

MEDIA RELEASE

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FSC PROMOTES SUGAR CANE FARMING IN BUA

Good fertile land that has been sitting idle since the mid-1980s in Nasarowaqa, in Bua is now being converted into sugar cane fields by Fiji Sugar Cooperation.

Two Mataqalis from the Yavusa Drakiniwai in Nasarowaqa, Bua have signed a Joint Venture agreement with FSC to cultivate sugar cane. Mataqali Nukusolevu has offered 360 acres of their land while Mataqali Veikurakura 110 acres.

Under this Joint Venture programme FSC will take full responsibility to develop and cultivate the land but there is a revenue sharing agreement with the Mataqali who will receive 70% of the profit whilst FSC retains 30%. A total of 352 acres of flat land has been made available to FSC. Of this, 180 acres of land preparation has already commenced.

The Turaga ni Mataqali's and other representatives of the Yavusa Drakiniwai expressed their appreciation to the FSC during a ground breaking ceremony on Thursday 27th September 2018. For the people of Nasarowaqa, this is a dream come true, not only for the current generation but also generations to come.

Right: an FSC tractor at work at Nasarowaqa



A clan representative, Ratu Josaia Tunaosara, said “the land was last put under use in the mid 1980s”. Since then, the land has been sitting idle with a number of projects mooted but nothing materialized.

Representing FSC at the ground-breaking ceremony was its Chief Operating Officer Navin Chandra who also expressed appreciation to the landowners for having faith in the sugar industry, and coming on board at a time when there were a growing number of positive changes occurring within the industry aptly backed by focused Government support”.



Above: Chief Operating Officer Navin Chandra, with the FSC tractor drivers, before they started cultivating the Nasarowaqa land.

He added “such partnership is built on mutual trust and a genuine desire to succeed. The landowners have entrusted their faith in FSC to not only develop their land but also to provide them the necessary training on cane farming. It will be a great sight to see when people travelling the Nabouwalu to Labasa corridor, see fields of newly developed sugar cane. Such visible development goes a long way to creating renewed optimism for the industry. People of Nasarowaqa have been traveling great distances for employment and now they will have this available on their doorsteps”.

From the mid-1990s, the non-renewal of land leases had become a major contributing factor to a drop in crop production. Cane planting grant, subsidies for fertiliser and weedicide, allocation for mechanisation, new farmer grants, investment in cane access roads and drainage are all initiatives aimed at reversing this and reviving this industry. We are now seeing how these benefits which have been put in place have started to benefit farmers.

Joint Venture initiatives such as this will activate access to government subsidies, which will in turn reduce farming costs such as land preparation and cultivation, therefore providing a cost effective farming concept for interested parties. Under the Cane Planting Grant Scheme, a Joint Venture will be able to draw on \$2000 per hectare for land development and cane planting. The guaranteed cane price of \$85 per tonne is also an exciting announcement in the 2018/19 Government Budget. FSC expects to grow 10,000 tonnes from this Joint Venture, once the full area is developed.

At the forefront of FSC's Strategic Plan is cane development, thus the reason why FSC is injecting a lot of resources and effort into increasing crop production. As a concept, Joint Ventures are not new; currently FSC runs a very successful Joint Venture partnership with the Ro Qomate family of Naigigi in Labasa. This farm has become a model Joint Venture farm with an average yield of 80 tonnes per hectare and a total crop of 7000 tonnes. On the back of this successful model, Ro Qomate family has purchased a new mechanical harvester this year, hence forging ahead in mechanization.

FSC has been working with iTLTB to finalise additional joint ventures in Tunalia in Nadi, as well as in Lomowai in Sigatoka, where they expect to commence planting this year. FSC has also discussed financial support with the Fiji Development Bank for additional funding that might be required to develop this land. Those land owning units or individual growers who have arable land available and would like assistance to convert into a profitable sugar cane farm should contact FSC. We would like to have at least 5000 hectares of land developed in the next 3 years using the Joint Venture model, adding another 350,000 tonnes of cane to the national crop base.

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