

## Pilot Exercise for 2020 Agriculture Census



Area coordinators and supervisors for the Fiji 2020 Agriculture Census during the Pilot Training

The importance of conducting a pilot exercise for the 2020 Fiji Agriculture Census survey as an example of the actual census was reiterated to census area coordinators and supervisors.

This was emphasized by acting Chief Economist Sera Bose while speaking to respective Government officials who would act as area coordinator and supervisors during the 3-day pilot training

held recently in Raiwaqa.

“The Pilot exercise is a mirror of what will happen during the 2020 Agriculture Census, therefore it is very important in any census or survey that we carry out a pilot survey.

“It tests the system, the questionnaires and the process itself and the result will show us if we are ready or not and areas that need improvement before the final 2020 Fiji Agriculture Census,” she said.

“Having participants from the operation division is crucial because you are the main recorders of the agriculture statistics, your contribution in terms of compilation of agriculture statistic is very important and it contributes to the system inside,” Ms Bose added.

She said that in ensuring the processes leading up to the census, the inclusion and training of Ministry officials on the exercise was important as they would be assigned as field supervisors and area coordinators, because through understanding the concept and methodologies, it would help them

carry out the 2020 Fiji Agriculture Census.

The training exercise also enabled participants to have a fair idea of how the statistical system would work.

“You are all experts in your technical areas but it is the statistical side that we need to impart to you and we want to teach you more of what is expected of you in areas you have been assigned to,” Ms Bose said.

“After this pilot training, you will be going to the field to conduct Pilot trials, it is important to communicate with your enumerators and supervisors which will enable us to focus more on achieving the task as a team,” she said.

The workshop which included personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Fisheries included the following training outcomes:

- Understanding of why the Agriculture Census is being conducted;
- Comprehending the use of Census Data and Collected

Information;

- Understanding the Flow of Questions in the Questionnaires;
- Acquiring the skills of Collecting High Quality Data;
- Understanding the use of Computer Assisted Personal Interview Tools (CAPI) and operability;
- Understanding, reading and using the Area map, and;
- Recognizing the necessary protocol of conducting Agriculture Census and knowing the procedure of Data Collection.

The Pilot trials were conducted in Naqali and Veikoba Settlement in Naitasiri for the Central Division, Biausevu village and settlement in Nadroga and Lomanikaya village in Vatulele for the Western Division, Navatu and Nasinu Village and Nacekoro Settlement, Savusavu for the North and Lovoni Village for the Eastern Division from the 4th-8th of November 2019.

## Farmers Complain of Losses Due to Stray Animals



Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy with farmers from Caboni Settlement, Tavua.

The Ministry of Agriculture is again strongly advising livestock farmers to ensure their animals are properly secured within their premises.

This follows complaints received from

crop farmers of Viti Vanua and Caboni settlements in Tavua during an informal talanoa session with the Minister for Agriculture Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy on Tuesday.

Farmers registered the losses they suffered on their crops due to damages done by stray animals like horses and cattle.

Advisory Councillor and farmer of Caboni settlement, Mr. Mukesh Chand said the stray animal problem has been an ongoing one in the area for the last 15 years, with livestock owners failing to take heed of the complaints made by neighbouring farmers.

Mr. Chand explained that ten years ago, he usually would harvest 3,000 tonnes of sugarcane however, recently, due to damages done by stray animals, he is only able to harvest just 400 tonnes, which is a huge loss to him.

The issue is experienced not only by sugarcane farmers, but crop farmers in both settlements are also being affected.

Minister Reddy has issued a stern warning and is urging livestock owners to take control of their animals because the

Ministry of Agriculture would continue to capture stray animals in the area from next week.

“This is a serious issue, because farmers are losing their source of income due to the carelessness and lack of responsibility of some animal owners,” said Hon. Reddy.

“Livestock such as cattle, horses, goats and sheep caught will be sent to a designated pound of the Ministry of Agriculture until the owners claim their livestock. Animals not claimed within 10 days of pounding will be auctioned by the Ministry,” said Dr. Reddy.

