

Fiji Time: 9:22 AM on Saturday 3 June

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## Try healthier farming methods

LICE MOVONO

Thursday, June 01, 2017



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Dr Jone Hawea, co-director of FRIEND in Suva today. Picture: JONA KONATACI

**Update: 2:55PM** ORGANIC agriculture as a mode of farming could sustain and enhance the health of the world's ecosystems and the organisms which live in it.

Farmers, agriculturalists, academics, resource owners and a doctor who gathered in Suva this morning agreed there was a need for more people to produce and use organic produce.

This follows the launch of two organic agriculture guides this morning, designed to encourage this method of farming as well as boost its economic benefits.

According to Dr Jone Hawea, a medical doctor and co-director of the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprise & Development who was part of the research team behind "Organics Simplified", chemical-based pesticide was contributing to high incidences of non-communicable diseases.

"Our food today is causing a lot of illnesses like cancer, diabetes, heart attacks, and strokes and lots of other diseases because of the many unseen, man-made chemicals present in the food we are eating and drinking," Dr Hawea said.

"Many of these unseen chemicals come from the sprays used in farms, storage rooms and containers to kill unwanted insects (pesticides) and unwanted or overgrown grass and bushes (weedicides)."

Formerly a surgeon whose experience in amputating patients afflicted with NCDs motivated a change of career to encouraging changing lifestyles, Dr Hawea said chemicals were used and handled by everyone in the farm to table food chain.

In the guide "Organics Simplified", Dr Hawea said the chemicals which were strong and often come in harmful amounts reacted badly with the body.

"If these chemicals are repeatedly eaten, over time, the body's natural repair systems break down and diseases take over," Dr Hawea said.

"That is why we have made this booklet to show you how you can deal with unwanted insects in your farms without harming your health or anyone else's."

Meanwhile, Salesh Kumar, the head of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension Education at the Fiji National University's College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests said the FRIEND Fiji booklet would have an added value to their work to educate the Government's agricultural officers and professional farmers.

"We do teach organic farming to our students and they are young so they will go out and be able to impart that knowledge. But this booklet once it goes out to the community will already give subsistence farmers and maybe even commercial farmers important knowledge," Mr Kumar said.

"It will have a multiplier effect because the community will now already know exactly how to change their farming models to something healthier."

The "Organics Simplified" manual and guide to healthy ways to control pests and weeds will be available to the nation as a lift out in *The Fiji Times* of Saturday June 3.



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