

Fiji Time: 9:25 AM on Saturday 3 June

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Guidelines to help organic farmers manage crop tests

Filipe Naigulevu
Friday, June 02, 2017



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Friend executive director Sashi Kiran, left, Dr Asif Chida and Dean Solofa launch the Growing Organics Booklet and the friend Participatory Guarantee System Guidelines at the Holiday Inn Suva yesterday. Picture: JONA KONATACI

WHILE organic farming is a niche area in Fiji, a non-government organisation (NGO) has developed the country's first comprehensive guides on naturally managing crop tests.

The two guides were compiled by the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprise and Development (FRIEND) in a bid to reduce the use of harmful chemicals in farming.

And with the huge potential in organic farming in Fiji, FRIEND executive director Sashi Kiran said more people in the Pacific were becoming more conscious of their health and what went in their food.

"We need to go back to the beginning and re-examine the way we are producing food and this booklet is about that," Ms Kiran said.

"Unseen, manmade chemicals present in the food we are consuming is causing people to become sick from various non-communicable diseases."

The homegrown NGO, FRIEND, had conducted trials on organic pest management and improving soil health towards compiling the booklets.

Launching the two booklets at the Holiday Inn Suva yesterday, UNDP Pacific office inclusive growth team leader Dr Asif Chida said the growing body of science indicated that organic agriculture was safe for people and the natural environment.

"Organic agriculture utilises practical agro-ecological (natural) methods that produce healthy foods for consumption in environmentally sound ways," he said.

"Great for waste management, which is a huge problem in the Pacific Islands, organic agriculture utilises waste to make composts and mulches, which reduce the need for landfills, and burning waste. It's also safe for our drinking water sources."

Dr Chida said organic agriculture was a responsible way to produce food, promoting the sanctity of human life, both the farmer's and consumer.

"Because it bans the use of harmful chemicals and encourages healthy diets based on natural, nutritious foods," he said.

Meanwhile, the two booklets; Growing Organics Booklet and the FRIEND Participatory Guarantee System Guidelines, were produced in partnership with the UNDP Pacific office in Fiji, the Sustainable Development Goal Fund (SDG-F), and the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) of the Land Resources Division of the Pacific Community.

The booklets contain various tried and tested methods that farmers can easily apply and support the growth of the organic agriculture movement.

The guidelines will be available in this Saturday's The Fiji Times or accessible on FRIEND website and social media site.

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