

## PRESS RELEASE

### *Launch of Fijis First-Ever Food Safety Manual targeted specially for the Tourism Operators*

The tourism industry being the leading sector in the country plays a very critical role in the development and growth of our economic condition. The Ministry of Tourism in this regard is tasked with the responsibility of developing and promoting SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) as a mechanism for encouraging active participation by the locals within the Tourism industry as well as enhancing the efficient use of our natural resources. It is therefore the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism to develop, assess, formulate, implement and monitor tourism policies and regulations so as to enhance sustainable tourism development in the country.

Apart from assisting tourism operators in the form of grants for start up and expansion as well as incentives under the Hotel Aid Act, the Ministry has also been involved in providing Capacity Building programs on basic knowledge and awareness on the fundamentals of enhancing sustainable development within the industry particularly to the community who are one of the most critical stakeholders of the industry.

Though the interest and commitment by these locals is quite significant, one of the greatest challenges particularly with an industry such as Tourism is the level and standard of service that we offer to our clients (visitors). Most are often mistaken in thinking that providing such services may only require a friendly smile and presentable food on the table while failing to realize that a satisfied tourist would include his/her view of the overall outlook of the service beginning from the actual source of the supply, preparation method, presentation of the service including the individual personally involved and finally the experience/taste which determines the satisfaction for these visitors. We believe that satisfied tourists are dependent on the standard of service that we provide and satisfied tourists are most likely to return in the future given the renowned service that Fiji and its people provide.

The Ministry of Tourism through our Communication & Awareness and Capacity in collaboration with the Institute of Applied Sciences of the University of the South Pacific, had carried out a three days workshop in **Food Safety Management in August, 2006**. The workshop proved very successful with about forty participants mainly the operators from the backpackers in the Yasawas, Nadi and the Lautoka area. The training scope encompassed the basic food safety issues, food poisoning, food and personal hygiene, and hygienic food preparation and actual presentation to our visitors. This covered both theory and practical training for the participants.

As part of this training, the facilitators gathered that though the number of small businesses was growing quite significantly, there was evidence of lack of knowledge on

basic requirements and standards on Food Safety Management and Food Handling. This training provided the motivation and initiative to collate and compile all relevant information relating to Food Safety Management and Food Handling and to publish this for the operators particularly our small-scale locally owned enterprises.

Based on the findings and the recommendations of the training that was carried out in August, Fiji's first ever Food Safety Manual has been compiled, printed and was launched on the **03<sup>rd</sup> of April at the Lautoka City Council Chambers in Lautoka**; a collaborative approach by the Ministry with the Institute of Applied Sciences, USP. The manual which was funded by JICA was given out free-of-charge to all those that attended the launch.

A highlight of this launch was the accompanied workshop that participants went through as an initiative for familiarizing the content and the expected outcome of this manual. This special and critical event was attended by approximately thirty participants mainly the operators from the Nadi and Lautoka boundary as well as representatives from Fiji Chemicals, Ministry of Health and Rural Local Authority.

The main objective of this one workshop was not only to launch **the Food Safety Manual** but to also to carry out some demonstrations on the required level of service that is acceptable. The manual is designed to provide basic information on various methods of food preparation, acceptable standard of presentations as well as some healthy local dish recipes. A possible weekly menu is also provided as part of this manual which is designed to provide local delicacies and dishes to our visitors

Expected outcomes of this critical event was to broader knowledge on the importance of food hygiene, personal hygiene and food contamination, food poisoning and required hygienic practices for food preparation, presentation for our visitors as well as to enhance improvement in the overall standard of Food Safety Management and Food Handling Practices.

Participants will also be able to prepare a wider variety of nutritious meals as an outcome of the launch of this vital booklet hence enabling the availability of local cuisine that tourists tend to enjoy greatly. There is also expected rapid reduction in the cost of food preparation through the use of local foods supplies