



# MAL to deliver 2021 development Budget

Three main important projects besides others has been earmarked for implementation under the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) 2021 development budget. Permanent Secretary Ethel Tebengi Frances highlighted these when her executive appeared before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), March.

The projects include;

- The Establishment of a biosecurity treatment facilities that will facilitate exports including

fruits, vegetables, root crops etc.;

- The Establishment of an agriculture loan facilities at the Development Bank of Solomon Islands (DBSI) that will enable access to credit facilities or loans for all farmers around the country

- The Establishment of a Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock farmer support services centre to introduce mechanisation to increase production.

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...as 3 main important projects besides others earmarked for implementation

## INSIDE STORIES

- Gov't committed to develop Noni industry
- Training aims to boost farming activities
- Agriculture 10-year growth strategy
- Support heralds MAL-CSSI new partnership



Farmers undergo agri-machine demonstration

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## MAL delivers machines and tools to Arabara CHS

Arabala Community High School (CHS) in Malaita Province will now be able to improve its farming program with the handover of new agricultural machineries and manual farming tools from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) at the school last month.

The ministry (MAL) officially handed over input's worth over SBD\$50K to the High School in

the Central Kwara'ae constituency at a brief ceremony on Wednesday, March 31st 2021.

The inputs included a walking tractor power tiller procured in partnership with the UNDP Markets for Change (M4C) Project via the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi Partner Trust Fund last year.

Parent Teacher Association head, Edward Sui described the hand-

over as a joyous occasion for the school.

"We look forward to our future cooperation after this handover to ensure the school's agricultural development," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the school's primary division, Dick Diko said the agriculture machines is a new technology and a milestone achievement for the school.

"This machine will help us also

achieve the government's goal to alleviate poverty in our areas and assist us to improve our livelihoods and standard of living," he said.

School Principal, Michael Gwaro said with the agriculture machineries and inputs, Arabala School are now partners with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

"The school is now truly partnering in the aims and goals of MAL."

■ Continue on page 2

# African Swine Fever (ASF)



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## WELCOME

It is my pleasure as the Permanent Secretary of MAL to present to you the 5th issue of our monthly newsletter. As we already know, we are living in uncertain times with Covid-19 impacting all core sectors including 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 fulfil its vision and mission. This publication brings you achievements of the ministry for the month of March-April. 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.

# MAL delivers machines & tools to Arabala CHS

From front page



Machine Operator Moses Misi (in green shirt) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) go through in details on how to use and operate the walking power tiller machine with Arabala Community High School members and students.



Field demonstration. The inputs included a walking tractor power tiller procured in partnership with the UNDP Markets for Change (M4C) Project via the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi Partner Trust Fund last year.

"The agriculture machines will improve our farming program and ensure we are able to address food security in our community and catchment areas," he said. Chief Field Officer of MAL, also National Agriculture Livelihoods Improvement & Export Based Expansion, MacDonnell Hiva said the objective of these machines is to support Solomon Islands farming families and communities increase food production and improve food security and nutrition. "To help achieve improved food se-

curity, we need input machines that would improve labor efficiency. For instance, one machine can do the labor of one hundred students in one hour." "Our productivity and garden harvest will increase and increased production in our farms means more nutritious food is readily available for families and communities." "The Ministry expects the school to fully utilize the machines in the farm to achieve its purpose." Arabala Community High School serves 14 catchment communities

in the Central Kwara'ae Constituency and estimates over 5,000 people benefits from its farming program. The school was selected as a beneficiary under the Ministry's National Food security and Enhancement program – an ongoing initiative addressing food security and nutrition insufficiencies in families and communities. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in partnership with UNDP Markets for Change Project procured agricultural inputs via the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Multi Partner Trust Fund in 2020. These included walking tractor power tillers, base power tillers, chainsaws and grass cutters all sourced from agricultural machinery suppliers in Honiara. MAL beneficiaries were identified under its National Food security and Enhancement program (Model Farm Project). Markets for Change Project beneficiaries are the Auki Market Vendors Association, Gizo Market Vendors Association and the Honiara Market Vendors Association.

# MAL to deliver 2021 development budget

From front page

Mrs. Frances explained that the purpose to establish treatment facilities at MAL biosecurity land at Henderson means that anyone who wishes to export fruits, crops or vegetables can do so as Solomon Islands will have a place where their products can be treated before exported. "Solomon Islands has never been for the past 40 years set up such facilities that is why our farmers cannot export fruits and vegetables because of biosecurity standards and requirements other countries have which we have to comply with." The PS further stressed that the establishment of an agriculture loan product or facilities at the DBSI is

specifically tailored to address specific needs of the agriculture sector. Our people, let alone farmers, cannot access loan to boost or increase their production. This product will be designed to address the unique need of the sector weeding out stringent criteria commercial products that deny our people the opportunities to better their farm production and lives. "This was already negotiated with the DBSI. Plans is to sign an MOU with the bank so that they will also conduct financial literacy training for our farmers so they learn simple financial management technique that will allow them to repay their loan and still enjoy a good return," she said.

