

Beqa Island Training on Soil Health for Farmers: 7 – 8 April 2021

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A two-day training on soil health was conducted in two villages namely Nawaisomo and Dakuibeqa on Beqa island, Fiji from 7 – 8 April 2021. A total of 47 participants attended the trainings.

Table 1. Number of participants (female and male) attending the trainings in each village

Participants	Total	Female	Male
Nawaisomo	25	2	23
Dakuibeqa	22	0	22
TOTAL	47	2	45

The facilitators of the training were SPC's Ellen Iramu, and Fiji Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) staff: Ami Sharma, Waisea Jikowale and Luisa Marama.

Topics presented in two presentations during the training included the following:

- *Crop production in Fiji*
- *Soil health*
 - *What is soil health?*
 - *Physical, chemical and biological components of soil*
 - *Management practices for healthy soil*
 - *How to tell healthy soil*
 - *How to know unhealthy soil*
 - *Sustainable fertilizer application using the 4R Approach*

The training incorporated a combination of presentations and a practical session on soil sampling. The use of SKW 500 Palin Test for soil nutrient testing was also demonstrated. At the end of each session, the participants were given opportunities to ask questions. Translation of presentations in English into Fijian was done by MOA's Technical Officer, Waisea Jikowale.

Figures 1-5 show some of the activities during the Soil Health training



Figure 1. Participant registration at the start of training



Figure 2. Luisa Marama of MOA presenting, and farmers listening to the presentation(s)



Figure 3. Participants practical on soil sampling



Figure 4. Groups of participants watched demonstrations on soil nutrient and pH testing using Palin test kit



Figure 5. Group photos with participants at Nawaisomo and Dakuibeqa villages

Farmers' Perception on the Training

Most of the farmers had perceived that the training was an eye-opener on soil. They had realised the importance of protecting the soil, and use of organic materials and manure to maintain soil fertility. Some also said that they have learned how to apply mineral fertilisers sustainably. However, a few participants suggested having more field demonstrations to enable participants to have more hands-on, and if the duration of the training can be more than one day. Nevertheless, others said they had gained knowledge on soil sampling from the practical during the training.