



European Commissioner visits FRIEND

The European Union has become an essential partner not only for Fiji but also for FRIEND. Mr Neven Mimica, the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, stopped by at FRIEND headquarter in Lautoka during his visit to Fiji in June this year. FRIEND used this opportunity to launch the first *Friend's Fiji Style* © certified organic product, namely our Lemon Grass tea.

Neven Mimica saw the operations of the organization first hand. He said that FRIEND, its focused activities with strong philosophies is a good story to tell to Fiji, the region and EU tax payers about the difference that the EU is making to reduce poverty and to promote economic development at grassroots level. Back in Europe he recapped his visit to Fiji in his blog: "During my visit, I underlined that we want to see that more people, especially the poorest and those living in remote areas, have access to information, to opportunities and to resources to move themselves out of poverty. This is the spirit we have applied to our new programme with Fiji, from 2015 to 2020."

Escorted by the EU Ambassador Andrew Jacobs, Mr Neven Mimica launched *Friend's Fiji Style* © organic Lemon Grass tea. Speaking at the occasion, Mr Mimica said that he is happy that funds granted by the EU have made a real difference to farmers. The Pacific Organic Mark was obtained and was made possible through EU grants and the support of the Pacific Organic Ethical Trade Community (POETCom). Karen Mapusa, director of POETCom, Samu Turagacati, director of IACT (Program at SPC), Mr Jinesh Patel the Marketing Man-



Organic Lemon Grass Tea launch

(Ltr: Director Sashi Kiran, EU Ambassador Andrew Jacobs, Associated Director Dr Jone Hawea, IACT director Samu Turagacati, POETCom Director Karen Mapusa, EU Commissioner Neven Mimica)

ager of Motibhai, FRIEND's product distributor were also present to witness the launch of organic certified Lemon Grass tea.

Three years of farm tests and close monitoring by the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) resulted in the certification of the product. 50 farmers and their families from Raranibulubulu, Navukuru, and Suweni in the Northern Division have been undergoing training for the process and will benefit from the sales of the teas. This is only the beginning of FRIEND's organic journey as we aim to focus on working with more farmers to be able to organically certify their farms and the resulting produce for a healthy Fiji.

Melanesian Spearhead Group visits FRIEND

Four consultants of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) arranged a meeting with FRIEND management in June. MSG as an intergovernmental organization was formed with focus to promote economic growth among Melanesian countries currently representing Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. Both organizations, MSG and FRIEND, took the time and effort to sit down together and exchange ideas and opinions on trade and investment in the Pacific region.

At present, members of the MSG are discussing broadening the MSGTA (trade in goods agreement) to an MSG Plus agreement which will include Trade in Services, labour mobility and membership from other interested Pacific Island Countries Members are currently further discussing the architecture of the Trade Agreement. FRIEND is happy to share its experience and ideas, as providing a market for local farmers is one of the major aims of the NGO.

Our guests from Melanesian Spearhead Group - really good to see Henry Sandy and Mr Vitusagabulu



Livelihoods Opportunities with FRIEND

FRIEND staff and management organized a whole day event in June at the Lautoka Headquarters to raise awareness on local products and on how to add value so our communities can improve their income using local resources with simple value additions.

Simple processes were demonstrated on:

- How to dry Pawpaw and Banana for healthy snacks
- How to dry Lemon Grass and Tulsi/ basil for herbal teas
- How to dry Rosella and Star Apple for refreshing fruity teas
- How to make Cassava Flour and Grated Cassava

Various village women and youths walked through the demo booths to trial out the products and go through steps of each process.

A group of village elders also made their way to FRIEND to learn about simple livelihood options. Dr Jone Hawea discussed various local herbs/ crops that grow easily in these communities and shared various value additions for health of families and livelihood options.

Interested communities have been inviting our teams to provide follow up training in each community.



EU Project Visit

Ms Noora Hayrinen, the desk officer for Pacific Division at the European External Action Service and Michael Parker of the EU Project Management Coordination Unit visited FRIEND and met some farmers who had benefited from AMSP 10 (Accompanying Measures for the Sugar Protocol Programme). The EU Funding for the projects ended in 2014 however sustainability of the projects continue to be monitored to assess effectiveness of the program.

