



HACCP JUST THE START

Vili has vision for growth

WHILE the ability to manage food safety is critical to the success of a business, it's just the starting point for the growth of exports.

Viliame Nagelevuki of Island Express believes that Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) training for his staff will open pathways to export opportunities in Australia and New Zealand.

But he's not satisfied with international recognition.

"As exporters, HACCP opens the door but we need to push through and see how to develop the market further," said Nagelevuki who operates Island Express at Wainibokasi, outside Nausori.

"HACCP certification keeps us on our toes but it won't necessarily grow the business and that's where we need to work really hard – identifying markets, adding value to our products, finding a constant supply."

FACT BOX

HACCP is a management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product.

Island Express workers underwent HACCP training with the support of the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program in early 2015. The business then invested in the required improvements to their facility and processes.

The company exports dalo, tavioka (cassava), breadfruit and chilli to a single customer in New Zealand.

"A single customer means there is no competition for your prices and complaints can be handled efficiently and quickly," Nagelevunki said.

"The dalo market in New Zealand is not that big – Samoans are the biggest consumers followed by Tongans and Fijians."

"What we need to do is offer dalo products such as chips or flour but for that we need volume. That is where Island Express is at the moment. The supply is clean, it meets international standards so what can we do next?"

Nagelevuki has already experimented with breadfruit flour which is popular overseas because it is gluten free.

Island Express has 20 workers – 12 in Wainibokasi, five in Bua and three on Taveuni with 20-30 villagers hired as casual labourers when needed.

IN THIS ISSUE

RAM PUSHES THE LIMITS

Ram's Garden City Exports Ltd has gained knowledge and better understanding of HACCP.

PAGE 02

GOLDEN FUTURE FOR GREEN PRODUCT

Praveen Narayan, owner of Green Gold Kava is well poised to supply niche export markets.

PAGE 02

FARMERS GET THE MESSAGE

Farmers need to raise the quality and quantity of yaqona that they will plant after Cyclone Winston.

PAGE 03

LAWS AND STANDARDS TO GOVERN KAVA

The proposed Yaqona Bill 2016 has been the subject of national consultations and is expected to lead to improvements of quality standards in the industry.

PAGE 03

COMING UP

9 - 16 OCT

Ginger marketing visit to Australia

19 - 20 OCT

Fiji Fresh Produce Forum in New Zealand

6/7 DEC

Market Access Working Group Meeting

DEC

Launching of Yaqona Quality Manual

Five Fijian companies have now received HACCP accreditation with support from the PHAMA program and are now selling the rewards.

Ram pushes the limits

GARDEN CITY EXPORT & IMPORT LIMITED

30

full time workers

15 TONNES

of exports per week to Australia

6 TONNES

of exports per week to New Zealand

2015

First HACCP Certification

THE ability to eliminate hazards in the supply chain has helped Garden City Export and Import Limited to grow its business despite challenges and competition.

For Managing Director Ram the decision to send his staff on HACCP training in 2015 and invest in the required improvements has paid huge dividends.

After first achieving internationally recognised HACCP accreditation in 2015, the company successfully retained the annual accreditation.

"Because the quality of our dalo and cassava exports is better than before, we can charge the customer a premium price and they are happy with the product," Ram said.

"You know, I only went to Form Four at Vakabuli High School in Lautoka and everything the company does I've learned along the way but this HACCP training has been really important in growing and maintaining the business."

Six of Ram's workers attended the HACCP training for exporters which was funded through the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access program. They returned with knowledge of how to maintain cleaner pack houses, basic hygiene for workers and supply chain management systems.

"Our facilities now can't compare to what we had before," Ram said.

"The old wooden tables have been replaced with stainless steel, we have special washing machines for the root crops and our workers follow strict hygiene processes. We are very strict with them but they know the impact of any failure in the HACCP process."

"It's a small operation and we all work together to ensure standards are maintained."



Ram with his family



Peeled cassava packing at Ram's.

Other changes implemented by the company to comply with HACCP requirements were specially designed trays to carry the root crops, a specific dining area, laying of rodent traps and a registration process for visitors.

Ram said an important part of the transition to HACCP processes was the education of suppliers – mainly farmers in the rural areas.

"With those who live close by we can sit and talk and explain how important it is to deliver quality, clean produce to the warehouse," Ram said.

"They appreciate it when we can show exactly what the requirements and when they understand the implications non-compliance might have on exports, the growers try really hard to make changes to what they bring us."

