

MEDIA RELEASE

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MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIP ON THE RISE

FSC’s Joint Venture initiatives with iTaukei landowners is growing and proving to be a winning formula, that sets to benefit both the FSC and iTaukei landowning units.

Just under a year ago, FSC introduced the Joint Venture sugar cane farming initiative, on a platform that was based on a win-win formula for both the FSC and iTaukei Landowning clans. The program commenced on Vanua Levu, in Nasarowaqa, in the province of Bua.

The Nasarowaqa Joint Venture is now almost six months in operation. There is much excitement and expectation from this Joint Venture which proudly spans around 460 acres of land converted to cane. In addition to Nasarowaqa, the Nakiko Joint Venture, located on the outskirts of Seaqaqa, has also commenced. This is an additional 390 acres of land now converted to cane.

FSC Chief Operating Officer Navin Chandra says “it is pleasing to note that both our Vanua Levu Joint Ventures are now progressing well. We want to plant more cane and we will continue to engage interested parties on this front”.

The company recently launched its latest Joint Venture initiative, located at Korovuto, about 10 minutes from Nadi town.

The new sugar cane Joint Venture at Tunalia, belongs to the Tokatoka Nasautorotoro, of Korovuto village and who are made up of three families.

Tokatoka Nasautorotoro representative Mosese Varasikete says, “we run a tourist transfer business, from the airport to Denarau or Sonaisali and return, which operates daily”. This model enterprising tokatoka, also operates an event equipment hiring business, which includes tables and chairs and tents, available for hire.



Right: Tokatoka Nasautorotoro with FSC representatives at the launch of the Tunalia Joint Venture, last week

Varasikete advised that their elders were engaged a bit in sugar cane farming from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s, but the attractive tourist-based type businesses saw them giving up sugar cane for the more lucrative tourism industry. But this changed today.

“Today we are happy to go back to sugar cane farming” says Varasikete. “Our young men, youths will be engaged directly in farming this land”, he adds.

In thanking the Tokatoka Nasautorotoro last week, Chandra said “we are grateful to the cooperation and indeed the foresight of their Headman Mr Vilitati Moto and the families of the Tokatoka Nasautorotoro, for the will to progress this sugar cane Joint Venture”.

Joint Ventures such as this, showcases the partnership that is growing between the FSC and the iTaukei landowners.

FSC’s key objective laid out in the Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023, is cane production. Commencing 2017 and increasingly more last year, FSC’s interactions with iTaukei landowners have been on the rise, reflecting greater collaboration and identifying opportunities. These partnerships will assist FSC’s five year objective to increase cane to 3 million tonnes.



Above: Tokatoka Nasautorotoro elder launching the Tunalia Joint Venture, last week



These partnerships will allow FSC to work closely with landowners, thus building their own capacities in the management of sugar cane farms.

Chandra says, “We will provide technical and operational support to ensure that these Joint Venture sugar cane farms are successful and yields the benefits”.

Varasikete echoed similar sentiments saying, “We are happy to work together with the FSC to bring about the required tonnage to be derived from this farm”.

Whilst Joint Ventures will assist cane development, there are incremental benefits as well for iTaukei landowners. Chief being the ability to convert idle land to commercial farming. Sustainable commercial sugar cane farming, built on mutual trust and a genuine desire to succeed, will definitely prove rewarding for successive generations of landowners.

Left: Development on the Nasarowaqa Joint Venture in Bua. Women can be seen working the farm.

FSC's efforts will not end here, as it looks to secure more land for sugar cane Joint Venture farms. The Nasarowaqa Joint Venture, once fully planted, will be the model sugar cane farm. The latest Tunalia Joint Venture farm along the Sigatoka to Nadi corridor, will also be a model sugar cane farm once planting is completed. Such visible development goes a long way to creating renewed optimism for the industry.

In thanking FSC's partners in progress Chandra also acknowledged and thanked the Government of Fiji, for leading the development progress in the sugar industry. "The level of subsidies provided to our growers is unmatched. I would also like to acknowledge the Fiji Development Bank for providing the financial platform and support to bring Joint Ventures like this to life", he said.

The new Tunalia partnership exemplifies the new direction of the FSC, the landowners and all other industry stakeholders.

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