



## DREAM COMES TO FRUITION WITH COLLABORATION AND HARD WORK

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Inspired by his father, Farouk Begg took the brave steps to establish his own cane farm at 42 years of age. Three years later, he now reflects on his journey and the decision to make it on his own.

Growing up on a farm Farouk was ingrained with farm life and a strong work ethic - it's fair to say he has farming in his blood. In his early career, Farouk completed his trade as a welder, but soon returned to help on his fathers farm & timber sawmill. When his two children were in high school, he began to want his own piece of the earth.

Hailing from Naivakasigani in Wailevu, outside Labasa, Farouk now owns a lease for 18-acres of land. Prior to his involvement, the land had laid idle for many years and required a lot of clearing to bring back its commercial value.

“When I came here I started from the bottom, by hiring a bulldozer and ploughing the land,” Farouk said.

“I moved here 3 years ago. Before this, I was in Waiqele where my father has a big farm. We used to produce 2000 canes of tonnes from two big farms; one was 100 acres and another one is 60 acres,” Farouk explains.

He had big dreams and worked hard, but the challenge of starting a new farm from scratch was large. Still it did not deter him from making his dream a reality.

“I was always interested in sugarcane even though I trained as a welder. I studied agricultural science at secondary school and even tried cattle farming on my father’s farm - but i always enjoyed sugarcane farming the best,” Farouk explained.

With help and guidance from his father, coupled with his educational background and drive, Farouk has found his own formula for success.

“My father assisted with the organisation of labourers, equipment and the sugar cane seed. He helped me all the way. This season I produced 500 tonnes and last season was 557 tonnes. Next year, the target is 600 tonnes” he said.

He insists farming is healthy not only for the physical benefits it brings to those who engage in the hard work but he says it has been the best direction for his family.

“I have a small family, my son is in secondary school and my daughter has just finished studying at USP and she will soon start working. I wanted to have something, my own farm, just for us and I'm very happy that we have this. Farming is good and healthy because you work everyday and also you have to get to work on time so my children learn the same values,” Farouk said.

“The secret is hard work. When I started farming, I knew that I would not make a good harvest in the first year. Sometimes it goes up and sometimes it goes down, a lot depends on the weather. I also know if I keep working hard and smart, I am going to make more money in a few years.”

It's a lesson in planning for the future and working for steady growth, and Farouk is adamant that this mindset is necessary for those coming into the industry to achieve success.

As a member of the Labasa Cane Producers Association (LCPA), Farouk is part of a community of farmers who lean on each other and work as a group to get the full benefits of the sugar industry.



“If we are interested in the same thing, we can help each other. When you know how to do things the right way, you show the other farmers and they can do it too” commented Farouk.

Graham Clark, Chief Executive Officer of the Fiji Sugar Corporation business commented “We are so pleased to see farmers like Farouk working hard to make his new farm a success. Furthermore, it’s great to see the collaborative approach that the farmers and the Labasa Cane Producers Association take to help each other build strong, well performing farms.”

Now that Farouk’s target of planting sugar cane on the 16 acres of his farm is achieved, he is focused on ensuring he is using the latest technological advancements and scientific advice from the Fiji Sugar Corporation, to boost his harvest. He will also look to plant some additional cash crops of the unused areas to help grow food and to generate additional income.

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1. Farouk Begg is a new farmer who is starting to make some real money, 3 years into starting a farm from scratch. Picture: LICE MOVONO





2. Farouk Begg set himself a target of planting all available land early so that he can focus on using technology to boost his harvest. Picture: LICE MOVONO