

FNU College commemorates International Day of Forests

Almost 50 various tree seedlings were planted today at the Fiji National University's (FNU), College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF) Koronivia Campus to commemorate the International Day of Forests.

Dean CAFF and Chief Guest Professor Paul Iji, in his address to staff and students, highlighted the importance of forests to the ecosystem as well as to the health of our planet.

"It is time for us to look at and look after our forests because our forests do not supply just wood or timber, it serves so many purposes such as being food and shelter for animals and contributes positively to the environment," said Professor Iji.

The theme for International Day of Forests 2019 is "Forests and Education".



FNU CAFF Dean Prof Paul Iji (second from right) and academic staff plant a sandalwood tree at Koronivia Campus farm to commemorate International Day of Forests.

"The theme ensures conformity and sustainable development, which links to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

"One of these is Goal 4, which is quality education to improve people's lives and create pathways for sustainable development and Goal 15, which is life on land and about planting trees."

Professor Iji said as a learning institution, the College had a responsibility of improving the understanding people have on forests and the important role it plays in safeguarding the ecosystem.

"Nature-based education and the creation of a new generation of more informed and responsible citizens will improve our approach to sustainable management of resources," he said.

"An integrated approach that blends modern and traditional knowledge is critical to sustainably manage the forest and investment in forest education, which is what the Fiji Government has done by setting up our College and having Forestry as a learning component."

"Forest education should be accessible to all without any disparity on the basis of gender, race or any kind of discrimination."

The senior academic said the College was committed to Government's '4 Million Trees in 4 Years'.

"Fiji is a very small country, so it requires more than one person to plant more than one tree. This is doable. The Department of Forestry at CAFF has organised this tree-planting program to ensure we meet the target set by Government and being an educational institution, what we do will pass on to the community."

Following the first sandalwood seedling planted by Professor Iji, Forestry students were also joined by their Agriculture and Fisheries student colleagues in planting native tree seedlings of sandalwood, vesi, damanu, waciwaci and koka trees. The students also planted fruit seedlings for kavika, dawa and soursop trees.

Bachelor of Science in Forestry Year 1 student Filimone Seru said being part of the tree-planting program motivated him to reach out into his community and encourage others to plant trees and contribute to a sustainable environment.

"Trees are so important to use because apart from everything else they do that benefits both us humans and animals, they also play a major role in mitigating climate change," Seru said.

"To put it simply, I will tell people that if you cut a tree, you cut a life. But if you plant a tree, you are planting a life."

Fellow Year 2 student Mary Radinivugalei said highlighting the devastating effects of man-made actions such as deforestation and soil erosion will also influence people to make a change and contribute to a sustainable environment for current and future generations.



FNU College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry students at the tree planting program.