

# Quarantine E-News

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## Coconut Planting Day - Make a difference



One of the many products of the coconut tree; virgin oil and mats.

The coconut (*Cocos nucifera*), is an agricultural economy product, reason being the many by-products that result from it. These include coconut milk, coconut juice, husk, coconut grains, handicrafts and significantly, coconut oil and bio-fuel to name a few. As result of its usefulness, the Ministry of Agriculture celebrated the Coconut Planting Day on the 15th October 2012.

Coconut is now one of the leading export products in great demand and the Prime Minister Tuilaepa Lufesoili Saitile Malielegaoi and Cabinet kicked off their coconut planting campaign by planting coconut trees at the Tuanaimato grounds.

Although it was a public holiday for White Sunday, children clad in their school uniforms also participated in this event by planting coconuts. They were from the Vaiusu and Vaitele Primary schools. Awareness campaigns were conducted to inform students and the general public of this initiative organised for the Lotu Tamaiti public holiday.

Coconut and coconut products is used and consumed on a daily basis, hence increase in products for cooking, mechanical use and beauty products has tripled in commercial demand. Coconut trees planted on this day are expected to bear fruits in approximately 5 years.

## Samoa celebrates World Food Day

Food security is one of the goals the ministry is mandated to achieve. It was this particular concept that was widely focused on as Samoa celebrated United Nation's World Food Day on the 16th October 2012.

The keynote address was delivered by the Minister of Agriculture, Le Mamea Ropati Mualia. "From Samoa's perspective, World Food Day is a reminder to us all of the need to have food in sufficient quantities" was a key message that was reiterated in his speech.

There were a number of displays and stalls from other government ministries as well as from the private sector to commemorate this particular day. After a long weekend holiday, many members of the public who turned up at the Nuu Crop Research Station learnt how to prepare vegetable based recipes that are healthy and nutritious for the diet.

A bit of modern influence and taste was added to the well packed healthy food stalls, this ranged from mushroom dishes to sandwiches filled with well cooked eggplant, stir fry of avocado and green pepper, and a variety of green salads. There were also displays from the Fisheries Division portraying the sea grape harvesting, tulip gardening and ever popular cold coconut or niu for thirst quenching. There were a variety of thirst quenchers such as freshly squeezed coconut milk to lime juice, sasalapa (sour sop) juice, avocado and nonu juice.

The ministry for the past two years have taken a more visible approach in dealing with the public by utilizing today's technology, the media especially television to reach out to farmers and fishermen, to promote new methods of farming and fishing as well as new innovations to improve the agriculture economy for Samoa.

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### Keep in Mind!

- ◆ Coconut flesh contains high traces of Manganese, Potassium and Copper.
- ◆ Cattle provide by-products for pharmaceuticals, gum, paints and much more.
- ◆ Footprints on the sand of time are not made by sitting down.
- ◆ Success is a journey, not a destination.

## Agriculture Show attracts more farmers

The Agriculture Show is held every year to encourage farmers and individuals or communities involved directly or indirectly in the farming and agriculture industry. It is a main source of income for many families here in Samoa, it can also aid as subsistence crops. On the week of 15th October, Agriculture was highlighted in the Coconut planting day at the beginning of the week. This was followed by the World Food day which was held also at the Nu'u grounds and then prior to the finale, 2 days dedicated to the Agriculture Show. The final day was the launch of the SACEP project at the Millenia Hotel.

Several farmers were happy that such an event is annually hosted, as it gives them a self esteem boost to continue and develop their farming practices, as the rewards are sweet. The farmers get a chance to show off their hard work and show the general public and various government officials, especially from the Agriculture sector, that they are capable of growing their products. **Although farming is hard work and may be viewed by some people as "dirty work", the results are very rewarding as farming can be a good source of income, and is a simple way to put bread and butter on the table.**

*Agriculture show in pictures: the Quarantine display booth and honey display, the different sizes of the tiapula (taro root) and banana varieties, and cattle showcase were a few of what was available for viewing by the public.*



## The impact of American Foulbrood on the local honey

Recent surveys have been conducted and results indicated the presence of the American Foulbrood disease (AFB), as notified by our Veterinarian, which was analyzed on one of the local honey bees farm in Upolu. There are many modes of its interception in Samoa. Some of these may be due to the possible slip through the borders due to dishonest declaration by the importer or passenger, smuggling or hidden package in cargo via shipment including yachts, and aircrafts etc..

