

# Quarantine E-News

Issue 9

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## 50 years of service ~ Public Service Day ~

This year, Samoa celebrated 50 years of independence, and as Government employees, there was also a commemoration of a Public Service day. This was a day for all Government employees to commemorate on their achievements in serving Samoa as a Government employee.

All Government ministries were gathered at the Police Headquarters, to begin a Public Service march pass ending at the front of the Parliament house. Here, everyone gathered for the welcome remarks by PSC member, Safuneituuga Paaga Neri Fepuleai followed by the Opening Prayer by Pastor Talomua Mona. Then an enlightening keynote address by the Honorable Prime Minister, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, focusing on the values and work ethics of government employees.

Although the weather gave a few showers of blessings, it did not dampen the mood of many public servants who paraded the streets of town commemorating this Special day.

All Government ministries held display booths on the ground floor of the Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi building. There were many interesting displays put up by the various government departments, showcasing the roles and responsibilities of each ministry. It was also an opportunity for many college level students to see for themselves what options of career paths are available for them.

In the evening the Public Service Commission hosted a dinner function for the Samoa Public Service Excellence Awards Ceremony, where they gave out awards for the Best Public Service Employee and Longest Serving Public Servant to name.



## International Health Regulations workshop discuss ways forward

The Ministry of Health conducted a 2 days workshop, 24th-25th September, to familiarize all invited port agents and all the frontliners and those directly or indirectly involved in carrying out the International Health Regulation functions at the borders. The facilitator from MOH, Dr. Take Naseri, conducted the 2 days workshop with presentations from various sections of the Public Health Section, and external presentations from Quarantine, Animal Protection Society, and the Disaster Management office. Conditions on Emergency cases for the boarding of passengers, procedures applied for clearance of vessels and aircrafts, Standards for the Imports and Exports pathways were a few of the topics that were discussed.

The normal procedures stages are first the Health officials board the vessel or aircraft to carry out Health clearance, to ensure there is no emergency or sick person on board, and then the Customs, Quarantine and if necessary, Immigration officials follow.

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### Keep in Mind!

- ◆ Understand that being certified organic does not guarantee sustainable practices
- ◆ Eliminate waste: 3R— Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- ◆ Imported Honey is considered Prohibited
- ◆ Be of assistance, report unfamiliar sight of species

## Abattoir to Improve Exports of Meat

Samoa's Ministry of Agriculture is to build an abattoir for both hygienic reasons as well as to revive beef exports. The Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fonoiva Seali'itu Sesega, has spoken to media reports saying that after many years of discussion on this topic, an abattoir will be built with funding from the World Bank.



He has stated that initially it will involve two mobile abattoirs that will go out to farms to slaughter the animals, before a central abattoir is completed. It is once this central abattoir is completed, that enforcement for all meat to be properly and hygienically slaughtered, will be mandatory.

*The traditional Samoan 'Fa'alavelave' usually would have butchered cows exchanged among the village mayors*

While some bigger farms have its' own abattoir facilities most don't and the Government says for health reasons there is a need for greater control. The current practise for many of these small time farmers, is that they take their slaughtered povi (cow meat) to the butcheries and they are paid on the spot if they appreciate by the looks of things. There is no control of the way meat is transported, hence, tougher health laws must be in place to address such food safety issues.

Fonoiva says legislation banning the sale of beef that does not come from the Ministry of Agriculture's abattoir is on the way. This type of initiative would be vital, not only for the monitor and surveillance by the Ministry of Agriculture, also for the benefit of the health of people of Samoa.

The facility will also allow a revival of exports to American Samoa after a ban imposed ten years ago because of unacceptable processing standards, thus involving no proper abattoir or slaughter house.

The need for an abattoir is convenient for most farmers in Samoa to expand there livelihoods to meet the export markets, and ensure agriculture sustainability in crop yields, and cattle farming alike.

## Samoa Agriculture Competitive Enhancement Project (SACEP)

Agriculture plays a critical role in Samoa's economy, employing around two-thirds of the national labor force and supporting 18,000 rural households. Despite strong economic performance, gaps in income have grown between the urban and rural populations. In part, this is due to the poor performance shown by the Agriculture sector. Dependence on food imports has been increasing, making Samoa vulnerable to global food and oil price volatility.

Through targeted support to livestock and fruit and vegetables sectors, the Samoa Agriculture Competitive Enhancement Project aims to ensure local produce captures a growing proportion of the domestic food market, and rural household incomes are increased.