The challenge has been to educate growers on Fiji's remote islands. But to meet the challenge, Ram has trained his agents who transport or arrange transportation to his Valelevu facility.

Golden future for green product

GREEN GOLD

20 YEARS

in the business

3 SHIPMENTS

a month overseas

10 DAYS

from farm to shelf

PRAVEEN Narayan has set his sights on two new markets for kava or yaqona – Japan and China.

The managing director of Green Gold Kava

knows that the current success of yaqona-based novelty drinks in the United States could soon translate into business in Asia.

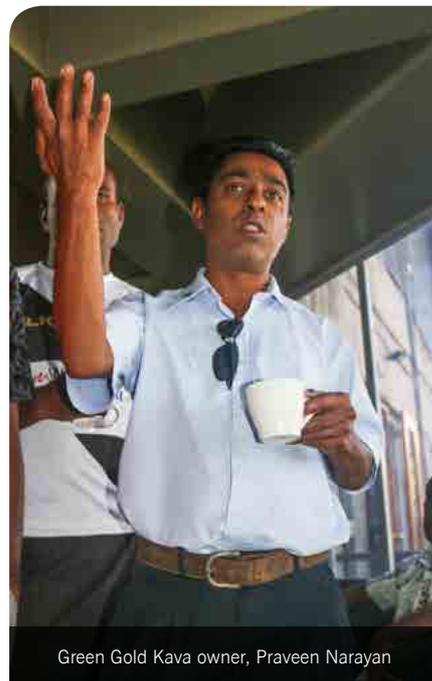
"Many of the global chains are moving into Asia where there is a growing number of people with money to spend on products which are popular in America," Narayan said.

Based in Savusavu, he has recently applied for assistance to develop his export market through the Pacific Horticultural and Market Access program.

Narayan knows that market access and a strong export platform are critical as he tries to grow his export base.

"The Asian markets are aggressive, and they demand high quality products," he said.

"There is no room for error. One mistake can cost thousands of dollars in time and



Green Gold Kava owner, Praveen Narayan

money which we cannot afford so any assistance which helps us provide quality exports is really important to keep us on our game at all times.”

Narayan has already begun implementing strict controls along the supply chain with the involvement of his growers and workers.

“We process around \$40,000 of yaqona a week – mainly from Natewa to Saqani – and our aim is to get the yaqona out of the ground, dried, cleaned, pounded and packed for export in 10 days,” he said.

“There is a huge reliance on the weather so our next step will be to find better ways to dry the yaqona without compromising quality. We export about three shipments per month.”

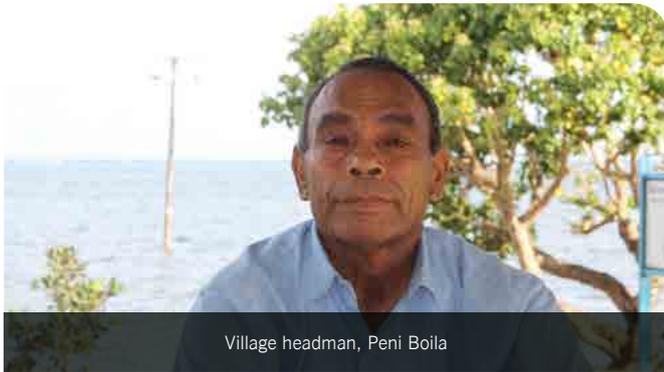
Narayan said his clients in New Zealand were impressed by the quality of Green Gold Kava’s products and this was because of the level of internal checks in export process.

“It’s not easy to get the growers to make sure the kava is cleaned and dried properly so we go to the farms and pick the produce from them,” Narayan said.

“For those who deliver, we make an effort to teach them about the need for quality and cleanliness and hygiene.”

“So far it’s working and we hope for better things down the line.”

Farmers get the message



Village headman, Peni Boila

ON Ovalau the time is right – rebuilding after Tropical Cyclone Winston is over and the replanting of crops has started.

Most of the islands in the Lomaiviti Group are known for the quality of their yaqona and Ovalau is no exception.

Local chief, Peni Boila, knows the critical role kava will play in the future of his village.

“It’s quite possible we will need to relocate due to climate change and that means rebuilding on a new site,” he said.

“We will need money for that move and if our people plant now, we can sell our yaqona in about five to six years to partially fund our relocation.”

While he has only heard a little of the Yaqona Standard and Quality Manual that is being developed with support from the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program, Boila recognises what it can do for his people.

“Much of our agriculture tends to be subsistence based and our methods are those passed down by the elders,” he said.

