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## CITTI Customer Services training

Very early into the year, the Ministry in conjunction with Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute (CITTI), conducted a Customer Services training course for all its 33 staff members.

The training was organized as a result of feedback received in the Economic Strategy Review meeting held in November 2019, where “poor” customer services were provided by Government Ministries and Agencies was highlighted.

The training, conducted by Tutor Mata Hetland of CITTI, was held over two sessions on the 17 and 20 January 2020.

Areas of focus included:

- understanding the Ministry’s vision and mission;
- Self realisation and how to contribute to achieving the Ministry’s mission and vision;
- Good & reliable customer service delivery (identifying customer needs);
- How to effectively deal with queries, problems and complaints from customers;

- Telephone skills; etiquette— do’s and don’ts!
- Communicating with internal customers: face to face, written communication, telephone & texts.

*Above: Crop Research & Corporate services staff undergoing training*

For the majority of staff, it was an opportunity to “refresh” their knowledge on



customer services and how they can contribute towards a public service of excellence!

Thank you Mata Hetland and CITTI.

# Pass me the Honey, honey....

On Wednesday 26 and 27 February 2020, a team of interested and potential bee keepers took part in a bee keeping training at the Ministry of Agriculture Arorangi premises.

The Ministry had received numerous requests to conduct a bee-keeping training on Rarotonga and as soon as the Ministry was able to secure the services of Dr Matairangi Pura, the training was done. Dr Pura, the former Secretary of the Ministry, is a passionate bee-keeper. Ably assisted by Edwin Apera and Patu Katu, Advisory officers of the Ministry, the team had over 30 participants attend. Reviving the honey industry on Rarotonga is a small step towards maintaining food security.

The two day training included a theory and practical session—importance of bees, how to identify the differences between a drone and a Queen Bee. The class then undertook a demonstration on how to assemble a bee hive kit.



Class session with Dr. Matairangi Pura—Day 1



Bee Hive box 1 created for Dr Debbie Puati.



The participants were a mix of current and new bee keepers and we look forward to positive reports from the participants about the progress of their hives.

Kia Manuia bee keepers!



Four new Hives created from a single location in Arorangi.



# Advisory Division work program highlights

The Advisory Division kicked off its 2020 School Agriculture program in February with Apii Avarua and Apii Takitumu. This program is in partnership with Korero O Te Orau, Te Ipukarea Society and the Ministry of Health. The program involves teaching primary school students on good agriculture practices and organic planting methods to reduce wastage and maintain healthy lifestyles.



Apii Takitumu students experimenting a direct sowing method of corn into clay soil.



Apii Avarua weeding their garden beds in preparation for transplanting of their seedlings.

The Divisions' Livestock boys also carried out visits to farmers to attend to farmers livestock that needed medication or advice on proper livestock management and husbandry practices.

Results of marcotted seedless lime trees done by Advisory Division



Livestock officers at work.

In addition, the Advisory officers carried out training on plant propagation methods for fruit trees on Atiu and Mauke in February and March 2020. Methods included grafting and marcotting of plants.



## Code Yellow COVID-19 safety measures

When the Prime Minister declared the Cook Islands was moving to Code Yellow for COVID-19, the Ministry instigated the limiting of its access and service to the public. This came into effect on Monday 30 March 2020. These measures were put in place for the safety of staff and our clients.



The office in Arorangi would only open to the public on Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday from 9am – 12noon for nursery services.

Livestock and advisory services would only respond to emergency call outs.

Biosecurity services reverted to “on-call services only”.

For growers wanting to collect seeds or seedlings, they were encouraged to contact the office prior to visiting. Hygiene practices and Social distancing would be implemented.

Furthermore, staff were encouraged to wash their hands and clean their work stations on a daily basis.

Protective masks were provided to Crop Research and Biosecurity staff.

Corporate Services Division and Biosecurity staff were rostered to work from home.

Staff safe everyone!

## Workplace Induction training with MIA

The workplace induction training was conducted by the Labour and Consumer Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 9 and 11 March 2020 for all staff.

The induction aims to prevent, improve and address any unfair working conditions, in particular the ongoing exploitation of workers. Knowing more about our working rights and obligations help us work better together and continuously improve our work environment and relationships.

Not only does the Induction assist workers to understand and follow the employment laws, it will also provide guidance on how to keep the workplace environment healthy and safe.

It also raised awareness on how to address workers compensation claims for workplace related injuries and illness.

Thank you MIA.



# Taro assessment (taste & eating quality)

The Crop Research Division carried out a “taro assessment (taste & eating quality) session on Monday 02 March.

More than 40 varieties of swamp taro (taro pai) was harvested from the Ministry taro patch and brought to the Arorangi Office for assessment.

According to the Director of the division William Wigmore, the feedback provided by the staff who did the taste and eating quality assessment will be analysed and the results used to aid the division in deciding the species of taro to be sent to the Pa Enua Crop Banks for conservation and to maintain food security.



## Mou te ko! staff weight challenge

On 02 March, 16 staff bravely registered for this eight week weight loss program coordinated by Project Advisor Tavake Karika.

Tavake developed a program of mandatory exercise routines with a weigh in every fortnight. To motivate staff, the program was designed as a competition—where the staff who lost the most weight after the 8 weeks would win all the funds in the kitty! The kitty included funds collected from penalties for missing exercises, weigh ins, or if the staff member gained or maintained their weight after a week of exercise.

This initiative is to reduce the incidence of NCD developing amongst our staff members. Although the COVID-19 situation has put the program on hold, the coordinator is still determined to continue this initiative when the situation clears.

*Mou te kō mou te 'ere, kia pūkuru o vaevae e kia mo-korā ō kakī... I-E-KO-KO!*



Ake Roberts representing Advisory division