion for the industry on the island as they were in desperate need of the newly commissioned shed and machine.

"We would often find ourselves stuck in situations that were beyond our control and as we progressed with our yaqona farming, there were setbacks that affected the consistency of our production and supply," he said.

"We have experienced problems such as the transportation of yaqona to the mainland due to irregular shipping schedules and services, and another problem was the unpredictable cost of

doing business between farmers and the middlemen, with fluctuating prices in the market resulting in inconsistent returns," he added.

With the new facility, Mr. Nabalarua said the load on farmers would be relieved as it would put some of their doubts to rest.

"The idea of establishing a Kadavu Kava group began in 2016 when discussions on the way forward was held during various district meetings and it became fruitful in 2017 with the involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture following consent from all the districts," he said.

"We are here witnessing the trials and sacrifices each of us has made and that is the opening of the pounding shed, we can testify to the commitment the Ministry of Agriculture has towards the development of outer islands and we're very grateful."

The development assistance which

was worth \$210,000.00 is part of the Rural and Outer Islands Program (ROI) under the Ministry of Agriculture. The processing shed and pounding machine, which will be managed by the KKFCL will oversee the pounding and processing of kava from members and farmers on the island.

"The facility will open up new opportunities for us and will be another way of circulating revenue within Kadavu and is a way of giving back to the island, contributing to the vision for a better Kadavu through our kava production," Mr. Nabalarua.

The opening of the facility was witnessed by the District representatives, Government Officials, representatives of Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA) Plus Program, Yaqona Taskforce Committee members, Kadavu Kava Committee members and yaqona farmers.



Kava farmers during the Farmers training

Kava Processing Shed and Pounding Machine Commissioned in Kadavu

The commitment of Kadavu Kava Farmers' Co-operative Limited (KKFCL) in developing the kava industry on the island received recognition and a boost following the recent commissioning of a Kava Processing Shed and pounding machine at Vunisea, Kadavu.

The facility, which will benefit kava farmers on the island was made possible through close collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and KKFCL and is a milestone achievement as it is the first of its kind for Kadavu.

While commissioning the project, Ministry of Agriculture's Director Crop Extension, Paula Tuione acknowledged the contributions made by Kadavu kava farmers in driving the development of the commodity despite their many challenges.

"This initiative is a symbol of progress and links the vision that the Kadavu Kava Farmers' Cooperative has towards the development of its farmers.

"Kadavu is well known for the cultivation of yaqona despite the hardships in geographical location and condition of the island, you still find solutions to combat this and this project ushers in a new dawn for the people of Kadavu and it depends on you to do your best to move Kadavu, and this partnership, forward," he added.

Mr. Tuione highlighted that the project was in line with the Ministry of Agriculture's vision towards a sustainable livelihood for Fiji stating; "The Ministry has viewed the sustainable development of the whole value chain, from the farmer to the market and we have looked into the improvement of farmhouses as well to raise the standard of yaqona pounding to another level," he said.

"It is encouraging to see the linkage of Kadavu Kava Farmers' Cooperative Limited's vision unfolding so farmers can witness and experience the returns

and impact of Yaqona to farmers in rural areas," said Mr. Tuione.

Members of KKFCL and kava farmers were also challenged to compete for the international market and to meet market demands.

"From what we have achieved and witnessed today, we can move further and proceed to another level of competition and it is your duty as yaqona farmers to step up to the challenge," he said.

The processing shed and pounding machine development assistance which was worth \$210,000.00 is part of the Rural and Outer Islands Program (ROI) under the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Kadavu Kava Farmers' Co-operative Limited was established in 2017 with the aim of assisting farmers to develop the commodity and to provide support to kava farmers.



Kava farmers during the opening of the processing shed and pounding machine