

FORNEY ENTERPRISE; True Success in the Kava Industry



Investing in any country takes effort, risks and patience but when done with passion and a goal for success, it is rewarding in all senses.

This is true for the journey of John Fordham, the determined investor behind Forney Enterprise, Vanuatu's leading kava exporter.

Forney Enterprises exports in powdered kava remains Vanuatu's biggest contributor in total kava exports as a result of growing kava consumption in the region and particularly in the United States.

In 2018 the value of kava exports from Vanuatu totalled to over 2.5 billion vatu. The kava exports for the month of December (2018) alone, constituted 54% of total exports. Continuing the strong growth in the kava export trend, Forney Enterprise plays a significant role in terms of its production and exports. Fordham says that from June 2007 to July 2018, Forney kava exports totalled VT1 billion, an average VT90 million to the overall total exports in kava per year for those years.

This continued growth in strength by Forney Enterprise displays the sheer passion that John Fordham has in further developing the kava industry of Vanuatu.

What is common with many success stories is that they are a product of hard work and will have faced many obstacles and this is the same for Fordham's Forney Enterprise.

In 2004 Fordham had his first taste of local kava and as all first experiences go, he did not take to its taste

and effect well. Yet the peaceful and calming effect that Fordham had experienced for the first time got him thinking. What if the kava experience could be improved with a more mild taste yet achieve the same sedative sensation that it had?

Commencing in 2004 and working from his makeshift lab in his wife's kitchen space, Fordham began experimenting on the different kava species to ensure its viability in the international market but breaking the kitchen utensils and dryer meant that Fordham had to find bigger space. With the continued progress with his development of the kava plant meant he had to find permanent space and hence his current high state tech laboratory and processing plant at Side River, Santo.



Fordham's investment plan began with the processing and development of dried kava and it also included farming and processing of an array of local crops, all targeted for export. However with rewarding results primarily from his kava products Fordham focused solely on bettering the product.

With focused research on developing kava, Fordham

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has for the past 12 years been experimenting with and exporting kava products of a fine quality, with improved taste and yet similar serene sensation, but he is not done yet. Fordham says his investment into a new processing machinery with the lab support of 3 scientists to assist in achieving successful DNA strand testing of the kava plant to determine the noble species of kava, would bring out the ultimate product.



Investment in its human resource is also key to its success and Forney Enterprises has grown immensely over the past years, providing employment to 140 staff, almost 95% of whom are women. More so, Forney Enterprises remains Vanuatu's biggest kava buyer. This has boosted farmers from Pentecost, Maewo, Ambae and Santo to increase kava production and the focus on planting noble kava species. Forney's annual competition for the biggest producing farms/famers has seen 3 Ford Ranger pick up's given away to the winners. An incentive to farmers for their hard work.

Fordham believes that as foreign investors it is important to contribute at levels where Ni-Vanuatu cannot afford to, with the example of investing in machinery and equipment to value add products. This creates a level playing field giving farmers the opportunity to improve their farming techniques and efforts.

On the receiving end of Forney Enterprises exports, clients from countries like the USA are experiencing the better experience through up and coming kava bars in the country. An alternate to relaxation without the headaches and regrets, kava bars are proving more and more popular in the States, especially in Florida.

Fordham has faced challenges with export facilities and the sluggish work to improve the Bauerfield runway. Expenses in setting up a business in Vanuatu have also been challenging yet Fordham believes that the kava industry holds strong potential in Vanuatu's growing economy.

Looking ahead into the future, Fordham believes that the success of Vanuatu's kava industry will be in Developed Countries like USA and thus the potential to improve current kava products to an even better form. In the same effort, his improvements to his kava products have seen better quality kava exported to many of the regional countries such as Fiji, Kiribati and Tonga.

Current research on his product by the scientists involved have shown that the current Forney Enterprises powdered kava is one of the best kava formula that can be found on the market. This is good news for the future of the investment and for Vanuatu because this will mean more clients, more international kava bars and more importantly, a chance for Vanuatu kava to be brought back onto markets where it is currently difficult to get into.

The future looks promising for Forney Enterprises and with the continued effort and hard work that Fordham has invested into the investment, it will surely continue to grow. When asked if Forney Enterprises would branch out into neighbouring Pacific Island countries in the near future, Fordham says Forney is for Vanuatu and its kava.

