

A publication of the Market Information Service (MIS) - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
"Linking the market and Primary producers"

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'AVA SAMOA (KAVA)



¹The 'ava (*Piper methysticum*) is a native species of the south-western Pacific where it has been consumed by Pacific Island countries for centuries. It is made from the

¹ Samoa 'Ava Standard 2018

root of the pepper plant, found in Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia.

It was one of Samoa's major export crops before the Europeans banned 'ava imports from the Pacific in the late 1990s due to an 'ava-induced sickness caused by poor product.

This upsets the 'ava industry discouraging farmers to grow 'ava whilst some switching to another crop. However, there was a still strong domestic market for 'ava with most supplies to the main Fugalei market and small stores around the country.

Samoa and other Pacific countries had tried to uplift the European Union (EU) ban for years until their request was approved and the ban was officially removed in 2015. In 2018 Samoa launched its first ever Ava Standard to ensure that Samoan Ava is produced and stored accordingly to good hygiene standards while maintaining its quality.

Today, kava is used across the Pacific in both traditional ceremonies and informal social events. With more kava bars opening in the US, European markets opening up, kava becoming available in more health stores and supermarkets worldwide, and more awareness of its relaxation and health benefits, the profile of kava is on the rise.

LOCAL PRODUCTION

Ava plays a significant role in ceremonies and social way of life or fa'asamoa. 'Ava is a scrub grown extensively throughout Samoa

for its root, from which the national beverage of the same name is made. The drink is an emulsion of the powdered 'ava root and water, prepared and served. It is not an intoxicant and has no injurious effects unless drunk in large quantities.

The 2019 Agricultural Census recorded a small reduction in the 'ava farming compared to the major reduction in 2009 from previous census.

FIGURE1: NUMBER OF HOLDINGS IN AVA PRODUCTION RECORDED IN AGRICULTURE CENSUS 2009 AND 2019

Holdings growing Ava	Upolu	Savaii
Ag Census 2009	775	1441
Ag Census 2019	548	818

Source: Agriculture Census Survey 2019

Agriculture Census in 2009 recorded a number of 2216 holdings growing Ava in Samoa (Upolu 775, Savaii 1441). However in the 2019 Census there was another drop recorded for the number of holdings. Upolu consists of 548 and Savaii 818 holdings.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries together with its stakeholders and exporters are conducting numerous activities to boost Ava Samoa to become one of a kind in the export market. Also the initiation of the Ava Standard and Regulation by the Samoa Association of Manufacturers and Exporters (SAME) put together by the Samoa National Codex Committee will greatly help to assist the producers and suppliers in Samoa.

²GROWING 'AVA TIPS

Site Selection

Ava is a shade-loving plant and proper care for the young plants should be taken to shelter from the sun's rays and wind. Favorably grown under a wide variety of conditions:

- To allow for vigorous root growth, soils should be fertile and loose but not allowed to dry out.
- Avoid soils that are prone to water-logging since this can inhibit growth and cause root rot.
- Provide shade and protection from the wind for the young plants.

Planting Materials

Experienced growers know that one of the most important decisions in producing quality 'ava is the selection of planting materials. The first aspect is that the cutting must come from a desirable kava cultivar, one with good drinking characteristics. Secondly, the cutting must be from a healthy and vigorous plant. Diseases can be spread from unhealthy 'ava plants to the surrounding plants and cause great losses.

The normal method of propagation is to use stem cuttings of one to four nodes in length, but the process varies according to area. Either shoots or stem cuttings can be used, and cuttings can be either planted in a nursery or directed planted in the field. However direct planting has found less useful for such reasons:

- Requires more planting materials and longer pieces

² Market Link – Ava 2019

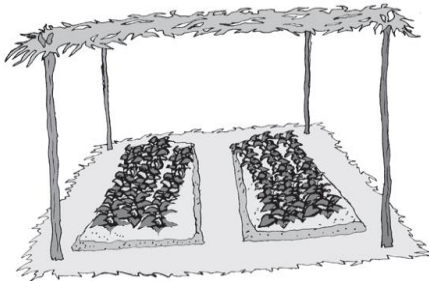
- Ava cuttings require moist conditions at time of planting to develop shoots and roots.
- Desired spacing can be difficult to achieve with direct planting because not all cuttings will produce plants.

Nurseries

Nurseries are adequately shaded to promote development and prevent the cuttings from drying out.

Ava nursery methods:

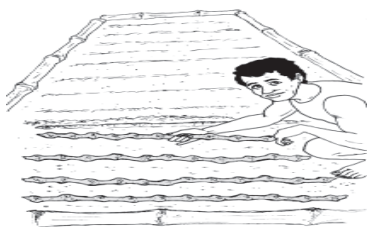
1. Planting one or two node cuttings in nursery beds



2. Planting one or two node cuttings in plastic bags



3. Germinating whole 'ava stems in the nursery beds.



Harvesting

Ava is harvested after 4 years of planting. Some 'ava expert growers believed that the longer in period the 'ava grows will produce good quality, hence higher concentrations of kava lactones. Kava lactones are the active compounds in 'ava.

