



MINISTRY OF WATERWAYS

Press Release

318 TOORAK ROAD, BALI TOWER, SUVA

P O BOX 1292, SUVA

Phone: (679) 3383155 Fax: (679) 338354 Email: waterwaysfiji@gmail.com

January 2021

IRRIGATION KITS EXPECTED TO BOOST FARMING ACTIVITIES IN THE WEST

Laying the foundation for continued growth to sustain the livelihoods of Fijians in rural and maritime areas remains a key priority of the Fijian Government.

These rural communities, being the hub of critical primary economic activities such as agriculture, play a crucial role in the country's overall development agenda.

This was highlighted by the Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy while handing over 22 irrigation kits to farmers in the Western Division today.

Government through the Ministry of Waterways has assisted a total of 22 farmers in the West and invested a total of \$34,532.98 for the 21 basic irrigation kits and also supported 1 farmer with a 5,300 liter Water Tank in an effort to address the issue of drought for these farmers.

While handing over the material to these farmers from Ra, Tavua, Ba, Lautoka, Nadi and Sigatoka, Minister Reddy said this would enhance farming activities in the West which would contribute towards the growth and expansion of the agriculture sector.

Minister Reddy reiterated that the irrigation project was expected to boost their farming activities, and that these farmers should now be more resilient and increase their farm productivity.

"The Irrigation Support for Farm Development Programme will provide a means of provision for water through sustainable irrigation systems to farmers to use during dry seasons.

Dr. Reddy further added that the Ministries under his portfolio would align its programmes to identify and address constraints progressively to achieve its related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and continue to assist farmers contribute towards the growth and development of the National economy.

"I want to assure all farmers, current and new farmers, that we will provide all the support to leverage their agricultural venture. But they must treat it as a business. We want small farmers to intensify their activities where land size should not limit their production in agricultural activity.

"The Ministry of Waterways through the Irrigation Support for Farm Development Programme aims to provide supplement irrigation kits to farmers to improve the productivity of niche market crops," he said.

"The Ministry urges farmers to make use of this government initiative to improve their livelihood and reduce the vulnerability and risk of crop damage during droughts and prolonged dry periods," said Dr. Reddy.

Meanwhile, for 59 year old farmer Mr. Jay Prasad from Dugunubatu Settlement in Ra, a drought has been a major constraint affecting yields on his farm.

"We have been farming in this community for the past 45 years and the drought has been a major concern for us here in Rakiraki as you all know this is one of the dry zones in the country.

"During drought our yields are badly affected which affects our household income as we heavily rely on farming as a source of income for our family. We used to cart water from the creek on a drum using bullocks which was one of the major problem for us farmers," he said.

"We are thankful to the Ministry of Waterways for providing this irrigation kit to us that will assist us to irrigate water into farms during drought season and will also enable us to continuously increase vegetable production," Mr. Prasad said.

Echoing similar sentiments, 53 year old former civil servant Petro Mausio of Matalevu, Tavua who also received a kit said during the prolonged dry spell in Tavua, they used buckets to cart water from a nearby creek to water the crops.

"Last year, the drought in our area lasted for 9 months which drastically affected the yield and production," he said.

"With the irrigation kit, I will be able to plant vegetables throughout the year and supply not only to the domestic market but contribute to the export sector as well," Mr Mausio said.

-ENDS-