



Copra Millers of Fiji Limited executive chairman Ilisoni Taoba (left) during his recent visit to Vanua Levu.
Photo: SHRATIKA NAIDU

Tree trouble for copra

By SHRATIKA NAIDU

Investors and locals involved in the copra industry need to replant coconut trees to reach the ultimatum copra production level, a copra executive has said.

Copra Millers of Fiji Limited executive chairman Ilisoni Taoba said the failure to plant new trees over the years has led to the decrease in supplying copra.

"Whatever coconut trees are seen around in Fiji were planted by our forefathers and very rarely can we see new coconut trees," Mr Taoba said.

"This situation is now a concern and we must ask ourselves what we

are doing to help the copra industry survive."

Mr Taoba said the copra production trend since 1950s was decreasing and the company was struggling to get more tonnes of copra.

"In 1950s we used to get 50,000 metric tonnes of copra. In 1977, the national production dropped to 30,000, in 2009 it dropped to 10,000 and in 2010, it was down to 6500.

"The likely reason for the decrease in copra production is that since the 1960s there were no major replanting programmes initiated.

This year, there has been an increase in the price of copra, but Mr Taoba said the production from

January to August has not increased.

He hopes that the people in Fiji can once again work to produce 30,000 metric tonnes of copra.

"This can only be achieved if we plant 615,000 coconut trees per year. In the next five years the company will be able to produce more than 30,000 metric tonnes.

"Although the number of replanted trees I stated may seem unrealistic, but if everyone in Fiji make an initiative to plant, we can achieve it."

Should the country replant 615,000 coconut trees annually, he is optimistic that the copra production will increase and that the industry will survive.