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Ministry of Agriculture

VOLUME 3 / 2020 ISSUE 6



QUARTER 3

2020 IS THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PLANT HEALTH

As declared by the United Nations and supported with the theme PROTECTING PLANTS, PROTECTING LIFE, the Cook Islands commemorated 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH).

This year is an opportunity to raise awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment and boost economic development. Plants are the source of the air we breathe and most of the food we eat, yet we often don't think about keeping them healthy.

To mark Cook Islands support to IYPH, the Ministry carried out a fruit tree planting program with 7 primary schools on Rarotonga—Takitumu, Te Uki Ou, Avarua, Aro-rangi, Rutaki, St Joseph and Nikao. Each school received 5 varieties of fruit trees to plant, 2 watering cans, a hose and fittings to manage the fruit trees.

We thank all the schools that participated and the Ministry of Education for allowing us to conduct this activity within the 7 primary schools. Meitaki maata to the Biosecurity team for implementing this program successfully.



DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

All Ministry staff received a brand new set of polo uniforms (blue and red) to celebrate 2020.



This time around, for uniqueness, the Ministry opted for a supplier from Fiji. The blessing of the new shirts took place at the Ministry's office on 19 June 2020. Team MOA, we look forward to another successful year!

"Success demands 6 things: 1. Hard-work. 2. Sacrifice. 3. Struggle. 4. Faith. 5. Patience, and 6. Passion". Kia Manuia

FRUIT FLY SURVEILLANCE



Every fortnight, 22 fruit-fly traps are inspected by Biosecurity officers at different sites on Rarotonga.

These traps are located around Rarotonga to attract, capture and analyse the species of fruit-fly present in the country. Cook Islands fruit fly (*Bactrocera melanotus*) and Pacific fruit fly (*Bactrocera xanthodes*).

This regular inspection exercise is to identify if new species of fruit flies are present in the country and allows the Ministry to prepare itself to avoid any outbreaks.

The last fruit-fly outbreak in the Cook Islands was recorded in 2002. It is a situation that the country does not want to experience again. During the inspection, re-dipping of lures and labelling of the containers is also

undertaken by staff.

Keep up the good work in protecting our borders from invasive species!

BIOSECURITY AT WORK!

For the month of July, the Biosecurity team inspected machinery that was being sent to New Zealand for maintenance.

Strict measures of inspections were carried out—engine compartment, mud guards and other potential areas for contamination or hitchhiking pests, before the clearance certificate was issued.



The team also engaged in inspecting supplies of produce from New Zealand. All consignments received at the wharf were inspected and reported free from pests.

Due to the COVID -19 situation, the team had to inspect a few extra consignments in this quarter that were delayed from March 2020.



For the month of August the Biosecurity inspectors, Mr. Moetu Tangitamaiti, Mr. Tamarua Teroi and Ms. Sherromoana Tomokino inspected quad bikes imported from New Zealand.

Again, strict measures were used during the inspection process and due to being vigilant, the team managed to identify Woodlouse and Hitchhiking insects that were present in the bike.

Thereafter, the bike was cleaned again and approved to be shipped to Manihiki.

Keep up the good work team in protecting our borders and our Paradise!

GALANGAL — PINK GINGER

Galangal — locally known as pink ginger was introduced to the Cook Islands from Australia in early 2005. Unlike the normal ginger, this variety is much spicier and pink/white in color.

Galangal is used much by Asians in their cuisine dishes, tea and more particularly, sushi dishes.

This root crop also has medicinal benefits that assists with digestion and alleviates respiratory problems.

This variety of ginger is grown by Kaota Tuariki. As a first time crop for Kaota, he harvested 15kgs in total (a huge amount according to his standards).

Kaota states that further investment into this crop is dependent on the demand and response from customers.

We congratulate Kaota as being the only farmer to plant this Galangal and wish him well with his endeavors.



SUMMER OF 2021

With summer 2021 approaching, it is time to think and grow pineapples.

Accordingly, the Ministry is growing 3 varieties of pineapples that will be ready for harvest in the summer of 2021.

They are:

MD2 golden Hawaii (golden and sweet)

White jade (white flesh, very sweet and rough crown)

Champarka (large white flesh pineapple)

Pineapples take 14 to 18 months to grow and fine weather and healthy soil permitting, we will reap the benefits in the coming year.



RAMBUTAN

Rambutan was introduced to the Cook Islands in 2005 from Australia.

This fruit is similar to lychee, but is red and its outside is fully covered with hair-like strands. It is also sweeter in taste as compared to lychee.

Unlike lychee, the Rambutan plant is very sensitive to humidity and requires constant watering to survive.

The Ministry is currently trying to grow Rambutan plants within its nursery for sale to the public. This is being done with the help of a humidifier and sprinkler system.

This fruit boasts anti-cancer properties and minerals such as calcium, potassium and magnesium.



AGRICULTURE INPUTS BACK IN STOCK!



After waiting for almost 3 months, the Ministry received its agriculture inputs and supplies from New Zealand. 2 containers arrived full of drip tape, lateral tubes, recrates and organic chemicals.

