



# Why ELIZABETH CHOSE Farming

*"This really help me to meet  
my children school fees...."*







WELCOME

It is my pleasure as the Permanent Secretary of MAL to present to you the 2nd issue of our new look 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 August-September. 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.

# CALL FOR GREATER GLOBAL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

## Solomon Islands calls for greater global action to climate change, strengthening resilience of food systems at FAO Asia-Pacific Regional Conference

Solomon Islands is calling on industrialized countries for greater global action to reduce the impacts of climate change. Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Ethel Frances made the call during the Thirty-fifth Asia and Pacific Regional Conference (APRC 35th) of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that convened virtually from 1st -4th September 2020. The Permanent Secretary delivered the Country Statement on Thursday 3rd September on behalf of the Minister of MAL who was not able to attend due to other official commitment. Bringing the issue of climate change to the forefront of the APRC 35th ministerial meeting, PS Frances said the severity that climate change continue to wedged on Small Is-

by our industrialised developed countries our Small Islands States will continue to live with these ugly impacts and bear the costs of adaptation and lag behind in delivering our SDG goals," Ms Frances said. "Solomon Islands therefore calls on FAO to advocate aggressively for greater global actions to reduce impacts and call on developed countries with high fossil fuel consumption to support our countries

implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures depends very much on availability of financial and technical resources in a timely manner." "The growing rate of malnutrition, obesity and overweight in the region is a grave concern. "The first top ten countries with high incidents are all from the Pacific Islands. Our National Hospital records three to six deaths every

progress made over the years and we fear worsening of situation in the years ahead. "Solomon Islands faced many challenges in ensuring sustainable food supply for our growing population because of our remoteness and geographical isolations, vulnerability to natural disasters, a fast growing population and excessive dependence on international trade and support. "These existing challenges are augmented by increase in spread of pests and diseases," the Permanent Secretary emphasized. Solomon Islands delegates who attended the zoom (virtual) conference held at the ICTSU facility comprised of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ethel Frances, Undersecretary Technical (Acting), Michael Ho'ota, David Fatai and Rosalie

***"Solomon Islands faced many challenges in ensuring sustainable food supply for our growing population because of our remoteness and geographical isolations, vulnerability to natural disasters, a fast growing population and excessive dependence on international trade and support."***



SI delegation headed by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Ethel Frances and officials from the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources at the virtual meeting, ICTSU facility.



The Thirty-fifth Asia and Pacific Regional Conference (APRC 35th) of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that convened virtually from 1st -4th September 2020.

land Developing States (SIDS) like Solomon Islands and other SIDS requires joint effort from global leaders. "...our countries are now experiencing increased incidents and intensity of natural disasters destroying our people's livelihood, loss of many lives and destroying our ability to grow our economies. "If no drastic measures are taken

adaptation efforts." PS Frances also used the opportunity and calls on FAO to continue strengthen the resilience of food systems and to continue to recognise importance of enhanced climate action in the agriculture sector as core elements in its Nationally Determined Contributions and implementation plans under the 2030 Agenda. Suffice to say that effective

single day related to non-communicable disease. Solomon Islands therefore call on FAO to do more in supporting our region cope. "Solomon Islands is tracking behind in attaining its Sustainable Development Goals on ending poverty, zero hunger, and access to clean water and sanitation plus others and the current impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will retract any moderate

Masu from the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources and FAO country Representatives, Jimi Saelea and Nichol Nonga. Representatives from 46 countries participated in the virtual conference on examining the present situation of the region's food security, with heavy emphasis on implications linked to the spread of the

[Continue reading on page 3.](#)

# Why Elizabeth chose farming

To leave a white-collar job or formal employment is a tough decision one could ponder and it only takes courageous women and men to take the risk. As hockey legend Wayne Gretzky once said, "It's important to actually strike out and follow your heart—even if the odds do not seem to be in your favor. That's the beauty of life. We never know what can happen unless we take a chance." Taking risk perhaps could create a whole new set of opportunities and gains for the future. Elizabeth Votu 28, resides at Barana Community. A community that also hosts the biggest conservation site on Guadalcanal - Barana Nature and Heritage Park, about 2 kilometers away (ride) from Borderline Bus stop haven through the Mt Austen road. Mrs. Votu used to be an Early Childhood Education (ECE) teacher back then but decided to take the risk thus left teaching profession in 2012. The young mother of four was preparing her cabbage for market sale when MAL Media caught up with her at her residence at Barana where she shared her story. "It is not easy. It was really a tough decision one could ever make but,



Elizabeth Votu with her wrapped cabbage ready for sale at the market.

