



Fact Sheet: Fiji Kava

The Industry and its significance

Kava, known as **yaqona** in Fiji, is widely consumed as a beverage informally and in ceremonial settings. Bundles of the dried root are presented as a ceremonial offering (**sevusevu**) when entering villages or for other significant occasions. Over 21,000 farms grow kava worth an estimated FJD66 million (AUD42 million) per year. Exports in 2014 were valued at FJD7.5 million (AUD4.9 million). Fiji exports yaqona to markets including other Pacific nations, New Zealand, to the European Union, USA, and some Asian nations. Some value added processing is done in Fiji including kava supplement drinks and kava capsules, but it is generally exported as powdered product made up of dried roots (**waka**) and chips (**lewena**). The domestic market is substantial and considered as valuable as the export market.

Market Access Issues

Since the last 1990's the export of kava and kava products has been affected by concerns in some markets over poor quality and potential health effects. Therefore the main market access concerns relate to

strengthening the production and regulatory systems in Fiji and other kava producing countries to ensure the quality of exports and confidence of buyers, consumers and regulatory agencies. The Fiji Market Access Working Group, established through PHAMA, and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) have confirmed the on-going priority of kava in terms of improving quality. This includes developing simple tests to differentiate between good and bad quality kava, and providing greater opportunities for the large producer base across the country.

PHAMA Action

➤ **Kava surveys:** In 2014–15, PHAMA collaborated with MoA to complete surveys of the major kava production areas across Fiji to identify and describe the varieties being grown, document the different production methods and, together with the University of the South Pacific, conduct chemical (kavalactone) analysis of the plants. Understanding kavalactone profiles and concentrations and how to improve consistency in kava products is an important aspect of producing quality kava for export markets. The survey confirmed that 13 varieties of kava are commonly grown in Fiji and all are considered “noble” varieties, or those preferred for human consumption. Clear differences were noted in the way that kava was grown and processed by farmers in the various regions.



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➤ **Awareness materials:** In collaboration with MoA and the private sector, the information from the kava surveys is being used to develop a comprehensive kava quality manual and awareness materials on how to produce quality kava products for exports.

➤ **Industry development:** PHAMA is also supporting the Yaqona Taskforce - a government-industry body established by MoA in 2014 to develop the kava industry, on strategic planning and industry representation. The Taskforce has drafted an industry plan (2015-19) covering priorities across research, legislation and standards, and supply and marketing. Additional to this, legislation for the establishment of an industry organization and regulation of the trade in kava is being developed. A national standard is near completion.

Progress

PHAMA's assistance to the Fiji kava industry is aimed at improving quality assurance systems and standards to ensure that market access is maintained and the volume and quality of exports increased. PHAMA's efforts have raised awareness of correct production, processing and storage at all levels of the value chain. PHAMA is not supporting any efforts to improve market access or promote kava consumption in Australia. The development of practical and economical quality testing tools will enable more effective quality assurance along the value chain. Government and industry will greatly benefit from increased knowledge to assist decision-making processes in the development of appropriate standards.

Future Actions

The priority for PHAMA is to help finalise the kava manual and national standard, and assist MoA in raising the awareness of farmers and exporters of the content of both documents.

There are useful opportunities for PHAMA to build on the work it has already supported for kava in Vanuatu to also assist the Fijian industry and better inform the region as a whole. The Fiji Yaqona Taskforce and MoA have also identified the need to progress legislation (e.g. formalising the representative industry body, providing a basis for quality standards) and an industry plan for kava. Further support is expected to be provided towards this including technical inputs and public consultation processes. Support towards the rehabilitation of kava production is also likely given the devastating impact of Cyclone Winston on Fiji kava farmers in February 2016.



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