

MEDIA RELEASE

30 November 2018

WORKING SMARTER PAYS DIVIDEND FOR LOVOLOVO

For a man who has worked on the land for almost half his lifetime, he develops a close bond with the land, the land somehow becomes an extension of him. That is true for Waisea Lovolovo, from Navuniivi, in the province of Ra.

Lovolovo owns and operates a 4 hectare farm in Matadawa, in the Tagitagi sector, in Tavua. He happily told us that sugar cane farming is his number one hobby. Touring his farm this week, albeit on an unusually rainy Tuesday morning, you could clearly see the extent of his hobby. As we gazed towards his farm, we saw the lush flowing rows and rows of green sugar cane.

“I am usually up from 5am and work till 10am on the farm. And then I rest and start again at 3pm and go till 6pm, during the planting season”, Lovolovo says.

A sturdy well-built man of his stature who at fifty-six years old does not seem to be slowing down. During the planting season, Lovolovo works on his own in the farm. “I do all the planting myself”, he says. And as a testament to this individual effort, sugar cane farming is keeping him fit and healthy.

He has only been farming for three years but this year Lovolovo has managed to harvest two-hundred and thirty one tonnes of cane, which is a 58% increase from the previous year. And he credits his self-discipline and work ethic with this achievement.

Lovolovo explains “during the planting season, I minimize my grog drinking, I minimize my attendance in social gathering at home or elsewhere and my commitment is full time on the farm”.

According to him, sugar cane farming is not a 12-month job, adding “you really are just engaged in planting for 3-months. After that, you just monitor”. Lovolovo attributes good time management as a contributing factor to successful sugar cane farming. A self-starter who takes initiatives to grow his farm and the fruits of his own self-discipline, is evident. “I have a daily plan, a weekly plan, which I follow, during planting time”, he says.



Above: Waisea Lovolovo showing his gap filling practiced on his farm

FSC Chief Operating Officer Navin Chandra says “its very encouraging to see success stories in sugar cane farming like this. It proves that sugar cane farming, when managed well, is financially very viable”.

Some vital drivers to his successful sugar cane farming include minimizing gaps; this year Lovolovo has maximized the usage of his land down to the tee. In between rows of planted cane, he has managed to fit in more cane thus enhancing the utilization of his land area.

He is also very particular about the management and control of weeds on the farm. He adds “you must avoid weeds at all costs, because they deprive your cane of valuable soil nutrients. When you apply the fertilizer, all the weeds’ roots are just on top of the soil and the cane’s roots is further down. So most of the time, the fertilizer will be absorbed by the weeds’ roots”.

“I draw my strength from the Lord and as a family, we pray daily”, he said.

Lovolovo credits his faith as an integral part of this life. He is also a Lay Preacher and this provides him great fortitude during challenging times.



Above: Lovolovo’s grandchildren enjoy the rain whilst playing outside.



This year Lovolovo was also one of the first growers to harvest his cane. And proudly all green cane. He transported his cane all the way to the Lautoka Mill. “I always check with the Field Officers on the start date of the mill, and this year, one week before the mill started crushing, I rounded up my labourers and started harvesting”, he says.

Lovolovo has set himself targets for the next three years and is confident he will achieve them.

As he says, “in this business, you either have to maintain your production or increase it. Planting is more expensive than ratoon cane, because you have to prepare the land, acquire a full set of seed cane and hire more labourers. My target for next

year is 300 tonnes and I will do that by avoiding all gaps”.

Proving his financial acumen, Lovolovo also engages in animal husbandry and he has forty-five goats and ten cattle on his land. He also has root crops and vegetables that he sells, like taro and taro leaves, duruka and bananas.

“Money I earn from selling my other produce and animals, I use to pay utilities and buy groceries. I don’t touch my sugar cane profits!”

Also acknowledging his days as an FSC employee, Lovolovo says “I have really put what knowledge I have acquired from my days as a Field Officer to use in my farm”. He was employed at the FSC for twenty-three years and was stationed in Lautoka, Rakiraki and Tavua during this time.

Looking to the future, Lovolovo is in the process of acquiring two more sugar cane farms, not too far from his current farm and to operate these on a share-farming basis.

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For more information, please contact:

Elenoa Korovulavula
Head of Strategic Communications
Fiji Sugar Corporation
Email: elenoa.korovulavula@fsc.com.fj
Mobile: 999 6009