



LANDMARK ACHIEVEMENT

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WELCOME

It is my pleasure as the Permanent Secretary of MAL to present to you the third issue of our monthly newsletter. As we already know, 2020 has been a tough year for us with the impact brought to by the Covid-19 on the agriculture sector, economy, education, health and the globe. Despite the challenges, MAL remain committed to its mandatory responsibilities thus continue to strive in service delivery to fulfill its vision and mission. This publication brings you achievements of the ministry for the month of November-December. This is a wonderful opportunity for MAL to embrace this communication medium and to fully maximize its capacity to disseminate agricultural news, success stories and information to meet the needs of its readers. We are grateful that you're taking your time to read it. Please share it with your friends and disseminate it through your respective network. This publication is produced by MAL information & Media Unit team.

Agriculture Sector 10-year growth strategy & action plan validated



Minister of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), Hon. Senley Levi Filualea (front centre) with his Permanent Secretary, Ethel Frances (standing next left) and Deputy Secretary Technical, Michael Ho'ota (standing next from right) with MAL departmental Directors, reps from PMO and MAL provincial Chief Field Officers, Principal Officers and senior officers of MAL after the official opening of the three days conference at Heritage Park Hotel.

A three days session of constructive with stirring spirited discussion to validate the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) first ever 10-year Agriculture Sector Growth Strategy and Investment Plan (ASGSIP 2021-2030) and action plan was successfully held from 14th -16th December at the Heritage Park Hotel. Honourable Minister for MAL, Senley Levi Filualea officially opened the National Agriculture Conference (NAC) on 14th December. MAL Permanent Secretary, Ethel Tebengi Frances, Deputy Secretary Technical, Michael Ho'ota, MAL Departmental Directors, Provincial Chief Field Officers (CFOs), Principal Field Officers (PFOs) and other senior officers of the ministry attended the conference. The conference provided an opportunity for the Permanent Secretary Ms. Ethel Frances and her Deputy Secretary Technical Michael Ho'ota and all departmental Directors to meet with Chief Field Officers, Principal Field Officers and senior officers from the nine provinces to discuss and validate the ASGSIP 2021-2030 together with MAL's Corporate Plan 2021-2024. The forum was the first of its kind for MAL to organize as it brought together all agricultural think tank experts of the ministry to discuss ideas and agree to the roadmap as a way forward for the sector and

where they want to see the agriculture sector in the next ten years. Minister of MAL, Hon. Senley Filualea while acknowledging all the efforts of its staff toward the growth of the sector in the country said ASGSIP 2021-2030 is the first ever Solomon Islands Agriculture Sector Growth Strategy and Investment Plan (ASGSIP) that will guide the country in development of the sector in the next ten years. The Minister stressed during his opening remarks that the workshop is happening at the right time because it allows the Ministry to align its Corporate Plan 2021-2024 to the new DCGA redirection policies recently approved by Cabinet. "We will be the only ministry that will develop its corporate plan fully align to a new policy redirection. "It is our duty to facilitate and support the government improve the livelihood of our people, create economic activities and build our country and so I am confident this 10-year roadmap is conduit where we can better facilitate collaborative efforts by all players in the agriculture sector," Hon. Minister Filualea said. MAL Permanent Secretary, Ethel Tebengi Frances said that "taking a sector-wide approach in developing agriculture sector is a strategic approach in that the performance of agriculture sector is measured by the collective contributions of all its

key stakeholders including the government, private sector including our farmers, development partners, NGOs and churches. "A sector wide approach aims to strengthen sector performances by increasing coherence and complementary of interventions in support of a common policy framework," PS Frances said. She said that the Ministry as a government agency overseeing agriculture sector only facilitate support and create conducive environment for the sector to thrive through development of policies and laws including regulations but the actual delivery is done by all who participated in productions therefore it is only meaningful that we all have a plan that sets out collective interventions to meet national targets. The Permanent Secretary acknowledged the support of the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) of the United Nation for funding support that allows them to engage Consultants from the Food and Agriculture Organizations (FAO) of the United Nation to put together the Strategy for the Ministry. Especially IFAD Pacific Islands Country Director Tawfig El-Zabri for his tireless efforts in mobilizing support for MAL and to FAO Consultant Mr Glaeser Anton for putting the Strategy together. PS Frances, added that this three days' workshop is to allow the Min-

istry to internally validate the strategy before sharing it to all stakeholders. The next process therefore is to present this to all stakeholders for their agreement hopefully in February 2021 then to Cabinet for blessing." In his closing remarks, MAL Deputy Secretary Technical, Michael Ho'ota on behalf of the Hon. Minister and the Permanent Secretary acknowledged the constructive and important contributions of everyone over the three days of discussions. "Your presence here over the whole 3 days, indicates your commitment and seriousness in seeing that the agriculture sector is properly planned and managed to ensure growth as a resulting increase of the contribution of the agriculture sector towards the National Economy." "The inputs that you have given will go a long way in completing our corporate plan and most importantly getting more meat to say towards further validation of the ASGSIP 2021-2030 by other sectors and the final launching of ASGSIP which look to happen in the first quarter of 2021," DST Ho'ota said. He said agriculture remains the main activity for more than 85% of the population leaving in the rural areas and plays an important role with regards to the maintenance of food security,

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MAL and Malaita signs MoU to enhance agricultural collaboration

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) and the Malaita Provincial Government (MPG) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for agriculture co-operation between the Ministry and the Province. The MoU was signed by MAL Minister Hon. Senley Levi Filualea and MPG Premier Daniel Suidani in Auki on 3rd November 2020. Hon. Minister Filualea in his official remarks emphasized that the event is of great significance as it captured well the need for a collaborative work in addressing challenges that often faced by the province in large scale agriculture development. He added that the MoU is based on mutual interest and shared responsibilities with the purpose to enhance Food Security and Livelihood's for the people of Malaita and Solomon Islands.

