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Kraft-Cadbury targets Solomon Islands cocoa



Alastair Furnival of Kraft-Cadbury speaks to cocoa stakeholders about the chocolate makers plans for Solomon Islands and the region.

One of the world's biggest chocolate manufacturers Kraft-Cadbury is seeking 10,000 tonnes of cocoa from Solomon Islands.

Officials from Kraft-Cadbury met with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, cocoa producers and stakeholders in March to outline their plans for the region.

Alastair Furnival of Kraft-Cadbury says although the chocolate maker is the world's largest buyer of cocoa, it is experiencing a shortfall of 100,000 tonnes and is looking around the world for new cocoa sources, including in the Pacific.

As part of its scoping project Kraft-Cadbury has been in talks with cocoa producers in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and West Papua with 10,000 tonnes allocated for Solomon Islands.

Last year Solomon Islands exported 5,000 tonnes, a reduction from 2011 with industry insiders blaming the Festival of Pacific Arts for lower production.



Solomon Islands cocoa in big demand.

MAL Permanent Secretary, Frank Wickham says although Solomon Islands has 30 million cocoa trees, only about 25 percent are productive. He says if the remaining 75 percent of trees are replaced with improved genetic material and if trees undergo Integrated Pest and Disease Management treatment, Solomon Islands can meet the 10,000 tonnes demand.

In addition cocoa stakeholders say the planting of new high yielding varieties will further boost the supply of cocoa to aid the Government's target of reaching 20,000 tonnes by 2020.

Furnival says Kraft-Cadbury is looking for high quality cocoa with a constant and regular supply for chocolate.

"We have tremendous confidence in Solomon Islands cocoa, we just hope that there can be more of it," said Furnival.

He says while Kraft-Cadbury wants Solomon Islands cocoa, the quality of all cocoa needs to be improved to meet the

demand.

"Our message is we are very keen to work with the Solomon Islands Government and with other development partners. We don't want to come in and duplicate things or to be less efficient.

"Not only do we want to see better crops and better yields but also social benefits."

At a briefing with cocoa stakeholders at the Iron Bottom Sound Hotel, Furnival said the Kraft-Cadbury would work directly with farmers to improve the quality of plants but would buy from cocoa exporters and ship the supply to its factories in Singapore.

Wickham says the next step is for Kraft-Cadbury to send in a proposal to the Ministry on the steps needed to enter into a partnership with the multi-national.

Last year Cadbury ran tests on Solomon Islands cocoa with a portion found to be too smoky for consumption, a further portion was salvageable through processing while the remainder of samples was found to be exceptional.

Furnival says there needs to be consistency in the quality of Solomon Islands cocoa.

Kraft-Cadbury believes that Australian consumers would appreciate buying

chocolate products made from cocoa from the region and support development work in the region.

He said it was important that Kraft-Cadbury maintained its social responsibilities as a multinational company by ensuring that small holder farmers were benefiting directly from the company buying its cocoa from the Solomon Islands.

Kraft-Cadbury expects the world demand for chocolate to continue to rise, as the middle class in Asia continues to grow and is prepared to invest in cocoa projects around the world to improve yield and improve lives of communities. ●

Agriculture sector shines at Business Excellence Awards



Sebastian Ilala of Direct Management Limited accepts his award at the BEA ceremony.



Albert Fono of Arania Enterprises after winning Exporter of the Year Award for medium business.

It was billed as the biggest night for the business community in the country and the agriculture sector was not disappointed with big wins at the Solomon Islands Business Excellence Awards.

Cocoa and commodities exporter Arania Enterprises won the Exporter of the Year Award in the medium business category while Direct Management Limited won the Exporter of the Year Award in the small business category.

DML's Change Officer, Sebastian Ilala received special commendation in the Green Business category for small business.

In accepting his Exporter of the Year Award, Ilala spoke on behalf of the cocoa sector to urge the Government

to listen and to work in partnership with cocoa exporters and growers.

"Strategic partnership between the Government, donor partners and the private sector must be strong, realistic and practical; and that the decision on partnership must be for the betterment of the country.

"To be frank, the Government cannot operate alone without the private sector and the private sector needs a commonsense approach to economic growth policies that is set and implemented by the national Government."

With cocoa being Solomon Islands third largest export earner, Ilala says the performance of both DML and Arania shows that businesses can

succeed when the industry succeeds."

Community group Baetalou Food Security and Marketing also featured in the awards winning the Business Contribution to the Community Award for small business.

While Honiara cafe Lime Lounge, which is featured in this month's *Agrikalsa Nius* for its use of local produce, won the Excellence in Business Service Delivery Award. Other winners that use local produce in their services include Mambo Juice and El Shadai Café.

The Business Excellence Awards was organised by the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industries with the winners selected by a panel of independent judges. ●

Reviving Black Post's legacy

In the 1980s, Black Post in North East Guadalcanal was the centre of cocoa research in the country.

The facility worked on developing cocoa varieties that were optimally suited to Solomon Islands soil and climate.

