



# NWC Research and Extension NEWS

Issue

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## Disaster rehabilitation is on track for fresh produce export sector

Fiji's fresh produce farmers and exporters are not strangers to natural disasters, however the combination of severe Tropical Cyclone Winston in February 2016, followed by a major flooding event in April 2016 has been devastating. NWC has exported a total of only 210 tonnes for the first six months of 2016. This is compared to a five year average of 500 tonnes for this same period. In response for this series of natural disasters, NWC designed a rehabilitation program aimed at supporting its members to return to normal production and exports, the program has three interrelated components, including:

**Component 1:** Export stimulus scheme - \$350,000 (funded by NZ Aid)

**Component 2:** Export farm rehab scheme - \$105,000 (funded NZ Aid)

**Component 3:** NWC Seed producer support scheme and rehab - \$20,000 (funded by NWC)

The combination of components is based on NWC's experience in implementing natural disaster rehab programs since 2009. Components were approved by the NWC board and are implemented through the NWC Disaster Rehab and Preparedness committee through funding provided by NZ Aid.

For the export stimulus scheme, nine exporters are given an equal export rebate allocation of \$38,888 to be utilized within six months. Exporters who are not able to utilize within six months may write to the NWC Disaster Rehab and Preparedness committee with justification for an extension. Unspent funds at the end of six months may be re-allocated to active exporters. To date five exporters have begun utilizing their allocation with a total of \$36,159.20 spent as at 25.07.16

For the export farm rehab scheme a partnership approach is being utilized where the eight participating exporters are facilitating the supply of seedlings and agro-inputs to their supplying farmers. To date, a total of \$63,286 has been distributed in the form of agro-inputs and seedlings to approximately 105 farmer members. Exporters will continue to supply their growers with seedlings until October 2017 or when their allocation is completed.

The export stimulus is pushing exporters to find produce which is pushing farmers to plant produce. The farmers seem to have an increased confidence in their exporter through this rehab partnership approach.



*Exports volumes are beginning to pick up thanks to the support from the NZ Aid funded disaster rehabilitation program.*

# **A Review of the Nature's Way Cooperative Research and Extension Program (2006-2016)**

A review of the past ten years of operations for the NWC Research and Extension Program has just been completed. This review was prepared for the management and members of NWC to assess the performance and impacts of the program over the past ten years and also make some proposals for the future. The review was conducted by Agricultural Economist Dr. Andrew McGregor who is also a current member of the NWC Supervisory Committee. Funding for the review was provided by the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) in partnership with the EU-SPC PAPP Project.

The review systematically evaluates the major projects undertaken by the Research and Extension Programme over the past ten years and their contribution to the growth and sustainability of the industry. A main finding of the report indicates that although NWC has still not achieved its target throughput of 3000 tonnes per annum, a very strong foundation for growth has been laid through innovations now available and the increased capacity of farmers and exporters. The report also indicates that a primary strength of the program is the ability to bring together stakeholders to address a common problem. The report suggests that if the NWC Research and Extension Program had not existed it is unlikely the industry owned and operated quarantine treatment facility would still be in operation today and Fiji would not be exporting fresh papaya, eggplant, mango and breadfruit. This conclusion is based on the following considerations:

- High quality certified Fiji Red papaya seed would not be available to the industry.
- The eggplant “disorder” would have caused crippling disharmony in the cooperative as the problem would have been blamed on HTFA treatment facility.
- High postharvest losses for papaya would continue to be experienced during the wet season and this would add fuel to the disharmony, with the HTFA being blamed for the problem.
- Fiji would have lost market access for papaya to Australia
- There probably would not have been widespread adoption of plastic crates in the industry – adversely affecting product quality.
- There would be little or no prospect of companies such as Fiji Water entering the industry.
- Exporters would not have received assistance following major disasters and the attrition rate amongst exporters would have been even higher.
- There would be little prospect of eventually securing market access for new products and markets; and improving the BQA protocols for existing products.
- Farmers would be overwhelmed in their endeavours to deal with extreme climatic events.
- There would be no prospect for developing breadfruit exports.
- There would be no prospect of sea freight exports to New Zealand

Finally, the report makes a number of recommendations for the research and extension program around:

- The future focus of the R&E Program
- Linkages with the Ministry of Agriculture
- Greater input from the exporters in the R&E Program
- The input supply role of NWC and the R&E Program
- The desirability and feasibility of NWC direct involvement in marketing
- Organisational structure and staffing and operational procedures

The report further concludes that the reality is that substantial donor funding, through an appropriate public private sector partnership, will be required until NWC can achieve the level of throughput necessary to be largely self-fund its R&E service. Previous estimates put the necessary throughput at around 3,000 tonnes annually.



# Nature's Way Cooperative becomes a focus for Industrial Innovation in the Pacific Islands

A case study on Nature's Way Cooperative focusing on its innovative proficiency is part of the PACE-Net project funded by the European Commission. It was written to further bi-regional science, technology and innovation (ST&I) cooperation between the South Pacific island nations and the European Union.

The case study was presented at the PACE-NET Plus bi-regional platform held in Nadi, Fiji on the 30<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 entitled: Moving towards a high-level policy dialogue in Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I); Pathways to innovation in Pacific region.

The publication can be downloaded at <http://www.pacificfarmers.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Case-Studies-on-Industrial-Innovation-in-the-Pacific-Islands.pdf>

## ACIAR Launches Tropical Fruit Project

The Australian Center for Agricultural Research (ACIAR) has recently launched a new four year project, entitled 'Enhanced Fruit Production and Postharvest Handling Systems for Fiji, Samoa and Tonga'. The project has two components in Fiji related to breadfruit and mango which NWC will be directly collaborating on.

