

Question 115/2019

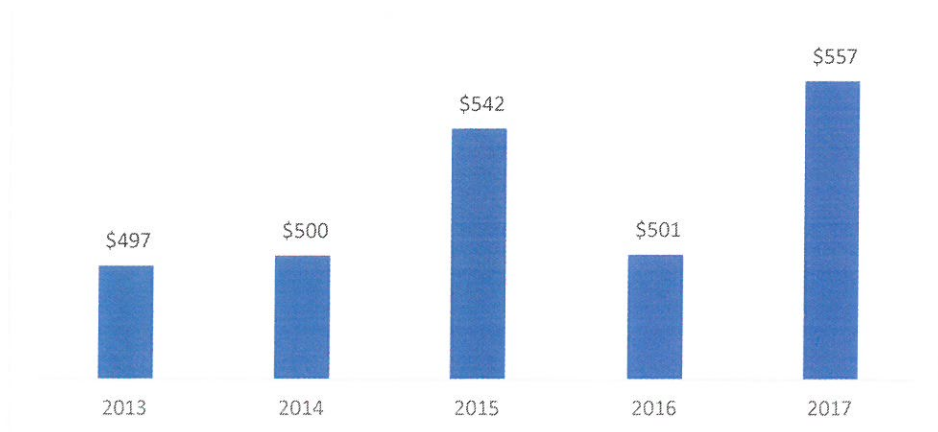
Hon. Inosi Kuridrani to ask the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment – Can the Minister advise Parliament on actions taken or plans to further improve the performance of non-sugar agriculture.

Honourable Speaker, I rise to reply to question asked by Hon. Inosi Kuridrani on actions and plans that the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) have in place to further improve the Non Sugar Agriculture Sector.

Honourable Speaker, please allow me, before I proceed to share with Hon. Members of Parliament performances of Fiji's Agriculture Sector as a result of on-going Agriculture Development Programs. Agriculture, remains vital due to its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and to the development of the economy. It provides food and livelihood security, promotes community development in rural areas, generates income for approximately 65 percent of the total population, and contributes to foreign exchange.

Honourable Speaker, The Agriculture GDP at constant basic price for 2017 shows an increase of 11.3% from 2016. It has increased from \$500.8 million in 2016 to \$557.3 million in 2017. Its contribution to the National GDP has also expanded from 7.4% in 2016 to 8.0% in 2017.

Figure 1: Crop & Livestock GDP Trend (2013-2017)



Source: National Accounts, Fiji Bureau of Statistics

Honourable Speaker, the growth in Fiji's economy in 2017, was mainly driven by positive growth contributions of four industries including Agriculture (Crop & Livestock) Sector. It was highlighted that the 11.3% growth was due to higher production of Yaqona, sugarcane and cattle (beef) in 2017.

Honourable Speaker, Total Agriculture Export in 2018 was \$219m which is an increase of \$10m [5%] as compared to 2017. Despite this increase our trade deficit continue to increase from 2017 – 2018 by \$58m. The total crop and livestock export contributed 32% to total Agriculture export (crop, livestock, fisheries and forest).

Figure 1: Agriculture Non - Sugar Production 2013-2018

Production (Mt)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Crop Production	254,005	255,631	217,952	238,148	253,112
Livestock Production	40,999	40,085	32,413	50,528	51,534
Total Agriculture Production	295,004	295,716	250,365	288,676	304,646

Source: Fiji Agriculture & Rural Statistics/ Animal Health & Production Division Quarterly Report:

Honourable Speaker, the agriculture sector has enormous productive potential. The Ministry has in recent years increased its focus on forward planning, strengthening data collection and emphasising more on evidence based approaches to better inform its work. This includes developing and reviewing commodity plans, strengthening our research programs and elevating strategic approaches for food security and commercial agriculture.