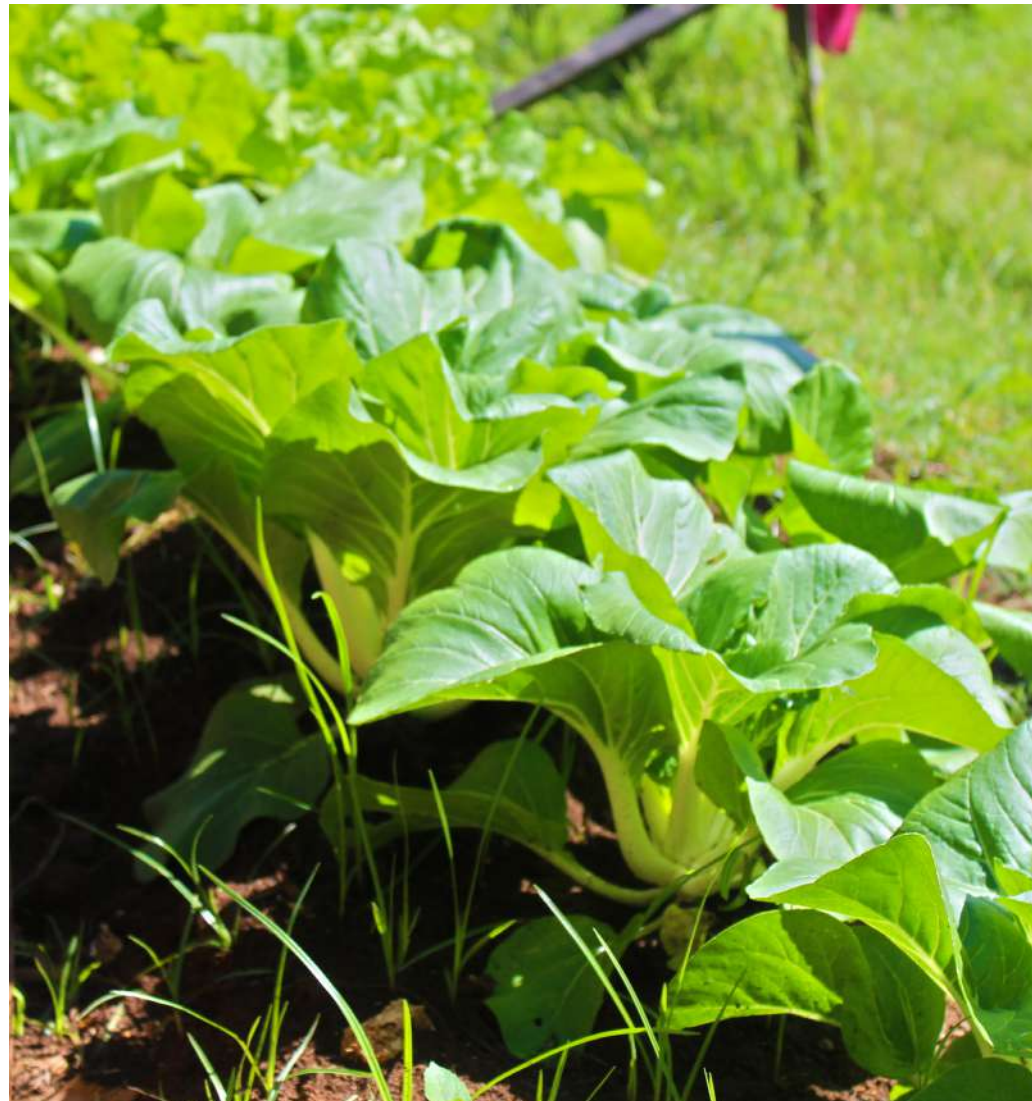
having the future of my children so dear at heart, braved me to take the bold step,"she said. "I have no second thought on that but leave the profession (teaching) and involve in gardening and selling produces at the market to support my children's education. Mrs. Votu's family farm (garden) is just a walking distance from her residence where she planted cabbage, bean, tomato, shallot, pawpaw, banana and various root crops purposely for market. "I involved in family farming (gardening) and marketing since I left