Related to breadfruit a series of trials will be implemented by NWC in collaboration with MoA aimed at identifying best practice canopy and tree management options consistent with smallholder farmer production systems. These trials will be established using an on-farm participatory model with NWC member farmers as the key implementers and builds upon the previous work of the Pacific Breadfruit Project.

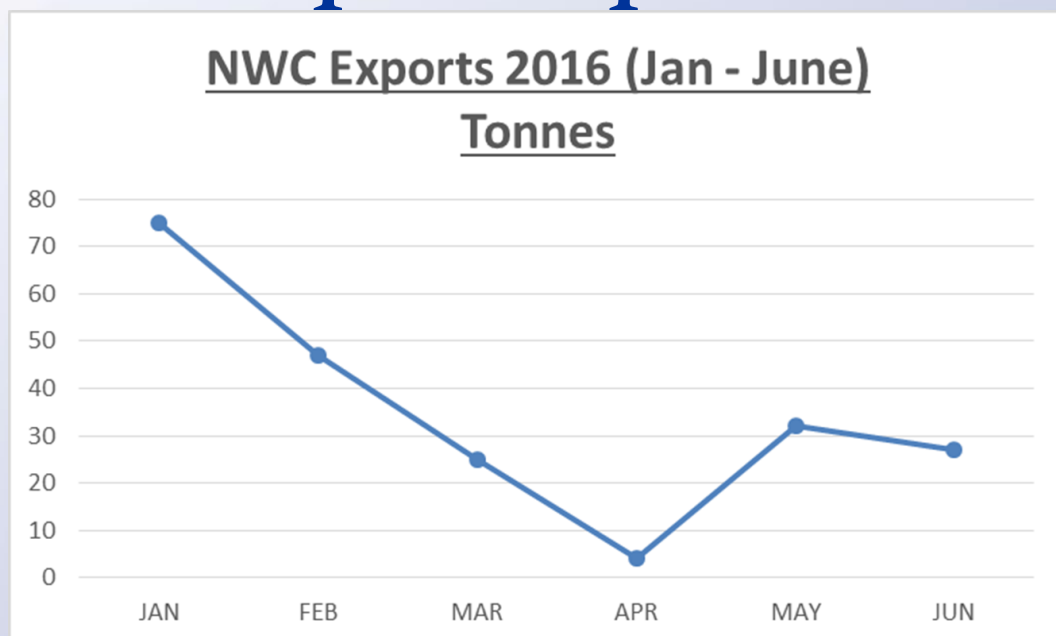
This is a four year project that will run from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.



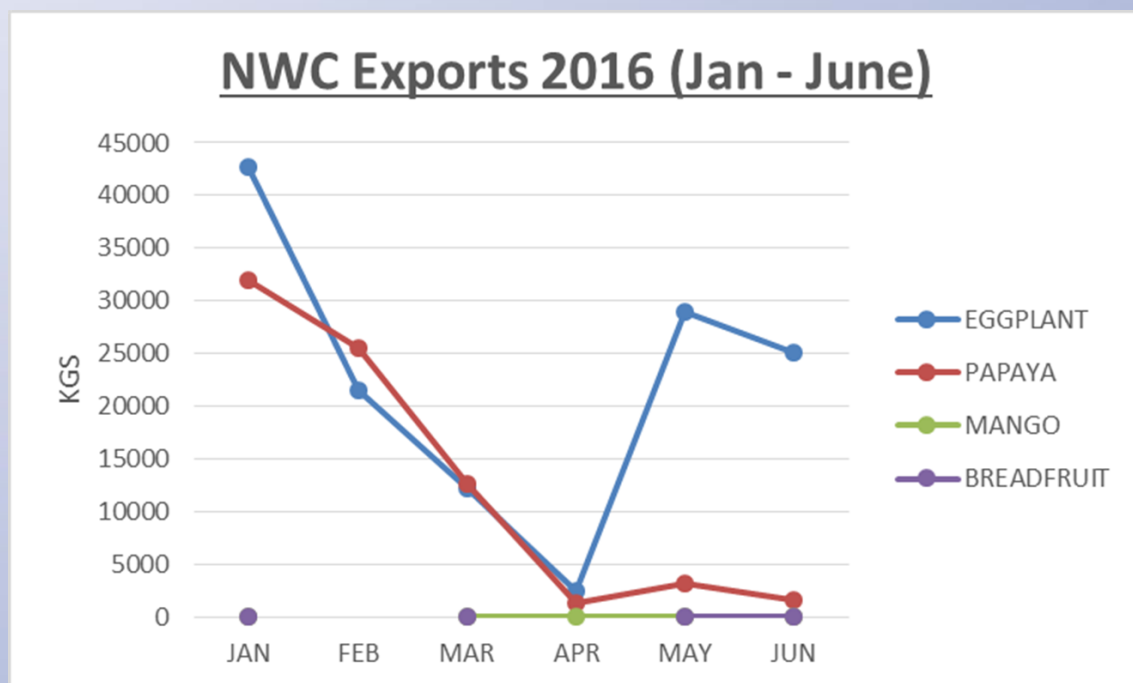
*On-farm participatory trials will be a key focus of the new ACIAR Tropical Fruit Project which builds on the previous work of the Pacific Breadfruit Project.*



# Export Update



Source: NWC



Source: NWC

## NWC Research and Extension Partnership Committee:

