



Labasa Farm Fresh

Cultivating Their Way to Export Success

How Connecting Farmers with End Markets Increased Sales by 29%

MDF supported Labasa Farm Fresh (LFF) to expand its business and increase its horticulture export volumes through the procurement of a cooler room and freezer, strengthening backward linkages through a Field Manager, and strengthening and upskilling management capacity to better manage the business expansion.



The Company

Labasa Farm Fresh is the only major exporter of cultivated and non-cultivated crops that is permanently based in Labasa, on the island of Vanua Levu, Fiji's second largest island. The company began operations in 2011 and exports crops to a family company in Australia.



The Context

Labasa, the largest town in Vanua Levu, is predominantly a sugar-cane growing town and hosts one of Fiji's largest sugar mills at the Labasa Sugar Mill. Due to steady declines in global raw sugar prices, sugarcane farmers have had to look for alternative means of earning an income.



The Challenge

Farmers on Vanua Levu have limited access to end markets, so the incentive to expand horticulture production is limited. Additionally, prices at local markets can be low because the majority of households in Vanua Levu grow their own food, and supplying to local markets on Viti Levu is not feasible due to the high costs of transportation.

As such, the export market is the only viable end market through which farmers can gain consistently higher prices and that can absorb higher volumes.



The Solution

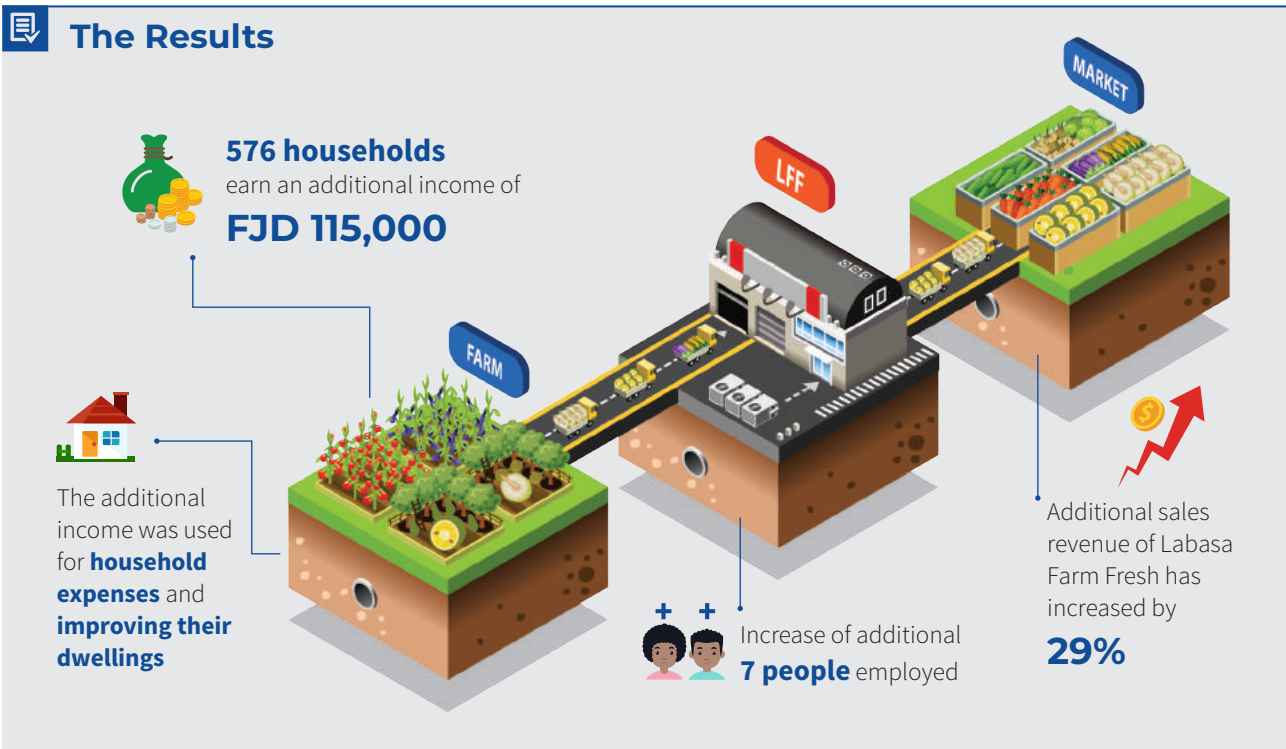
MDF supported Labasa Farm Fresh with the procurement and installation of a cooler room and freezer, and helped them hire a Field Manager to strengthen backward linkages between LFF and their existing and new suppliers. The LFF team were also supported with strengthening and upskilling management capacity in order to better manage the business's expansion. This enabled LFF to purchase more cultivated and non-cultivated crops from farmers.

By giving farming households the ability to make money throughout the year, farmers are now able to grow and sell a variety of crops to LFF - including crops such as breadfruit and jackfruit - which would otherwise rot in the fields.

This has resulted in the creation of more jobs and a more consistent inflow of money into households, as they are not dependent on one crop to earn an income. This has also directly benefitted women, as they are responsible for the management of non-cultivated produce.

Through Labasa Farm Fresh's increased processing capacity, more male and female farmers are able to supply horticultural produce for export markets and are able to supply increased volumes – allowing them earn additional income.

The Results



Since partnering with MDF, Labasa Farm Fresh has increased sourcing to 576 households mostly located in rural areas. Farmers are now able to make money from non-cultivated produce such as jackfruit and breadfruit, a domestic consumption produce, as the company has found a market in Australia that has a demand for this non-cultivated produce. Farmers have earned an additional FJD 105,000 through these crops alone.

Though collecting wild-grown produce is traditionally a man's role, decision-making on the use of additional income from non-cultivated produce is predominantly reserved for women. This extra income has enabled them to invest more money in their children's education, improve their homes and afford better nutrition. The farmers have also cited a healthy steady relationship with the exporter, where they enjoy premium pricing on their produce, as well as convenience in collections, and transactions.

The company continues to expand and diversify its export list by including these non-traditional crops which allows them to make money throughout the year, become more resilient, and not rely on a few crops that face a lot of competition.

This has resulted in additional incomes of FJD 81,200 earned by women.