teaching." She does marketing twice a week. "A day I can earn \$1000 from the sales of my vegetables and root crops and that amount be doubled in two days of marketing. It is more better than my pay while in teaching. This really help me to meet my children school fees and daily bus fare." Mrs. Votu's husband is currently undertaking tertiary studies at the Solomon Islands National University (SINU). "Also the money I earned from market enabled me to meet my hus-

band school fees at SINU as well as pay for my adopted son courses who is currently undertaking tertiary studies at the University of the South Pacific Honiara campus. "Most of my market intake (money) were spent on my children and husband education and part of it were spent on basic family needs. "I could not afford all these expenditures if I am still in teaching and I regret not the decision made at the first place and my involvement in gardening and marketing,"Mrs. Votu said with a smile. She said that though Covid-19 affected her normal market intake per day, she can still earn around 600 -800 a day. "Farming and marketing is better than teaching because you earn fast money instead of waiting for salary," Mrs. Votu confidently said. Mrs. Votu appeals to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to support her and other women alike with gardening tools and pesticides to control the continuous attack of invasive pest on their gardens. She also encourages other women out there to involve in family gardening and marketing since it is a good undertaking to support you and your family and also improve your livelihood.



systems region-wide. More than 400 delegates from the Asia-Pacific region participated in the meeting, including representatives from the private sector, civil society, academia and technical experts in the food and agriculture sectors. The Regional conference, which takes place every two years, is an official forum where Ministers of Agriculture and other high officials from member states in the Asia-Pacific region meet to debate challenges related to food security and agriculture promoting regional coherence. The meeting provide recommendations and further guidance to FAO's global conference on FAO's work in the vast Asia-Pacific region.





# Funding support for revival of Land Purchase Cooperatives



Director Planning Department of MAL, Peter Trena and PS MAL Ethel Frances during the project introductory virtual meeting on 4th September, ICTSU facility.

The national government is boosting its efforts to revive the country's Land Purchase Cooperatives (LPCs) with a technical funding assistance of CAD\$203,000 (approx. SBD\$1 million) from the Government of Canada.

The funding assistance was made possible by the government of Canada through its Canadian Trade and Investment Facility for Development (CTIF) following a funding request submission made to the Government of Canada by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Ethel Frances, late last year.

"The request was made out of the need to revive these agriculture related Corporative (LPC) that were once the production house of copra and coconut in the country years back. The land registered under these Corporative is where we find years of investment in Cocoa and Coconut, but are now dormant. The support is to ensure these Corporative are rejuvenated to support their members –farmers.

"Market access and price has been a long standing challenge for our farmers and as individuals, they have no voice and cannot influence issues that affect them. Farmers forming as cooperatives can enhance their economic market power therefore important that we revive the Corporative models to build a support network for our farmers. "Since the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration is the custodiam of the Cooperative Acts, they will be key Lead Partner supporting the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in this effort," the Permanent Secretary of MAL, Ethel Frances said. The funding will enable MAL in alliance with MCILI to carry out preparatory and research work in reviewing the current state of farmer and marketing cooperatives in the country, recommending regula-

tory and policy measures that the Government may take to provide support to farmers through these cooperatives, and carrying out a pilot activity to implement part of the report's recommendations. The project will provide technical assistance through two main components:

1. An assessment report of farmer and marketing cooperatives, which would include a survey of the profiles and activities of existing cooperatives, their capabilities to promote climate-resilient agricultural practice, roles of men and women

***"LPCs are dormant resources that can be awakened through focused investments of resources through a Public and Private Partnership (PPP) that could revive the agriculture sector much quicker due to more effective and efficient delivery of support services that will result in better returns for resource investment in socio-economic returns against time.***

in the cooperatives, as well as recommended interventions, including identification of training needs, for the Government of Solomon Islands

2. A remote technical assistance activity, as mutually agreed upon by the Consultant and Government of Solomon Islands, to support MAL and MCILI in implementing the report's recommendations. Expected results include enhancing the knowledge of the Government of Solomon Islands on the state of cooperatives and interventions it may undertake to improve the breadth, impact and operational capabilities of farmer and marketing cooperatives, with a view to reviving and increasing their role in sustainable and inclusive rural economic development. The Permanent Secretary of MAL



The project inception meeting convened virtually on 4<sup>th</sup> September with reps from CTIF, Whitelum Group- project management & supervisor consultant, MAL and MCILI.

while commending the government of Canada said the assistance is a huge leap for the ministry as it progresses efforts to resurrect the country's LPCs.

