



NATIONAL AGRICULTURE SHOW 2024

**Opening Address by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Tourism
and Civil Aviation, Honourable Viliame Gavoka**

**15 October 2024
1000 HRS**

**Valelevu Grounds
Nasinu**

The Honourable Cabinet Ministers,
Your Excellencies – Members of the Diplomatic Corp,
Senior Government Officials,
Civil Society Organisations,
Farmers,
Students,
Esteemed guests,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Before I commence my speech, I pay homage to the traditional owners of the lands where we now stand – Na Vanua o Matanikutu i Naivisere vua na Gone Turaga na Qaranivalu – their leaders, past, present and emerging.

Bula and a warm welcome to the 2024 National Agriculture Show. It is both an honor and a privilege to

stand before you today as we gather to celebrate the heart and soul of our nation, our farmers. Ladies and gentlemen, this year's theme, "Empowering Farmers, Cultivating Resilience through Innovation and Inclusiveness in Climate Smart Agriculture," truly reflects our shared vision for a sustainable and prosperous Fiji.

Agriculture is not merely a sector; it is a way of life for countless Fijians. It sustains families, nourishes communities, and underpins our economy. Yet, as we confront the escalating challenges of climate change and fluctuating global market requirements, we must adapt and innovate. Our farmers are on the front lines of this transformation, equipped with the knowledge and skills not only to survive but to thrive in adversity.

To elevate our agricultural production and significantly contribute to our national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), we must embrace innovation. This entails harnessing technology, adopting sustainable practices, and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders. The Ministry of

Agriculture and Waterways is unwavering in its mandate; to ensure food security and improve nutrition for every Fijian. That is why we need to remain committed to not just traditional agricultural practices, but also to integrating new technologies, research, and inclusive policies that empower every farmer, men, women, youth, and marginalized communities.

An exciting new initiative being championed by the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, the Ministry of Fisheries and Forestry and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization - is the Farm to Fork Initiative.

This initiative aims to promote local agriculture by incorporating locally grown produce into the tourism supply chain. By connecting farmers directly with hotels, restaurants, and other tourism operators, this initiative helps ensure that tourists experience the freshest Fijian cuisine while supporting local agriculture.

Additionally, the Farm to Fork Initiative emphasizes sustainability by reducing the carbon footprint associated with importing food. By sourcing ingredients locally, this initiative not only supports the local economy but also aligns with global sustainability trends, promoting eco-friendly tourism practices that benefit both the environment and the community.

Food and nutrition security depend on increasing food production and it involves cultivating nutritious, diverse, and resilient crops that can withstand climate variability. We must ensure that all Fijians, regardless of their location, have access to affordable and healthy food.

I am proud to share that Fiji's exports of fresh and chilled products increased by 16% between January and June 2024, while imports of fresh and chilled goods dropped by 3%, saving our nation \$17 million. While this progress is commendable, we must strive for improvement. From government initiatives to private sector partnerships, we must create a platform that supports our farmers,

providing them with the necessary resources, training and market access they need.

Our efforts and interventions must empower all farmers and stakeholders regardless of gender, age or background to actively participate in the development of the sector. By doing so, we tap into a wealth of diverse ideas and practices that will enhance our agricultural resilience. Our youth and women are vital to this transformation as they bring fresh perspectives and energy and we must harness this to develop the sector further.

As we gather to showcase the innovations and successes of our farmers, let us also acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead. Together, we can forge a robust agricultural sector that combats poverty and elevates the standard of living for all Fijians. Let us commit to supporting one another, learning from each other, and strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

In closing, I invite you to immerse yourselves fully in the activities and discussions throughout this show. Let us celebrate our achievements, share our knowledge, build our networks and cultivate the resilience we need to face the future together. Together, we can empower our farmers and stakeholders, foster innovation, and build a sustainable and thriving agricultural sector in Fiji.

With those few words, I now declare the National Agriculture Show 2024 OPEN!

Vinaka vakalevu, and may this year's National Agriculture Show inspire us all.