The MoU outlined areas of mutual interests, obligations of each party (MAL & MPG) and joint obligations of the parties that would be followed in the development of agriculture and livestock on Malaita Province. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock is operating a pig breeding farm and crop bulking site at Adaliua, Central Kwara'ae and has in its key priority the revitalisation of Land purchase Cooperatives (LPCs) in Malaita as they are still active compared to majority of LPCs around the country that are now dormant. "The ministry (MAL) is looking forward to working collaboratively with MPG to revitalise these LPCs. "My ministry has been able to secure support from Canada Government to support the revitalisation of LPCs and currently a team is on the ground now to carry out a survey on agriculture related Cooperatives to support the design of revitalisation interventions. "Malaita LPCs are in the priority list for revival, because despite not being supported, the members of the Cooperatives are still actively involved in farming" Hon. Minister Filualea said. Welcoming the shared commitment under the Malaita Provincial Government, Premier Daniel Suidani affirmed that the event marked a new journey in the development of Agriculture and livestock in Malaita



MAL Minister Hon. Senley Levi Filualea and Malaita Province Premier Hon. Daniel Suidani with copy of the signed MoU. Photos courtesy of Solomon Star.

Province and certainly in Solomon Islands. "This is a new journey based on mutual cooperation and shared

development of the province and SI at large. "Agriculture as we know is the pillar through which our society survives.

"This is a new journey based on mutual cooperation and shared responsibilities.

responsibilities. Especially in addressing multiple challenges that often confront us in our large scale Agriculture endeavours. Mindful of those challenges, we must take stock of our past disappointments and thereupon forge a new outlook

Therefore it is an industry that we can all participate in than any other sector. However, as our society expanded and grows in population we need to expand and grow the way we see agriculture as well for better economic status and food security.



(L-R) Deputy Secretary Technical of MAL, Michael Ho'ota, MAL Minister Hon. Senley Levi Filualea, Malaita Premier, Daniel Suidani and MPG PS, Fredrick Fa'abasua during the MoU signing in Auki.

for our agricultural sector," Premier Suidani said. Mr. Suidani believes that the engagement and partnership between MAL and MPG through the MoU will pave the way forward to ensuring that the Agriculture and livestock sector of the province play an important role in the economic

That for me is the exact thing we are doing today. Finding new ways and approaches to work collaboratively in the agriculture sector to achieve better results," Premier Suidani emphasized. Deputy Secretary Technical of MAL, Michael Ho'ota who accompanied the Hon. Minister while congratu-

lating MPG for the fine achievement, said the ministry is looking forward to further collaborations with the Malaita Provincial government in implementing the national as well as provincial agriculture development programmes. He also used the opportunity and thanked the National Government and the MPG for their wisdom in seeing fit to come under a common understanding and partnership in developing the agriculture sector within the province to new heights. The Permanent Secretary of MAL, Ethel Tebengi Frances who was unable to join the team for the signing due to official commitment said that she believe that securing and ensuring land are available for development, and problem free, is the role of Provincial Governments. Ms. Frances pleased that this MoU paves the way for this to happen in Malaita Province adding she want to see MAL sealing similar agreement with other provinces but is hesitant to do so as other MOU with other Provinces have not materialised fully due to lack of funding. "The Ministry has existing MoU with other provinces like Isabel Province where a total of 300 plus hectares of land was allocated for agriculture research work. Challenge has been securing funds to develop this land so MAL has been slowly developing it as resources permits" PS Frances said. However, the Permanent Secretary said that she aim to aggressively seek funding externally so more agriculture development can happen in our provinces. "With Malaita, we took over the former Taiwan Operated pig breeding site and crop bulking at Adaliua, Central Kwara'ae so we need Malaita province to support and oversee land issues should there be any, and off course, the LPC revitalization program with Malaita LPCs, so these necessitated the signing of this MOU," PS Frances said. The signed MoU also formalises and further strengthens a long-standing traditional partnership that has existed for over a decade, between MAL and MPG individually or collectively contributing to numerous agricultural development initiatives in the province.



The delegation with Director of the Ministry of Forestry & Research Herbarium Department, Myknee Sirikolo, siting fourth, front row from left.

Agriculture Research pundits visit National Herbarium

A team comprised of Agriculture Research, Extension and Biosecurity professionals from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), Solomon Islands National University (SINU), Kastom Garden Association (KGA) and SPC Honiara office has visited the Ministry of Forestry & Research, National Herbarium Division at the Water Pump area, Botanical Garden on 4th November 2020.

The visit was part of the Plant Health Clinic refresher training organised by MAL and SPC Honiara office for the MAL, SINU and KGA agriculture plant protection specialist or Plant Doctors from 2nd-6th November at the KGA conference room.

"The visit provided us an opportunity to look and learn from the National Herbarium staff on the techniques/methods of preserving plant specimens," MAL Chief Research Officer Maria Gharuka said.

She said from the knowledge gathered during the field trip, the Plant Doctors or participants will be able to preserve sick plant samples, especially damaged or sick plants by using the pressing technique to make dry specimens.

"Dried specimens of sick or damaged plants are important reference materials that can be sent to Entomologist or Pathologist for identification of the pest or pathogen that actually caused the plant to get sick or damaged," she said.

Ms. Gharuka said though the visit was the first of its kind, participants are able to learn new ideas through sharing of information and discussions held on that day.

She added that such field visit is important as it provided a space for MAL through its Research Department to determine areas of potential future collaboration between both government organisations.

"The Research Department of MAL can utilize such field trips to learn from the Herbarium staff or Forestry about certain activities that MAL can collaborate with Forestry to implement.

"Also the two ministries can collaborate to build the capacity of their staff through practical trainings," Ms. Gharuka added.

The visit also enabled the officers to have a look at the dried specimens of plants kept in cabinets, some of which

are agricultural food crops such as sweet potato.

Director for the Ministry of Forestry & Research, Herbarium & Botanical Garden Division, Myknee Sirikolo while welcoming the team to his office said the National Herbarium and Botanical Garden is directly responsible for the management and improvement of the Herbarium and the Botanical Garden's infrastructure for both research and amenities for visitors, researchers and fellow citizens.

He said the division is made up of two Section which include the National Herbarium and the Botanical Garden.

"The National Herbarium Section is responsible for conducting plant specimen collection, documentation and updating the Solomon Islands' flora along with collaborating with international agencies, institutions and researchers to conduct research on ecology and botany. This Section also liaises with other herbaria for specimen loans and exchange.

