

INTERVENTION HIGHLIGHT



ROAD KING FARMS FRESH PRODUCE PROCESSING FACILITY

Officially opened by
The Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji - Hon Sitiveni L. Rabuka
25 January 2024
Nalele, Taveuni



Revolutionising Fiji's taro exports

On the Garden Island of Taveuni, north of Fiji, lies a humble, roadside facility that could easily be mistaken as “just a shed”. Working inside are women and young adults, peeling taro in preparation for the next shipment to the island. The facility is home to Road King Farms (RKF), a taro processing export business owned by Atish Prasad, a 29-year-old farmer from Fiji who has been exporting fresh and frozen produce including taro, cassava and chillies to New Zealand and Australia for more than four years.

At a glance

- While Taveuni accounts for more than half of Fiji's taro exports, processing and preserving its taro for export has proven challenging for several reasons including a lack of cold storage facilities and a ship that comes only once a week to the island.
- The short consignment purchasing and preparation time, as well as a lengthy supply chain that takes up to seven days, leads to high wastage of almost 20% of taro consignments before processing. Over the years, this has led to multiple missed opportunities for farmers who have also suffered losses due to unprocessed taro wastage.
- PHAMA Plus partnered with RKF to establish Taveuni's first ever fresh produce cold chain facility.

A new business model

With the facility now in place, RKF has transitioned to an efficient business model that enables higher levels of cold chain control and food safety management, reduced taro spoilage and improved packing conditions that supports export growth and creates income-generating opportunities for rural household suppliers. The company has expanded its farmer base to 570 households, up from 222 in the previous year. Out of this, about 290 farmers regularly sell taro to RKF. The company has also recorded an export growth since the beginning of the collaboration.



As part of this collaboration, PHAMA Plus also supported the company to pilot a biodigester system for gas production and converting livestock and plant waste into liquid fertiliser for farmers. The system produces 500 litres of liquid biofertilizer per day for farmers to use on their farms to improve soil fertility. A new hybrid solar power system was also installed to provide electricity for the cold storage facility and reduce the company's carbon footprint.



A new workers' accommodation and rehabilitation centre has been established as part of the facility upgrade. The centre caters to RKF workers who live remotely, especially during peak production periods. RKF's workforce is about 90% women involved in the factory's processing lines.



I congratulate young Atish for his innovation and resilient discovery to be able to market our produce to the world. I reiterate my appreciation to the Australian and New Zealand governments' support through PHAMA Plus that ensures much needed assistance is readily available to companies like Road King Farms.

- Fiji's Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka

