

MEDIA RELEASE

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FSC MILLS' PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Lautoka Mill has performed exceptionally well after the first few weeks of teething issues. Efforts made by FSC Lautoka team to rectify the issues have been successful and mill has crushed close to 10% more than same period last year.

A better Mill performance and good supply of cane especially allowing for some transfer of cane from Rakiraki and Rarawai Mill area has boosted the performance.

On average in Lautoka Mill on a daily basis is crushing 5000 tonnes of cane which is 17% better than the set target

FSC's Chief Operating Officer Navin Chandra said "the highlight for Lautoka Mill this year is that it has notched crushing 6000 tonnes of cane in a 24-hour period, which is highest quantity of cane crushed in the same period in 3 years".

Despite the initial teething issues, Lautoka Mill has improved significantly showcasing the mill's full potential.

Chandra further adds, "I am grateful for the support and understanding provided by our Growers, Lorry Association and lorry operators and other industry stakeholders who had enough faith in us to get the Mill to achieve what we are achieving now".



Above: FSC Chief Operating Officer Navin Chandra

The plan developed by FSC whilst working within the 2018/19 Budget allocation guidelines for the funding of the transfer of cane from Rakiraki and Rarawai to Lautoka, and in doing so reduced the queues at Rarawai Mill. This allowed for the timely turnaround lorries ensuring that growers have maximum cane harvested and transported in the dry weather.

The Mill still has yet to reach its full potential as certain issues encountered post the floods are being overcome. FSC is working towards and is confident to deliver the target of 4,500 tonnes per day.

Chandra says “Lorry drivers are fully informed if there are any extended stops and also diversion of Lorries are put in motion when Lautoka Mill is running out of cane supply especially in the early hours of the morning”.

Labasa Mill; with 88% of the gangs operating, is enjoying great cane supplies. The introduction of 24 mechanical harvesters in the Northern Division together with 200 rail gangs, as well as manually harvested tractor/lorry gangs has put a big challenge in managing quotas. FSC through its sector officers is working closely with the growers to ensure that they receive adequate quotas.

Chandra says “it is a very delicate balance that is required especially balancing the demands of mechanically harvested cane and manually harvested cane, versus cane transported by rail and cane transported by lorries/tractors, versus furthermore cane in hilly areas and cane in flat areas versus burnt cane and green cane. These combinations have their own challenges”.

In saying that however, Labasa Mill has been running steady without much extended stops. FSC Labasa management and technical teams are working to ensure the crushing rate is increased further. A lot of work was done on Tuesday this week, during the weekly shutdown and results are promising.



Above: An FSC mechanical harvester working in a Labasa cane farm

Chandra adds “we also thank the Growers of Labasa for making all the efforts in getting their cutters and also cooperatives for investing in mechanical harvesters. Cane supply in Labasa is good and we should see good results from Labasa mill district this year.

Daily on average, at least 364 lorries carrying cane and 314 rail carrying cane are emptied. The objective is to reach to close to 400 lorries/tractors and 350 rails daily.

Looking ahead, FSC advises Growers that the time is right to decide on which low yielding farms with very old ratoons that they will replant as well as focus on planting as much fallow land available.

With the guaranteed price of \$85 per tonne, as a Grower incentive for next three years, this should give Growers a great level of confidence to balance the cash-flow whilst taking advantage of the current Government subsidies on fertilisers and weedicide and cane planting grant etc. available which will allow them to reduce their production costs.

Chandra adds “the platform to grow our sugar industry is very solid”.

ENDS

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