Michael was able to witness the success of Abhymanu's irrigation system where the farmer showed him proudly his crops. Noora had the opportunity to meet Bhavna, a successful Apiary farmer. The profit she makes from her bee boxes, she uses to invest further in her growing farm business. Back in the FRIEND office, Noora and Michael were impressed by all the products FRIEND is bringing into the market and they even got the chance to try some of the products with FRIEND home made refreshments.

Product of the Month—
Friend's Fiji Style®
Organic Lemon Grass Tea



I remember watching my grandmother cutting fresh leaves from the garden, washing and tying the long leaves before putting it in the pot to boil and telling me that “fiji cha” is the best as we sat sipping the hot fragrant drink. Long after she had passed away, in my mind I still used to call it ‘aji’s tea’.

Now we learn that compounds in lemongrass have properties that might help lower your risk of developing cancer. Several laboratory studies have confirmed that lemongrass components could prevent growth of cancer cells.

Lemongrass might also have a sedative effect, increasing the time you stay asleep and its anti-inflammatory properties help suppress pain in disorders such as arthritis, although these and other potential benefits still need further study.

By Sandhya Narayan

Income Generating Projects for Schools

A team led by the Director met with community leaders and some school managements around the Western and Northern Divisions for assessment of resources for set ups of new income generation projects (IGPs) for schools. The projects have been undertaken at the request of Access to Quality Education (AQEP) program that is funded by the Australian Government. Those projects will enable the institutions to have their own income to continue with the quality education program at the conclusion of AQEP activities.

Five schools in Ra and five in the Northern Division were assessed and the work has started in these schools.



FRIEND continues to monitor income generation projects set up for 17 pre-schools in the last year.

This work was undertaken at the request of the Save the Children Fund so pre-school committees have steady income to maintain and manage pre-schools in their communities.

Each committee has been provided with resources to set up their income generation activity that include nursery set up, bee farming, solar dryers, fishing equipment, sewing machines to make hand bags. Each committee has been trained in managing business, accountability and book keeping. Pre-Schools in Suva, Labasa and Lautoka have benefitted under the New Zealand funded program.

Recipe Corner — Green Pawpaw in Coconut Cream



Ingredients

1 medium green pawpaw
 2 medium tomatoes
 1 small onion chopped
 1 clove garlic minced
 Fresh Herbs (Green Basil)
 Oil for sauté

For miti/lolo

Fresh grated coconut for miti/lolo. For the first cup extract thick miti, without or with as little water possible. Keep aside.

For second cup, add another cup of water to the grated coconut and squeeze lolo for cooking.

Method

- 1 Heat oil in a frying and sauté onions and garlic till brown.
- 2 Add grated pawpaw and cook through till it turns translucent.
- 3 Add tomatoes and fresh herbs.
4. Add the second extract of the coconut milk to the pan and cook till all the liquid is nearly dried.
5. Now add the thick miti, stir through and serve with freshly boiled cassava or dalo.

By Sandhya Narayan

“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it...The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”



MANDELA



Take A Pledge—Eat Right, Exercise and Stay Healthy



The SMILE team was greeted with a beaming smile by a 59 year old as we arrived at the community hall in Ba for the six weekly visit.

Earlier in the year the patient was seen at the clinic with a serious case of abscess on his feet. This time around, his

wounds were clean and dry.

Mr O says “I just did whatever I was advised. Apart from taking my medication regularly and monitoring my blood sugars, I also followed the recommendation of the team and regularly applied raw honey to my feet.”

“I was afraid I may have to lose my feet, but now I don’t

have that fear anymore.” says Mr O.

The rate of diabetic foot amputations in Fiji is recorded as 1 every 12 hours. “This translates as more than 700 amputations every year. That is 7000 amputees in ten years,” says FRIEND Director Sashi Kiran. “For a small country like Fiji this is a big number.”

Before



After



The moving camera at FRIEND