"The Botanical Garden Section is responsible for conducting

living plant collections in provinces to increase biodiversity, promote plant conservation and display indigenous ornamental plants in the botanical garden. This Section also promotes in situ and ex situ conservation of vulnerable and endangered plant species, along with updating and managing plant records of all living plant materials stored inside the botanical garden," Director Sirikolo said as he revealed the responsibility of each section under the National Herbarium & Botanical Garden Division.

Meanwhile, Chief Research Officer of MAL Maria Gharuka thanked Mr. Sirikolo for his helpful presentations and for information shared and for making sure officers have the chance to observe the work that the National Herbarium staff is doing to study, protect and preserve our plant specimens.

Ms. Gharuka said MAL through its Research Department is looking forward to collaborate with the National Herbarium office in future research undertakings.



The delegation takes a tour through the National Herbarium.



Clyde Zoti, MAL Research Dept. and Rosemary Alabae, MAL Extension Dept. have a look at a dried plant specimen.

Kava demonstration training enlighten Vella La Vella farmers

A Kava training for farmers in the Northern part of Vella La Vella Island in the Western Province was deemed successful.

Farmers from three selected villages including Iriqila, Karaka and Valapata undertook the demonstration training from 17th-25th November 2020, facilitated by agriculture officers in the Western Province.

Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock (MAL), Chief Field Officer for Western Province, Sipuru Rove said the purpose of the activity is to guarantee farmers are educated on Kava nursery establishment to field management.

"This is a new cash crop and having farmers well versed with important information to grow it is critical for existing and interested farmers within those three villages, the province and even across the country.

"The programme involved more on field practicals and demonstration from nursery establishment to field management as such farmers' expectation were well met and acknowledged and appreciated by all the communities especially the farmers visited," Mr. Rove said.

Mr. Rove said it was an interactive training as participants were allocated



Kava harvesting demonstration conducted for farmers in the Northern part of Vella La Vella Island.

into groups and were asked to discuss on simple questions prepared by the agriculture facilitators specifically on Kava nursery establishment and field management followed by group presentations and discussions.

"Reasons for adopting this approach is for the facilitators to know and understand the background

information and understanding of the farmers about this new cash crop and also to certain facilitators understand farmers' problems and simple advices be given to them (farmers)."

On field demonstration Mr. Rove said the focus was on Kava variety identification, nursery practices including Kava cutting selection, pre-

germination process and nursery management, field planting and management and harvesting and processing.

However, Mr. Rove said one of the challenges farmers often faced with is the lack of knowledge and practical skills especially on the management aspect of this new crop and also finance obstacles for MAL officers to carry out trainings for farmers throughout the province particularly on kava crop.

Mr. Rove recommended that more Kava demonstration and training is needed to be carried out throughout the whole Province with the need and support of a training manual or factsheet for technical advices to farmers adding daily visit by officers to encourage farmers' interest is of importance.

More than 133 farmers (participants) attended the training including 11 women farmers in the three villages. A total data of 80,846 kava plants were collected in those three villages with an average of 608 kava plants per farmer.

Clemence Sivoro, Richard Bulehite, Natasha Kilo, Patrick Soruevo and Jason Soruevo from MAL, Western Province Extension office facilitated the training.

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Agriculture Sector 10-year growth strategy & action plan validated



Permanent Secretary, Ethel Tebengi Frances presenting the Agriculture Growth Strategy & Investment Plan 2021-2030.

livelihoods Social Stability and peace for our Nation, Solomon Islands.

He said the development of this ASGSIP 2021-2030 and other relevant documents such as the MAL's corporate plan 2021-2024 is timely after 40 years without a roadmap.

"We appreciate that there are many challenges facing the agriculture sector where there is no single answer and MAL cannot deal with

this alone and needs a sector wide approach.

"I guess this is the first time that we have a road map that considers a sector wide approach towards agriculture development in the country, it identifies strategic opportunities and outlines an ambitious path to revitalise the agricultural sector to contribute to the well-being and prosperity of all Solomon Islanders, ensuring food and



Some of the provincial Chief Field Officers that attended the conference.

nutrition security and increased economic growth.

"Drawing up a very good roadmap and strategy may be the easiest part of the whole process, implementing it will be more challenging, where we will need all your cooperation and assistance," Mr. Ho'ota said.

DST Ho'ota thanked the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Ethel Frances for her leadership in initiating and getting the ASGSIP 2021-2030 to

where it is now.

He also acknowledged local consultant Joseph Waleanisia for his guidance and support to MAL in putting the Ministry Corporate Plan professionally together and his advice with regards to the development of the ASGSIP.

Development of the ASGSIP 2021-2030 started last year with a nationwide consultations to all provinces including Honiara by local consultants with SIG funding support.

MAL and Foodworks launches gov't funded poultry project



Foodworks Managing Director, Tony Tepe, MAL Minister, Hon. Senley Filualea and PS MAL, Ms. Ethel Frances cuts the ribbon to officially launch and open the hatchery and stockfeed project.



Clement Wanefiolo, Vice chairman, poultry farmers association, Jimson Difeni General Manager of Foodworks, PS MAL, Ms. Ethel Frances and MAL Minister Hon. Senley Filualea with day old chicks ready to be given out to farmers.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreement with Foodworks Suppliers Limited has made another landmark achievement after both parties launched the Hatchery & Stockfeed government funded project on 30th November 2020. This came as the result of the 2.4 million funding support agreement that MAL and Foodworks Suppliers Hatchery & Stockfeed Ltd signed in May this year for the establishment of hatchery and feed mill services. The event was filled with excitement as poultry farmers collected their day old chicks and stockfeed straight after the official launching. Speaking during the event, Minister of MAL, Hon. Senley Filualea said early this year the Ministry signed two historic project support worth more than \$2million each for the

mass production of cassava and for hatchery and feed mill to increase supply of day old chicks and feeds. "These two support are complementary in that, the cassava production is not only aimed at exporting but for production of feeds for chicken and pigs," Hon. Filualea said. The Minister congratulated Foodworks Ltd for the milestone achievement. "I am so proud to declare to our people around the country that in just the same year we deliver. And so I wish to congratulate and share my appreciation to these two partners, especially Foodworks Supplier, for this milestone achievement. "This year we saw the export of cassava by Varivao in partnership with Sape Farm out-growers and today we are here to launch the

achievements of our Support to Foodworks Supplier with the first batch of day old chicks to come out of Foodworks Supplier Hatchery." Hon. Filualea said his ministry is custodian of many DCGA policies which Foodworks Suppliers hatchery services will help achieve through creation of income generating opportunities for our people to;