Fifteen lots of cocoa varieties were grown at the Black Post research facility.

But in the late 1990s, years of research and data were lost when the facility was plundered and burnt to the ground during the ethnic tension.

The research may be gone but today Black Post's legacy continues to live in the plots of cocoa trees that have withstood the destruction of the ethnic tension.

"The trees are important because they provide strong genetic variety that can be used to strengthen the type of cocoa plants we have here in the Solomons," said agriculture expert Moses Pelomo.

In 2010, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock began talks with the landowners to rehabilitate the lots, under the Cocoa Livelihoods Improvement Programme. This included pruning, brushing and maintaining the area.

When CLIP ended in June 2012, Pelomo was engaged by the Ministry to complete his work with landowners to rehabilitate the cocoa trees at Black Post.

"The main work that needs to be done is to identify the different varieties of cocoa trees that are at Black Post."

He says the progress made at rehabilitating the trees at Black Post has only been possible through the close



Harvest time at Black Post.

partnership with landowners.

Talks are underway to set up a formal memorandum of understanding between the Ministry and landowners – to provide a long-term access agreement to the cocoa trees.

Highlighting the Ministry's plan, Pelomo says the Black Post rehabilitation is very important to the future of cocoa research in the country.

"If we find any trees that are productive and high yielding we need to graft them and then replicate and plant them.

"Once you find productive trees and graft them it's better than finding seed and growing because seeds can change. Using graft materials gives a true characteristic."

Pelomo says MAL will continue to work with landowners to ensure that research into cocoa varieties continues. ●

Solomon Islands pilot plant health clinics

A new concept in getting agricultural assistance out to farmers is being trialled in the Solomon Islands.

Instead of the usual visits to farms, plant health clinics have been set up in project communities for farmers to attend and access help from agriculture officers and plant specialists.

The first plant health clinics were set up in May last year at Burns Creek in Honiara, Guadalcanal and Malaita as part of an 18-month pilot study funded by the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR) and implemented by the MAL's Research Department, Kastom Gaden Association and Vois Blong Mere Solomon.

It is a component of a larger five year study on Integrated Crop Management in the region.

Maria Gharuka from MAL's Research Department says plant health clinics operate the same way as medical clinics in that patients see doctors about their ailment and they go



Plant health clinic at Tetere in Guadalcanal.

back home with a prescription and treatment.

"It doesn't require many resources to set up, just a tarpaulin, some chairs and a table," said Gharuka.

"The number of extension officers around the country is very low. We simply cannot attend to every farmer."

Although not resource intensive, the outcomes from the clinics have been very beneficial, she added.

"During the clinics we've found that often it's the first time for some of these farmers to get help from the Ministry."

The plant health clinic concept was first developed in Bolivia in 2004 where an under resourced agriculture ministry turned to clinics as a means of delivering services to farmers.

Plant health veteran Dr Grahame Jackson, who has been assisting the set up of clinics, says the benefits of plant health clinics are obvious.

"Plant health clinics make the most out

of our very limited resources to carry out a good service. Through the clinics farmers can also assist each other with similar problems."

Dr Jackson says the clinics can be used to keep track of diseases and pests as part of wider plant health surveillance.

"The clinics have been set up near market areas, so that it is on the way for farmers who are travelling to sell their produce.

"Right now we are targeting commercial crops such as slippery cabbage, beans, egg plants, tomatoes,

water melon and women have even brought in their ornamental plants for treatment," said Gharuka.

Since May last year 12 clinics have been carried out with plans for 14 more this year.

In North Malaita the Kastom Gaden Association ran one clinic while Gharuka from MAL's Research Department has had the leading role in clinics at Burns Creek, Henderson, New Zealand Camp, GPPOL 1 and GPPOL 2 and in North Guadalcanal. ●

400-egg incubator for Kastom Gaden Association



The incubator is unpacked during the ceremony.

The Kastom Gaden Association received an incubator from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in March as part of a five-year project on mitigating the effects of climate change.

The incubator will help create a supply of chicks that will be distributed to farmers in three project areas of Aruligho in Guadalcanal, Hunda and Kena in Western Province and Buma in Malaita.

By giving farmers a greater supply of chicken hatchlings it is envisaged that this will boost the protein content in the diet of the local community in addition to providing livelihood for

farmers. The project is funded by the European Union and implemented by the National Agriculture Research Institute of Papua New Guinea in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

It targets areas that have been affected by either heavy rain, dry spells or salinity in their water table.

The chairman of the Kastom Gaden Association, Moses Polemo, praised the EU, NARI and MAL for supporting what he described as a practical initiative.

"Too many times we preach about what we want achieved but often we forget what is needed to achieve it. This incubator is an example of what is needed."

The incubator will be set up at the KGA headquarters in Burns Creek outside of Honiara where it will be linked to the power supply and backed up with a standby generator. The KGA has a small village chicken breeding unit that will produce fertile eggs for the incubator.

Clement Hadosaia of KGA says in the later stage of the project farmers will try to cross breed chickens to find the most suitable for local production.

