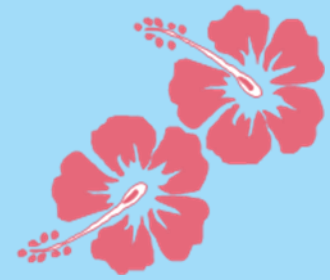




# The “Bula Bulletin”



August 2011

“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously...”  
**2 Corinthians 9:6**  
(NIV)

## Home-grown news

It’s mid winter and the dry season in Fiji, so recently, I found myself surprised by two events: we had four consecutive *dry* days in Suva, and they coincided with the capital’s Agricultural Show.

### The Agricultural Show – “A Food Secure Fiji – Our Future”

Vodafone Arena was the venue for Fiji’s second annual Agricultural Show. The event was held to create public awareness of the importance of the non-sugar agricultural sector, and to showcase the fish, forestry, crops and livestock cultivated or bred in the country.

Farmers make an important contribution to the economy here; forty per cent of the labour force in Fiji is engaged in agriculture, and the agriculture industry accounts for 15 per cent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product. The Agricultural Show, therefore, is a major event in the farming calendar with over 300 farmers wishing to showcase their businesses.

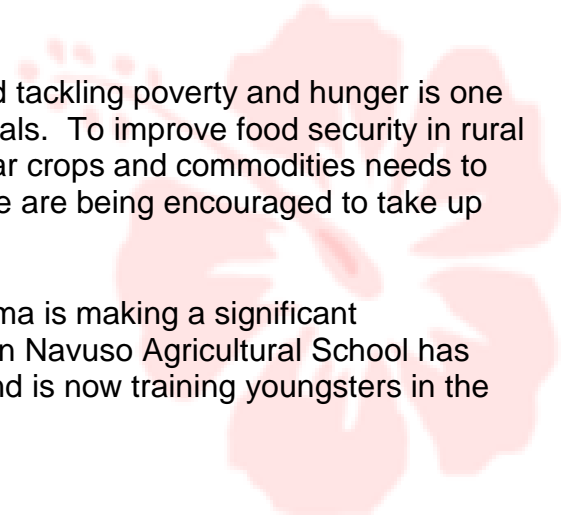
Each day, the programme started with an opening prayer (not an unusual occurrence for meetings in Fiji) and continued with a full programme of events and entertainment lasting into the evening. Highlights of the Show included: a portable-machine milking demonstration, cookery challenges, a school-garden contest, and basket-weaving competitions. Disappointingly, I missed the Bee-on-Human demonstration, I assume there was more than one bee, and I also missed the live castration of a bull. My nonattendance at the latter was intentional.

### Food security in Fiji – “Grow me Fiji” Campaign

Knut Ostby, the UN resident representative to Fiji, speaking at the launch of the Agricultural Show, said: “*The agriculture sector in Fiji is facing significant challenges to sustain domestic food production to meet national food security...*”

Food security is a global challenge and tackling poverty and hunger is one of the UN Millennium Development Goals. To improve food security in rural areas in Fiji the production of non-sugar crops and commodities needs to be increased; to this end, young people are being encouraged to take up farming as an enterprise.

The Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma is making a significant contribution in this area; the Church-run Navuso Agricultural School has reopened in the last couple of years and is now training youngsters in the latest agricultural practices.

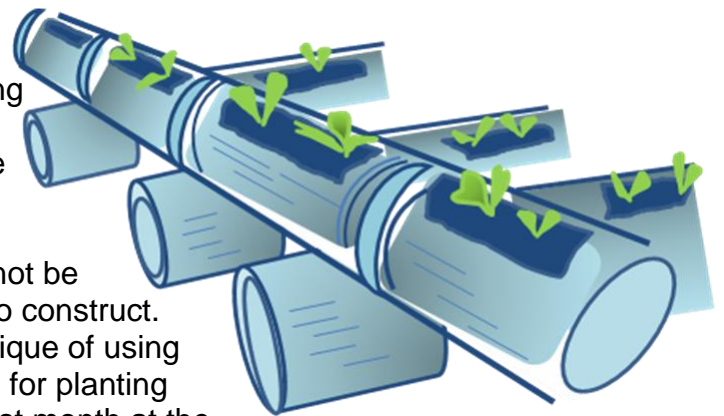




Half of Fiji's population now live in urban areas, however, and with rapid urban growth, informal (squatter) settlements are to be found in many of the main cities. Poverty in Fiji may be *concentrated* in rural areas, but people who migrate from rural areas to urban centres also face economic challenges in finding employment, securing housing and providing for their families.

Several Fiji-based NGOs are working to empower the growing number of squatter dwellers. The backyard garden project, run by the Foundation for Rural Enterprises and Development (FRIEND), is one example. It aims to teach communities in peri-urban areas to grow fresh food for family consumption and then to sell any surplus. Different types of gardening are taught, depending on the location of the settlement. Coastal communities, for instance, are shown how to build raised and hanging gardens, to deter sea crabs.

I saw similar raised-garden adaptation in low-lying Bangladesh, as a method to combat the effects of climate change.



Adaptation measures need not be expensive nor complicated to construct. A simple, but effective technique of using raised hollowed-out bamboo for planting seed beds was on display last month at the Agriculture Show in Suva. Previously, I had been introduced to this sustainable approach in Bangladesh.

**Bamboo Culture**

### **Buy local - "Buy Fijian and Fijian Made" Campaign**

Earlier in the month another initiative, the "Buy Fijian and Fijian Made" Campaign, was launched to promote products that are grown, manufactured and produced locally. Launching the Campaign, interim Prime Minister Bainimarama said: "*Fiji, Fijians and Fijian products have enormous potential. Whether weaved, manufactured, processed or grown, Fijian products must be identified and supported.*"

The project is driven by economic circumstances. Fiji has a high import bill, fruit and vegetable imports currently cost \$80 million a year (£30 million), and the interim government also wants to increase non-sugar exports, valued at \$53m in 2010, to \$80m by 2014. Indirectly, however, consumers are being asked to question their consumption habits.

The "Buy Fijian and Fijian Made" Campaign and the various local food security initiatives all support the call by the Pacific Conference of Churches to "Rethink Oceania", when we are asked the question: "When is enough, enough...?"

**Do we consider the basic needs of others in our everyday purchases and in the choices that we make as consumers?**

God bless  
Julia

#### **Prayers & practical:**

- Pray for those around the world who are hungry while we have plenty, especially those facing extreme starvation in the Horn of Africa.
- Pray for local producers, and all who provide us with our food.
- Pray for the farmer manager, instructors and trainees at the Methodist-run Navuso Agricultural School.
- Pray for those trying to live righteously and with dignity in informal (squatter) settlements.
- Give thanks for small-scale training projects that equip people with the means to be self-sufficient.
- Plant a seed to connect with God our Creator, and to symbolise our care for the environment and our concern for each other.