

AGRITECH GRANT KICK-STARTS INDIGO PACIFIC'S SUSTAINABLE ECO-SYSTEM INITIATIVE

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) is pleased to announce it has awarded Indigo Pacific Limited (Indigo Pacific) a SMART AgriTech Scheme grant to create a self-sustaining and long-lasting mini eco-system for commercial flower growing.

Indigo Pacific's core product is both edible and ornamental flowers, predominantly anthuriums but also ginger, heliconia (parrot flower), strelitzia (bird of paradise) and orchids. These varieties of flower are in high demand for hotels, holiday homes, churches, gift markets, weddings, funerals, and celebrations of all types.

Indigo Pacific will use the Agritech grant to develop a fully contained growing eco-system that incorporates water, livestock, plants, and the micro-organisms needed for compost mounds. Microprocessor fertigation control will be used for automated and controlled watering, misting and irrigation. This technology will eliminate guess work and ensure water is used efficiently.

Minar Henderson of Indigo Pacific says: "The Agritech grant provides much-needed seed funding to allow us to get our eco-environment up and running within months. Once established, it should sustain itself and require very little input. Our ob-

jective is to create a financially viable venture from our initial eco-system, identify any potential improvements, then cut and paste the concept to another large property we currently farm for flowers. We intend to prepare for this expansion in the near future and eventually to export our products."



The eco-system comprises a shade house, with additional planting around it, livestock to produce nutrients for the plants, and a pond as a water source for both plants and livestock and also to grow watercress, water spinach, eels and tilapia fish. The eco-system concept is designed to have a lifespan of 20 years before any serious work is needed.

The Indigo Pacific project will provide a blueprint for other farms to try this environmentally sustainable growing concept. The benefits are not restricted to flowers but can be applied to just about any farm product, and the size of the eco-system can be modified to suit the needs of each agriculture business. Indigo Pacific see their eco-system project as creating a new way forward for meeting future farming needs in the Cook Islands. "By making smarter use of what we already have, with small modifications to keep the environment balanced, ultimately we are controlling the environment for best yield planting," says Minar.