“But our world is growing smaller and our younger people will understand the need for standards. These kinds of documents which shows them how and why things must be done in a certain way can help increase the quality of our produce.”

“If we have better quality, it means better revenue which we definitely need given the high freight costs from here to Suva.”

But farmers on Ovalau may not have to look too far for buyers.

The locally based exporter Taki Mai – operated by Zane Yoshida – sells powdered kava to overseas clients and demands high quality.

Yoshida says Fiji earned \$20.9 million from yaqona exports between 2012 and 2014, and this figure continued to rise with the US alone expected to reach \$15 million in 2016.

He argues that maintaining quality is what matters.

“By maintaining quality now, the growing worldwide reputation of yaqona will only increase in years to come,” Yoshida said.

“That’s why we have invested our own time and efforts into growing elite yaqona varieties in our nurseries.”

Those nurseries are not far from Boila’s village. With local expertise and additional knowledge from the new Fiji Yaqona Standard and Quality Manual, the time is right for yaqona producers on Ovalau.

Laws and standards to govern kava



Donny Yee of Lami Kava Ltd talking with Timothy Tumukon, Director of Biosecurity Vanuatu

A PROPOSED legislation to govern yaqona production in Fiji is to be discussed by Parliament.

It is the first such legislation in the region.

The Yaqona Bill 2016 sets out the provisions of a council which will register growers, processors, importers and exporters and control imports and exports through a licensing mechanism.

This legislation has been over 20 years in the making and comes just as a National Yaqona Standard was completed ahead of regional discussions on a food safety standard under the international Codex Alimentarius. The discussions were held in Vanuatu in September 2016

The proposed international standard will build on what is being developed for use at the national and possibly regional levels for the production, processing and sale of yaqona and yaqona products.

Support to develop national, regional and ultimately international standards for yaqona is one of the key activities under the Australian and New Zealand-funded Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program.

Fiji's new Yaqona legislation will put pressure on industry players to maintain high quality levels or face prosecution.

In Fiji, the proposed Yaqona Council will have powers to deregister growers, producers, importers and exporters who do not follow national guidelines.

The council will also be required to develop industry research plans, improve quality and efficiency of production in all sectors, encourage better standards and generally improve planting, processing, marketing and transportation.

Parliament is expected to receive the Bill this year and it could become law before 2017.

Much of the future of yaqona will depend on how soon the region can agree to the requirements which allows the product access to a global market based on nationally and internationally recognised standards

With Fiji taking these major steps through its Yaqona Standard and Yaqona Bill, regional yaqona producers will also need to raise their standards or risk losing potential access to the valuable domestic and export markets.

FIJI YAQONA STANDARDS

1. Scope
2. Description of Kava
3. Quality Factors
4. Contaminants
5. Hygiene
6. Labelling
7. Sampling Methods
8. Methods of Analysis

Safeguarding the future of kava



Recently, a milestone agreement was reached at a regional meeting of the Codex Alimentarius (or Codex) Commission to develop a new regional standard for kava. This agreement is a significant step that holds renewed promise for the future of the kava industry.

The path-way to this point has been a long and winding one. There has been talk of developing a regional standard for kava for many years and exports cannot be regulated if legislation is not in place or if farmers and exporters have not been made aware of quality requirements.

Fiji is also close to finalising its national standard following consultations with farmers and industry in June and July 2016. The Fiji Yaqona Taskforce and Ministry of Agriculture have also identified the need to progress legislation to formalise the representative industry body, provide a basis for quality standards and develop an industry plan for kava.

All stakeholders recognise that the Pacific kava-producing countries need to work together to promote quality exports. If one country exports poor quality kava, and this results in restrictions by importing countries, it risks affecting exports of kava from other Pacific countries.

This underlines the importance of developing a regional standard that is informed by the work already undertaken on national standards. This is why PHAMA supported a number of Pacific Island Countries to prepare for and attend the recent regional Codex Commission meeting in Port Vila.

While tangible progress has been made at the national level, the process for developing a regional Codex standard has only just begun. The development and finalisation of a regional standard could take a few years and PHAMA expects to continue its support on the development of this standard but will also cement its work in Fiji and Vanuatu to promote the quality of kava production and exports that are so important to the livelihoods of so many people.



Fiji delegation at Codex meeting, Port Vila September 2016



Contact Us

Losalini Leweniqila

National Market Access Coordinator, Fiji

M: (+679) 3379293 (Fiji) M: (+679) 9957593 (Fiji) E: l.leweniqila@phama.com.au

www.phama.com.au