- Reduce poverty,
- Improve the livelihood of our people,
- For food Security
- To reduce the value of imports into the country and
- For Economic growth

He said the launching of the Foodworks Suppliers hatchery & Stockfeed is a great achievement. Foodworks Suppliers Ltd Managing Director, Tony Tepe said the launching of the MAL funded pro-

ject is indeed a milestone achievement for the DCGA as the responsible government. He said Foodworks Suppliers Ltd is a new and infant company yet with the government support through the MAL Public Private Partnership agreement, enabled the business to expand its operations into hatchery and stockfeed. Mr. Tepe thanked the unwavering support rendered to Foodworks Ltd by the government in formalising the PPP agreement to revitalise and nurture the poultry industry. "This is a simple and tangible manifestation of the government (DCGA) bottom up approach that put its very own people first and foremost its very own poultry farmers in the rural areas." Mr. Tepe assured that his company

will do all it can within its means and ability to grow the production side of the poultry industry to meet expectations of local poultry farmers by improving easy access to quality and affordable day old chicks and stockfeed. Meanwhile, General Manager of Foodworks Suppliers Ltd, Jimson Difeni said operating a hatchery business is not easy. "Operation cost is always the main challenges which include, importation charges, tax, high electricity and water bills and administration." Despite those challenges, Mr. Difeni believed in partnership as a way forward to grow the poultry industry and find solutions to address the high cost of the feed price and market access. Mr. Difeni thanked all poultry farm-

ers for their collaborative work with Foodworks Ltd through the years despite challenges faced. "I am optimistic if we can work in collaboration in the coming years, nothing can stop us from achieving our goal." Mr. Difeni said 11,900 eggs has been placed into the incubator and they manage to hatch 86 per cent of it which is 10,400. A "Good hatch". Speaking on behalf of poultry farmers, Clement Wanefiolo, Vice Chairman of the Poultry Farmers Association acknowledged government support through MAL toward the success of the project. He said such support like this will definitely boost the poultry industry. "Let us all work collaboratively in this initiative to ensure we go commercial and industrial in the future

to grow the economy and at the same time ensure farmers benefited from such government support or funded projects." Mr. Wanefiolo also thanked the government, stakeholders and everyone who are working tirelessly toward success of the hatchery & stockfeed project. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Mrs. Ethel Tebengi Frances was just as excited as the farmers because she sees a future not only for poultry farmers but MAL supporting our trade deficit which is now at its lowest. She said that "if we are able to keep export receipts in the country, it will stimulate domestic food production and the poultry industry is one which this can be best achieved." PS Frances said that for last year

alone, the value of poultry products imported into the country was more than \$80million. "You add the costs of day old chicks, chicken feeds we are talking about \$200million dollars of export receipts that are going out to poultry farmers in other countries when it should go to our own people. "I am looking forward to the day when we will see our own locally made products on the shelves competing with overseas products." PS Frances in her closing remarks urged Foodworks Suppliers Ltd management to make this work for our people and also appeal to farmers to take advantage of this opportunity to increase their production and go commercial as this country will need that level of production. ■



A poultry farmer in Honiara takes delivery of their old day chicks after the official launching of Foodworks Suppliers Hatchery & Stockfeed.



PS MAL, Ms. Ethel Frances, Jimson Difeni General Manager of Foodworks and MAL Minister, Hon. Senley Filualea takes a visit inside the hatchery house. From the back, eggs set inside incubators for hatching.



Day old chicks ready for delivery to poultry farmers. The project is supported by the government through the Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock.



Some of poultry farmers during the launching event. The event was witnessed by MAL Minister Filualea and Permanent Secretary Ethel Frances.

MAL participates in West big events

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), Western Province Extension Office have participated in the province's second appointed day celebration and the Roviana Lagoon Festival activities, from 7th -10th December 2020.

Chief Field Officer of MAL, Western Province Extension office, Sipuru Rove said the event provided an opportunity for agriculture officers in the province to promote activities of the Ministry and at the same time disseminate important information regarding services that MAL is offering to the general public/citizens.

"The Ministry of Agriculture is participating in these events promoting the services they provide to the general public. Stalls were erected and manned by MAL staff to disseminate vital information to the public.

"The highlight of MAL's participation is the visit of the Honourable Minister of the Ministry (MAL) Senley Levi Filualea," Mr. Rove said.

Mr. Rove said Hon. Filualea visited his officers and briefed them with plans that the ministry is embarking on to resuscitate/revive the agriculture sector.

"The Hon. Minister stressed that Agriculture is really a backbone of



MAL, Biosecurity booth with information materials on display during the event for public viewing and access.

our country especially during this period of anxiety that our country face.

"The Covid-19 is seen as a blessing to our country as this is actually the turning point of the government to realize that agriculture should be the leading government ministry that should be prioritize as far as economy, livelihood and food security are concern. With these, the minister also highlights that government propose plan is to revive agriculture sub-station on each constituency of the nine province in

Solomon Islands so that agriculture information dissemination is effective and have impact to rural people," Mr. Rove quoted Hon. Minister Filualea.

Mr. Rove said officers also used the opportunity and discussed challenges and barriers that they often faced in the province with Hon. Minister Filualea, some of which are logistics challenges, housing, Office buildings and storage shed and office Equipment's and tools.

A sum of \$2000 was donated by Hon. Filualea to support the officer's activities during the event.

The Western Province 37th second appointed day was celebrated at Noro the province's Industrial Township and featured along with the opening of the Roviana Lagoon Festival in Munda on Monday 7th December 2020.