A stray animal is an animal that is not tethered, not confined to the owners property and does not have any official identification (brands, ear tags and/or license). Any poundable animal is one that is found tethered and wandering, straying or lying in any public place, street, square, quay, others farms, wharf or highway may

be seized and sent or taken to the pound by any person finding the same.

All livestock farmers are required under the law to brand their animals as proof of ownership. In the case where the animal is without brands, the Ministry of Agriculture demands that owners claiming these animals must provide statutory declaration of ownership before animals can be considered for release. After ownership is confirmed, the farmer can then facilitate and apply brand requirements under the Act and pay the necessary pound fees before animals can be released.

Charges paid by owners for the release of animals taken to the pound are within the guidelines of the Pounds Act.

Farmers are strongly encouraged to brand their animals and ensure that they are confined to the owner’s property at all times. Livestock farmers can report cases of missing animals at the nearest Police Stations.

Farmers must ensure that their animals are tethered.

## 8th Value Chain Training Held for Agriculture Officers

Twelve agricultural officers recently underwent a value chain training in Nadi to equip and strengthen their capacity in developing agri-businesses and improving linkages in the value chain.

The training, which was the 8th in a series of value chain workshops for agriculture officers on agri-business and value chain development facilitated and organized by the AgriBusiness Development Unit of the Fiji Agricultural Partnership Project (FAPP) was held at the Tanoa Skylodge Hotel in Nadi from the 23-25 of October 2019.

Speaking during the training workshop, Acting Commissioner Western Division Jone Bacau encouraged participants to efficiently and actively improve value chain linkages in their respective areas.

“The training facilitates farmers’ access to markets, improve the agricultural value chains, and develop relationships between value chain actors, as well as partnerships between the public and private sectors for agribusiness development.”

“In a new environment where farming is considered more as a business than a subsistence activity, it is no longer acceptable for extension officers to know only about producing crops, without having any knowledge of how farmers should market those crops and how post-harvest handling should be managed,” he said.

“For this reason, it becomes imperative for Extension staff to have value chain knowledge,” he added.

Mr. Bacau said as livestock and crop officers, it was their duty to be value chain agents to their farmers, to influence market forces through vibrant and sustainable agriculture activity that reduced poverty and the risk of food insecurity while increasing contribution to GDP.

“As a participant, you will enable farmers to understand the important role they play as a farmer, highlight to them the importance of all other actors along the chain and educate farmers on the costs associated in each activity,” he reiterated.

Acknowledging the comments made by the Commissioner for the Western Division, Animal Health & Production Division Livestock Officer, Elenoa Vosayaco said the training had enabled her to learn and know the importance of the value chain.

“This training has broadened my knowledge on the whole value chain, I have learnt things that I hadn’t known about before and to focus on elevating farmers to another level, working according to the value chain,” she said.

Agriculture Assistant Bilateral Quarantine Agreement (Ba) Tanarusa Naveata said the training enlightened him on the vital aspect his role played in the process; “As a new officer, this training



Participants of the 8th Value Chain Training held at Tanoa Skylodge, Nadi.

has enlightened me more on what I can practically do in the field as BQA officer in the value chain process compared to theories that I have been learning.”

“I learnt value chain, the role it plays in maintaining the market, the relationship from the farmers to consumers, its importance, developing plans to improve the value chain and steps in analyzing value chain for BQA farmers,” said Mr. Naveata.

As part of the training, participants toured the Sigatoka market, Manasa’s Export and Vuda Piggery.

FAPP is jointly funded by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the Fijian Government and implies a vision of the public sector as a partner to the private sector through its actions to create an enabling environment where business in the agricultural sector can flourish for the benefit of producers, consumers, and the economy.

FAPP aims to support smallholder farmers in Fiji to take advantage of and respond to the strong in-country demand for domestically produced agricultural products and develop farming as a

business.

The overall goal of FAPP is to reduce hardship in remote rural communities with the development objective of engaging small-scale producers in sustainable farming and business partnerships in remote areas, particularly the highlands with targeted highland areas including the districts of Nabobuco, Savatu, Magodro, Nadrau, Navatusila, Nasikawa and Noikoro.

Through the FAPP value chain training, 144 agriculture officers have received in-depth training from the previously held 7 workshops.



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