Noble Varieties

According to the Ava Regulation 2018, noble 'ava variety is any 'ava variety that has certain chemical composition adequate for daily human consumption and drinking and have a long history of safe traditional use in Samoa. ³ Noble 'ava varieties in Samoa:

- 'Ava Le'a
- 'Ava La'au
- 'Ava Loa
- 'Ava Talo
- 'Ava Mumu

SAMOA AVA STANDARD AND REGULATION

Moving forward Samoa aims to revive the production of Ava in Samoa. In order to do so the first ever Ava Standard and regulation was produced for guidance. The aim is to ensure that Samoan Ava is produced and stored according to good hygiene standards while maintaining its quality, so that it is safe for consumption and is internationally recognized as a quality product.

FIGURE 2: 2018 SAMOA 'AVA STANDARD



This standard and regulation was initiated by Samoa Association of Manufacturers and Exporters (SAME) and was put together by the Samoa National Codex Committee.

LOCAL MARKET

The local market and side roads market are playing a huge role for selling Ava Samoa. Mostly ava is sold in packets (powder form) not only that but there is an increasing number of Ava being sold in Samoa using traditional cup (ipu tauava) a mixture of water and ava powder form. Usually the cost of a packet is \$10 and \$2 for a cup of Ava already mixed with water.

FIGURE 3: AVA SOLD AS POWDER AND TRADITION CUP (ALREADY MIXED WITH WATER)

Ava (Powder Form-\$10)



Ava (Already mixed with water-\$2)



The local market is still the most important market for 'ava in terms of total size and cash value. There is an increasing demand for 'ava sold in packets (powdered form) for local consumption at the local market (Fugalei/Salelologa) and retailers.

EXPORT MARKET

In the 1990s it is marked as the glorious years of ava export. But because of the demand from markets overseas and the prices going up the farmers began to uproot whatever it takes to make profit not knowing that it led to affecting and causing decline from overseas markets due to poor quality.

FIGURE 4: AVA EXPORT TREND FROM 2019-2022

Samoa AVA EXPORT FROM 2019 - 2022

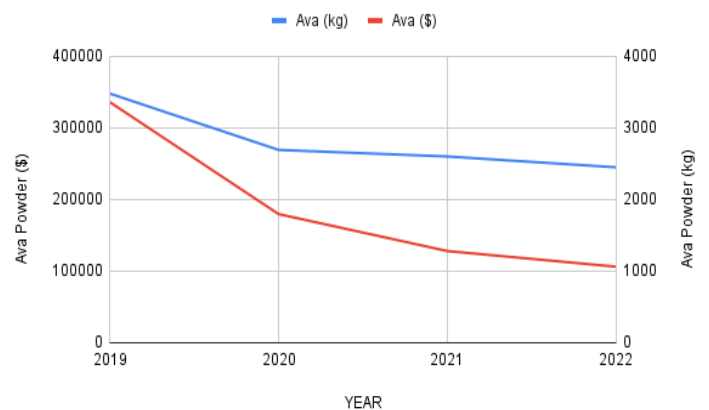


Figure 4 shows the trend of 'ava powder being exported to markets overseas from 2019 to 2022. Large number were exported to the United State of America and American Samoa in 2019 but from 2018 to

2022 exporting of 'ava powder was dropped so as the earnings due to the low price of the market at such time. One good example of this trend is that in 2022 'ava powder export was 300,038kg with the earning of just \$106,128. The USA is still the leading market both in export volume and value.

WAY FORWARD

'Ava export in Samoa is decreasing from time to time but there is a great potential for growth not only for the export market but the local market as well. But in order for growth the industry needs to look at areas of production, research and marketing.

The initiation of the 'Ava Standard and Regulation is a great contribution to the industry where farmers will use it for guidance.

Overall, not so many farmers are interested in 'Ava production because of its longevity processes but it is all worth the wait.

Average Prices at the Fugalei Market

Commodities (SAT\$/kg)	May 2023	June 2023	Lowest Price for 2023 to date	Highest Price for 2023 to date
Taro	4.14	4.76	3.74	5.31
Banana	1.86	2.03	1.80	2.37
Ta'amu	12.74	22.65	12.74	31.25
Coconut	0.88	0.90	0.80	0.99
Breadfruit	3.07	3.46	2.91	4.33
Yam	7.61	6.21	5.37	7.38
Head Cabbage	15.41	16.04	13.44	20.45
Tomato	28.25	28.92	25.83	33.33
Chinese Cabbage	10.30	11.42	9.55	13.40
Cucumber	7.85	8.20	7.40	8.34
Pumpkin	5.41	7.28	6.37	7.90

Source: Samoa Bureau of Statistics-Local market survey

Foreign Currency per Tala (SAT\$)

June 2023	USD\$	NZD\$	AUD\$	YEN\$	FJD\$	EURO
1 Samoan Tala SAT\$=	0.3550	0.5826	0.5362	51.1400	0.7873	0.3203

Source: Bank of South Pacific

Market Link Newsletter

This newsletter is published bi-monthly and it seeks to assist stakeholders (farmers, consumers, wholesalers, policymakers) make informed market and marketing decisions based on credible, relevant price and supply information. Help us help you by providing constructive feedback on market information issues that will improve the service which will lead to growing a healthy and wealthy Samoa. For more information contact the Policy, Planning and Communication Division and ask for Suepasi Palatiso.

Disclaimer

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