The incubator cost \$35,000 including shipment to Honiara and has the capacity to hold 400 eggs, which will take 21 days to mature.

NARI of PNG will provide practical

training to KGA technicians on the set up and management of the incubator. KGA will also receive an operational budget of \$45,000 from the project and supply chicks to the project on a cost recovery basis.

Apart from small livestock development, the project has components on crop improvement, soil fertility management and water management.

The project is financed by the European Union which provided a research grant of \$33 million to finance 80 percent of the direct costs of the project over its five year implementation period. NARI is contributing the matching 20 percent of the project. ●



Handing over of the incubator from MAL to Kastom Gaden Association.

Time to address coconut dilemma

The one common plant that can be found in virtually all the islands of the Solomons group, from shore to shore, is the coconut tree.

The coconut tree is part of the natural island heritage with communities in the west to those in the far east all having their own traditional uses of the plant.

In the agriculture sector the coconut has always been a mainstay commodity with copra being the early foundation of Solomon Islands trade.

But what many do not realise is that most coconut plantations in the country are over 40 years old and filled with senile trees. Meaning they are producing less fruit as the years go by.

Most plantations were planted during 1960s when world prices were competitive and the Government embarked on a mass planting campaign.

Four decades on and many of our coconut trees have outlived their usefulness says MAL's Deputy Director of Agriculture Land Use and Planning, Titus Sura, with minimal fruit production and poor yield.

"Most trees need to be chopped down and a serious replanting campaign needs to take place."

It's a problem shared by many countries in the Pacific and Sura is encouraging Solomon Islands to follow the footsteps of one country that is taking the lead in turning around its coconut industry, Fiji.

This year Fiji began its campaign to plant one million coconut trees that it launched at the Asia Pacific Coconut Committee Meeting in Nadi in February.

"It's a very innovative programme to drive the coconut sector. For us in the Solomon Islands we need a holistic approach to the coconut sector. Replanting should be a priority for MAL," said Sura.

"Although it's difficult right now because copra prices are



Titus Sura, centre, at the planting of 1 million coconut trees launch in Fiji.

so low and few farmers want to invest in coconuts, we have to plan for the future," added Sura.

Subsidies or other incentives can be used to drive farmers towards working on coconuts and to lay the groundwork for the sector's future.

This could include the setting up of coconut nurseries across the country.

Farmers too, he says will need to take a different approach in how they set up their plantations.

"We want to promote integrated farming systems where farmers can have a plantation of coconut trees but also grow food crops or keep livestock on the ground."

Other industries such as the virgin coconut oil which is developing in the Solomon Islands should also be encouraged says Sura.

"The Government could also look at introducing milling machines to communities to promote virgin coconut oil. This could be a major incentive for a replanting programme."

But any programme to revive Solomon Islands coconut industry must include young people and students, says Sura.

"With the replanting programme young people must have a leading role. After all they are the ones that will be responsible for seeing this through and they will be the ones to reap the success of this programme."

Sura believes one offshoot industry that can benefit from a replanting programme is the coconut timber industry.

"All the trees that need to be felled can be used in the timber industry. In Fiji, it's a big sector with one company Pacific Green using coconut timber to make high quality flooring and furniture." ●



Coconut products on display at the meeting.

Quality appropriate research

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock strengthened its research capacity with a one-week long intensive training for researchers in late March.

The training led by Dr Mark Johnston of Component Two of the Rural Development Programme reviewed a proposed set of research guidelines for MAL and a research manual.

Dr Johnston said it's important that MAL and the Government invest in research as it has been proven that countries that have invested in research have benefitted through development.

He says the proposed research guidelines would ensure that the work of the Ministry is in line with the Government's needs as well as those of farmers.

"Having a set of guidelines would ensure that our research is appropriate and accountable," he told attendees from Research, other MAL departments including provincial staff.

MAL Permanent Secretary, Frank Wickham, encouraged research officers to work hard and to aim for excellence in their line of work.

"Of all the departments you have the added challenge of being both a scientist and a manager," said Wickham.

"You not only search for new knowledge but manage the process with each research activity almost a project in



Training participants at the Research workshop.

itself."

Dr Johnston said the training would ensure that Research staff know how to develop a proposal, how to get it approved and how to access funds for it.

"It's to institutionalise a common system for project management and research that makes sense.

"This is a starting point. Every organisation needs to have a system in place so things are organised properly."

As part of the training MAL's researchers also created a research slogan 'Quality Appropriate Research' for the Research Department.

The training was made possible with the support of NARI-EU-ACP-S&T capacity building project which co-funded the training with RDP. ●

Locally Lime Lounge

From its ngali nut cake to its vast array of smoothies and unripe pawpaw salad, local fruits and vegetables are a core factor in the success of one of Honiara's most popular eateries, the Lime Lounge Cafe.

This year Lime Lounge is marking its 10 years of business. Over the past decade the cafe has expanded its Point Cruz operation as well as setting up its Sublime coffee kiosk at RAMSI's GBR base in Henderson.

