

It's Dairy for Titilia



Titilia Bolakoro controlling the calf into the shed at her farm

Not everyone wakes up before the rooster crows and heads straight out to the farm before the crack of dawn.

To even awake in the early hours of the morning is a huge ask in itself but that is exactly the type of dedication and commitment that Titilia Bolakoro has

shown for past two decades on her dairy farm.

Rain, hail or shine, regardless of the weather, she is out on her dairy farm every morning, something which has become second nature to her.

The 54-year-old Naluwai native was born and raised on a dairy farm, and after 20 years of marriage in Naocosaqa settlement

in Nabaitavo, Naitasiri she continues to ply her trade in the same industry upon which she was reared from.

"I was born and brought up in a dairy farm back at Naluwai, so dairy farming was nothing new to me when I decided to become a full time dairy farmer and after getting married, I took control of

my husband's farm and helped him in his farming," she said.

"My husband's family have been dairy farmers since the 50's and they've come a long way since then, I just stepped in and helped to revive the farms production level.

After marrying in 1997, the couple concentrated efforts in raising the standard of their farm by applying differing techniques with mixed results.

Through trainings conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and consultation with stakeholders and other experienced farmers, the couple soon reaped the rewards of their labour.

She has consistently supplied approximately 25 liters of milk per day and earns a decent living from the dairy farm to support her family.

"There have been a lot of changes in the dairy industry as compared to the past because the Government has committed itself to helping farmers and making their

work easier like constructing farm access roads and other agricultural developments, which is good for us," said Titilia.

She also acknowledged Government's exhaustive effort to assist and support farmers in the dairy industry in order to achieve its potential, highlighting the onus was also on farmers to do their part for the industry's benefit.

"It is our responsibility, as farmers to look after our animals, we should ensure they are secured in the fence and have the frequent Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) and Brucellosis tests done in order to prevent animals from catching these diseases," she said.

Her only wish was for more farmers to show interest in the dairy industry as it could be a lucrative venture if one remained committed to it.

She has optimistic plans for the future, plans which involve a fully automated milking system to ease her burden and she hasn't shown any signs of giving up on her

goal.

"We have a 5-year development plan to fully develop this farm to a level that we have envisioned, to have proper milking sheds, to have more calves and milking cows, to secure fully automatic milking machines and in the long term a vehicle to assist transport our milk to chilling centers," she said.

Her advice, work smart and work together; "I would like to advise dairy farmers and other farmers who are interested in the dairy industry to work smartly and closely with each other, do things communally as this is our strength and most importantly to take heed of technical advice given by the Ministry of Agriculture, this will only boost and enhance the dairy industry for everyone."

Such is the life and drive of Titilia Bolakoro, dedication of this like will ensure the dairy industry is headed in the right direction.

Tavua Smallholder Farmers Contribution to Livestock Sector Emphasized



Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy and livestock farmers of Tavua

Transitioning to large scale farming from smallholder livestock farming will undoubtedly contribute towards achieving the sector's potential.

This was relayed by Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy while handing over fencing material packages to 9 selected smallholder

livestock farmers of Tavua yesterday, whereby he emphasized their contributions could effectively reduce the importation bill of livestock products and improve the local sector's performance.

"As you may have heard, we are actively pursuing the transitioning of smallholder agriculture into medium

and large commercial farmers and we are assisting farmers once, particularly livestock to move towards commercial levels, livestock includes beef, dairy and sheep," he said.

"These are the widely consumed meat based products locally, for beef, we're actually importing 40%, for dairy, 85% is

being imported whereas for sheep, 99% of lamb meat is being imported from New Zealand.

"And I think for all three, we have the capacity to raise here, if not we can produce 100% consumption to be met here and it is important that if we have an advantage on any commodity, we should

exploit that advantage," said Hon. Reddy.

The fencing material assistance is anticipated to assist these smallholder farmers develop towards medium and large scale livestock farmers to develop their paddocks.

Grant recipient Ms. Khairul Bibi of Tavua said the assistance would greatly assist in the maintenance of her stock.

"I am grateful for this assistance as this will enable me to improve and extend the fencing of my stock, prevent them from going astray or getting stolen, and I am looking forward to expanding my herd because this is our main livelihood," he said.

The Ministry of Agriculture provided assistance packages of 8 coiled goat fence (4ft x 50 m), 19 Pine posts (1.8m x 100mm) and 3kg U-nails to each farmer to incentivize small holder farmers to expand livestock farms into commercial farm by ensuring they developed suitable paddocks for the growth of their herds.

The assistance, through a grant of \$140,000 received by the Ministry of Agriculture, is earmarked for 134 farmers around Fiji, with 84 recipients from both the Western and Northern Divisions already having received similar assistance packages recently.

Do not misuse Government subsidized assistance: Minister Reddy



A Benai farmer raises an issue with Minister Dr. Mahendra Reddy during the informal Talanoa Session at Benai Settlement, Ba.

The misuse of subsidized government assistance will not be tolerated.

This was emphasized by Minister

for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy

during an informal talanoa session with farmers of Benai Settlement on the outskirts of Koronubu in Ba yesterday.

While responding to issues highlighted by farmers of Benai, Minister Reddy said the practice of circumventing Governments assistance for reasons other than its intended purpose was irresponsible of farmers who sought the assistance.

"Let me make it clear, the assistance which is provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, particularly that of land clearing and preparation is to be used for the sole purpose of crop farmers and not for sugarcane farms," he said.

"Do not misuse the Government subsidized cost of tractor hours for land preparations other than crop farming, if you're a crop farmer who has sought assistance from the Ministry for land preparation, use it for the purpose for which you had requested, to prepare land for your non-sugar agriculture," Minister Reddy reiterated.

He strongly discouraged sugarcane farmers from attempting to access Ministry of Agriculture land preparation assistance for their sugarcane farms as the Ministry's resources was limited and solely intended for crop farming.

"If you're abusing the system, refrain

immediately because there are other areas and farmers who are in desperate need of these services elsewhere and here you are, misusing the Ministry's services, which would otherwise have been put to better use elsewhere to further another farmers progress.

Hon. Reddy stated that similar land preparation was carried out by the Fiji Sugar Corporation for the benefit of sugarcane farmers and it would be negligent and reckless of them to continue abusing existing systems and processes for their own personal gain.

The Ministry of Agriculture offers a Government subsidized rate of \$28.50 per hour for both land preparation and land clearing in comparison to the \$450.00 per acre rate for land preparation (ploughing & harrowing), and \$4,500.00 per acre for land clearing offered by private contractors.