The fertilizer and potting mix, which had run out, was also part of the consignment received together with construction materials for the nursery.

The men folk were all on hand to devan the two containers and within an hour it was done. For such excellent effort, the Ministry provided lunch. A big meitaki ma'ata to all staff in this whole process!



REVIVING FLORICULTURE WITHIN MOA



In an effort to revive floriculture within the Ministry, we had staff attend a sale of J Peyroux's anthurium plants. Seen here is Ake, Edwin and Tino. Watch this space!!

AGE IS NO BARRIER TO EDUCATION!

As part of the Economic Response Phase II, a component for training was included. The Ministry took advantage of the opportunity and had staff enroll to complete courses for continuing professional development.

Tavake Karika — Senior Projects Advisor, opted to take several short courses with CITTI— Performance Management, Workplace stress & Self Management, Teamwork and Negotiation Skills. Tavake has further enrolled to complete a Certificate in Management Studies with USP.

He is joined by seven other staff who have enrolled to complete a Certificate in Business Administration and Cybercrime Laws and Forensics with USP.

Our vision is "Healthy soils, healthy food, local and appropriate while sustaining our common livelihoods". In order to meet this goal, we require a well-trained, highly motivated and competent workforce, who will work together to drive the performance of the agriculture sector.

We look to our workforce to innovate, provide leadership and work to serve our farming communities and business entities, utilizing the skills and experiences they have and will develop in the future.

The workforce is the most critical factor to determine the quality and quantity of outputs and outcomes.

We wish our staff all the success in their studies!



NEW WATER TRUCKS FOR ATIU & MAUKE AGRICULTURE

Two brand new water trucks have been received by the Ministry destined for and to support Atiu and Mauke Agriculture. Funded by the Japanese Government, the two water trucks arrived into the country in August.



In June 2018, a diplomatic level agreement was mutually agreed and signed between the Governments of Japan and the Cook Islands. Through this agreement the government of Japan confirmed a provision of a grant through its public sector economic and social development programme, for the purchase of products and/or services for the implementation of

programmes to enhance public sector agencies functions. Priority items were identified through the use of the capital plan and in collaboration with public sector ministries and agencies identified as grant recipients.



Representatives from Atiu and Mauke Agriculture travelled to Rarotonga to undertake training on the operation, maintenance and use of the two water trucks to ensure sustainability through its proper use.

Both vehicles will be transported to the 2 islands on the next available vessel.

The Ministry of Agriculture wishes to express its appreciation to the governments of Japan and the Cook Islands for being selected as a grant recipient to receive support through the economic and social development programme.

We gratefully acknowledge Takili Tairi, Director of Advisory Services, for his input into the sourcing and purchase of the two water trucks.

The two trucks complement the three excavators received previously, also funded by the Japanese Government.

Meitaki maata!

ARE AKATUPU UA RAKAU NO TONGAREVA HENUA

The Adaptation Funded Pa Enea for Resilient Livelihoods (PEARL) Project, has funded two new Hydroponics plants (Are Akatupu Ua Rakau) on Tongareva. The two plants were handed over to the Tongareva Island Government and community by Honourable Minister Robert Tapaitau and Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture Mrs Temarama Anguna-Kamana on the 18 September 2020.



Hydroponics encompasses growing plants using water without soil, which for coral islands is a great option and supports locally grown Fresh Produce in the Pa Enea. "The Islands Hydroponics will assist in supporting the island agriculture and communities in enabling them to grow more fresh vegetables and fruits. It is essential to unlock the potential and innovation of the agriculture sector in the Pa Enea and ensuring increased food security resilience and preparedness for disasters. The sandy soil of the Northern Group atolls can make growing a variety of greens a challenge and hydroponics presents an alternative innovative option to provide the possibility of increasing food and nutrition with fresh vegetables" said Secretary Mrs Temarama Anguna-Kamana. (*Climate Change C Is release*). We thank the Tongareva Island Government, Island Council, Farmers, Schools, Vaine Tini, and Community for the support of the PEARL Projects and initiatives on Tongareva. The two plants were built by MOA staff Edwin Apera, Moetu Tangitamaiti and Tereapii Tumutoa. They spent 14 days in Tongareva to construct the two hydroponic plants and establish school gardens.

TRAVELLING OVERSEAS? BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR ACTIONS!

Think before you travel – understand the consequences of your actions!

How often do we travel and buy wooden curios, flowers or agricultural products to bring home for our friends and family?

THINK before you do this! you could be bringing pests back into our country that could result in a very significant negative economic, food security or environmental impact.

Prevention is better than cure!



Be responsible for our actions!

LEARNING NEVER ENDS

The Corporate Services Division organized a staff training on 28 September that entailed "Email Etiquette" and "Procedures and chemicals used for fumigation of plants before shipment to the Pa Enua".



Moetu and Edwin highlighted their "trip to Penrhyn to construct the Hydroponics plants" and Greta completed the session by providing an "update on the inspection and tasks carried out by the Biosecurity division". A very eventful training session. Thank you Corporate Services and MOA team!