Roviana Lagoon Festival is the cultural festival of the people of Roviana Lagoon. People from all over Roviana Lagoon gather in Munda for this event of festivity and celebration. All villages parade in show and style with floats both on water and land. A lot of cultural and water based activities including competitions aiming at upholding cultural norms and values were displayed by participants through organized activities both in land and sea.

The aim of the Roviana lagoon festival is to increase awareness of the culture of Roviana, promote tourism, whilst raise funds for charity that works towards the preservation and growth of the area and encourages community participation from residence, organizations and businesses.

Major companies that operates in the province like Sol-Tuna, NFD, Telekom, Origin Gas and Solomon Airline, participated during the lagoon festival.

Plant Health Clinic dubbed fruitful for women vendors

A one-day Plant Health Clinic (PHC) for Women Market Vendors from East Guadalcanal Province, Aola to Ghaobata ward who are members of the Honiara Central Market Vendor Association (HCMVA) was deemed successful. The PHC was part of the four days training workshop organised and supported by UNDP through the Guadalcanal Province Agriculture Extension Office with the aim to support farmers with advice on practical and long-term management practices to enable local farmers care for their crops more effectively for increase production, income generating and promoting nutritional and food security for farmers and consumers.

Also to provide advice for farmers struggling to control pest and disease affecting their plants and root crops.

More than 20 farmer participants attended the training from 27th – 30th October held at the St Barnabas Cathedral Melanesian Hall in Honiara.

The training involved four presentation awareness, two demonstration on vegetable farming and natural plant pesticides including the plant health clinic.

The Plant Doctors talked with farmers, discussed their problems, and then give correct advises or information to them on how to control

and manage the problems on their crops and plants.

Hezilyn Tarimana, representative for East Guadalcanal Women Vendors said the training was really a blessing to them (participants).

"The concepts and demonstra-



tions conducted will really help the farmers when they return to their respective homes and apply what they learn to their plants and crops. For some women, it is their first time to join such training and that is really an advantage for them," Mrs. Tarimana said.

She appeals to MAL to consider organising similar workshop training down in the rural communities to make sure rural farmers access such important training to boost their farming knowledge and likewise production.

Participant, Chereen Vili, while ac-

knowledging the training said she learned a lot from what has been presented and shared during the week long training.

"I learn new ideas, especially about producing our own natural pesticides, how to fusion and spray our

fruits is really helpful and will reduce or stop us from buying pesticides from the stores," Mr. Aluga said.

Mr. Aluga also calls on the government through MAL to invest more in agriculture and grow the sector to boost the local economy.

He said that similar trainings should be extended to the rural communities to ensure the participation of our rural farmers and not just few that registered under certain association to access such trainings.

"Agriculture is an important sector and the backbone of the country, therefore, making sure inclusive participatory is critical," Mr. Aluga added.

Plant Health Clinic is similar to human clinics, but PHC is specifically for plants. A meeting place where local agricultural advisory officers, called "Plant Doctors" come together to meet farmers who brought with them their sick plants and crops for diagnoses and management advices.

MAL plant doctors have been running plant clinics for farmers in Guadalcanal, Malaita, Isabel, Makira, and Western since 2012. Plant Doctors from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), Extension Department, Guadalcanal Province Agriculture Extension office, Honiara City Council, and SPC facilitated the PHC.

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One of the female kava farmers received her certificate from Member of Parliament for SMC Hon. Rick Hou.



MP for Small Malaita Constituency Hon. Rick Hou sits third from left, front row with MAL trainers/officers together with farmer participants showing off their certificates.

Training aims to boost Kava production in South Malaita

A kava training aimed at sharing knowledge to farmers on Kava production in the Southern Region of Malaita Province was recently conducted at Afio Station, Small Malaita Constituency (SMC).

The three days training, from 7-9 October, was co-funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Malaita Province Agriculture Extension office, Southern Region and the Small Malaita Constituency (SMC) office.

The training that was attended by 60 farmers from the different wards in South Malaita was officiated by the Member of Parliament for the constituency (SMC) Hon. Rick Hounipwela.

The Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Ethel Frances wish to acknowledge the support by the MP for South Malaita Constituency Hon. Rick Hounipwela because he not only co-funded the training but officiated the opening ceremony and also attended as a participant with his constituency people.

"I can imagine the joy and motivation this is having on 60 constituency participants seeing their MP there with them down to that level of support" said PS Frances.

She said that, "agriculture sector has huge potential to improve the lives of our people and economy and we can achieve more when all parties working with our rural people partner together and so I am grateful and touch by this gesture of support by MP for South Malaita and so I am calling on other con-

stituency offices and Honourable Members to do the same."

The Permanent Secretary said that, "the greatest gift leaders in such level of leadership can do is teach their constituents how to be self-sufficient than to dependent on them for everything."

She added that the "sustainability of agriculture sector depends on our people having a reason or purpose to do farming like school fees, build a house and so on but if these are paid and provided for by their MPs then they have no reason to be out farming."

The Ministry of Agriculture Principal Field Officer for Southern Region Willie Wate too was excited saying that "We expect an increase in kava production for the constituency (SMC) as the result of this training workshop."

"It was a successful training workshop and indeed an opportunity empowering the 60 participating farmers to acquire knowledge about the importance of Kava propagation, husbandry, harvesting and marketing," Mr. Wate said.

Mr. Wate said that Kava is a new crop, therefore, there should be quality assurance in its (Kava) production (kava products) to market for a good and better return for local farmers.

"The practical sessions fully summarized the whole training especially when the actual kava management and husbandry practices were witnessed by participants," Wate said.

He said the training was an eye

opener for all the farmers in the constituency and really helpful for them as they venture into this new crop (Kava) cultivation.

Topics covered during the first day of training include;

- Kava history in the Solomon Islands
- Site selection
- Root stock selection
- Basic kava tools
- Nursery and direct planting and management
- Shades and its management
- Transplanting and plant spacing
- Field Management Practices
- Pest and Diseases Control
- Harvesting, cleaning, chipping and drying
- Quality Control and Assurance
- Kava Exporters/Buyers

"On day two participants involved in a full day kava practical training sessions. Demonstrations were done on a participant's farm on all the topics covered during the first day of training but more specifically on root stock selection, nursery, direct planting, harvesting, cleaning, chipping and drying. A kava mound was also harvested during the practical session.

