

Immature Ginger Export Rises

by: Riteshni Singh

IMMATURE ginger exports have increased this year as more farmers have shown interest in growing the commodity.

According to the Senior Agriculture Officer Kasanita Ratu the rise interests shown by the farmers was due to the increase in the market capacity of the existing buyers.

“Processed ginger is exported to Australia, New Zealand and United States of America while fresh ginger is exported to New Zealand, United States of America, United Kingdom, Germany and other small Pacific Island countries,” said Mrs Ratu.

Major exporters of ginger are Frespac Limited, Kaiming Exports, Balthan International

and Produce Processing.

“Frespac used to import ginger from China in order to fulfill the quota requirement of 1500

to 2000 tonnes from 1500 tonnes in 2011 due to the increase in the number of farmers supplying ginger to Frespac,” said Mrs Ratu.



Workers cleaning ginger at Kaiming's Agro Processing in Navua

tonnes until last year when the market demand was fulfilled by our farmers,” she said.

“This year the quota for immature ginger increased

General Manager for Frespac Mr Satish Kumar said that there are about 400 contracted farmers mainly from the areas of Naitasiri, Tailevu and Navua supplying ginger to Frespac.

“Last year Frespac exported 350 tonnes of whole

root ginger in brine solution and 900 tonnes of crystallized and glazed ginger and this year we will export about 400 to 500 tonnes of ginger in brine and 900 to 1000 tonnes of crystallized and glazed ginger,” said Mr Kumar.

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“The increase in export is due to high demand of brined ginger in Australian market,” he said.

Mr Kumar added that Fiji ginger is the best in the world and the demand is really high because of its high quality.

Mr Kumar buys the unwashed immature ginger at \$900 per tonne at the farm gate from the contracted farmers.



Candied Ginger

Mrs Ratu said that a local farmer and exporter Kaiming Agro Processing Limited has also increased the number of his contracted farmers from 200 last year to 300 this year.



“The quota has also increased to 1000 tonnes this year from the 500 tonnes last year,” she added.

Mrs Ratu has urged farmers to grow more ginger by partnering with local exporters through contracts.

“The farmers should also take note of the post-

harvest handling to maintain the quality of ginger especially when selling unwashed ginger which is a major concern from the buyers,” Mr Ratu said.

“Red and White (Canton) are the two main varieties of ginger grown in Fiji,” said Mrs Ratu.

Meanwhile farmers are harvesting mature ginger for export and are urged to take precautions on post-harvest handling.

Lime to reduce soil acidity

by: Riteshni Singh

SOIL acidity is a problem in most parts of Fiji as it affects plant growth and reduces crop production.

Fiji soils are volcanic and prone to acidity which can neutralize the effect of fertilizer on crops.

The Department of Agriculture together with Tei-tei Taveuni (TTT) and other stakeholders have formed a taskforce to address this issue by recommending the application of lime to reduce soil acidity.

The chairman of the taskforce and Chief Economist of the



Department of Agriculture Mr Ilimeleki Kaiyanuanu said

that the taskforce is working on making lime available to the farmers to maintain the soil pH (potential Hydrogen) level.

“The taskforce has conducted three meetings and have discussed importance of lime and its impact on plant growth and how they can convince farmers to use it on their farms,” said Mr Kaiyanuanu.

“Some farmers are currently using lime on their farms but on a very minimal

level due to the cost factor and the taskforce is working on making lime available locally at a price affordable to farmers," he said.

"We are trying to source lime locally instead of importing and arrangement is currently made with a local company to process lime and sell it to farmers," added Mr Kaiyanuyan.

"Lime can be used by both



crops and livestock farmers. Livestock farmers can apply lime to their pasture fields

for healthy pastures that will contribute to high milk and meat production," he said.

"Lime is sold by local companies like South Pacific Fertilizers, AgChem and MH."

Lime is mainly applied to the soil to change soil pH and high calcium lime can also be a source of calcium which is an important nutrient for soil and plant health.

Effect of soil pH on plant growth

How Soils Become Acidic?

Rain is an important reason why soils become acidic. In areas with high rainfall, much water goes through the soil and can slowly remove a lot of nutrients from the soil.

They will be carried out in the rivers to the sea. At the same time, soil pH decreases and the soil becomes acidic.

Soils from a rainy area will not be very fertile. They need N-P-K fertilizers and/or organic fertilizers to make sure the plants get enough nutrients to grow.

However, it does not work in very acidic soils and need other fertilizers as well. It is possible that too much calcium and/or magnesium has washed out of such soils.

If this happens, such soils have calcium and/or magnesium deficiency. These elements need to be added back to the soil for crops to grow well again.

Why Plants Do Not Grow Well In Acid Soils?

When pH drops below 5.5 some red soils start to release a lot of aluminum. It is a poison to plant roots. This problem is called aluminum toxicity. If we can raise soil pH above 5.5, the aluminum toxicity will disappear and the plant roots will be able to develop again. Similarly manganese also can be toxic under acid conditions.

In some very acid soils, plant roots will not grow deep. The roots tend to remain in the top soil. These plants can dry out very quickly. Also, they can fall over easily when the winds are strong.

What can be done to improve Acidic Soils?

Very acid soils are usually found in areas with high rainfall, and they are not very fertile. They have lost a lot of nutrients. To improve the growth of plants, we need to add fertilizers.