"These LPCs are part of our agriculture sector history and described as 'Dormant Resources awaiting to stimulate agriculture development in the Solomon Islands,' Ms. Frances said.

She said reviving the country's LPC's is in line with the current government policy of growing the economy, create jobs and better the lives of our people through the country.

Independence there was a scheme to support buy-back of large tracts of land from foreign companies. Many of these areas are now underutilised so reviving those cooperatives could yield 'quick wins', she said.

Morris Rapa'ai, Director Business and Cooperatives, MCILI, explained that cooperative support and registration sits with MCILI and is guided by the Cooperatives Act.

"There have been several types of cooperative in the past, instance retail/consumer cooperatives, tribal land cooperatives, marketing cooperatives; and then land purchase cooperatives developed in the 1980s. "This project assignment is expected to inform a planned review and revision of the Act and updating of draft Instructions which accompany it. Around 60% of registered cooperatives are currently dormant, and MCILI wishes to develop a plan to resurrect them and encourage further cooperative development,"Mr. Rapa'ai said.

The Permanent Secretary further added that it is only fitting that we tapped into reviving the LPC's because these are large registered land that are being held under the LPC's with potential for us to introduce commercial agriculture development.

"LPCs are dormant resources that can be awakened through focused investments of resources through a Public and Private Partnership (PPP) that could revive the agriculture sector much quicker due to more effective and efficient delivery of support services that will result in better returns for resource investment in socio-economic returns against time.

"We hope we can rekindle the interest of the LPC members to engage again in mass production of agriculture produce around the country," Ms. Frances said.

# Developing resilient model farms to improve nutrition in Provincial areas

The Solomon Islands Government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) has hosted a two-day workshop with key government stakeholders in Honiara, to design agricultural model farms that will strengthen community resilience and enhance livelihoods.

Held from 16-17 September at the MAL office, the workshop brought together representatives from MAL, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM) Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Unit to contribute to a risk screening exercise for proposed model farms in six provinces.

The collective expertise of participants ensured that the design of the farms considers the health and agriculture requirements, potential natural hazards and importantly the differing strengths and needs and of all users, including (but not limited to) women, men, youth, el-



Representatives from the Solomon Islands Government MAL, MHMS, MWYCFA, MECDM and UNDP.

derly and people with disabilities. "This integrated approach to designing the model farms ensures that they are sustainable, more productive and better meet community's needs. We need to acknowledge risks which might impact the success of the farms in each province, and design management measures to mitigate these," said Sipuru Rove, the Chief Field Officer, MAL Western Province. Rove added "if farming in communities is more

risk informed and productive, the reliance on imported goods can also decrease which is an additional economic benefit."

From a health perspective, Aloysius Vakeke, the Chief Health Promotion Officer, MHMS Guadalcanal Province, said "Solomon Islands has been found to have very high rates of malnutrition, and pressure on food security has enhanced since COVID-19. The model farms will support communities by improving

the diversity and nutrition of their crops. They will be located in areas which have the highest rate of nutritional disorders in each province so will address some of the priority areas in relation to health."

The participants also identified that it is important to consider people's differing needs at an early stage of any project, to make sure it is accessible and beneficial to everyone in the community.

Following the completion of the workshop, the MAL will finalise the risk informed design for each of the sites and start establishing the farms before the end of the year. Once the farms have been constructed, MHMS and MAL will deliver training that will include guidance on nursery establishment, seed saving, preservation, crop nutrition and hygiene, and demonstrations to farmers at each site over the next three years.

The workshop is supported by the UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji through the Governance for Resilient Development in the Pacific (Gov4Res) Project and the UNDP Solomon Islands Office in Honiara.

# New home for Agriculture staff in Ringi

A research staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) manning the research station at Ringi on Kolombangara Island in the Western Province now has a new and secure home for accommodation.

