

Striving Through Cocoa



Mr. Iowane Kaloulia

Toiling the land and making a living from proceeds generated through cocoa has been a mainstay for Iowane Kaloulia's family.

Mr. Kaloulia, who hails from Nabulini Village, Wainibuka in Tailevu has remained a faithful laborer of cocoa for a majority of his life and now farms at Naveidawa Settlement, never losing sight of the rewards of cocoa. Though he faced some hurdles along his cocoa farming journey due to fluctuating market prices, he rekindled the family's long standing relationship with cocoa and hasn't stopped

since.

"It (cocoa) used to be a source of income for my family and in 1998 I took over the responsibility of looking after the cocoa plants from my father, who was a cocoa farmer.

"Although we tried to produce as much as we could, the price kept dropping and when it finally dropped from \$0.60c per kilogram to \$0.25c per kilogram, we decided to stop but we kept our plants growing," he said.

As time passed, Iowane eventually ventured into banana farming but his thoughts always lingered on his first commodity, "Every time I would visit the farm, I would look at the cocoa trees and think - what if I try to revitalize it, what if it goes wrong again?"

"It would pain me to see it ripen year in, year out before going to waste and I thought something can be done, that was when I started again with cocoa. I was also encouraged to take up cocoa farming again after being informed of the price of dry beans selling at \$3.00 per kilogram and I decided to try my hand at it once more," he said.

On his farm lingers the aroma of vanilla and banana, his main produce, with dalo bordering his farm as a substitution for banana during its off season along with other assorted fruits for the roadside market. "This is a banana producing area and it is always in demand, we supply consistently to our markets with buyers

coming in to buy at the farm gate.

"Along the way I would experiment on my farm and results would sometimes surprise me. In one of those trials and experiments I tried planting vanilla next to cocoa trees so they could creep up for support," he smiled. "One thing I found is two crops could be harvested at the same time and two is a better yield of vanilla compared to when it crept on other plants."

Upon consultation with his locality officer, Iowane was encouraged to prune his cocoa trees as there was a market for cocoa. "I was excited when I heard this, so I decided to keep practicing the vanilla and cocoa practice and start with the maintenance of the other cocoa trees. "Since I had left cocoa farming a long time ago, a refresher demonstration was shown to me and as simple as that, the cocoa techniques I had learnt from back then came naturally to me," he added. Soon after this, buyers began flocking into his farm for cocoa beans to supply to the market, eagerly awaiting to process the beans of Nabulini.

"Cocoa beans were paid according to the grading of the buyer, wet beans were sold at \$1.10 per kilogram and during peak hours, cocoa production from my farm could be 80-120 kilograms," he said. "During the off-season, production is normally 40-50 kilograms and my dry beans are selling at \$3.00-\$6.00 per kilogram depending on grades. Iowane farms his assorted crops on a 14-acre piece of land with cocoa taking up 5-acres harboring 1,500 nucleus cocoa trees (40

years old) and 200 newly planted hybrid cocoa trees.

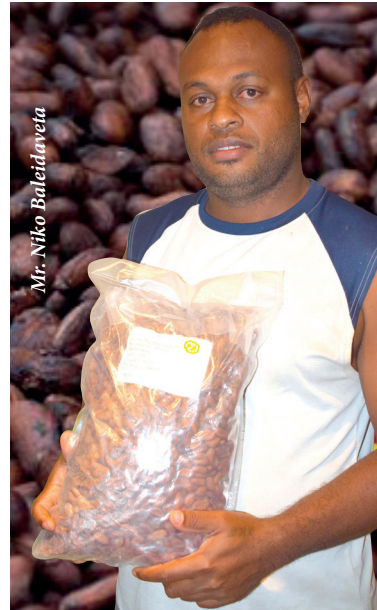
"The high demand for cocoa pushed me to another level, to plant and experiment on newly introduced varieties mixed with the Amelonado variety. The 60-year-old fondly recalls the benefits of growing cocoa as a child as it afforded his family a stable source of income, allowing his family members to pursue their education and careers.

"I can say that it is once again providing for the needs of my family now, financially as well as for my children's education, and acting as a substitute when other crops are off season. Iowane is pleased that as a farmer, he is contributing to the economy through his efforts confidently saying that although the cocoa

industry is slowly increasing, it will bloom again. "I firmly believe cocoa is a good commodity, a money generating crop and although it would need extra hard attention with its related issues, we should keep working on it," said Iowane.