Honourable Speaker, in order to improve performance in the non - sugar agriculture, I will highlight some initiatives that the Ministry is undertaking:

- **Livestock** – embryo transfer program, artificial insemination program, pasture development program (Juncao Technology), improve breeding programs (sheep and goat), Electronic Identification Device (EID) for electronic recording systems, Control Internal Drug Release (CIDR) technology for breeding program and genetic conservation for resilient livestock. Focus is on restocking our domestic farmers through improved breeding program and farm management practices to substantial meet domestic demands over the next 3-5 years.

- **Crops** – continue research on superior and climate tolerant varieties, organizing farming groups, new initiative on young farmer’s incubator scheme, establishment of fruit tree orchards, promote backyard gardening and provision of assistance to commodity funded programs.

Honourable Speaker, The Ministry of Agriculture has developed a 5year strategic development plan with the aim to build competitive sustainable and resilient agriculture sector contributing to building a vibrant and progressive nation. We will develop a result-based framework that can guide the implementation of these plans and support the achievements of its goals.

The five (5) strategic priorities are as follows:

Strategic Priority 1: Improved food and nutrition security for all Fijians.

Through this strategic priority, the ministry aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Improved production and access to local, safe and nutritious food
- Increased adaptation of local food gardens by school and demand for diverse, nutritious and safe food.
- Increased production of resilient, safe and nutritious foods in rural, peri-urban and urban communities.
- Strong multi sector approach supported by strategic FNS planning, monitoring and governance system.

Strategic Priority 2: Increased farmer household income for sustainable livelihoods

Through this strategic priority, the ministry aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Increased farmer participation in existing and new demand driven markets.
- Increased participation of women and youths in the crop and livestock sector.

- Strengthened MOA institutional approach, capacity and engagement with partners and stakeholders that support market driven production of agriculture commodities.

Strategic Priority 3: Increased adoption of sustainable resource management and climate smart agriculture

Through this strategic priority, the ministry aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Improve MOA institutional, technical and scientific capacity for evidence based planning and targeted research agendas.
- Increased access to resilient crop varieties, livestock breeds and social safety nets and market products that mitigate risks for farmers.
- Increased awareness and adaptation by farmers of sustainable resource management and climate smart agriculture practices.

Strategic Priority 4: Establish and improve commercial agriculture.

Through this strategic priority, the ministry aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Increased farmer access to loans, grants, insurance and basic financial services.
- Increased farmer, youth and agribusiness participation producing market driven commodities.
- Improved information and communication system in the agriculture sector that includes value chain opportunities, financial literacy, business planning and farm management.
- Improved commercial agriculture linkage with tourism industry.

Strategic Priority 5: Improved quality public sector performance and service delivery

Through this strategic priority, the ministry aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Improved communication and knowledge management information systems in MOA
- Strengthened information flows to farmers and stakeholders that is relevant, accurate and timely.

Honourable Speaker, I also wish to highlight and share with members of parliament some of our ongoing bilateral partnership with external stakeholders who have recognized the agriculture sector contribution to Fiji's economy. Examples of such partnership are:

- Engagement with International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group (IFC) on a study of fresh produce demand of Fiji's Hotel and Resorts – The report highlights strategies and plans on how Fiji's Agriculture sector can cut back on import of fresh produce demanded by our tourist industry.
- Pro-resilient project with Food Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Adventist Relief Agency (ADRA) – The project provides an in-depth picture of the community situation and vulnerability of households in selected province. It analyses information on crop and livestock, farmers' situation, water and power supply, food supply, livelihoods, drought impact and Climate Smart Agriculture, health education and infrastructures. It focusses on improving resilience and adapting capacities of vulnerable communities and subsistence farmers to reduce food and nutrition insecurity.
- International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) funded Fiji Agriculture Partnership Program (FAPP) project. The project focuses on the most vulnerable communities in the highlands of Vitilevu.

Honourable Speaker, while we lay out our strategic priorities for the upcoming years, we have also designed a robust monitoring and evaluation process and framework to guide us through the implementation. Importantly our actions and plans are linked to the NDP growth targets which will help us track how well we are contributing to the collective national vision.