But one thing that hasn't changed since day one of operation has been the use of local produce.

"Local produce is our key ingredients, it's what makes our dishes stand out," said Lime Lounge manager, Maryann Saimon.

The cafe maximises the use of fruits that are in season, such as mango or melon, mixing it with other fruits to create a special hybrid flavour for their smoothies.

Even royalty have been impressed by Lime Lounge's menu. In November 2012 Lime Lounge catered an island feast at Government House for the visiting Prince William and his wife Kate.



Lime Lounge's famous ngali nut cake and coffee.

"Prince William was really fascinated by the fern salad and wanted to know more about it," said Saimon.

During the week the Lime Lounge regularly spends up to \$10,000 buying local fruits and vegetables. It relies on local supplies so much, that the café has developed a scheduling system where it will buy from one farmer per week.

"It's our way of trying to spread the business around but

also to try and maintain a regular supply."

Despite the scheduling system kitchen staff still find the need to run to the market for extra supplies during the week.

"If there is one thing that needs to be improved its the regular and constant supply of fruits and vegetables," said Saimon.

"Some weeks we may have a lot of one fruit or vegetable and the next there is nothing and this creates problems for us with our menu."

With the cafe's popular salad offerings completely reliant on local produce, Assistant Manager Jessie Konofilia says what happens to farmers impacts the café too.

"Recently our supplier for lettuce was unable to provide any because of the heavy rains. This really affects what we can offer our customers."

Despite these challenges – including the constant rise in prices of local vegetables and fruits – Saimon says the café is committed to sticking by its practice of using and buying local produce.

"When we find good, reliable suppliers we stick with them. Like our lemon supplier from Gold Ridge, he's been with us since day one. He's well over 80-years-old yet he's one of our most active and reliable suppliers."

The irregularity of produce has also forced the café to be innovative in its approach to certain fruits and vegetables.

"Ngali nuts are very popular but because of their seasonal nature are not available throughout the year.

"What we do is when we do get some we buy in bulk and freeze it for use later."

The café has bought ngali nuts from different parts of the country Malaita, Western Province and Gela.

Local honey too is another product that is in big demand.

"Honey always seems to run out very fast in Honiara," said Konofilia.

"There was one period there was no honey in town. Then we had a call from one of our employees saying they seen some honey on sale. True enough, we found the honey being sold, of all places, at the Rove Betel Nut market. We bought all of it but it just goes to show how difficult it can be to get local ingredients."

Opening seven days a week the Lime Lounge has earned a reputation as a hangout for Honiara's expatriate population, but that too is changing says Saimon, with a younger set of Solomon Islanders becoming part of the clientele. In late March Lime Lounge won the Business Service Delivery Award at the Business Excellence Awards.

Konofilia says the award has not only brought pride to the 32 staff members of the café but has instilled the drive to maintain high standards in its operations. ●



Lime Lounge Manager, Maryann Saimon and Assistant Manager, Jessie Konofilia at the Business Excellence Awards.

Permaculture expert urges local approach

An Australian permaculture expert is encouraging Solomon Islanders to take on a 'live local' approach, whereby people grow their own foods and buy locally made products.

Rosemary Morrow (Rowe) says this will ensure that communities have food security and promote local livelihood.

"With the rising cost of fuel, communities can't rely on imports as this will only get more expensive over time. So why buy products from across the world when you can either grow your own food or buy from your own community?"

Rowe is part of a fast worldwide movement that encourages people to live and buy locally.

"We urge people to grow their own food or buy locally and support the local economy.

"We have a name for these type of people called locavores."



Solomon Islanders urged to grow their own or buy local fruits, vegetables and produce.

She says this movement would be relevant here in the

Solomon Islands where there is major reliance on imported foods such as rice, noodles and processed goods.

Rowe is known world-wide for her pragmatic and effective approach to creating permaculture systems across a broad range of environments.

She has successfully implemented community-scale permaculture systems in such diverse biospheres as Uganda, Somalia, Thailand, the Middle East, Bhutan, Australia and northern Europe.

Rowe was in the Solomon Islands in March to work with the community at Lilisiana in Malaita on permaculture and disaster preparedness.

She says a key aspect of permaculture is that communities are self reliant especially in times of disaster.

"Most people think that in times of disaster the government will swoop in and save them. But the reality worldwide is that governments have limited resources which are stretched beyond capacity at disaster time. Communities only have themselves to rely on."

Her trip to Langalanga was inspired by Tide of Change a documentary made by Solomon Islands filmmaker Amie Batalibasi about her community on Lilisiana.

In the film people in the community were distressed over lack of good knowledge on what to do in the case of natural disaster such as rising sea levels.

Based on the film interviews and a request from Batalibasi, Rowe was able to source funding to travel to Malaita and work with the community.

Over five days the community prepared a disaster plan on what to do during a natural disaster.

"First the community looked at what disasters were likely to affect them, of which they highlighted three; cyclones, ocean rise and tsunami.

"They carried out a disaster profile looking at how long had to prepare, what would they do before disaster such as evacuate old people, move boats, and fix up houses.

