



Maciu Rabici displays two bars of chocolates at the Agriculture Show.

Picture ATU RASEA

Cocoa farmers await choco mill

By IFEREIMI NADORE

TAILEVU cocoa farmer Maciu Rabici was all emotional at the Agriculture Show at Laucala on Wednesday because his homemade chocolate won accolades.

The 72-year-old Nanau villager sold these chocolates at the show, and the feedback gave him personal satisfaction.

He offered a bar to Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, and smiled when commended.

"When he (Cmdr Bainimarama) raised his hand indicating his approval, I knew straight away the chocolate was tasty. He liked it I suppose," Mr Rabici said.

Mr Rabici began cocoa farming in 1979. He

knows truly well the pros and cons of the product, in particular the unfavourable price on the world market that led to its collapse in the late 70s. The price of dried cocoa beans was cut to as low as 70 cents compared to \$2.50 per kilogram currently.

During those hard times when other farmers quit to plant other crops, he continued to toil his cocoa farm.

Now, Mr Rabici and others in his community have ventured into other cocoa bi-products - like homemade chocolate, particularly with plans of a chocolate factory to be set up on their piece of land.

Sweden-based NGO Cocoa Bello and State officials will visit Nanau this week to finalise the factory site.