This was after the local contractor, Velra Construction Company presented key of the newly built resident to the MAL research officer in Ringi, October 2020.

"Work has already completed with only few minor tasks to be done," Supervising Principal Accountant, Project, Naelyn Binta who undertook assessment on the newly constructed resident said.

The remaining minor tasks include:

- Installation of fans
- Power point blugs/sockets fixing and
- Furniture painting of the kitchen cupboards

"Those remaining work is very important in order for the house to be fully completed,"Ms. Binta said.



"There are existing staff house but are unfit for inhabitation after assessments carried out on them (houses). With the new house now completed, the officer and his/her family now be able to accommo-

date in a better and safe accommodation," she added.

Permanent Secretary Ethel Frances said the completion of the new residential house is an achievement for the Ministry.

"The new house will surely provide secure accommodation for the MAL research officer and his/her immediate families, and are expected to play a key role in ensuring the officer operating the research centre at Ringgi can continue to discharge its responsibilities – especially through important agriculture research work.

"Having strong and a comfortable house for the officer and his or her family is important."

Ms. Frances thanked MAL Research Division for its commitment and the efforts of everyone who are behind the success of the project.

She also acknowledged the local contractor, Velra Construction Company for their hard work and patience despite financial challenges faced during the course of construction work.

Government (SIG) through MAL, Research Division funded the construction of the new resident.



ABOVE: Contractor hands over keys to MAL Supervising Principle Accountant, Project, Naelyn Binta. Pictures from left-right: Views of the new home.







# PS Frances: “Eat healthy food not processed food”

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Ethel Frances is urging citizens to plant and eat healthy nutritious food and not processed food.

PS Frances was speaking during the International World Food Day programme broadcasted live through the national broadcaster (SIBC) and livestreamed on SIBC facebook page on Friday 16 October.

“...let us all (citizens) endeavour to plant and eat a lot of healthy nutritious food. Not resort to easily available processed food like noodles. These choices kills us,” Ms. Ethel said.

She said there is a new emerging dimensions for Food Security – malnutrition and all related diseases that results from our Food and drink intake.

“...the issue of food insecurity is not only to do with hunger but the quality of food we take.

“Non-communicable disease is the worst killer in our country today.

“We are scared of covid-19 but 2 out of 5 people are dying every week in our country today due to non-communicable diseases. And the major cause is what we eat and drink,” she said.



Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock PS Ethel Frances delivers her remarks.

The Permanent Secretary urged everyone to eat healthy food.

Ms Frances also appeals to mothers and sisters out there that you have a huge role in determining how healthy the status of your household because of your role in making choices as to what to cook for your families every day.

Meanwhile, Ms. Ethel said the event (world food day) has brought the world together to remember and bring awareness to the issue of HUNGER, an issue that God himself had it all planned out well for us in

the Garden of Eden.

“...there was no question about food security as food was divinely supplied - but due to the fall of men humanity was expelled to toil the land – that is farm- to look after themselves and so the command to farm for the survival started back then – the starting of agriculture.

“Hunger has become a major problem around the world today and is becoming worst during this covid-19 pandemic. Predictions are that more than a quarter billions of people will be suffering acute hun-

ger by end of this year. It is going to be the biggest killer because of the large numbers of people now out of jobs.

“As a nation, we are so blessed with land resources and that is where our Food Security lies. Our Food Security is in the abundance of land God bless us with,” the Permanent Secretary emphasized.

This year’s world food day was celebrated with the theme: Grow, nourish, sustain. Together. Our Actions are our future.

“Hunger is the issue that created the need for a World Food Day so we remind ourselves every year of this and take action to change it.

“The message is very clear. ACTIONS. Our actions determines our future. In terms of Food Insecurity, the answers lies in us taking action, collective actions as households, community and as a nation,” she stressed.

She said our cure for hunger is very simple – plantim kakai.

World Food Day is an annual event to honor formation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in 1945.

The commemoration on 16th October also coincided with the 75th anniversary of FAO. ■

# MAL Minister calls for united effort towards agriculture development

Minister for the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Hon. Senley Levi Filualea (pictured) is calling for collective efforts from stakeholders including government, private sectors and farmers towards the development of agriculture in the country.

Hon. Filualea was speaking during the World Food Day programme broadcasted live on SIBC on 16th October. The event also accorded with the 75th anniversary of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations.

