



Hands on ... participants during a practical session of the portable sawmill operation training.

Picture: SUPPLIED

New beginning for 'ava trade

THE launch of the Samoa 'Ava Standard and 'Ava Regulation marks a new beginning in the country's efforts to improve the quality of 'ava.

Launched on May 25, 2018, the standard and regulation have been welcomed by stakeholders of the 'ava industry.

The standard and regulation will guide the way 'ava and 'ava products are handled, processed, packaged and exported to overseas markets and will facilitate safe trade by ensuring the products are compliant with quality standards and safe for human consumption.

The two policies act as a point of reference for 'ava stakeholders to improve the quality of 'ava from production to sales of the commodity.

The development of the 'Ava Standard and 'Ava Regulation was led by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour (MCIL) in collaboration with the Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa (SROS), Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), Ministry of Health (MoH), representatives of farmer organisations and the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA) Program*.

Advisor to the Sosaite Auifaatoaga Savai'i (SAS/Savai'i Farmers Association) and 'ava farmer, Vaaaoa Alofipo, said the launch of the standard and regulation offered farmers the chance to improve their production of 'ava for the export market. Another farmer Tiatia Tauloa said the documents would open up more markets for them.

'Ava, also known as kava, has historically been an important crop in Samoa and other Pacific countries, but production decreased significantly following the closure of major markets in the late 1990s. Despite the European Union lifting its 'ava ban in 2012, 'ava exports have been increasingly subjected to market concerns over quality.

■ PHAMA

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Training to help rebuild homes

FALLEN and damaged trees that were left scattered around parts of Tonga after the Category 4 Tropical Cyclone Gita will soon be used to rebuild homes and aid recovery efforts.

This week, 32 representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests (MAFF), Latter Day Saints (LDS) Church, Tonga National Youth Congress, Tupou College and Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation (MORDI) Tonga Trust attended several training sessions on the safe operation of a portable sawmill.

The training was supported by the Australian and New Zealand-funded Pacific Horticultural

and Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA) Program which also supplied a high-quality portable sawmill, chainsaws and safety equipment.

PHAMA also organised for Lindsay Vutilolo, a level 5-certified trainer based in Australia, to deliver the training.

MORDI general manager Soane Patolo said the training had helped initiate several positive opportunities.

"Good things have come out of the training. It has provided capacity building for the participants. It has helped us to maximise the use of the fallen trees with little to no waste and it has also helped connect people and

build a network among portable sawmill operators who will now work together as part of the joint response team instead of as individuals," he said.

Mr Patolo said the trainer had also taught participants the different approaches to cutting different types of trees.

"The trainer organised classroom and practical sessions and there were sessions where the participants had to operate the sawmill on their own. They were taught the art of cutting timber so that there's minimal to no waste. The timber will go towards the reconstruction of homes," he said.

Tupou College staff had pur-

chased a similar portable mill in 2016 and took the opportunity for a refresher course.

Lucas Mills also generously provided servicing and spare parts for the college sawmill. MAFF and LDS will soon be purchasing portable sawmills to assist with TC Gita recovery and better utilisation of local sources of timber. The sawmill purchased by the PHAMA Program will now be used by MORDI as part of their ongoing disaster response activities on 'Eua Island.

The 32 participants were presented with certificates in recognition of their completion of the training.

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New skills in sensory analysis for fishing industry

STAFF members of SolTuna Ltd and National Fisheries Developments (NFD) Ltd can now use sensory techniques to assess the quality of fish products. This follows their completion of a Seafood Sensory Analysis training that has enabled them to make assessments using their sense of smell, sight, touch and taste.

The training allows staff to assess the quality of fish products using sensory techniques.

Sensory analysis of seafood is a tool to protect consumers from products that have been compromised by decomposition or contamination. The newly-acquired skills are critical for ensuring the safety and quality of products and are a requirement for sale into high-value international markets such as the United States of America (USA) and Europe.

Held at the SolTuna cannery in Noro, Western Province, the training was conducted over two weeks and was attended by more than 100 people including representatives from the Competent Authority (Health) from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services. The training was funded by the Australian and New Zealand-funded Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access



Participants at a session of the Seafood Sensory Analysis training held at the SolTuna cannery in Noro, Western Province. The training allows staff members to assess the quality of fish products using sensory techniques.

Picture: ALJAY TUHAIKA

(PHAMA) Program* in cooperation with SolTuna Ltd.

International expert on sensory analysis from the USA, James Barnett, delivered the training and commended the Solomon

Islands for having the "best and freshest tuna". Mr Barnett encouraged the industry to maintain this quality through processing.

Participants learned tech-

niques to assess fresh, cooked and canned fish, which each present different food safety risks. The training was a first for most participants who will benefit in their roles of ensuring good quality

product for local and international customers.

Production manager for SolTuna, Hearty Matamaru, said, "The sensory training is a huge milestone for SolTuna and NFD. It upskills our workers and brings our production into another level for international markets. We have learned that quality control must start from the catching, offloading, and butchering of the fish. It is hard to control quality issues once fish is canned. We must make sure we process high quality and fresh tuna, before selling it to our consumers."

SolTuna's quality manager, Soni Maria, said the training would aid the efforts of the Solomon Islands' fishing industry in maintaining access to the EU, US and other markets which are currently valued at around SBD350 million per year.

PHAMA has previously supported the SI fisheries industry with training and technical support to develop Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems and undertake training on food safety management, including significant capacity support for the Competent Authority (Health).

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