Apart from the commercial fertilizers soils often need other nutrients as well, before the

plants can grow well again. Lime is a fertilizer that has a high pH and contains large amounts of calcium (and sometimes magnesium as well). When we add lime to an acid soil, a number of things can happen at the same time:

- the soil pH will increase,
- the aluminum and manganese toxicity can disappear again when the pH increases above
- since lime has large amounts of calcium, it can take away the calcium deficiency of a soil,
- magnesium deficiency will also be taken care of, if we use lime containing magnesium,
- improves phosphorus availability in the soil,
- improves the physical properties of soil such as soil structure.

Source:

Bekker, A. W & Yapa, L. G. G., (1994). *Improving Pacific Acid Soils Using Coralline Lime*. USP Samoa: IRETA. (http://www.adap.hawaii.edu/adap/Publications/Ireta_pubs/acid_soils.pdf)

Daily Average FIJI MARKET PRICES

as on 08/06/2012

| COMMODITY | Retail | | Price diff. (\$) | | Wholesale | | Price diff. (\$) | |
|----------------------|----------|----------|------------------|--|-----------|----------|------------------|--|
| | 08/06/12 | 01/06/12 | | | 08/06/12 | 01/06/12 | | |
| Dalo-Tausala (kg) | 1.00 | 1.06 | -0.06 | | 0.80 | 0.90 | -0.05 | |
| Other Taro (kg) | 0.92 | 0.88 | 0.04 | | 0.84 | 0.80 | 0.04 | |
| Cassava (kg) | 0.70 | 0.71 | -0.01 | | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.00 | |
| Sweet potato (kg) | 1.46 | 1.51 | -0.05 | | 1.50 | 1.50 | 0.00 | |
| Ginger (kg) | 2.26 | 2.69 | -0.43 | | 1.54 | 1.65 | -0.11 | |
| Yam (kg) | 1.57 | 1.65 | -0.08 | | 1.25 | 1.75 | -0.50 | |
| Tannia (kg) | 1.25 | 1.50 | -0.25 | | 1.00 | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| E/Cabbage (kg) | 4.93 | 5.05 | -0.12 | | 3.75 | 3.67 | 0.08 | |
| C/Cabbage (bundle) | 1.29 | 1.93 | -0.64 | | 0.95 | 1.36 | -0.41 | |
| French Bean (kg) | 4.05 | 4.97 | -0.92 | | 2.75 | 3.08 | -0.33 | |
| Long Bean (kg) | 2.71 | 2.70 | 0.01 | | 1.98 | 1.93 | 0.05 | |
| Okra (kg) | 3.76 | 4.63 | -0.87 | | 2.52 | 2.92 | -0.40 | |
| Tomato (kg) | 9.33 | 9.67 | -0.34 | | 6.67 | 12.25 | -5.29 | |
| Lettuce (kg) | 10.11 | 19.89 | -9.78 | | 6.96 | 12.25 | -5.29 | |
| Cucumber (kg) | 2.48 | 3.29 | -0.81 | | 1.66 | 1.76 | -0.10 | |
| Carrot (kg) | 2.72 | 2.96 | -0.24 | | 1.79 | 1.88 | -0.09 | |
| Eggplant-long (kg) | 1.94 | 3.05 | -1.11 | | 1.23 | 1.13 | 0.10 | |
| Cowpea (kg) | 6.35 | 5.22 | 1.13 | | 2.64 | 2.67 | -0.03 | |
| Chilly-Bongo (kg) | 11.74 | 10.86 | 0.88 | | 9.00 | 7.00 | 2.00 | |
| Capsicum (kg) | 16.89 | 16.00 | 0.89 | | 13.00 | 12.22 | 0.78 | |
| B/Gourd (kg) | 2.30 | 2.72 | -0.42 | | 1.33 | 1.50 | -0.17 | |
| Taro leaf (kg) | 1.40 | 1.20 | 0.20 | | 1.07 | 1.01 | 0.06 | |
| Watermelon (kg) | 2.18 | 2.18 | 0.00 | | 1.49 | 1.63 | -0.14 | |
| Banana (ripe) (kg) | 1.30 | 1.41 | -0.11 | | 0.85 | 0.73 | 0.12 | |
| Pineapple (kg) | 1.89 | 1.99 | -0.10 | | 1.16 | 1.26 | -1.10 | |
| Pawpaw (kg) | 2.70 | 2.44 | 0.26 | | 1.53 | 1.63 | -0.10 | |
| Lime (kg) | 1.55 | 1.46 | 0.09 | | 0.87 | 0.90 | -0.03 | |
| Local kava-root (kg) | 33.89 | 35.93 | -2.04 | | 28.78 | 30.07 | -1.29 | |
| Local kava-chip (kg) | 22.39 | 24.40 | -2.01 | | 18.94 | 19.93 | -0.99 | |
| Vanuatu kava (kg) | 28.00 | 25.00 | 3.00 | | 25.00 | 20.00 | 5.00 | |
| Tobacco (kg) | 58.27 | 47.60 | 10.67 | | 45.67 | 34.00 | 11.67 | |
| Coconut (doz.) | 3.08 | 3.02 | 0.06 | | 4.88 | 2.78 | 2.10 | |

Source : Fiji AgTrade, Economic Planning & Statistics Division, Ministry of Primary Industries, Private Mail Bag, Robinson Complex, Raiwaqa. Ph: 3100290, Fax: 3100293

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