“All stakeholders, including government, civil society, NGOs, development partners, private sector, and of course farmers must put our heads, our hearts, our hands, and resources together to effecting changes in agriculture development in order to meet the country’s economic needs, food security needs, peoples livelihoods, and to meeting the country’s commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,” Hon. Minister Filualea said.

“...we all have a role to play to ensuring food systems are more resilient and robust. We need to make sure that our food systems grow a variety of food to nourish our growing population and sustain the planet, together.”

The Minister also took the opportu-



nity and thanked all stakeholders in Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry and all “food-heroes” especially farmers who continue to ensure food sovereignty for the country.

On FAO assistance, Hon. Minister Filualea said FAO over the last four decades has been in one way or another provided assistance to Solomon Islands in human resource development, policy, natural resource management, food systems development, infrastructure and data capture and analysis.

“The ongoing programme based on the Country Programme Framework 2018 -2022 consist of both regional and national actions ranging from fisheries, forestry, environment, health, and agriculture. New programmes to address emerging issues are also being discussed with FAO for assistance in the near future,” he said.

Meanwhile, on the World Food Day theme, Hon. Minister Filualea said this year’s theme: Grow, Nourish, Sustain. Together. reflects how Our

Actions should determine our Future in terms of dealing with food security and food systems in general.

“Year 2020 has ushered in a new normal that requires all to take stock of how we do business in as far as food production is concerned.

“Each year the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) chose a theme that reflects the current situation affecting World Foods. For 2020 as you know the theme reflects the current status of the World Foods as impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The theme “Grow, Nourish, Sustain. Together” is a request for global action by all including farmers and communities to make healthy choices in their food production systems, the governments to making policies and legal frameworks that supports sustainable food systems, and private business to invest more in resilient food systems and create employment in the face of the pandemic disruptions,” he said.

The Minister then thanked FAO for its continuous support to Solomon Islands with regards to food and nutrition security, environmental management, sustainable land management, sustainable forest management, sustainable fisheries, and livelihoods growth. ■



Deputy Secretary Technical of MAL Michael Ho'ota, FAO rep Jimi Saelea, MAL PS Ethel Frances and other FAO rep Nichol Nonga.



Deputy Secretary Technical of MAL Michael Ho'ota, MAL PS Ethel Frances and FAO rep Jimi Saelea during the WFD talk-back show.



The International World Food Day 2020 banner with the theme.



Officials and some of the local farmers that attended the WFD programme held at the SIBC conference room.

## Paradigm shift needed in Agriculture to sustain livelihoods & food security

The country’s agriculture sector needs to shift from doing business as usual and embark on adaptive and disaster risk resilience approaches to sustain people’s livelihoods and food security.

Minister for the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Hon. Senley Levi Filualea highlighted this in his keynote address on the national broadcaster (SIBC) during the World Food Day and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) 75th anniversary commemoration on 16 October 2020.

“Agriculture must adapt in order to mitigate the extreme effects of natural disasters and pandemics. “Adverse effects of Climate Change and other natural calamities had been a constant threat to agriculture in Solomon Islands. Similarly, pandemics that affect humans and animals regularly emerged in

countries close to home. The COVID-19, Bird Flu, and African swine fever are examples.

“The Agriculture sector must make a paradigm shift from doing business as usual to having a more adaptive and disaster risk resilience approach. Stakeholders must start to listen to each other and plan the way forward for the sector,” Minister Filualea emphasised.

He said not long ago the country signed the Paris Declaration on Climate Change, and begin to implement its commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“These platforms enables us to look seriously at how we deal with issues that matters most for our people. Peoples’ health and well-being are so important. The SDG-1, SDG-2, related to ending Poverty and zero hunger are global



targets that are set.

“We as a country have to develop and work towards the achievement of these goals and the rest of the 17 SDGs.

“The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and other development partners including FAO is contributing to achieving these goals through its various programmes and activities that support farmers and farming families.

“The same can be said for the fisheries, forest and health sectors. Other players in the sectors must do the same to achieve that combined effect of meeting the goals,” he said.

He said resilience of our rural people to mitigate and change to the effects of climate change, and oth-

er natural disasters have always sustained our people.

