



The Right to Informed Choices

Farmers and local authorities have been requested to rethink the use of a widely used weed killer, Glyphosate in Fiji.

This follows the release of a recent study in the US that linked Glyphosate to a range of health problems and diseases, including Parkinson's, infertility and cancers. Glyphosate is the chief ingredient in Roundup weed killer, which is sprayed over acres of crops.

"Food safety is every ones responsibility, including our farmers and it is important that they and consumers are aware of the inputs in our food chain.," says FRIEND Founder/Director Sashi Kiran.

Over the years a lot of controversy has surrounded the weed killer and various studies have been released. (See links below)

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/weed-whacking-herbicide-p/>

<http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2013/06/09/monsanto-roundup-herbicide.aspx>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/25/roundup-health-study-idUSL2N0DC22F20130425>



FRIEND-GROW Officer Reshma Sharma with Organic farmers in Sigatoka

"Farmers in Fiji are not aware of the negative effects of this chemical and are often seen spraying without the use of protective gear. Families being exposed to the chemical has become the norm; children walking from school pass by acres of sprayed fields inhaling the compound. It's the ignorance and poor handling of the chemicals that pose great danger to health," says Ms Kiran,

"We request the Ministry to create awareness on the side effects of all pesticides introduced into the market so farmers are aware of what they're applying in the food

chain affecting thousands of consumers."

World Health Day was marked on 7 April with the theme 'Food Safety – Farm to Table'. This provided the opportunity to create awareness on the health soils and good practices in farming .

FRIEND has been actively encouraging organic farming with now 50 registered farmers who practice the method using local manures and herbal pesticides with great results.

EU Appointment for FRIEND Board Treasurer

Team FRIEND hosted a heartfelt farewell for Mr Deo Saran as he left the country to take up his position as the Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and Permanent Representative to the European Union this month.

Ambassador Saran, who has vast experience in the private sector, was appointed to the post by the Fijian Government in late March.

Mr Saran has been serving on a voluntary basis on the FRIEND Board for the last four years. As Fiji's Head of Mission in Brussels, Ambassador Saran will be at the forefront of interactions with the European Union and its 27 member states.



FRIEND Associate Director, Dr Jone Hawea presenting a farewell token to Mr Deo Saran

Facilitation with Performing Arts in Communities

FRIEND's theatre group held two performances this month, creating awareness on Governance, one of FRIEND's development programs.

The Governance Program is based on dreams, goal setting, planning, budgeting, saving and accountability.

"Both the sessions were well received as audiences enjoyed the lively performances by the group," says Program Team Leader Anare

Lewanavanua.

"The main act is based on a newly married couple, Tevita and Una who dream of having their own home. The play shows them having a clear goal to budget and save the amount of money needed as their family expands over the next decade. Finally comes the day when they have enough in their savings to start work on their new house. The play also emphasises on the strong foundation of the house. This is

to give a clear message that it is important to have a strong foundation for any development project," says Anare.

In response to the performances, a community spokesperson said while her village had multiple dreams, many remained just tht. Dreams!

She thanked the group for showing them the missing link between dreams and action.

Eseromi Ratini & Makareta Tawa in their roles of Tevita & Una

Honey Harvesting Season for Bee Farmers

As the new month began, GROW apiary farmers excitedly reported their readiness for new harvests.

While some were eagerly looking forward to their first ever experience of honey extraction, for others, it was their second or even third year in the business.

"I am looking forward to this. I want to taste the honey from my bee boxes," said a first time harvester. "I was very worried about my hives when the warning about the cyclone was announced last month. I had tied down my hives, but still, I was worried."

A total of 80 apiary projects were set up for supplementary incomes as part of the three year EU funded project.

"As hives get stronger, the production of honey also increases. We also have to ensure that we don't take away all the honey. We have to leave some for the bees," says FRIEND officer Naresh Chandra.

The teams are also meeting with farmers to assess and provide follow up support where needed.

FRIEND Field Officer, Reshma Sonima says, "For us even though the project period has officially ended, work continues to ensure that farmers continue to use the skills and knowledge they have acquired through the various trainings and that the initiatives remain sustainable."

"We also have a number of trainings planned for this year to share what we learnt during our trip to India. This includes permaculture techniques, organics, water harvesting as well as use of various plants and herbs for sustainable health," says Reshma.

More than 500 farmers received assistance through the project that has seen the formation of supply clusters, set up of organic farms, irrigation model farms and planting of fruit orchards.

"FRIEND hopes to continue working with these clusters to make them stronger. Farming is more than just putting the seed in the ground and waiting for it to grow. There are a lot of things that can be done to increase yield in a sustainable manner without harming anything or anyone.," says Reshma.