The community looked at what to do during the disaster,



Local foods important in supporting good health and the economy.

how to keep children and families safe. And what to do after the disaster in terms of dividing food and water supply."

The plan also looked at what to do afterwards, where to put injured people, the need to keep the road open for first aid and medical treatment.

The final aspects of the disaster planning looked at community meetings and discussion post-disaster on whether or not to rebuild the community again or to move. Other issues that the planning also looked at included how to deal with donations coming in.

After a week in Malaita, Rowe travelled back to Honiara where she spent a day training with the Kastom Gaden Association on disaster preparedness.

She says natural disasters will always happen so it's imperative that authorities and communities disaster plans in place such as escape routes, access to food and water supply, evacuation points and access to clinics and medical treatment.

As for Solomon Islands agriculture, Rowe is encouraging farmers to plant crops and plants that are not cultivated and replaced annually.

"The annual plant is quite destructive to the soil, so to protect the soil farmers should plant perennial crops that can stay in the ground for long periods.

Ploughing of the soil makes the land vulnerable to landslide and erosion"

Rowe is encouraging Solomon Islanders to plant more yams and taro, onions, sweet potatoes, chives, garlic, ginger. Food like garlic and ginger not only add flavour but are nutritious with health benefits.

Bamboo, she says is a plant that could grow well here in Solomon Islands without damage to the soil and land.

She says bamboos are especially good in coastal areas and protect land from soil erosion. In addition bamboos can also be exported to countries like Japan. ●



Traditional crops like taro can help communities be disaster resistant says Rosemary Morrow.



**Andrew Kamoto, Central Islands Province
Chief Field Officer.**

As Chief Field Officer, Andrew Kamoto has been at the helm of agriculture at Central Islands Province for the past seven years.

He is in charge of developing agriculture in the area covering Gela, Florida Islands, Russells and Tulagi.

"Central Islands closeness to Honiara makes agriculture a real potential for development for its people.

"Many of our farmers will travel to Honiara to sell their produce at the Central Market," Kamoto told *Agrikalsa Nius* in a recent interview.

The presence of the Russell Islands Plantation Estates Limited, RIPEL, show the enormous agriculture potential the province has, he added.

Born and raised in Isabel Kamoto didn't live outside the province until he passed his primary school exams and travelled to Guadalcanal in 1972 to study at Selwyn College.

From secondary school his passion for agriculture took him to Papua New Guinea where he studied agriculture. In 1981 he returned from studies and joined the Ministry of Agriculture. In 1988 he completed his post graduate studies before being posted back home to Isabel. In 2006 he was promoted and posted to the Central Islands.

One of his first tasks was to find

Central Province's Chief Field Officer: Andrew Kamoto

office space for provincial agriculture workers.

"When I arrived there were about seven of us all sharing one desk."

From 2006 to 2009, Kamoto set about finding office space in Tulagi. It was a frustrating experience with every vacant space he found, already allocated to a ministry, organisation or company.

Three years into his search Kamoto finally convinced the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to fund the construction of a new office.

Even then Kamoto's worries were still not over, facing constant challenges in getting the plan approved and in sourcing funds.

When the builders had a major falling out with the building contractor – Kamoto kept the project alive, with the builders foregoing their pay to complete the job.

In February this year, thanks to funding from the Rural Development Programme, Component Two, MAL's new office in Tulagi was finally opened by the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock the Hon. David Tome.

For Kamoto his Central Islands

experience has been an exciting and challenging one. The major difference between Central Islands and Isabel says Kamoto is how scattered the islands are.

"You have to travel far to get to farmers and communities, but the good thing is nearly all the villages are coastal so you don't have to travel far inland."

Kamoto says one aspect of work in the Central Islands that he has been happy with is the level of support his office has received from the Provincial Government.

"Under the Provincial Government Strengthening Programme, we have a great working relationship with the PGSP funding broiler work, communications through solar radio and for 2013 there is funding to revive cattle in the province."

Looking beyond life in the Ministry, Kamoto says his plans would include either something with honey in Isabel or crab farming.

"In the area where I am from there we have lots of crabs. I want to utilize the natural resources and develop a farm," said Kamoto. ●



Solomon Islands' old capital Tulagi.

Supporting fumigation services to improve Quarantine

Source PHAMA

An initiative being carried out to improve fumigation standards for quarantine treatment should result in improved market access for Solomon Islands agricultural and timber products into Australia and New Zealand, and better quarantine protection for Solomon Islands.

As part of assistance being provided by the AusAID funded Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA) programme, a meeting was held in March to bring together representatives from the Quarantine department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, current providers of fumigation services, exporters and Solomon Islands Ports Authority. Attendees discussed standards and procedures that have been developed for Solomon Islands on gas fumigation treatments based on the Australia Fumigation and Accreditation Standard (AFAS). These treatments are used to ensure imported and exported goods and products are free of insect pests of quarantine concern and are an important part of trade facilitation in agricultural and timber products.

