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Media Release

## **Organic Study Tour to India**

A group of local farmers returning from an Organic Study Tour have hailed their excursion as highly successful.

The tour included visits to a number of farms and facilities incorporating organic practices in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh regions of India

The farmers were able to observe and learn firsthand organic ways of preparing insecticides, fungicides, compost, vermi culture, biogas and water harvesting techniques.

“FRIEND is promoting organic farming as opposed to use of chemical inputs for pest and weed control and increased yields. While organically grown produce is better for health, it is also a more sustainable way of farming and better for the environment,” says Founder /Director Sashi Kiran.

The highlights of the visit included learning of techniques involved in collection of rain water to use for farms using and digging ponds to improve water tables and turning barren lands into farms and orchards using organic manures.

The tour group included eight farmers from Viti Levu and Vanua Levu who were recipients of the GROW STAR Awards for best practices in various agricultural activities implemented by FRIEND through the EU Funding of a total of 2.8 million Euro or around 6.05 million FJD over the last three years.

"The European Union is an important actor in promoting organic farming and sustainable agriculture, both at home and in our partner countries. Economically, ecologically and socially sustainable agriculture is the future if the world is to feed its growing population, in particular in developing countries where food production will be required to nearly double by 2050. Organic farming represents a major economic opportunity for countries, with a strong potential for job

creation. With its specific environment and culture, the Pacific has a high potential for promoting sustainable agriculture and organic farming, producing nutritious and healthy food and, at the same time, protecting the environment” says Ambassador Andrew Jacobs, Head of the European Union Delegation for the Pacific

The three year EU funded project which commenced in 2012 saw FRIEND engaging with more than 500 farmers in Cash Crop for supplementary incomes, establishment of 200 poultry projects, 80 Apiary set ups and training of more than 1200 people in Food Processing activities. The project also saw upskilling of 200 unemployed youths for the job market.

“We are grateful for the support by the European Union and look forward to continuing and sustaining the good work carried out so far. Farmers involved in the study tour are extremely thankful for the opportunity to observe and learn from the good practices they have seen during the tour and are keen to implement and share their learnings with other farmers,” says Sashi Kiran.

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