



**HON. VATIMI T.T.K. RAYALU**

**Minister for Agriculture and Waterways**

**Date: 21 November 2023**

**Venue: Parliamentary Complex, Suva**

---

**Written Question: 168/2023**

Hon. Sachida Nand to ask the Minister for Agriculture and Waterways –  
Can the Minister update Parliament on how many commercial vegetable farmers are in Fiji and what measures are being undertaken by the Ministry to assist farmers.

---

The Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways five year Strategic Development Plan (SDP) has 5 key strategic priority areas. The strategic priority area 4 of the SDP aims to Establish and Improve Commercial Agriculture to accelerate the process in transitioning smallholder farmers to semi-commercial and commercial level.

The Ministry has registered **24,174** agriculture households in Fiji that grows vegetables at subsistence, semi-commercial and commercial level. About **370** of these farmers are growing vegetables at commercial level utilizing a minimum 1 hectare of land.

The total number of commercial vegetable farmers in Fiji by Division is as follows:

- Central – 66 farmers (63 male and 3 female)
- Eastern – 13 farmers (9 male and 4 female)
- Northern – 10 farmers ( 9 male and 1 female)
- Western – 281 farmers (272 male and 9 female)

In addition, it is worth noting that **44%** of total commercial vegetable farmers are registered under Bilateral Quarantine Agreement (BQA) farmers that influence the export of fresh/chilled vegetables in Fiji.

Furthermore, **5%** of commercial vegetable farmers in Fiji are female. Western Division continues to dominate vegetable farming in Fiji, mainly from the salad bowl, Sigatoka where **40%** of commercial vegetable farmers are located.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways is assisting commercial vegetable farmers through Commercial Agriculture Development Program (CADP) and Commercial Farmers Equity Package (CFEP). These Programmes are designed to specifically address targeted outcomes of the strategic priority area 4 of the SDP.

The CADP encompasses component of the existing Demand Driven Approach (DDA) Programme; Food Security Programme (FSP), Export Promotion Programme (EPP) and Rural & Outer Island (ROI).

The CADP for vegetable farmers will provide borehole assistance for irrigation to farmers during the dry season in Western and Central Division. While scoping has been done for the Northern Division to be implemented in the next financial year.

The CFEP directly supports commercial farmers to improve their capacity to expand production through the provision of loan equity in partnership with Fiji Development Bank (FDB). Moreover, the assistance is to inspire existing local commercial farmers to acquire financial support outside Government that will modernize their agricultural production.

In addition, the Ministry has other capital programmes which support commercial vegetable farming through the following:

- **Highland Farming Program** – focuses on the highlands of Western Division (Sigatoka, Nadarivatu and Saivou in the Ra province). This program includes provision of planting materials, infrastructure development (land clearing, construction of drains), protective structures, crates and small farm equipment's (irrigation kit and rototiller).
- **Agriculture Extension Services** – it provides farm support on supply of vegetable seeds.
- **Farm Mechanization program** – purchase of machines (tractor and digger and rice harvester) on 1/3 and 2/3 basis where the farmer contributes 1/3 of the total cost and the Ministry contributes 2/3.

- **Small Farming Equipment** – the supply of small farming equipment's on 1/3 and 2/3 basis (mini rototiller, power tiller, dryers and portable value adding machines).

The Ministry will assist commercial vegetable farmers in Fiji through the following measures:

**1. Research and Development Support:**

The Ministry has allocated funds for research and development initiatives focused on improving vegetable varieties, pest and disease management, and sustainable farming practices. This has been done through establishing partnerships with agricultural research institutions to facilitate the transfer of technology and knowledge to farmers.

**2. Training and Extension Services:**

The Ministry organizes training programs and workshops to educate farmers on modern and efficient farming techniques, including crop rotation, irrigation methods, and organic farming practices. The Ministry also strengthens its extension services to provide timely information and advice to farmers on best practices, market trends, and weather forecasts.

**3. Infrastructure Development:**

The Ministry has invested in rural infrastructure such as farm access roads, irrigation systems, and storage facilities to enhance the overall efficiency of the supply chain and reduce post-harvest losses in vegetable farming. The Ministry also supports the establishment of

farmers' cooperatives to improve collective bargaining power and facilitate the sharing of resources and knowledge.

#### **4. Market Access and Linkages:**

The Ministry facilitates the creation of market linkages and diversification between farmers and agribusinesses, supermarkets, tourism sector and export markets. For instance, large scale maize production is currently being discussed to replace wheat imports for livestock feed reducing our import bill.

#### **5. Data Collection and Analysis:**

The Ministry has a comprehensive database on vegetable production, market price, and market trends to aid in informed decision-making and policy formulation. With the use of data analytics helps to identify emerging challenges and opportunities in the vegetable farming sector and tailor support programs accordingly.

#### **6. Promotion of Value-Added Products:**

The Ministry encourages the development of value-added products from vegetables, such as processing facilities for canning, drying, or freezing, to enhance the income of farmers and promote economic diversification.

#### **7. Environmental Conservation:**

The Ministry promotes sustainable farming practices that focus on soil conservation, water management, and biodiversity preservation to ensure the long-term viability of commercial vegetable farming.

In conclusion, by addressing these areas, the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways can significantly assist farmers and contribute to the success sustainability of commercial vegetable farming, fostering economic growth and food security.

**VTTKR**

-----**END**-----