“Making use of acquired knowledge to enhance our traditional systems in our villages is the right way towards sustainable development, and utilization of natural resources which are limited to mitigate the effects of natural and man-made disasters.

“This year 2020 saw the onset of the Coronavirus Pandemic unlike any other threatening economies, lives, and food security of the developing and developed countries. Solomon Islands eventually succumbed to the virus having been one of the few countries with the virus-free status for the past eight months.

*Continue reading on page 10.*



# Farmers get advice on plant pest & disease management

A Plant Health Clinic (PHC) aims to support farmers struggling to control pest and disease affecting their plants/crops was held in Munda, Western Province last month 18 September.

Plant Doctors from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), Research Department in Honiara and Extension officers at Munda office facilitated the PHC.

The purpose of the PHC is to ensure MAL officers known as 'Plant Doctors' come together and attend to farmers who have experienced pest and disease problems on their plants/crops.

"The Plant Doctors talk with farmers, discuss the problems, and then give correct advises or information to farmers on how to control or manage the problems on their crops. It is similar to human clinics, but this one is for plants.

"MAL plant doctors have been running plant clinics for farmers in Guadalcanal, Malaita, Isabel, Makira, and Western since 2012. For Munda, this was the second plant clinic," Chief Research Officer Maria Gharuka from the MAL Research Department said.

Ms. Gharuka said the half-day event provided an opportunity for officers to talk face to face with farmers, and enabled them to make visit to gardens and give correct advices. "More than twenty people came



Farmers and members of the public gets agricultural advices from Plant Doctors on plant pests and diseases.

around to the plant clinic tent to see and learn from the factsheets that were displayed with nine (9) farmers participated at the clinic by bringing samples of sick plants.

"The nine (9) farmers were females and they presented 11 samples of affected crops.

"Most farmers came from in and around Munda, including neighbouring Rendova Island and sur-

rounding Vonvona & Roviana Lagoon," Ms. Gharuka said. She stated that the key problems that were presented were flea beetle on slippery cabbage leaves, soft rot and scales on papaya fruits, nutrient deficiency on capsicum and tomato, sun scald on cucumber fruit, Papuana beetle on taro corn, spots by fruit flies on guava and cucumber fruits, fungus on cassava

roots and sweet potato weevil on sweet potato tubers.

The Plant Doctors that facilitating the PHC include Lorima Bela, June-na Talasasa and Kelvin Lamusasa from MAL Extension office, Munda and Freda Mudu and Maria Gharuka from MAL Research office in Honiara.

Ms. Gharuka then thanked farmers who attended the PHC, especially those who brought samples of sick crops/plants to show to the plant doctors as well as members of the public in Munda who took their time to visit the PHC booth for information.

Plant Health Clinic (PHC) is a meeting place where local agricultural advisory officers, called Plant Doctors, come together to support farmers struggling with plant pests and diseases by providing diagnoses and management advices.

Australian government funded the Plant Health Clinic programme through its Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) project which aims at strengthening Integrated Crop Management (ICM) research in the Pacific Islands in support of sustainable intensification of high-value crop production. Collaborating countries under the ACIAR-ICM project includes Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

# Agriculture team visits SPK farm

A delegation comprised of senior officers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Extension department in Honiara and Guadalcanal Province Agriculture Division visited SPK farm at Metapona area, North Guadalcanal on 23rd September.

The joint visit was for officers to witness first-hand information, challenges and farming issues SPK farm is facing which requires technical assistances from the government as well as assessed the measures needed to be in place to ensure development of the farm progresses to the next level.

Welcoming the delegates, Chief Baddley Beuko said the visit was a positive gesture as it proven a new chapter for SPK farm management to work in partnership with MAL for potential support towards the farm development.

"To receive such important delegation from the government is reassuring and we are really pleased with your visit.

"This is an opportunity for us to share and chat future pathways for close collaboration," he said.

Chief Beuko admitted that the visit was the first of its kind since the inaugural of SPK farm in June 2019.

Chief Field Officer for Guadalcanal Province Joseph Wotomaru who led the delegation said the visit was



The agriculture delegation with SPK farm management members standing with the SPK farm signpost during the visit.

an important one as it set basis for field officers to get actual information and observed issues facing the farm for further recommendation from MAL, and identify where it proper to provide assistance.