Director of Quarantine Francis Tsatsia, said that Solomon Islands had been facing significant problems for many years due to a lack of treatment capacity putting the country at risk and affecting trade. He felt the development of recognised fumigation standards and the training of quarantine and private sector staff on how to follow them



Participants with their Australia Fumigation Accreditation Standard certificates.

will improve consistency of treatments conducted and improve the country's ability to meet export standards as well as better protect itself from entry of unwanted pests.

Following the meeting, the National Coordinator for PHAMA in Solomons Islands, Andrew Sale presented AFAS Training Certificates for five trainees from Quarantine and the private sector who successfully completed an initial fumigation training course in Fiji in November 2012. He also handed over gas monitoring and protective equipment to the Quarantine Department to enable them to assess fumigations. Sale congratulated the trainees for their success and looked forward to PHAMA's further support to the initiative to build recognised treatment standards to help support trade. He advised further work is now being conducted to train Quarantine staff in Solomon Islands on audit processes to regulate fumigation standards and that further training of staff from interested private sector businesses will be carried out in April on how to conduct fumigation to the newly developed standards. ●

Young farmer = young scientist = young entrepreneur = a bright future for Pacific organics

Source: SPC

A programme to build capacity of youth in organic agriculture was held in March in Nukualofa Tonga.

The programme is the outcome of a partnership between the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom), Land Resources Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the United Nations Development Programme, Oxfam New Zealand and the Tonga National Youth Congress.

The overall objective of this project is to enhance livelihood opportunities for youth in organic agriculture through

training trainers and extension providers from organic associations in sustainable organic production methods. These organisations provide ongoing mentoring and support to young farmers and link youth agricultural enterprises existing organic certification and market chains.

The Pacific is facing an aging farming population, the SPC Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy also highlighted that Agriculture is not being seen as a viable career option for young people and is often viewed as the job for 'drop outs'.

UNDP Representative, Asif Chida pointed out in his opening remarks that this creates grave concerns for future food security in the region. He noted that farmers hold the



Solomon Islands scientist and farmer Dr Shane Tutua.

health of our nations in their hands and we need to create interest and opportunities for youth to engage in farming as a business.

The POETCom Coordinating Officer Karen Mapusua noted: "the average age of organic farmers worldwide is five to eight years younger than conventional farmers; it is attractive to younger people because it addresses the concerns of young people such as climate change and environment and well as providing livelihood opportunities. Youth can feel they are more than labourers, that they are actively contributing to a better world."

The train-the-trainers workshop held 11-16 March is a pilot programme in the Polynesia sub region. The 30 participants, two-thirds of whom are under 35, are from NGOs and organisations from across Polynesia including Niue Island Organic Farmers Association, Titikaveka Producers Association, Cook Islands; Women in Business Development, Samoa; the Department of Agriculture American Samoa; the Tonga National Youth Congress and Tonga Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Extension and Women's Division.

These organisations provide extension support and advisory services to the growing number of organic

farmers in the Pacific region and to youth or schools farming programmes. After this pilot there are plans to take the training to Melanesia and Micronesia and to make the training kit for organic agriculture in the Pacific which is being developed widely available.

The trainers are Karen Mapusua, POETCom coordinating officer; Dr. Shane Tutua, a soil scientist and farmer from the Solomon Islands; and Kamilo Ali, Livelihoods Programme Officer from Oxfam New Zealand. The workshop covers the principles of organics, soil and plant health, and animal husbandry.

As the workshop progressed participants engaged in active discussion drawing on traditional practices from the various countries and sharing some of the scientific explanations behind them as well as undertaking a variety of experiments and practical activities that highlighted that to be an organic farmer is really to be a scientist.

Also discussed were certification requirements and the role of organic guarantee systems in building consumer confidence and developing markets for organic products- confirming the need for development of business and entrepreneurial skills amongst young farmers.

At the conclusion of the workshop it was agreed that to engage youth in organics and the opportunities it provides, we need to change the way we look at and talk about farming as a career and that extension providers are well placed to lead this change.

POETCom is the peak organics body for the Pacific region, and its secretariat is based at SPC with funding support from the EU Increasing Agricultural Commodities Trade project (IACT). POETCom's vision is that Organics and Ethical trade will be the key contributors to sustaining our cultures and communities; improving farmer livelihoods, communities, people's health and the environment in the Pacific.

For further information please contact Karen Mapusua, POETCom coordinating officer on email Irdhelpdesk@spc.int or telephone (679) 3370733 ●

Posarae adapts to a changing climate

By Dr Melchior Matak

Posarae community in South Choiseul with the assistance of the Agriculture Division in Choiseul Province, Research Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)/Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) recently completed the first phase of a contouring farm demonstration pilot covering 2,500m² of slope land with gradients ranging from 200 to 450.

The pilot was implemented as part of a joint effort between SPC/GIZ and Choiseul Province under the Choiseul Integrated Climate Change Programme to adapt agriculture

production in Choiseul to climate change.

