

Value addition to agricultural products

World-renowned US investor and businessman Warren Buffett defined value as: “Price is what you pay for, value is what you get.” The definition cautions us against using a simple equation of value and price and gives us food for thought on the topic of value addition. Value addition in agribusiness, its importance, and the skills and methods to harvest the benefits were the key topics of the APO training course on Value Addition to Agricultural Products held in Suva, Fiji, 22–28 July. It was implemented by the Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF) with 19 overseas and six local participants.

“In many developing countries here in Asia, we produce a wide variety of agricultural products, but have not yet optimized the economic benefits we can derive from them. This is due in part to inadequate knowledge of appropriate value-adding technologies coupled with poor infrastructure facilities and the absence of coherent policies to support such an undertaking, especially in rural areas,” said Secretariat Senior Agriculture Program Officer Joselito C. Bernardo in explaining the training course background. The five learning modules emphasized broadening the understanding of participants of the importance of value-adding activities as well as enhancing their knowledge and skills in using various value-adding approaches and technologies.

“Value addition to agricultural products is the process of increasing the economic value and consumer appeal of an agricultural commodity,” explained Executive Director Reuel K. Virtucio, Punla sa Tao Foundation, the Philippines. Mr. Virtucio also introduced various value-adding technologies such as processing and preservation techniques, dehydration and drying technology, freezing technology, packing, labeling, etc. His session was followed by sessions led by Director Dr. D.B.T. Wijeratne, Ministry of Agriculture Development and Agrarian Service, Sri Lanka, and Professor Navam S. Hettiarachchy, University of Arkansas Fayetteville, USA, all of whom shared their expertise and experiences in methods for farmers, small entrepreneurs, food processors, and others in the supply chain to upgrade the value of agrifood products.

At the end of the seven-day training course, participants agreed that value ad-



Preparing breadfruit for processing

dition is an important concept and approach in today's business environment where innovation in farming and agrifood processing are important to remain competitive and to optimize returns from an enterprise. It may entail producing a commodity for a special market; changing the form of the commodity before it is marketed; changing how a commodity is packaged and labeled for the market; changing the way a commodity is marketed; or even adding a new enterprise to an existing one. The course also provided ideas and practices on deriving other marketable items or developing new ones from primary products, coproducts, and even from by-products previously considered to be waste.

“Most of all, we learned that value addition creates jobs, which is critically needed at this time when employment has been shrinking due to the economic crisis,” stated Bernardo in his closing remarks. Many participants agreed with his comments and joined him in thanking the resource speakers and the TPAF for making the training course so successful. “We learned a lot and now it is the time for us to utilize it all in practical ways,” said Manager Manoj Tilakarathna, VI TI Foods Limited, an agrifood-processing company in Fiji. 