In doing so, the project will help narrow the gap between rural and urban incomes, and boost Samoa's foreign exchange reserves through food imports substitution and increased exports.

This Project contributes to Samoa's objective of increased food and income security by 2015 and specifically to the agriculture sector policy objectives to improve self reliance in food production and nutritional security. The project will also help the country enhance private sector capacity in improving productivity, value adding and marketing.

## The Revival of the Cocoa Industry

Many of us are familiar with the daily advertisements on TV depicting Mika and Mele, on how their relationship develops over the promotion of CCK coffee. A local businessman, health educator, Samoan rugby under-17s coach and exporter and producer of organic coconut oil, Uaea Apelu from Lefaga, also shareholder in Cocoa Samoa Ltd, was designed to revive the cocoa industry after 20 years.

In the early eighties, it was reported that about 500,000 coconuts a month were exported to Australia. Uaea began researching and experimenting five years ago to work out how to get produce coconut oil. Then after so many research and eight months ago he got his product. It is based that there is a huge demand all over the world – in America, in Australia in Europe – because of the benefits of the oil.

Apelu says that 50 years ago no one had diabetes in Samoa and links the increase in the disease to coconut disappearing from the Samoan diet. **“Samoans are not big vegetable eaters; vegetables were introduced into Samoa, but not to the diet,” he said. “The only thing they were eating at every meal was their breadfruit, bananas, taro, yams but with coconut cream or juice. That’s the only thing you can attribute their health and physical appearance.”**

**Nowadays there is very little coconut in the average Samoan’s diet, they may include it in their meals once a week.** There is a lot of processed food and imports being consumed by the majority of Samoan today.

Cocoa was first planted by German settlers in Samoa in the 1880s; you can still find trees that are 120 years old. Samoa was a member in good standing of the international cocoa organisation (ICO) for decades; it was rated as one of the top cocoa producers in the world. There were about 1,200 families producing cocoa. In the 1990s there were two devastating cyclones, followed by a drought and a collapse in cocoa prices, so as to many crops in the Agriculture sector. In spite of this, Samoan farmers continue to grow some of the finest cocoa beans in the world.



*Dried cocoa beans undergoing physical inspection prior to treatment for certification for export*

## Survey of Honey Bee Diseases in Samoa

The Varroa mite is a parasite that attacks adult honeybees and their developing larvae, thus resulting in infestation in the production of deformed bees, reduced longevity of individuals and slow death of the colony. It is found in most parts of the world and the closest vicinity being New Zealand. It is rapidly spread between colonies, usually a very high growth. The prevention and control method is very costly affecting the bee industry.

There is a total of 39 beekeepers operating 465 hives, which usually has an annual production of 8 tonnes per year, most of which are locally consumed.

The European Foulbrood is a bacterial disease which is not present in Samoa. It can be transmitted through bee products, especially honey and pollen. The initiative taken by the prevention of this disease from entering Samoa, is to prohibit any imported Honey from overseas. Surveys carried out by Murray Reid, Assure Quality Ltd, of NZ proved no presence of disease or external pest, hence regarded as the highest health situation in the Pacific



*The Varroa mite destroying honeybees at larval and adult stages*

## Blind Snake: Consider it Harmless

There were recent complaints regarding a certain species of Brahminy Blind snakes that were sighted at one Mr. **Fonoti Brown's residence at Lalovaea**. **These reports suggested that the species of snake, that was destroyed on the spot, is that of a Blind Snake** which has been long existing in Samoa. The only concern Mr. Brown had was that it was much longer in length compared to the last time that he reported the same incident late in 2011.

Our inspection team that handled cases such as these of reported pest like creatures, found that the snake like figure was already seemingly crushed by a vehicle, so a specimen could not be obtained at the time for further analysis by Pest net. But advice was given for report in future and in assistance, for capture, so that confirmation upon analysis can be carried out.

The Blind snake is rarely seen, as they spend most of their life underground, living in ant and termite nests and loose soil beneath rocks. These particular species of snake is not much of a worry, as they are sensitive to sunlight, are non-venomous and completely harmless.

Key characteristics in identifying this species is its uniform thickness, and may range from 20-50cm in length. It has a colouration of usually black, to dark brown.

It is considered a species that has existed in Samoa since early 90s, and unknown of its introduction, but it assists in soil burrowing as its diet feeds on termite and ant larvae.



*Brahminy Blind snake is considered Harmless, and it assists in soil development through burrowing and feeding on ant and termite larvae*