

Quarantine E-news

Determined Taro grower work with SQS

Samoan taro has been absent from the New Zealand market since the taro blight in the early 1990s. Taro is Samoa's main staple food as well as a lucrative cash crop. TLB wiped out the entire taro industry in a matter of months, raising food security concerns, and export revenues nose-dived, upsetting the nation's comfortable level of foreign reserves. When taro leaf blight (TLB) hit Samoa in 1993, taro exports were worth ST\$20 million annually.

After countless years of research new taro cultivars have been released to interested farmers and assessed for their production qualities and closely studied in trial plots in various locations around the country.

The work now is to continue developing our farmers to have an adequate amount of planting material and consistency in supply to cater for the demand from the overseas market now that the taro is back in business.

One hardworking farmer was determined to have his taro pack house approved thus was the purpose of the visit by SQS to confirm that procedures and components of the system to export fresh taro to New Zealand were being adhered to.

SQS requirements were not met on this visit and recommendations such as a concrete area for placement of taro (to minimize soil and other debris), proper shelving for storage, availability of wash basins and sink areas and to ensure that the surrounding area was free from weed and debris.

The second visit saw huge improvements as a sheltered area for final rinsing and drying taro was provided. Furthermore, the main inspection area prior to issuance of certification was ready. Minor improvements were to be done such as the provision of adequate lighting and to ensure that baiting was carried out to eliminate ants, insects etc.

On the final visit, the farmer was found to be in compliance with all recommendations and advice by the team.

Samoa Quarantine Service has therefore approved the premises as an accredited pack house and the farmer was issued with a pack house license. Mr. Hall was informed about SQS regular audits and informed that if the pack house is found not to be in conformance with procedural requirements; the license will be suspended until SQS is satisfied that requirements are again met.

Table indicating current exporters of Taro				
Date	Exporter	Importer	Quantity	
			Sacks/20K g	Weight(kg)
22 June 2010	P & A Trading	Mellow Food Ltd, N.Z	155	3100
10 September	“	“	300	6000
26 October	“	“	551	11020
9 November	Tusani Samotu	Pacific Vision Ltd	603	12060
25 November	William Hall	Big Island Group	409	8180
Total			2,018	40360



The first visit to the proposed pack-house



2nd visit

3rd visit

“Quarantine helps farmers export their crops and produce”