On the Establishment of a MAL farmer support services centre, she said the idea is to introduce mechanisation to increase production. "We are in the 21st centuries but have not supported our people with machines that reduces the burden of farming. We are starting with Honiara and Guadalcanal then to the provinces. We now have secured a new lease with the Catholic Church for reestablishment of the former Field Experimental Station at Tenaru." The Permanent Secretary then thanked the Democratic Coalition Government for Advancement (DCGA) for its great wisdom for seeing the need to have its policies

reviewed to be more refocused so resources are directed to where there is great need right now in the sector, being economic recovery and food security. "The plan to establish biosecurity treatment facility received overwhelming support from the Minister and Office of the Prime Minister so it is very encouraging. "As a government agency in the productive sector, our role is to support the government's economic recovery efforts therefore our program this year reflects these new policy redirections so that there is more focus on exports, commercial farming and facilitation of trade," Mrs. Frances said.

# Gov't committed to develop Noni industry

Developing the Noni industry and others like kava and cassava is one of the key policy priority of the Democratic Coalition Government for Advancement (DCGA) therefore the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) remains committed to it. Permanent Secretary of MAL, Mrs. Ethel Tebengi Frances said, it is very important that we identify and develop new industries because relying on only a few export commodities is very risky. "For the past 40 years it has always been coconut, cocoa and palm oil when talking about agricultural export commodities. It is time to look at other commodities because we need to caution our economy against the unknown. "One of the key lesson we must learn from the Covid-19 pandemic is that the future is so uncertain so let's caution ourselves against the unknown by developing new industries," PS Mrs. Frances said. Mrs. Frances said that the recent incursion of the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) and the existing cocoa black pod disease poses so much threat to our three main export commodities, therefore, besides efforts currently ongoing to



Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Ethel Tebengi Frances.

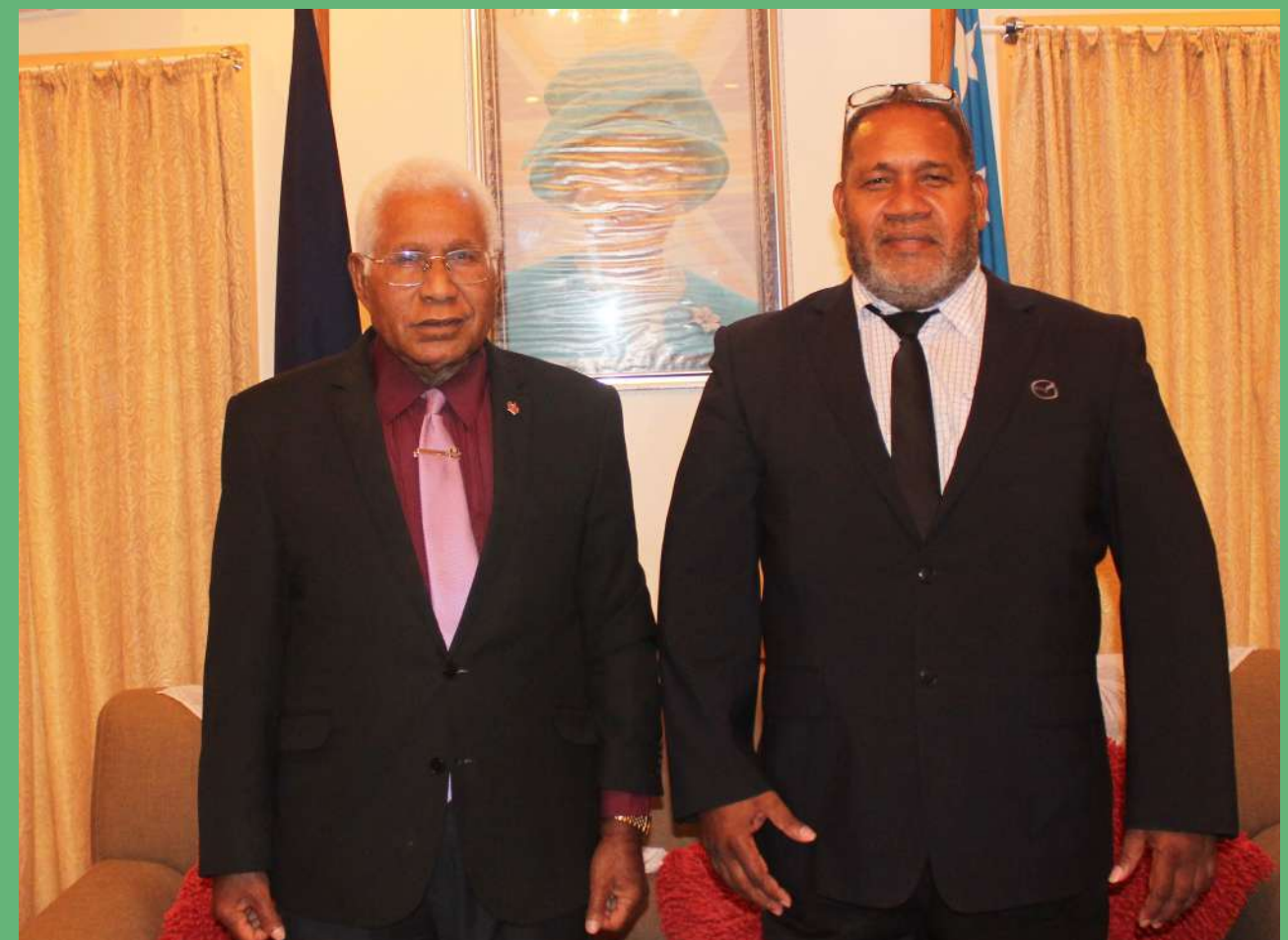
manage their spread it is also important to develop other commodities as mitigation measures. "Unlike the cocoa tree that was introduced to Solomon Islands many years back, the Noni tree is a native tree that grows anywhere so we are

