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Walt Smith Expands his Coral Farm Project to Naviti Island

The villagers of Marou in the Yasawa's can expect to earn around a thousand dollars per month once a coral farming project gets underway soon.

The 2013 Fisheries "Exporter of the Year", Walt Smith International, has earmarked the village on Naviti Island as their next site for their coral farms.

Walt Smith International is an export business who is in the marine aquarium trade. Walt is the founder and pioneer of the first ever commercial coral farm in the world that began in 1998 and has since replanted more than 20 pieces on the reef for every one we have exported. We grow and plant about 130,000 pieces of farmed coral each year since we began says Mr. Smith. That's a lot of coral over the past 16 years.

Company director Walt Smith said they had already established 2 farms in Vanua Levu with a third one planned for later this month and are now looking to the Yasawa's to expand this already successful program.

"We expect to be in Marou at the end of the week, and will begin with a workshop to teach villagers the whole process of coral farming.

Mr Smith says when the project is fully up and running, villagers can earn up to \$1,000 per month.

The company is looking at establishing 45 farms throughout Fiji over the next three years which can help villagers with an alternative source of income. Even though the export market will soon be saturated after the implementation of this latest farm Mr. Smith is currently working on funding from overseas to pay the villages to replant the farmed coral on the local reefs. "The export market is only so big and after 4 working farms are growing corals for our market the next step

will be to still pay them for the corals they will replant for this massive reef restoration project. We are seeking the funding from a major U.S. based corporation that has expressed interest since no income will be earned for the company in this part of my plan” says Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith says they have already registered a non-profit organization named “Aquaculture Development for the Environment” (ADE) in the United States and will soon be bringing this NGO to Fiji in the next few months.