He assured the SPK farm management that a report with recommendations will be forwarded to the senior management of MAL for their consideration.

Mr. Wotomaru recognised SPK farm management for their commitment and sacrifices for progressing the farm to-date despite support impediments.

"SPK farm is contributing a lot towards food security in your community and in Honiara. You have played a big role in this regard –

food security."

Mr. Wotomaru then thanked MAL senior officers and Guadalcanal Province Agriculture Division officers for being part of the visit.

MAL Chief Field Officer, Lily Wame while commending SPK farm for their commitment said she was impressed with the farm progress so far.

Mrs. Wame said that the inaugural visit was really an opportunity to ensure MAL and SPK farm management dialogue and explore possible avenues for potential assistance.

"In every undertaking, there are challenges we have to overcome and some positives we can build on. This field visit has indeed given us a little bit of both. Facts gathered from this trip will help us (MAL)

prepare recommendations for prospective support."

Challenges facing SPK farm includes;

- Plant or crop health issues
- Handling of pesticides
- Minimal knowledge of organic and non- organic fertilizers
- Lack of management skills to embrace quantity and quality products
- Post harvesting management, including cleaning, packaging storage, transportation and marketing networking
- Irrigation system
- Labour mobilization
- Farm machineries and implements and

Adverse climatic conditions "I see lots of opportunities the ministry (MAL) can explore and exploit in alliance with SPK farm.

"Land is readily available, but it is how we farmer's operate the plots of land to produce at the level that MAL and the entire community and SPK farm can be proud of," Mrs. Wame said.

SPK vegetable farm is a privately operated farm and is owned by Stephen Keve.

Developed since June 2019, SPK farm covers about 3.3 hectares of land area with potential land areas available for expansion for large-scale vegetable, fruits and root crops production.



Continue from page 9.

## Paradigm shift needed in Agriculture to sustain livelihoods & food security

"The policy of the DCGA government clearly spells out the importance of addressing food security. As such my Ministry has been embarking on various National programmes from food security to economic development. Partnerships have been forged with private sector players to commercialise crop and livestock production targeting the domestic and export markets," he said.



Pictures highlights of the World Food Day programme held on 16th October 2020, SIBC.





# SPK farm assisted with essential farming tools

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Guadalcanal Province Extension Office (Agriculture Division) has supported SPK farm with the donation of required farming tools last month 29th September.

This was days after a team comprised of senior officers from MAL head office and Guadalcanal Province Extension office (Agriculture Division) made a joint visit to the farm on 23rd September and witnessed challenges that SPK farm is facing.

The donated items include one 16 litres knapsack sprayer, two draining spades, one 50-metre roll shade cloth, two 5 litres watering cans and a wheelbarrow.

The support was part of the Ministry's through its GP Extension office appreciation toward SPK farm management commitment for progressing the farm despite support impediments and challenges faced. Permanent Secretary of MAL Ethel Frances was impressed with SPK farm progress since its humble beginning in June 2019.

PS Frances who also accompanied the visiting team toured SPK farm before handing over of the tools to the farm manager.

Ms. Frances said challenges that farmers are facing is undisputable and those who took the initiative to start without any government support must and continue to do so must be applauded especially at a

time when many people think that to go into farming require government support.

"Our visit is basically to show our support and acknowledge farmers who are making it happen without government support. The tools now given to you today is a gesture acknowledging and appreciating your great efforts."

"There is also the thinking that the government has to support in a big way but those who are content and see their place in building our nation value a simple visit like this so we are so honoured to be here and show you our support this way."

SPK farm Managing Director and owner Stephen Keve in response thanked PS Frances and her team

for the timely donation of tools and for visiting his farm.

He said the donation was the first of its kind for his management to receive from the government, thus, it's a progressive step to bigger things as SPK farm is hopeful for.

Mr. Keve said the donation is a bonus to his farm expansion efforts.

He also used the opportunity and highlighted challenges and needs of SPK farm to PS Frances and her visiting team.

"Let's work together towards agriculture development in this country," Mr. Keve concluded.

The farming tools was acquired under the Covid-19 Livelihood budget.



PS of MAL Ethel Frances (centre) hands over the donated farming kits to Managing Director and owner of SPK farm Stephen Keve as officers from GP Agriculture Division and MAL looks on.

## 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.