



TRUE PACIFIC

Friend's Fiji Style® food products has been branded 'True Pacific'. True Pacific Branding is a New Zealand initiative driven by Pacific Cooperation Foundation to promote products from the Pacific into the international market.

Chief Executive of the Pacific Cooperation Foundation, Meg Poutasi, says despite being lands of diversity, many Pacific countries have unbalanced economic growth and Pacific businesses can spearhead export led growth by exploring niche markets for their quality export products.

FRIEND is amongst the 25 producers from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu that have passed the quality assurance benchmarks and been issued with licences to carry the True Pacific mark in a ceremony hosted by New Zealand's Foreign Affairs Minister, the Hon Murray McCully on 5 September 2011 in Auckland.

Sashi and Sandhya from FRIEND were at the Pacific Show Case at the Cloud at Queens Wharf from 3-8th August in their attempt to find distributors while displaying *Friend's Fiji Style*® jams, pickles and chutneys with other True Pacific licencees. From the response received FRIEND is hopeful of hitting the shelves in New Zealand before the end of the year.



NZ Rugby icon Michael Jones vouches for *Friend's Fiji Style*® products

"Weaving Dreams Together for Community Growth"

'FRIEND is on the right track in its approach for Social Protection of communities' says an international development professional. In his keynote address at FRIEND's annual DESI conference, Professor Frank Ellis of UK said that the simple definition of this new buzz word in the Development world is "protecting people from falling into extreme poverty."

Prof Ellis says while poor communities have similar problems in many other countries, Fiji is extremely lucky to have a way of life where people help each other out. However he says it is important to have more than one way of livelihood and diversification is a way of generating resilience against risks in future.

First Secretary for Development Cooperation Mr Tim Gill in sharing his reflections from his earlier visits to FRIEND communities, said while AUSAID is a big supporter of education in Fiji, he feels that it is unfortunate that there is something vital lacking in formal education and he believes that community education is one of the ways to fill this gap. He says FRIEND's adult education program is revolutionary as it not only teaches theory but practical learning is part of the process. His simple message was that while communities have their collective duty of planting for the clan, they could also plant for their families in their backyard where the needs of the community as well as that of a family is also met.

Panelists from various FRIEND programs shared their stories of impact ranging from successfully negotiating for additional bus services in communities to awareness on lifestyle diseases to starting off income generation projects. Participants also enjoyed songs and skits prepared by various community groups based on their thoughts and experiences in their dealings with FRIEND. Some community members also brought displays of the skills they had learnt during skills training.

Around 200 participants from twenty commu-



Professor Frank Ellis

nities gathered in Tuvu for the DESI IV Conference also graced by representation from two core funders for FRIEND AUSAid and NZ AID.

The one day event concluded with Annual General Meeting of FRIEND and the launch of Commendation Awards for 2012.

Launching the awards NZ AID Development Program Coordinator Faga Semesi revealed a moment of truth saying as risk averse donors, the team at NZAID always hold cautious concerns about the ever increasing scope and size of FRIEND's operations. However she admitted that they are always pleasantly surprised with the energy and commitment and the success stories that result from FRIEND's work. Ms Semesi said the presence in big numbers by the communities was a clear testament to the good work that FRIEND has achieved over the years. She says the Commendation Awards for community development is another positive milestone in FRIEND's endeavours to alleviate poverty and improve the livelihoods of the marginalised, under-served, and poor in society.



Viniana at DESI IV

FRIEND's Community Governance Program came to my village and since then, it has changed my thinking. Undergoing the training I realized that I can make my own money while staying at home and improve mine and my family's living standards. I remember that during the course when we were doing the module on backyard gardening and healthy living, our facilitators, Jone and Vive, were encouraging to plant vegetables for our families for healthy meals. During discussions, I would always try and keep quiet, because I had planted

I have been planting flowers for the past 10 years because I just love flowers. But I had never realized that one day my hobby will be a source of income for me and my family. Early this year

Flower Hobby turned into Money

Viniana Qati is 57 years old.. She lives in Vakabuli Village with her husband. While she had been planting flowers for years Viniana says she never dreamed of making any money from it. The budding entrepreneur shared her motivational story at DESI IV.

more flowers instead of the vegetables in my garden. Then later in the course we talked about Income generation Projects where we were supposed to start our small business with whatever resources we have. During these session I learnt about product development and costing. I decided to work on flower arrangements as my income generation project. As word spread I built a network of contacts for my IGP. One of my fellow villagers who does casual work in Lautoka town, has given me a job too in the Company she works for. Every Tuesday, I get an arrangement done for her and the company pays me \$30.00 every week.

