



HE Andrew Jacob addresses farmers



EU Head of Delegation, Andrew Jacobs at the Farmers Conference.

"Fiji's sugar production has fallen from a peak of 341,000mt in 2000 to 167,000mt in 2012. This situation is now further aggravated by the end of the EU sugar regime which has provided a guaranteed quota and a stable price (which in average was over twice the international price) for more than 30 years to Fiji.

The EU is very aware of this situation and is providing some assistance in the framework of its programme the Accompanying Measures for the Sugar Protocol, whereby assistance is provided to the farmers and their families in order to cushion the impacts of the EU reform.

We are here today attending this conference and seeing another of the very first outputs of the social mitigation programme under which EU has provided a grant of EUR 2.8 million (FJD 6.4m) to FRIEND.

I must commend FRIEND for the very good achievements so far. Despite very adverse weather conditions that we all know, with the 2012 two successive floods and Cyclone EVAN, and the very severe damage caused to its buildings, FRIEND has managed to keep on track with the targets and timelines of the GROW programme".

Why Organics?

ENCOURAGING sustainable farming practices, FRIEND invited trainers from Women in Business (WIBDI) in Samoa to address the Farmer.

FRIEND director Sashi Kiran says Organics is more than just production of food without chemicals. It is also about better health and better income.

The Samoa trainers also held a one day workshop in Labasa which at-

tracted 150 farmers.

"FRIEND is marketing herbal teas, spices and dried fruits from the North. Although these products do not have an 'organic certification', most of the products are coming from areas that could qualify as organic.

"We're hoping to be able to capitalise on that to benefit our people," says Sashi.



A full house at the Girit Center

The Farmer Conference - Lautoka

550 FARMERS from the Western Division filled the Girit Centre in Lautoka to the brim to participate in the GROW conference organised by the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development.

The conference provided a platform for project holders and new farmers to learn from each other's experiences and work through their difficulties.

All the sessions were translated in the two vernacular encouraging farmers to engage freely.

The conference covered a range of topics including organic farming, growing of fruit orchard, planting of cash crop and poultry production.

The focus of all the sessions was sustain-

able methods of production for yielding and income.

Farmers expressed that they felt reassured when they saw the display of FRIEND's Fiji style range of products that market is assured with FRIEND.

GROW officers also had on display a range of models for poultry, cash crop and bee keeping.

The models were used to encourage farmers to integrate their farming methods. For example bee keeping with set up of fruit orchards and use of poultry manure for soil rehabilitation to stage their income streams.

A similar conference for GROW project holders in the North will be held in June.



WIBDI Trainers Fuamaono and Melanie with FRIEND staff

Commission Hails FRIEND's Programs

impressions of the EC-funded projects were very encouraging.

"The EC has been involved in significant efforts to address social mitigation efforts in the sugar belt and to provide opportunities for supplementary income livelihoods for sugarcane farmers. FRIEND has achieved a lot of work in this area and managed some concrete achievements and we are happy to assist them in development programs like this," he said.

FRIEND founder Sashi Kiran said it was always good for donor agencies like the EC to visit programs they supported and see first-hand the type of work being done and where their resources were being spent.



EU Visitors Xavier Canton Lammouse and Jean Christopher Virieu with staff

THE European Commission has lauded the work done by FRIEND in social mitigation and development work for the marginalised and disadvantaged communities in the Western Division. FRIEND has remained

On target despite destruction of its offices during cyclone Evan. During a visit to sugar development programs in the West this month, International Aid Co-operation Officer for Asia and Pacific, Mr Jean-Christophe Virieu, said first

Learning & Growing Together

A two day workshop for GROW Poultry holders was held in Labasa this month.

Participants worked in groups discussing the different phases of the project, the types of feed available around them, and the type of medicine to use for their birds. They also participated in a dreams session taking time to reflect on what they wish to achieve and how they are going to make it into a reality.

GROW Poultry holders are set up with a staged 100 plus bird holding and put on a business plan to sell a minimum of 10 birds per week.

Each project holder is expected to draw a minimum of \$200 a week.

Savings and reinvestment into the project is an essential component of the project.

During the first year 80 projects have been established in the North.



Post Farmer Conference Meetings

The last two weeks following the Farmers Conference has seen a new level of interest from communities.

"We have been getting lots of meeting requests from communities for various projects," says GROW Manager Sandhya Narayan.

"All the requests are noted down and our officers are working on ensuring that each request gets the attention."

For cash crop interests, farmers are advised to work in area clusters planting atleast 10 acres of a particular crop.

"In the beginning farmers were

willing to put forward only upto an acre each for the project, now they are assigning larger areas per project holder," says Sandhya.