"Cocoa should be well looked after, similar to how we look after a child growing up, with caution, pruned all the time and once harvested, our full attention should be given to the beans, it should be turned in the sun every 20 minutes with procedures to be followed closely to avoid any disappointments," he said. It was during the first Fiji Cocoa Competition held in Nadi that this meticulous practice landed Iowane the honors of 3rd place and by the looks of it, he has a lot more cocoa left in him.

The Olsen's Fiji Farm



Mr. Niko Baleidaveta

unattended farms with opportunities."

They are weighing their options and identifying areas that need improvement and improving further ones that had already been resolved. The Olsen farm has moved into another level of production, from the normal process of breaking pods to fermentation, they have moved a step further from drying to packaging.

"The market has always been a concern for us and we are grateful for the help in securing a market, which the Olsen's are doing," he said.

The unfavorable market has forced farmers to look for opportunities that come their way and although the demand has to be met, it has provided some satisfaction.

"There is not a steady market that we can depend on for the supply of our cocoa beans and we are sometimes faced with incidences of fungus infecting beans from the long wait," he said.

"In 2016 we harvested a total of 40 kilograms of cocoa beans and was sold at \$5 per kilogram, a good start after the quest to revitalize the farm." Lessons have been learnt from past experiences of cocoa drying and Niko hopes to maintain the techniques demonstrated to him by experts.

"Before, our parents used dryers to dry the beans and because of its sensitivity, the smell of smoke was often noticed in the chocolates after the process and this led us to use the sun to dry our beans.

"We are now using that drying method, there are different techniques that people use, as long as there is no negative effect," he said.

With the difficulty of securing a market being a problem, the continuous stride for improvement proved successful with a better second harvest being sent to Denmark.

"The Olsen's secured the market and during the second harvest, we harvested 250 kilograms of cocoa beans all of which was shipped to Denmark to Pure Rainforest Chocolate by Koefoed," said Niko.

"It is just the first year we are supplying and we are processing our packed cocoa for the 2nd shipment, we are starting, but we will definitely get there but nonetheless this is a milestone for us and we're grateful to have achieved it.

Niko has begun his expansion having their own processing unit for fermentating to drying in the sun and roasting and cracking before packing for shipment. All the beans are collected from cocoa pods around the land which also boasts 2-year-old hybrid cocoa trees.

"It is the future plan of the owners to stretch their helping arms and buy beans from neighboring farmers and to also secure more markets for local farmers.

Growing Cocoa for Cash



Cocoa Field Day in Nayavu, Wainibuka

Recommended Varieties:

- Amelonado
- Trinitario
- Keravat

Seed Rate:

2500 plants/ha

Planting Time:

Can be planted all year around but best planting time:

Dry Zone: Mid September to December
Wet Zone: October to December.

Spacing:

Between Rows: 2m
Plants within Rows: 2m
Planting Materials: Select healthy and disease free as planting materials.

Fertilizer:

Super Phosphate: Apply 10g per plant, basal application at planting.
NPK: 13:13:21 200kg/ha @ 2 split application, @ 4 months and 8 months.

Apply fertilizer around the plant based on canopy diameter. Soil analysis should be done before fertilizer application.

Weed Control/ Management:

Ring weeding, spray with Glyphosate between plants @ 150-200ml/15L of Water or Paraquat at 100ml/15L of Water.

Disease Control/Management

Black Pod: Spray with Kocide at 53g/16L of Water every 2 weeks.

Canker: Remove & destroy diseased plants.

Sanitation: Remove disease parts away from the Cocoa field, burn & bury. Plant the recommended Amelonado variety.

Remove black pods regularly & bury or burn outside the plantation.
Prune shade trees & overgrown Cocoa branches.

Insect Control/ Management

Green Semi Hopper: Spray Acephate (sold as Sunthene) @ 12g/16L Water

Harvest Yield/Food Value:

Harvest @ 3 years after planting.

Yield: 2.5 tonnes/ha Wet beans.
Or 2.0 tonnes/ha Dry

Food Value:

Source of Thiamin, Niacin & Vitamin B12.



(+679) 338 4233



Ministry of Agriculture Fiji



Fiji Agriculture



agrihelp@govnet.gov.fj



www.agriculture.gov.fj