I have also learnt how to market and how to quote my prices for decorating a hall for any function or a church or a wedding etc. My decoration charges I feel are very reasonable as most of the things that I use are natural resources.

Apart from my flower arrangement business which I feel is doing well, I now also sell rourou. My order goes as far as the Lautoka Hospital where I deliver 15 bundles every week. For rourou alone, my net is \$50 - \$60 per week.

And of course, families in Vakabuli village also now buy their rourou from me for \$1.00 per bundle.

Thanks to FRIEND, along with my flowers, now I also plant my vegetables and am financially independent.

Sumintra's Hydroponic Lettuces

Sumintra is 38 years old. She lives in Raviravi with her husband and two daughters. Recently she has taken a very bold step by investing in a hydroponic garden for herself. Sumintra addressed DESI IV with her story.

I got married at a young age and have always supported my husband at his sugar cane farm. We used to harvest over 400 tonnes of cane until recently but with the overall slowing of the sugar industry and increasing costs, we can no longer rely on just sugar cane farming.

Last year, my husband and I had gone to visit a friend. At his place I saw his hydroponic set up in which he was growing really beautiful lettuces. I thought to myself that I would love to have something like this for myself. It seemed easy enough. But then in our day to day living the thought remained unactioned.

Later in the year I had a chance to take part in the FRIEND Social and Economic Empowerment Training program held at Raviravi Sangam School with some other people living in our area. During our course we came across many things like how to keep our environment clean, about back yard gardening, about own income generation programs and many other things.

When we were doing our IGP module during the course, I again realised that I wanted my very own hydrophonic garden. I started talking about it to my husband again.

With his support, we went to the bank, took out the savings and used that money to buy a hydrophonic kit set. The initial set cost around four thousand dollars.

Now every morning after I cook breakfast, parcel the lunches and tie my daughter's hair for school, I go and check my lettuces. I look after them like my own babies. And it gives me pleasure and happiness to see them growing day by day.



Sumintra shows off her hydroponic set up

I have currently about 400 lettuce plants growing. My first crop will be sold through my contacts at the Ba market, but eventually I hope to secure a fixed market with one of the resorts where I would be able to sell my produce in bulk. I also hope to try some other plants like tomatoes and capsicum for better returns in the future.

Along with my hydroponic set up I also do my backyard gardening with my two daughters. My daughters help me dig, make plots and plant. We have planted cabbage, tomatoes, egg plants, chillies, choraya, bananas, dalo, dhanya, arhar, seasm seeds, bele, bean, paw-paw, cassava and pumpkin.

FRIEND Commendation Awards "Reaching Out To A Neighbor"



Ms Faga after a satisfying day

Launching the FRIEND Commendation Awards for 2012 at DESI IV, NZ High Commission Development Programme Coordinator Faga Semesi said

individuals and groups to be rewarded for their reach out to motivate and empower more individuals /families/communities through the knowledge, skills and lessons learnt from the community development programmes they have participated in.

Ms Semesi says while a development network has already begun amongst the communities FRIEND works with, recognition through this Award scheme will encourage more communities to reach out to their neighbours. And the publicity that the scheme will no doubt receive will give recognition to good development work

being done in the communities and encourage more participation in the scheme. She says the end result would be more empowered communities built, in both capacity and resources, and sustainable links between communities, strengthened. "We are sure that, from the great work that we have seen so far, there will be many strong contenders for these awards." said Ms Semesi. Inaugural FRIEND Commendation Awards will be announced in October 2012. The award nominees will have to show that they have sustainably assisted at least 10 others during the year in setting up gardens, composts, starting of income generation programs or any other sustainable development cooperation.

