

Parliament Session – Written Response
Wednesday 18th August. 2021

172/2021

Hon. Inosi Kuridrani to ask the Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment – Can the Minister update Parliament on the status of the distribution of F1 Sheep Cross Breed to farmers in 2019, in particular

- (a) how many were distributed per Division;
- (b) how many farmers received this breed of sheep; and
- (c) what improvement in output was recorded from 2019 to date in the domestic sheep industry as a result of this activity.

Sheep production in Fiji has attracted a lot of passion and opportunity as a food security commodity and livelihood program. The F1 Sheep breeding program undertaken by the Ministry aims to improve breeds that can yield better carcass weight, resilient, worm resistant, better reproductive performance with a higher growth rate. In addition the Ministry has secured funding from the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR) to assist in addressing nutritional and parasite related problems, training and field days to up skill farmer's knowledge on breeding practices, husbandry and management as well as nutritional improvement.

Through this ongoing programme, the number of sheep farms has increased from 394 farms in 2009 to 4341 farms in 2020. Relatively the population of sheep increased from 10,843 to 37,435 in the same period. The production of local mutton weighs around 70 – 80 tons annually from both formal and informal market while volume of total import is around 4,000 – 7,000 tonnes.

In recent years the Ministry has invested in number of private sheep farms and upgraded them from subsistence to semi commercial level through Sheep Breeding and Expansion program. The farmers have been assisted with breeding stock and infrastructures support such as fencing materials, sheds and nutritional improvement.

From 2019 to 2020, 200 smallholder sheep farms were assisted with fencing materials to enable them to expand their stock and upgrade their farming status to semi commercial level.

The F1 Sheep breed were distributed in the North with 92 stock and Western Division with 98 stock. There were 64 farmers in the Northern division and 74 farmers in the Western division who received the F1 Sheep breed. As the result of this distribution, there were improved genetic makeup of farmers sheep flock, improved reproductive and productive parameters and increased farmer's income.

The Ministry will continue to monitor these process and work with sheep farmers in the Annual Sheep Breeding Programme to ensure enhancement of the industry and improved individual farmers output.

END

MR