



MINISTRY OF FORESTRY

HON. OSEA NAIQAMU MINISTER FOR FORESTRY

Venue: Parliament

Date: Thursday, 10th February, 2021

WRITTEN QUESTION – 37/2021

Hon. Peceli Vosanibola to ask the Minister for Forestry – Can the Minister update Parliament on the extent of damage or destruction by Tropical Cyclone Yasa to more than 100,000 tree seedlings planted towards the 30 Million Trees Initiative in Vanua Levu?

Written Response:

In the fight against climate change, biodiversity loss, degradation of forests, loss of endemic species and the need for plantation species for economic growth and recovery, the Fijian Government initiated the 30 Million Trees in 15 Years initiative as it recognizes the important services that the forest resources provide and the urgent need to address environmental decline, rising temperatures, offsetting emissions from highly industrialized sectors and generally restoring a balance with nature to support lives and livelihoods while making forestry more productive and sustainable.

Loss of seedlings to natural disasters, pests and diseases, fires and human induced repercussions are associated risks envisaged when seedlings are planted. Under any tree-planting regime, seedlings planted are revisited to ensure their survival through weeding and clearing vegetation that impede growth. “Beat up”, a forestry term used for replacing seedlings loss is part of this regime and continues up to 3 years when

seedlings are considered to be hardy, well adapted to the environment they grow in and capable of growing without intervention.

Our teams on the ground in the Northern Division have no record of the 100,000 seedlings damaged by Tropical Cyclone Yasa. This is a figure most likely plucked from thin air. In fact what we have is damages to 726 seedlings planted on 2.7 hectares of land around the district of Tunuloa in the province of Cakaudrove.

Other than that, records of damages in the North mostly due to fires sits at 2,634 seedlings with the following statistics recorded on the ground;

Nailou - 20% Survival (151 seedlings)
Total Seedlings Planted - 756
Total Ha - 2.7ha

Vusaratu - Completely destroyed by fire
Total Seedlings – 1,200
Total Ha - 4.3ha

Karoko - Completely destroyed by fire
Total Seedlings – 1,283
Total Ha - 4.6ha

The Ministry is yet to undertake a full reconnaissance of all seedlings planted under the 30Million Trees in 15 years initiative. Currently our teams are deployed to undertake urgent rehabilitation required to ensure access to water, electricity, homes and schools and general access for the people in Vanua Levu to regain some semblance of normalcy.

Once the State of Emergency is uplifted, our teams will resume their work in monitoring, assessing and replacing seedlings lost to ensure accountability and accuracy of reporting on planted figures.

Just planting a tree does not ensure its growth, it needs tender loving care to ensure it grows well and Tropical Cyclone Yasa is only one of the many challenges faced in ensuring the survival of trees that have been planted. We have been struck by two devastating

cyclones in the space of a few weeks and the cyclone season is not over yet. It is imperative that we understand nature and the effects of climate change when growing trees. Losses are expected and restoring losses is part of the strategy to maintain our target of growing 30 million trees in 15 years.

Fiji's tree-planting and growing revolution is urgently required to achieve much more ambitious global targets of redressing the wrongs of the past and addressing the current climate emergency.

Despite the challenging times, the Ministry continues to make progress with Fiji's tree-planting and growing efforts, and I wish to thank all the communities, corporate organisations and individuals who have supported this initiative. Over the last 24 months, the Ministry coordinated the planting of more than 3 million trees and mangroves across Fiji. The first million was planted when we had an initial target of four million trees in four years. This target was revised to 30 million trees in 15 years when we noticed that we could plant more than one million trees in a year.

So in 2020, the Ministry coordinated the planting of over two million trees and mangroves. Additionally, the Fiji Pine Group of Companies planted over two million trees in 2020. So, as a country, we now see that we can plant more than four million trees in a span of 12 months. We have every confidence that Fiji's tree-planting and growing revolution will benefit the environment and our people. This is the legacy we can leave for our future generations.