The contours were marked and planted with vetiver grass (*Chrysopogon zizanioides*) and Gliricidia (*Gliricidia sepium*). The vetiver grasses were aimed at reducing soil erosion and to stabilize the soil. In addition, Gliricidia, a leguminous (nitrogen fixing) tree species was planted between the contours to improve soil fertility and stabilise the soil.

The technical aspects of contouring were implemented under the guidance of Alex Maoma of MAL (Research) and his Extension counterparts led by the Chief Field Officer, Andrew Melanolu and Senior Field Officer, Joe Dino. The Posarae Adaptation Programme was designed by SPC/GIZ



Community members take part in contouring and farming on slope training.

staff in Choiseul in consultation with Choiseul Agriculture Division following the completion of a province-wide climate change vulnerability and adaptation assessment study in September 2012.

Kastom Gaden targets collaborative effort

The head of the Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) says his organisation is looking to strengthen its ties with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and farmer networks throughout the country.

Clement Hadosaia says KGA is looking forward to signing an MOU with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to allow for greater collaboration between the two organisations and assist agriculture development in rural areas.

"In the provinces MAL has a good set-up so we want the Ministry's support through the use of its resources or logistics to deliver agriculture services to the people."

The Kastom Gaden Association was set up in 1995 and became a registered body in 2000.

"Its aim is to promote food security, conservation of genetic materials and soil preservation," said Hadosaia.

Informal discussions have already started between KGA and MAL with the two parties to meet officially later this year to renew an MOU that had lapsed in 2001.

Hadosaia says the MOU must be practical, useful and one that will be beneficial to both parties.

"We already work together at all levels but we want to put something in black and white."

Ten community representatives (males and females) were given training in how to delineate contours and revegetate them with Vetiver grass and Gliricidia. Also their awareness about the significance of contouring when farming on slope lands was also heightened through the exercise. According to Maoma, the Posarae pilot is the second largest contour-based farm in Solomon Islands.

In addition, to the set-up of contours, soil erosion monitoring pegs were installed in the contour plot, and a rain gauge from the Solomon Islands Meteorological Service was also installed. One villager was trained to record daily rainfall readings. Soil samples were also collected and sent overseas for analysis.

The second phase began in early 2013. It involves the planting of crops and training of farmers on appropriate farming practices conducive to slope lands, and can accommodate intense and frequent rainfall. The success of the pilot will rest upon on-going collaboration amongst all relevant stakeholders including community and church leaders, the provincial member for Katupika ward and the community of Posarae as a whole. ●



Kastom Gaden and MAL officials at a ceremony.

He says any work in the agriculture sector has to be tied in to MAL for it to be sustainable as they are the main body delivering agriculture services in the country.

Kastom Gaden is also looking to expand its ties with other partner ministries, including the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change Disaster Management and Meteorology.

Hadosaia says KGA is also working on strengthen its ties with farmer groups and associations throughout the provinces.

"They are our agents out in the field so we want to build their capacity." ●

MAL organisational reform – column 2

By Malcolm Bell

A key input to the planned organisational development for MAL will be a review of the capacity of MAL, and this process will commence in April with a formal organisational capacity assessment.

Senior officers in Headquarters will be attending a three-day workshop in Maravagi in April, where they will be involved in an intensive consultative exercise. Following that, a similar program will be conducted for Chiefs from HQ and Provinces plus some other key staff.

This is part of the current RDP support to MAL, with Dr Mark Johnston leading the overall program. Malcolm Bell will facilitate the first workshop activity, and Gabriel Hiele will be recording key aspects of group discussions. For the second workshop, it is planned that the Under-Secretary Administration



MAL PS Frank Wickham, centre, and senior staff hold a group meeting.

David Patternot will also be involved in the conduct of the activities.

"These consultations will be very intensive, as we try to map the dominant assessments of organisational capacity

and structural elements, both before the RDP commenced and now, plus the consensus opinion of MAL culture, both now and desired, and also other some key attitudes to aspects of MAL's organisational structure."

Following these workshops,

it is planned that members of the RDP team and the Under-Secretary, Administration will visit provinces for further and focussed consultations. ●

Experts meet on safe exchange of genetic resources in Western Pacific

by PNG-AGRINEWS

Protocols and procedures for the safe exchange of Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) between three Western Pacific countries were reviewed and refined by stakeholders from PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu during a workshop at Bubia in Lae, Morobe Province, in February.

The three day workshop was organised by the PNG National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) to encourage material transfer of genetic resources for the purposes of food security, research and breeding but within the limits of the required quarantine and legal frameworks. And such frameworks, agreements and practices were discussed and reviewed with countries giving status reports on quarantine and intellectual property rights issues involved in PGR

exchange.

More than 20 participants including senior executives, subject matter experts, research managers, legal experts and policy makers from quarantine authorities, research and development organizations, representatives of government and non-government organisations from the three countries attended.

Among them were NARI Director General Dr Raghunath Ghodake; NARI Council Chairman Dr John Kola; Managing Director of National Agricultural and Quarantine Inspection Authority, Andrew Yamanea; Solomon Island Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock's (MAL) Permanent Secretary, Frank Wickham; MAL Quarantine Director Francis Tsatsia; Vanuatu's Director General for the Ministry of Agriculture, Quarantine, Forestry and Fisheries (MAQFF) and



Workshop participants from the region.

