

“A Sustainable future Together”

“Building and strengthening Recognized Seasonal Employment (RSE) Pacific Families for a sustainable future” was the theme of the 12th RSE conference held in Port Vila Vanuatu from the 17th to the 19th July 2019.

The conference brought together more than 200 RSE employers and growers from New Zealand, academia, training providers, financial institutions and officials from the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) New Zealand. Samoa was represented at the conference by the Hon Minister Lautafi Fio Selafi Purcell, the Chief Executive Officer of MCIL, Pulotu Lyndon Chu Ling, and Samoa’s RSE Liaison Officer Lemalu Nele Leilua.

Several speakers presented on a series of topics that revolved around RSE specific to the sustainability of the scheme such as the process of future RSE numbers; the RSE operational review outcome, the RSE policy review process and timeline, strategic outlook; as well as reporting on five challenges that Minister for Immigration, Ian-Lees Galloway laid out at the 2018 RSE Conference.

These five challenges including doing more to employ New Zealanders, improving conditions, increasing wages, and developing automation; developing the infrastructure for all workers, not just RSE; stamp out worker exploitation in New Zealand and along the industry’s supply chains; and work with other industries, such as age care and transportation, to help them with New Zealand’s experience and knowledge.

Honourable Minister Lautafi Fio Selafi Purcell spoke on the topic *RSE from a wider Pacific Perspective*. Minister Lautafi in his remarks highlighted the ‘triple win benefits of the RSE scheme that are now experienced by the communities in Samoa and other participating countries; as well as for the horticulture and viticulture industries of New Zealand, thus an increase in the RSE cap was recommended. He reiterated the importance of effective pastoral care, health and safety support for all RSE workers while in New Zealand; and that exploitation in any form will not be tolerated. The need for strengthening capacity building opportunities beyond RSE for Pacific workers under the Vakameasina program and other initiatives was also raised. He further made a call for all RSE stakeholders for “more active engagement in the world of work that promotes more sustainable development with combined efforts to help find and shape new pathways towards environmentally sustainable economies in view of the damaging impact of climate change”. It was also conveyed that Samoa will be happy to host the next RSE conference in Apia if the opportunity is provided.

The Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme is now in its twelfth year and employers are now seeing the predicted and unprecedented growth in the industry sectors that are part of RSE. Stakeholders were urged to consider how they can future-proof the RSE scheme so that it can be the solution to supplying sustainable seasonal labour that it was always meant to be.

This 2019 RSE conference was organised by Horticulture New Zealand, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and the Government of Vanuatu.



Honorable Minister, Lautafi Fio Selafi Purcell presenting his statement at the 12th Recognized Seasonal Employment (RSE) Conference held in Port Vila Vanuatu; July 2019. The Conference brought together more than 200 RSE Employers and growers, academia, training providers, financial institutions and officials (picture above) from NZ.

Bilateral meeting with Mr Alistair Jamieson (centre) of Mr Apple – the biggest RSE Employer for Samoa; July 2019