FRIEND Officer Naresh Chandra explains the operations of an extractor



Meeting with cluster farmers in Tavua

**Product of the Month—
Friend's Fiji Style®
Fiji Cha Rosella Tea**



This herbal infusion has a tart fresh taste to awaken your senses.

While the leaves of the rosella plant is widely used for “khatta bhaji” preparation in Fiji, surplus flowers often were considered a throwaway product after preparation of chutneys and jams for home consumption. The dried petals are now fetching farmers a healthy price of \$25.00 a kg.

Rosella can help our body to boost our immune system. As we know, the immune system is very important for preventing illness. By consuming rosella, our immune system increases gradually.

**Facilitation Skills
for Team Labasa**

The FRIEND Labasa team participated in a 3 day Facilitation Workshop with Suva based Trainer Penelope Moore this month.

“I have never been able to speak out in public without getting nervous. This training has boosted my confidence and gotten me to push my boundaries” says Jone Vulava.



Labasa Team with Penelope Moore

“The workshop enabled us to see that it is not only about exploring emotions but about the transformation of the same that brings true change” says Viloki Gohil. “The wide range of pocket tools and tips that we learnt was something new and refreshing.”

To market, to market...

Friend's Fiji Style® teas and flours have recently made it to the shelves at New World Supermarkets premium stores in Lautoka, Votualevu and Suva to add to the existing range of FRIEND jams, pickles, and chutneys being sold through the chain of stores.

“We have been getting steady orders, so that means that the products are selling well,” says FRIEND Sales Representative, Kajal Rashna.

“All our products are of good quality and can stand their own should anyone want to compare it to other similar recognized brand items selling in Fiji.”

“I always get asked what is my favorite product. I tell them that I like them all and you have to try each one of them for yourself to know exactly what I mean,” says Kajal.



Working with Coconuts for Kindergarten



A group of ladies in Labasa have commenced production of Desiccated Coconut to raise funds for their community kindergartens.

“We have an abundance of coconuts to process desiccated coconut regularly. It would mean economic sustenance for the kindergarten” said Kinisimere Ratu, a kindergarten committee member from Nabukadogo.

Friend's Fiji Style® Desiccated Coconut is the only brand of locally produced Desiccated Coconut in the local market.

Kinisimere (in white top) with other committee members

Recipe Corner — Iced Rosella Tea

Ingredients

- 2 Tablespoon Friend's Fiji Style® Fiji Cha Rosella Tea
- 1 liter of water
- Juice from one-half of a lemon or lime
- Honey for sweetening.

Directions

Combine the Fiji Cha Rosella Tea and water in a pot and bring to a full boil.

Remove from stove and let steep covered for 30 minutes.

The color should be a deep red-purple, like some kinds of grape juice.

Refrigerate for 24 hours.

Strain off the liquid through a sieve and throw away the rosella calyces.

Stir in lemon juice and honey and serve chilled





“Our society needs to re-establish a culture of caring”
Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela



Take A Pledge

Eat Right, Exercise and Say NO to Smoking

“My work keeps me out of the office most of the time. That means travelling around in the hot sun. The water bottle in the cars get hot so to quench thirst it’s very easy to reach out for a sweet fizzy drink.”

“I was noticing that I was developing a belly. I would notice that the belly would go

down when I left fizzy drinks. Now I do not drink any fizzy drinks and have also started taking daily walks with my mother after work.”

“This is also my special time with her when we can talk easily and stay healthy together.”



Living with Diabetes

Sprinkling your food with cinnamon can add flavor without

adding salt, carbs, or calories. Some studies suggest it also can improve the body's ability to use insulin and may lower blood sugar in people with type 2 diabetes. More research is needed to confirm these promising studies, and supplements containing large doses can cause side effects.

To eat or not to eat—GMO Foods

Genetically modified foods (or GM foods) are foods produced from organisms that have had specific changes introduced into their DNA using the methods of genetic engineering.

These techniques allow for the introduction of new traits as well as greater control over traits than previous methods such as selective breeding and mutation breeding.

for resistance to pathogens and herbicides and for better nutrient profiles. GM livestock have been developed, although as of November 2013 none were on the market.



Commercial sale of genetically modified foods began in 1994, when Calgene first marketed its Flavr Savr delayed-ripening tomato.

There is broad scientific consensus that food on the market derived from GM crops poses no greater risk to human health than conventional food.

Most food modifications have primarily focused on cash crops in high demand by farmers such as soybean, corn, canola, and cotton seed oil.

However, opponents have objected to GM foods on grounds including safety, environmental impact and the fact that some GM seeds that are food sources are subject to intellectual property rights and owned by corporations.

These have been engineered

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetically_modified_food)