"All the farmers really enjoyed the practical sessions since most of them are yet to engage in harvesting of their produce. This is new information to them in assisting to produce the quality to the market. After the practical session they returned to the training venue for discussion and questioning for further clarification.

"All in all the practical summarizes

the whole training as farmer participants are confident to look after and manage their farms as well as pass what has been learnt to other farmers within the constituency and the region," Mr. Wate said.

Day three of training involved sessions on simple farm records and cashbook recording.

"These recording activities are important in managing of farming activities and the keeping of farming inputs. Participants (farmers) really appreciated the sessions because these records are important and will helpful for them when they want to seek further assistance from other donors."

Mr. Wate added that this was the first ever biggest training held in the region particularly on Kava which involved specialist trainers/officers from the Ministry of Agriculture, Extension Department.

Meanwhile, Director of MAL Extension Department Andrew Menanolu acknowledged the support that MP for Small Malaita Constituency Hon. Rick Hou through its constituency office provided to the program together with MAL that eventuated in training's success.

He also thanked his Extension officers in Honiara and Malaita for the job well done in facilitating the training and making sure that right information are provided for farmers to improve their production especially in this new crop, Kava.

The training ended with presentation of certificates to farmer participants.



Participants of Small Malaita Constituency (SMC) Kava Training Workshop during its opening.



SMC Farmers Practical Harvested kava chips & root been sun dried.

West Are'are kava farmers receive training



“We do not plant kava for how many but how much.”

The importance of Kava crop to livelihood and its economic return to the country was emphasized to West Are'are Constituency farmers during a training held at Haumahure'a Centre – Uhu from the 12th to 14th October 2020.

The training, which focused on kava farming husbandry practices, farming methods to produce high quality kava for local and international markets was held by the theme “We do not plant kava for how many but how much” and facilitated by Kava specialist from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), Extension Department and attended by farmers from various wards in the constituency. While addressing the 90 farmer participants, MAL Extension Department, Deputy Director Projects, Eddie Hori highlighted the importance of Kava to livelihoods and its economic benefits to farmers in West Are'are Constituency.

“...kava could be one of the crops that can be able to sustain the livelihoods of West Are'are people.

“It is a high value crop and most suitable for the Southern Region of Malaita Province because of the limited arable lands for huge agricultural developments,” Mr. Hori highlighted. The training was aimed at enlightening and

broadening farmers' knowledge on various aspects unknown to participating farmers as they will be also able to share their knowledge to other farmers who are present and those back home to elevate the production of Kava not only individually but for West Are'are Constituency, Malaita Southern Region and the nation.

West Are'are Constituency Development Officer (CDO), Stanley Araha, while acknowledging the Ministry of Agriculture in facilitating the training said that Kava is a new crop and it is very important that West Are'are farmers learnt the basic practical kava farming skills and knowledge from the workshop so that they could all be successful and to support their rural livelihoods through kava production.

Mr. Araha further said the training has enhanced participants' knowledge on this new crop – Kava and at the same time inbuilt them with confidence to manage their own farms.

Topics covered on day one of training includes;

- Kava history in the Solomon Islands
- Site selection
- Root stock selection
- Basic kava tools
- Nursery and direct planting and management

- Shades and its management
- Transplanting and plant spacing
- Field Management Practices
- Pest and Diseases Control
- Harvesting, cleaning, chipping and drying
- Quality Control and Assurance
- Kava Exporters/Buyers

Day two involved practical and demonstration sessions with specific areas covered includes;

- Conducive environment,
- Site selection,
- Land preparation,
- Plant spacing,
- Growth & development,
- Preparation of planting materials,
- Nurseries, kava management & kava harvesting,
- Washing, cutting/sorting/drying, packaging and storage

The importance of selecting the right variety to plant was highlighted. An important knowledge for farmers especially following experiences of farmers in other parts of the country who brought their kava for sale in Honiara only to find that it is the wrong type of kava and was rejected by buyers. The Ministry of Agriculture urged all kava farmers to ensure they can identify the type of kava that is being purchased by exporters and that they teach others too.

The importance of record keeping was also highlighted as a planning tool.

“This simple farm recording activities are important in managing of farming activities, income and expenses to ensure farmers know how much profit they make from their farming business,” Mr. Araha said.

Mr. Araha said the training was the first ever biggest training held in the Constituency particularly on Kava which involved specialist trainers from the Ministry of Agriculture, Extension Department.

A similar training was also conducted by the MAL team for Kava farmers in the Small Malaita Constituency from 7-9 October.

The training ended with presentation of certificates to participants.

The training was coordinated and co-funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Malaita Province Agriculture Extension office, Southern Region and the West Are'are Constituency office.

Director of MAL Extension Department Andrew Menanolu acknowledged the support that the West Are'are constituency office provided to the program together with MAL that eventuated in the training's realization. He also thank his team for the job well done.

Distribution of vegetable seeds and tools extended to provinces



The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) has stretched its vegetable seeds and farming tools distribution programme under the Covid-19 Livelihood Sector Agriculture Support to the provinces.

The distribution is part of the ongoing agriculture support programme that the ministry is implementing under the Livelihood Sector initiative (Sup-sup garden) to support and encourage households to make gardens around their houses to subsidize food costs as aligned to the national government food security programme to counter the impacts of Covid-19.

MAL Deputy Secretary Technical (DST) and Chairman of the Covid-19 Livelihood Sector Committee (LSC), Michael Ho'ota said so far, total of 12,933 packets of seeds has been distributed to all the provinces.

“Seeds distribution to all provinces cost the government SBD\$214,200.00 so far while expenses on tools distribution valued at SBD\$877,521.00.”

Provinces that already received their share of seeds and tools distribution under the Covid-19 agriculture support programme include; Guadalcanal, Malaita, Makira, Choiseul, Central Province, Temotu, Isabel and Western province except for Honiara City (Honiara Urban) - their payment for the agriculture support programme is yet to be released by the Ministry of Finance (MoFT).

For Renbel Province, vegetable seeds already sent to Tigoa, Agriculture Extension Office except payment for tools still process at MoFT.

