



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **BAF WORKING TOWARDS BETTER MANAGING AST INFESTATION IN FIJI**

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The Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) has engaged the services of a consultant from Australia in efforts to better manage Asian Subterranean Termites (AST) infestations in the Lautoka and Labasa districts.

Dr. Theodore Evans, who is an Associate Professor with the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Western Australia in Perth, will be assisting BAF with this consultancy. Dr. Evans has vast experience in dealing with termites and their invasions. He possesses a PhD in Entomology from the University of Melbourne with proven experience in the design and implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies for termites and other pests.

The AST, a new species of termites in Fiji has the potential to significantly damage property and belongings as they feed on timber and other wooden products. This termite has been in existence in Fiji since late 2009, however, BAF, with assistance from the Government and relevant stakeholders, has been successful in preventing its spread to other areas of Fiji.

The consultation which started earlier this month will be on-going for a period of 9 months via which BAF seeks to assess its current national termite control services, evaluate IPM systems for AST control, assess the economic and environmental sustainability of the present and proposed termite management practices, derive new termite control methods or approaches that can be easily implemented in Fiji and moreover assess the level of awareness amongst the public regarding the disastrous impact of AST.

The whole idea of engaging a consultant is to allow BAF an opportunity to develop a pest management strategy for AST, along with a national treatment guideline. BAF will continue to work in collaboration and partnership with all relevant stakeholders in better managing the AST issue.

BAF's Acting Chief Executive Officer Mr. Surend Pratap said the engagement of Dr. Evans is timely as the issue of AST has been a major area of concern to all Fijians. Over the years, innumerable properties and belongings have been subject to AST infestation, causing substantial losses to people and the Government alike.

"Through this consultation BAF is also looking towards developing building codes which can deter or discourage termite infestation in buildings", Mr. Pratap said.

He further added that BAF is continuously working towards improving its services and ensuring Fiji is safe from incursions of harmful pests and diseases.

"ASTs are one of the most destructive termite species in the world, hence it is imperative to engage experts who can help elevate understanding towards the severity of the pest and simultaneously assist BAF towards implementing better control mechanisms", he mentioned.

Mr. Pratap stated BAF cannot work in isolation and whilst such engagements are critical for them, BAF still needs the public's cooperation in its efforts to contain AST within the declared zones.



BAF officers with the consultant from Australia whilst discussing the infestation of ASTs in trees in parts of Lautoka

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