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Ashwin's Exports & Imports Private Limited received plaudits and praise for identifying a niche high-end market for organic turmeric.

This was relayed by Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime

Development, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy while commissioning the export company's processing facility at the Namaka Industrial Zone in Nadi yesterday.

Ashwin's Exports & Imports PTE Limited exports organic turmeric to the United States of America and New Zealand and exports ginger only to New Zealand.

Minister Reddy highlighted that an integral strategic advantage that Fiji had with regards to agricultural production was the potential for large scale organic crop production.

"The most important strategic advantage has been picked up by this firm here as they've tapped into the organic market, they're tapping into a very high-end value market, very good. Excellent," he said.

Hon. Reddy acknowledged the business and also pledged the Ministry's support for the venture because it supported the Ministry's main strategic priority of export-oriented commercial agriculture.

"I want to congratulate Mr. Patel for really tapping into that segmented high-value organic market.

Minister Reddy elaborated that the next step would require them to establish certified organic farms to guarantee a consistent volume of organic turmeric.

"The next important aspect is that he has picked up and grown into the market, a product, which otherwise wouldn't have been picked up, we would've lost out on it.

"I want to thank you for that, thank you for doing that or else we would've lost out on this opportunity, so it was very important that he had gone and picked up that particular commodity and he is here at this

establishment, a processing plant, value-adding it, processing it and that's what differentiates this outfit from the others," he said.

Minister Reddy also highlighted the importance of the venture as it opened up another commodity market for farmers to choose from in regards to commercial agriculture.

"We're opening up another commodity market for our farmers to choose from when it comes to commercial agriculture. We're talking about commercial rice production, commercial duruka production, and other commodities which will stabilize and grow our foreign reserves, very important for a country like Fiji where we look at agriculture as a sector which will support and build foreign reserves," said Hon. Reddy.

"I am sure that this is going to grow and there is no limit to expanding this facility, as long as in the backward sector he is able to expand that and we need committed farmers. We are willing to assist him in this area.

"We look forward to him expanding into the other few crops that he has mentioned, drumstick and ginger, and I want to assure you that we're here to support you to make this bigger, better, and to be a strong player in the Ministry of Agriculture export-oriented commercial agriculture strategy," he added.

Due to Mr. Patel's relationships with the farmers, he has in a very short period of time, made substantial gains in terms of exports as he is exporting approximately 40-tonnes per month to high-end markets in Los Angeles and New York.



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