Currently there is a total of 35 registered clusters with around 450 farmers.

160 poultry projects are in various stages of implementation.

40 people are being set up with beehive projects.

And 80 youths are part of the the GROW YEN program for self esteem building and upskilling for employment.



YEN Graduates

First cohort YEN students from Lautoka, who started the programme in July last year graduated this month.

GROW YEN is part of European Union funded project implemented by FRIEND in partnership with USP Lautoka Campus.

The main guest at the function was the visiting senior EU official from Brussels, Mr Jean Christopher Virieu.

Mr Virieu congratulated the students on their achievements and wished them well for the future.

“80% of the first cohort of twenty youths have secured permanent employment,” says GROW Manager Sandhya Narayan. “We will be working with 200 youths on boosting their self esteem and employability skills as per project targets before the end of 2014.”



A Challenge - GROW Awards for Best Practices

“GROW Awards for Best Practices” was announced at the inaugural farmers conference held in Lautoka this month.

The awards are aimed at defining the star performers of the project holders of various GROW initiatives.

Cash Crop Project holders are encouraged to improve their crop yields, diversify crops, practice good soil management practices and become a model farmer.

Our challenge for Poultry holders is to increase their flock of birds to be able to practice self dependence in terms of their household poultry needs and also be able earn enough to improve their livelihoods through the project and to be able to sustain the flock with homegrown feed.

For beekeepers, we would like to see colour

around the bee hives, surrounded by fruits and flowers and herbs, strong hives, and possibly multiplication of hives for sustainable projects.

Every year the market in Fiji runs short of honey. Honey is imported from outside.

For our Food Processing project we wish to see sustainable income generation projects in homes and communities utilizing products available in their localities.

Exploration of ideas and recipes that would contribute to better health of nation, socially and economically.

Currently our people are eating a large percentage of items that are brought into the country from outside.

We have the resources and talents to provide

the same grains/pluses/flours in Fiji.

Last but not the least we are also looking out for stars in our YEN programme. We are looking for youths with commitment and the push to shine through and be a role model for youths in similar disadvantaged situations.

The awards will be announced at the end of the project period in December next year.



Recipe Corner - Quick Pumpkin Vege Soup

Ingredients:

2 cups Pumpkin	Fresh Coriander
1 cup Carrots	1 tspn Butter
1 stalk Celery	2 cups Milk
1 small piece Ginger	

Method:

Cube pumpkin and carrots. Throw in crushed chopped ginger and garlic.

Cook on high in a microwave for 5 minutes.

In the meantime chop up celery and coriander.

Using a big spoon, mash up pumpkin.

Add milk celery and coriander and put the bowl back in the microwave for 2 minutes.

Serve hot with pepper/salt to taste.

**April
BIRTHDAY**



Happy Birthday

**A Personal Reflection -
Going the EXTRA MILE**



I am a newcomer to FRIEND and each day I learn more and more about the number of lives this organization has touched of those in need.

To be able to reach out into the communities with information, opportunities and resources to move themselves out of poverty has brought a feeling of wanting to do more.

Having grown up in Fiji, with FRIEND I find that I am going to places I didn't realize existed.

And seeing living conditions of some of our communities makes me even more-grateful for the resources I had growing up and not taking it for granted.

Learning about the different programs that come under this organization and how it integrates and compliments each other is priceless.

I believe a lot can be achieved in making Fiji a land of opportunities where everyone can look forward to a happy and healthy living.

By Ateca Waqavolau



From 30 to 500

Mere Yacalevu is a healthy 60 years old and a proud owner of a thriving backyard garden that she believes plays a key role in her life

She lives in a close knit community on the outskirts of Lautoka with her son and his family.

“After our community was severely damaged by the floods in early 2012, FRIEND distributed planting material to assist with the food situation. Along with backyard seeds, I also received 30 cuttings of kumala. Today I have 500 kumala in the ground. Some is eaten by the family, but I am also able to sell and make money from the crop,” says Mere.

“My garden also keeps me healthy as I get my daily exercise while tending to my plants and also get to eat fresh everyday. Before I would spend a fair sum on buying my groceries from stores.”



A Healthy Stretch - FRIEND Staff stretch it out.

Eating Right & Exercising

Staff at FRIEND celebrated World Health Day on 7th April with a theme of “Health at FRIEND.”

Staff shared stories of healthy habits and their motivations through FRIEND.

“I hardly used to eat fruits before, now I realise how important it is in a balanced diet,” says Ronil.

“The habits we teach our children makes them what they become in life,” says Reshma. “I believe we now know better

than to fulfill all the wants of our children if we want them to be healthy.”

Healthy Dish Competition saw a range of local food ideas put forward and enjoyed by the team.