Dessicated Coconut



Mohinesh with the Canda Fund assisted Hydraulic

The group was bright eyed with anticipation and eager to start with the practical's as they got together for the weeklong training on production of dessicated coconut. The first challenge for the team of six was to scrape 60 coconuts before noon to be put into the solar dryer. This was repeated daily throughout the week. On the last day all gathered around the new hydraulic oil press watching keenly as oil was extracted and fresh dessicated coconut removed from the press—the product that was in making all week.

The Canada Fund sponsored training was held at FRIEND's Labasa office following successful trials on the product and in preparation for the launch of *Friend's Fiji Style*® Dessicated into the market.

By Mohinesh Reddy

Recipe Corner—Bhindi Chokha

Ingredients A dozen fresh Okra, Lemon Juice, Salt to taste, Chillies, Onion, Corriander Leaves

Method:

1. Carefully select okra (worm free)
2. Bury it amongst the glowing ambers of smoldering log fire (wooden stove/bbq)
3. Pull okra pieces out after about five minutes and give them a thorough wash under running water
4. Cut off the tip and the tail of okra and mash them with a fork.
5. Add all the other condiments to taste.



Jone's Trip to Indonesia

The ASPBAE Basic Leadership Development Course 2011 attracted 28 participants to Medan in North Sumatra, Indonesia from 12th to the 17th of September. The program was organized by Asia South Pacific Association for Basic

Adult Education (ASPBAE) and a local NGO called PESADA which works with women, children and marginalized groups. ASPBAE basically is an organization that works towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating lifelong adult education and learning.

The week long program which was packed with information and activities with great facilitators from ASPBAE lined up with topics such as Gender and Lifelong Learning, Education Policy Advocacy, Rights based Approach to Adult Education and many others. We also

had a film festival where we looked at some documentaries and films advocating on issues around the world.

The learnings of the workshop re-emphasized for me the work we do at FRIEND. Listening to the experiences from the region I recollected our work in the communities and was very pleased to realize that FRIEND's adult education program meets the global standards. The stories from other countries struck a chord with participants as they related their work. We realize the challenges are very similar across Nations.

In my view the *Context* being the demographic of a particular community is important for facilitators especially when we approach a community. Information content that is presented should suit the needs of the community. I enjoyed the dynamics of the ASPBAE workshop which gave me a new vigour and enthusiasm for the work we do in the communities. It was wonderful to make new friends in the region at yet another successful ASPBAE BLDC.

September Birthday Corner



Saras

Dhaerya

Sandhya

Early morning get-together for Exercise

Men, Women, Youth and children from six communities living along the Ba-Lautoka corridor gathered for a 'Walk' to promote Healthy Living early this month.

Seventy nine people from ages of 8 to 58 years walked from their homes in neighboring villages led by FRIEND Team members, to gather at one of the designated communities where they all 'cooled' down in a fifteen minute stretch and exercise session followed by breakfast.

FRIEND Governance Trainer, Vive Liutaki says, "The walk was to encourage communities to practice healthy living in their communities and families by exercising together and early morning walks as families. This walk was also organized to get the communities to 'make friends' and to work with each other towards development. It was really interesting to see them mingle during breakfast and planning more of similar morning walks."

FRIEND Governance Program takes its Social and Economic Empowerment Training (SEET) to various communities over a period of six months. The training includes modules on Active Citizenship, Community Governance, Food Security & Healthy Living, Disaster Management, Income Generation and Participatory Budgeting

More than one hundred new participants will be graduating with their Community Development Certificates in October this year.

Garden Competition

To commemorate World Food Day and see how the community used their gardening theories a organic garden competition has been organized. As part of our training practicals, each participant is to have a backyard garden and a compost bin to encourage healthy living to prevent and better manage lifestyle diseases. Our Backyard Garden Competition commenced on 19th of August and will end on 3rd of October 2011. We have 7 communities registered to take part in the competition with about 68 participants. The winners will be declared by the end of October.



Jone leads the group through the stretches

DESI 2011 Photos