Mr. Ho'ota said many households

in the City (Honiara) has benefited from the programme since its initiation in June, adding his committee (LSC) is now extending the programme to support those living in the provinces with the aim to reduce the impacts of the Covid-19 within Honiara and other provinces on Food Security as well as livelihoods.

“A total of 3,603 packets of seeds had already been distributed to 1,201 households in Honiara alone since the start of the agriculture support programme under the Covid-19 LSC agriculture support programme,” he said.

The LSC Chairman said farmers who want to access those vegetable seeds and tools distributed to the provinces are encouraged to check their MAL Provincial Agriculture Extension Offices.

However, he said some vegetable seeds are to be distributed through the Constituency offices. “The reason for this is MAL through its LSC wants to utilise their (constituencies) network since, not all MAL officers can reach all constituencies and farmers can have access from this network as well.

“Distribution through the constituency offices are yet to be done but will be executed in due course,” Mr. Ho'ota said.

He said that the target is to ensure all provinces are covered and supported.

Vegetable seeds and tools were paid under the Covid-19 budget. Mr. Ho'ota thanked the Australian Government (DFAT) in partnership with UNDP for supporting the programme since its inauguration in June.



Facilitators from MAL, Small Malaita Constituency representatives and farmer participants with their certificates after the training.



Casper Manelugu of MAL, left, show how harvested kava should be thoroughly cleaned by running tap water.



MK Farm Fresh gets farming tools to boost production

MK Farm Fresh at Takambow Community, Northwest Guadalcanal received new essential farming tools from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Guadalcanal Province Extension Office on 14th December to boost its vegetable and fruit crop production.

The tools donated to MK Farm Fresh included mini power tiller machine, chainsaw and one grass cutter.

The tools were procured through a UNDP funding support in partnership with MAL through, Guadalcanal Province Extension Office (Agriculture Division).

Owner of MK Farm Fresh, John Maeli Kauvera said he was grateful for the tools, which would make farming work easier.

"In the past, we used to loan from the commercial banks to purchase basic tools. With this support, there will be improvement in our production and expansion to guarantee every households have access to



Daniel Ogu Besa'a, Minister of Agriculture & Fisheries of Guadalcanal Province (in green shirt) with two female officers from MAL Guadalcanal Province Extension Office hands over the tools to MK Farm Fresh owner and recipient John Maeli Kauvera, flanked by his farm workers.

have access to nutritious food to promote healthy and happy family and to reduce increased cases of Nutrition Disorders in Solomon Islands.

target communities include:

1. Climate risks and impacts,
2. Soil degradation (Soil health issues),
3. Pest and diseases infestation and

be risk informed.

"MAL in collaboration with UNDP under the Governance for Resilient Development in the Pacific Project (Governance Resilience) aims to risk inform The Model Farm Projects in six provinces including Guadalcanal.

"This means planners will need to acknowledge certain risks which might impact the success of the farms in each province, and design management measures to mitigate these risks. Doing so will enhance the resilience of the model farms in the face of climate change and disaster events, as well as ensuring that they meet the needs of all people in the community including youth, elderly, and all genders," MAL Guadalcanal Province CFO, Mr. Wotomaru stressed.

He further said that this is a four (4) years project and will be implemented by Guadalcanal Province Agriculture Extension Division in collaboration with the Provincial



healthy and nutritious food," Mr. Maeli said.

He thanked MAL and UNDP for the support and for choosing MK Farm Fresh as the recipient of the tools under the Model farm project.

Mr. Maeli is a popular person for his supply of Guava fruits and vegetables to the Honiara markets. He planted over 10,000 guava trees. Most people (resellers) usually buy guava fruits from his farm and resell it at markets in Honiara.

He involved in intercropping and of course one of the main supplier of fresh vegetables and root/fruit crop to markets in the city (Honiara).

MAL Chief Field Officer (CFO) for Guadalcanal Province, Joseph Wotomaru said the assistance is assured to boost farm production to ensure households or communities

Mr. Wotomaru said the support is devised under the Model Farm project that the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health through the Guadalcanal Province Health Authority (GPHA) is implementing. "The Model Farm is a sub component of the National Food security and Enhancement program aimed at Promoting and assisting vulnerable communities to improve Food and Nutritional status to ensure every households have access to nutritious food to promote healthy and happy family and to reduce increased cases of Nutrition Disorders in Solomon Islands.

He stated that other farming issues to be addressed under the project to ensure sustainable production of nutritious food readily available in



conservation of plant genetic resources (Conserving and preserving of our indigenous crops). MAL and the Ministry of Health, Guadalcanal Province Health Authority commenced this programme to improve Nutritional Disorders in Guadalcanal by promoting and delivering the following activities;

- Development of model farms/gardens,
- Training programmes on health, nutrition and agriculture jointly delivered through MAL and Ministry of Health extension networks and
- Distribution of seeds, equipment and tools.

Mr. Wotomaru said to ensure that the Model farm investments are sustainable and to achieve their desired outcomes, they will need to

Health Promotion division in Guadalcanal Province.

At the same time Mr. Wotomaru acknowledged MK Farm Fresh for taking on board the initiative and for its continuous engagement, promotion and production of nutritious food crops to support food security in the country.

"To MK Farm Fresh farmers, we really appreciated your positive response to take on board this initiative on our behalf and we thank you for your continuous engagement, promotion and production of nutritious food crops to support the food security of this country. "These farm inputs will surely lift the morale of farmers and will also increase the quality and quantity of produce in the field.

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Covid-19 implications on food security & nutrition discussed

A workshop that brought together relevant stakeholders across the food system in the Solomon Islands for an open dialogue and exchange of ideas on the impacts of COVID-19 was held on Tuesday 17th and Thursday 19th November at IBS Hotel.

It was organised to ensure participants share information and engage in discussions on the ongoing government and non-government food security and nutrition issues and initiatives in the COVID-19 pandemic, assess what data we have, what data we need and who is collecting it and how to access it. Identify gaps and brainstorm possible innovative solutions and devise ways and /or what to do in the future.

"The workshop was organized and designed to bring together stakeholders to discuss the implications of COVID-19 and the responses that the country does and identify ways forward.