**The presence of AFB could have devastating effects on the local honey exports, as Samoa's very own honey was noted to be the most purest in the Pacific, meaning, that there was no disease or pests affecting this natural resource in comparison to the other Pacific island Countries.**

The American foulbrood disease is easily spread throughout the hive as the bees try to remove the spore laden dead larvae, thus contaminate the brood food. Bacteria from a contaminated hive can be transmitted to other hives if it comes into contact with local bees. It is this risk that the Ministry is targeting to eliminate altogether by quick eradication of suspected contaminated sites and vigilant monitoring.

## Bilateral talks among Heads of Quarantine boost regional trade

As an ongoing function to develop regional trade, a Heads of Quarantine meeting was held in Suva, Fiji where participants from the Quarantine agencies from Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu exchanged details on current local status. The meeting was organized by PHAMA—Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access program—an AusAid funded program that provides practical assistance to support regional trade.



*Biosecurity of Fiji CEO and inaugural chair of the Heads of Quarantine Group, Mr Elvis Silverstrini*

*Picture courtesy—BAF website*

These trade opportunities discussed included Fiji exporting frozen taro to Solomon Islands, and ginger to Tonga, Tonga exporting squash and watermelons to Fiji for processing, and Samoa exporting mango, honey and ornamental flowers (Ginger and Antherium) into Fiji. There were also talks on having a standard system for trade protocols between Pacific Island countries for items such as tapa, mats, kava and handicrafts.

A standardized system for trade protocols among the region strengthens market access with other trading partners by building trust in our systems and gives the region a stronger voice.

Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) CEO and initial chair of the Heads of Quarantine group, Mr. Elvis Silverstrini said while some discussions were more explanatory, while for the other discussions there was an agreement to work on policy drafts for imports and exports within a set period of time. He also mentioned that export of frozen taro into Solomon Islands, both countries agreed that the frozen taro was of low biosecurity risk but import conditions need to be developed. The BAF has also offered to assist Solomon Islands develop import conditions for frozen cassava as Fiji is a strong exporter of the commodity.

It is vital that the recommendations from this regional meeting is practical at the operational level and is solely cooperation. A significant aspect of the Heads of Quarantine meeting was participation from the private sector whose representatives brought critical commercial view to the discussions.

## Pest Diagnostic Training for Border Security officers in neighboring Fiji

The regional initiative to enhance border security skills in selected countries of the Pacific, the NZ AID funded project, is a 3 year project to strengthen biosecurity. Fiji, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Samoa have undergone pest and disease diagnostics trainings with further attachments carried out in New Zealand.

The participation and completion of these trainings includes developing diagnostic tools and virtual collection of important plant pests and diseases relevant to Pacific Island Countries and conducting a series of in country trainings and attachment to MPI in NZ.



*Participants of the Pest Diagnostic training in Fiji with Project Manager, Dr Lali the Kumarasinghe (3rd from left in front row) and trainers Ms Inga Meadow and Dr Wellcom Ho*

*Picture courtesy - BAF website*

## Understanding WTO - Agriculture

Under the World Trade Organization, there are certain agreements that have been developed for the equal play and fairness of trade related issues. The Agreement on Agriculture, is to reform trade in the sector and to make policies more market oriented. This would improve predictability and security for importing exporting countries alike.

The new rules and commitment applies to:

- ◆ Market access - various trade restrictions confronting imports
- ◆ Domestic support- subsidies and other programs, including those that raise or guarantee farmgate prices and **farmers' income**
- ◆ Export subsidies - and other methods used to make exports artificially competitive

The agreement allows the governments to protect their rural economies, but preferably through policies that cause less distortion to trade. It also allows some flexibility in the way commitments are implemented. Developing countries do not have to cut their subsidies and lower their tariffs as much as developed countries, and they are given extra time to complete their obligations. **Least developed countries don't have to go through all these. Special provisions deal with the interests of countries that rely on imports for their food supply, and concerns of least developed economies.**



*Participants of the WTO/ESCAP Regional Seminar on Trade in Agriculture and Agriculture Negotiations, 16th - 18th October, UP Manila, Philippines*