MAQFF's Quarantine Director Benuel Tarilongi.

The workshop concluded with the development of a draft Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) document for the exchange of PGR materials between the three countries. The draft was accepted by representatives who participated in the workshop. The participants also developed a better understanding and appreciation of issues and procedures on the MTA,

knowledge gap, facilities, intellectual property rights, international treaties, quarantine, pathogen testing, and other critical inputs during the meeting.

Other organisations that participated were the Business Council of PNG and Intellectual Property Office (PNG); Ministry of Environment and Conservation (Solomon Island); Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Vanuatu Agriculture Research and Technical Centre (Vanuatu). Biosecurity experts

from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community also attended to share their experiences on PGR material cleansing and transfer between Pacific countries and international partners.

The workshop was part of a project on "Capacity Development in Conservation and Utilisation of Invaluable Plant Genetic Resources in Western Pacific Countries", under the EU financed Africa-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) Science and Technology Programme. The project is designed to enhance the human resource

capacity in PGR collection and maintenance, characterization and evaluation, conservation, pre-breeding techniques and procedures, screening and evaluation and finally utilization of PGRs in crop breeding. It is part of three ACP projects undertaken in the three countries to build the human resource capacity needed for high calibre agricultural research in the Western Pacific region to enhance productivity, efficiency and sustainability of the smallholder agricultural sector. ●

Tingting Raonim

Question:

I have just bought a coconut/cocoa plantation in the Northern Region of Malaita. It has very good road access and I believe we have the market for beef at Malu'u and Auki. I have every intention of turning this new property into a family cattle business. I understand that the cattle development in Kwaio has begun the process of felling and clearing after which planting pasture grass and legumes will take place later this year. Well, I am at the former stage at this point in time and I would certainly appreciate what expert advice you can provide on that one.



Cattle at Tenavatu in North East Guadalcanal.

Agrikalsa Nius Reader

Answer:

The idea is for the Kwaio (Gonokukufo cattle property) to operate commercially by producing beef cattle for the domestic beef market with the capacity to distribute steers to small farmers in economic zones of Malaita.

The next step is to implement an expansion phase - this is where the development of sturdy and viable smallholder development is involved. The interest must be expressed initially by the farmer in developing the farm to some reasonable level. This will then be followed by an application to the provincial agriculture extension services (PAES) (through Malu'u field officer). There will be a selection process for all such applications and PAES will decide who fits in the programme.

So for Malaita Province we are still at development and establishment phase that is developing the farm at West Kwaio and we hope to get it operational end of 2013 or early 2014. This means the expansion phase may commence in 2014 giving Malaita farmers good time to ready their farms and to apply.

MAL

Recipe - Quick and Easy Pineapple Pie

Ingredients

Filling

One big pineapple
Three tbsp custard powder
Half cup sugar
water

Base

Two cups self-raising flour. Three tbsp milk powder
Three tbsp margarine
Three egg yolks

Meringue

Three egg whites
Three tbsp sugar

Method

Filling

- Peel pineapple, remove core and dice.
- Put pineapple pulp and sugar into pot with enough water to cover.
- When boiling, reduce heat to simmer.
- Mix custard with water enough to make thick paste.
- Stir thoroughly into pineapple. Cook for five minutes.
- Cool and set aside while preparing base and meringue.

Base

- Put self raising flour into dish with milk powder and margarine.
- Rub mixture with fingertips. It should resemble coarse breadcrumbs.
- Separate egg yolk from whites and beat until frothy with 3 tbsp ice cold water.
- Pour egg yolk into flour mix.
- Using blade of knife and chopping motion, mix flour and yolks. The pastry mix should be clumpy and soft.
- Press into greased pie dish.

Meringue

- Beat egg whites until soft peaks form - peaks should be able to hold shape when beater is lifted.
- Gradually add in sugar in two lots and beat until meringue is stiff.
- Pour pineapple onto pastry and top with meringue.
- Bake in oven at 180C until meringue is browned.



For more information on stories in this newsletter or agriculture enquiries contact the Agriculture Information Unit at the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Headquarters in Point Cruz.

Ph: 22143/22144 **Email:** mal.agrikalsanius@gmail.com

For the latest agriculture news and stories catch Famas Kona every week on the national broadcaster SIBC at 8.30pm on Monday and 7.30pm on Wednesday.

The Agriculture Information Unit is the public relations arm of the Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock. Its role is to disseminate agriculture information to the public and farming communities using radio, newspapers, television, online and print media.

Library

The Solomon Islands National Agriculture Information Centre is now open.

The library has a major collection of books and information on Solomon Islands agriculture. Members of the public and students are encouraged to visit the library for information on agriculture in the Solomon Islands and around the world.

Opening hours

Monday & Wednesday

Friday

1:30pm - 4:00pm

9:00am - 11:30am