"We lived through the impacts of



Participants who attended the final day of the workshop.

COVID-19, but we fail to record them and how to resolve the impacts. The two day forum is to ensure invited participants attend and share their experiences and knowledge. It was also to identify data, reports and publications, gaps to fill and ways forward," FAO /FIRST National Policy Officer, Nichol Nonga said.

He said that, it is also crucial for everyone to gain common understanding of what data/policy is available and where gaps are, to ensure programmes and decisions are evidence-based.

Mr. Nonga added that from the workshop they will be able to plan

the way forward, exploring ways in which the meeting conclusions can inform the government and development partners COVID-19 responses.

"At the completion of the workshop we will be compiling a report to be shared with the wider stakeholders and to inform the Livelihood Sector Committee (LSC) Action Framework, briefing papers and plans for improving the food and nutrition security of the Solomon Islands population in COVID-19 times. Similarly, the information so gathered will supplement other like reports that MAL, line ministries, NGOs, and development partners

may need to formulate their medium and long term strategies in response to COVID-19," Mr. Nonga further added.

He said that this type of workshop is vital for government and stakeholders to identify evidence based resolutions to the impacts of COVID-19.

Mr. Nonga thanked all participants in what they have shared and contributed towards in sharing their ideas, experiences and evidences adding the way forwards /way ahead as identified by the participants in the workshop would be useful for the development of the country's food and nutrition security aspirations.

The workshop is funded and facilitated by FAO /Food and Nutrition Security Impacts, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation (FIRST) Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) and the Livelihood Sector Committee (LSC).



Participants pictured above during a group discussion



■ Continue reading from page 12.

MK Farm Fresh gets farming tools to boost production



"Please utilize this expensive tools and machineries and look after them well. This is an opportunity that others wish to have to boost their farm productions," Mr. Wotomaru emphasized.

Meanwhile, Minister of Agriculture & Fisheries of Guadalcanal Province Hon. Daniel Ogu Besa'a, congratulated MK Farm Fresh for becoming the lucky recipient of the tools.

He also acknowledged MK Farm Fresh continuous contribution toward food security in the country and looks forward to working closely with farmers in the province to guarantee households or communities have access to nutritious food to promote healthy life.





Research work to ascertain cocoa varieties in SI piloted

Research to ascertain the genetic family background of cocoa grown locally in the country was conducted in Rendova and Vella Lavella Islands in the Western Province from 12th - 19th October 2020.

The Australian Government through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) funded the project lead by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland.

In the Solomon Islands the project is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), Extension and Research departments.

"This is the second round of collection after the first collection was done in June this year on cocoa farms within the Marovo Lagoon, Western Province.

"Similar collection was completed in Malaita Province last year (2019)," Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Cocoa Coordinator, Elison Toramo said.

Mr. Toramo added that collections in Malaita and Western were continuations from the work started in Makira in 2017.

He said cocoa leaf buds and fermentation data collection is a research activity carried out under the ACIAR project "HORT 2014/078" and an important undertaking to determine the type (variety) of cocoa grown in Solomon Islands.

"The genetic background of cocoa is more complicated than the simple designations of Amelonado (Forestero type), Criollo and their hybrid Trinitario. "In the last decade with the advent of sophisticated DNA "finger printing" techniques, cocoa researches report that cocoa originally consisted of ten unique family groups in its centre of origin, Central and South America. Over the last several hundred years, with the dispersal of seed, budwood and plants to other tropical production regions the genetics of cocoa has mixed.

"The new DNA techniques can de-

termine the percentage of the 10 original family groups in a sample. The analysis of sampling carried out by MAL in Makira Province has shown that although the bulk of cocoa sampled has a predominately Amelonado background there are examples where the Criollo component is as high as 18%. "The information can be used to make selections (clonal material) for regional testing where yield and the potential for fine flavour types are identified."

"This is determined by DNA extraction and genotyping. DNA extraction is done in Queensland, Australia. Further to that, the extracted DNA are sent to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Centre (ARS), Maryland, USA for genotyping. Genetics of cocoa and the post-harvest practices influence the type of flavour which the chocolate makers are looking for. Genotyping of cocoa has never done by MAL over the past 50 years," Mr.

Toramo explained.

He further said that data on fermentation practices is also collected to find out how cocoa in Solomon Islands is processed (fermented and dried).

He said according to Commodity Export Marketing Authority (CEMA) 2018 report, Western province together with four other provinces contributed 3 per cent of the total production of dry cocoa beans in 2018.

The research work also provided an opportunity for the Agriculture Field Officers to observe challenges and difficulties that cocoa farmers within those areas are facing.

Ministry of Agriculture Extension and Research officers both in Honiara and Western Province collaborated in the collection efforts under the ACIAR project.

The national government through the ministry of Agriculture (MAL) thanked the financial support that Australian Government provided toward the Research Project. ■

About us

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) is one of the government's key ministry responsible for formulating, executing, monitoring and coordinating the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) agricultural policies. It has two broad set of responsibilities and functions; one is related to policy and the other is linked to the provision of technical support and regulatory services. With the aim to manage natural resources and improve quality and quantity of production of staple and commodity crops and livestock, MAL continues to work together with government, NGO's and private sector partners in its service delivery to facilitate and support the development of commercial agriculture and livestock in Solomon Islands.

**To find out more, click
and follow the link below:**

<https://solomons.gov.sb/ministry-of-agriculture-and-livestock/>

Our Services

Ministry services include;

- Facilitate and support the development of commercial agriculture in Solomon Islands.
- Facilitate research, development and marketing of high value cash crops.
- Facilitate acquisition of Russell Islands Plantation Estates.
- Support agro-forestry in the country (SI).
- Promote oil palm development in other parts of the country.
- Facilitate and support the development of livestock industry.
- Enhance and promote sustainable agriculture development in Solomon Islands and ensure the sector contributes to economic growth, stability, food security, good health and rural development through improved rural livelihoods.
- Promote, improve and ensure leading agricultural developments in Solomon Islands are profitable and environmentally sustainable through the provision of timely and quality agricultural information, research, extension, education and regulatory services throughout the country.