blessed that there is demand for it. We do not have to look elsewhere for planting materials when it is right there at our doorsteps. "The recent 1.2 million dollars injected by the government, through its Economic Stimulus Package (ESP) initiative to restore the operation of the Noni local business registered as 'Solomon Noni Corporation' shows how serious DCGA's commitment towards this industry." The Permanent Secretary added that Noni is a new industry and like other new things we need to learn how to do it right. As it is at its initiation stage there are many things we do not know from farm to processing and marketing. That is why it is clearly define in the DCGA policy statement as "developing the Noni industry". "The DCGA is committed to develop this new industry therefore is one of our (MAL) key agenda as the government agency overseeing agriculture sector. "Supporting initiative which provide our people opportunities to better themselves is a national obligation therefore worth investing in," Mrs. Frances said.

# Caption story: Minister meets GG

On 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Honourable Senley Levi Filualea paid a courtesy visit to His Excellency the Governor General, Sir David Vunagi at the Government House, East Kola. Hon. Minister Filualea took the opportunity to highlight the critical role of the ministry (MAL) and the programmes it is undertaking to develop agriculture sector across the country. Minister Filualea also informed H.E Sir Vunagi on the Democratic Coalition for Advancement Government redirection policies, specially on agriculture which translated into four programmes for 2021. They are;

1. Commercial Agriculture development program
2. Export Crop program
3. Food Security and Livestock industries development program and
4. National Biosecurity Strengthening Program





# BSI, Aussie counterparts dialogues Trade & Market Access Communication key issues

A virtual meeting on Regional Trade and Market Access Communication Strategy was held between Biosecurity Solomon Islands (BSI) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) and the Australia counterparts (Biosecurity) on 15th March 2021.

The meeting is aimed at identifying key issues that BSI and the Australian Government could collaborate to guarantee improved communication as Biosecurity is concerned.

"It was a successful and fruitful session that we have with our Australia counterparts," BSI Director Francis Tsatsia who led the BSI team said.

Key issues identified and discussed include;

- Trade and Market access communication issues,
- Ways communications can be improved,
- Key communication messages and channels and
- Stakeholders engagement

Mr. Tsatsia said the meeting also provided an opportunity where they are able to discussed areas of improvement and what both countries (SI and Australia) setting to achieve in the future concern-



Biosecurity Solomon Islands team during the virtual meeting at the ICTSU conference room, Honiara.

ing Regional Trade and Market Access Communication Strategy.

The Director also used the opportunity and highlighted challenges that his office (BSI) has encountered with regards to communication, pointing out the geographical spread of Solomon Islands

and language diversity as the main challenges.

However, Mr. Francis said that, despite the challenges, his office (BSI) is considering alternatives and looking at ways to improve its communication strategy, to guarantee citizens are informed on the work of Biosecurity (BSI).



Biosecurity Solomon Islands Director Francis Tsatsia close to camera with his officers during the virtual meeting at the ICTSU conference room.



The virtual meeting between Biosecurity Solomon Islands and Australia counterparts.

# Agriculture 10-year growth strategy gets gov't inputs

The first ever 10-year Agriculture Sector Growth Strategy and Investment Plan (ASGSIP 2021-2030) has received overwhelming support and valuable inputs from government line ministries as it going through final consultations for ratification before presentation to Cabinet.

This was after a one day forum organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) at the Kairos Conference room in Honiara on Friday 5th March with Permanent Secretaries (PSs) and senior technical officers of the government to get consensus over the draft strategy.

Permanent Secretary of MAL, Mrs. Ethel Tebengi Frances said the inter-ministerial consultation is critical as it brought every government agencies whose work impact or contributes to the growth of agriculture sector to discuss over the document, get inputs and share experiences that will support MAL towards the strategy final review work.

She further said the forum also provided an opportunity where they are able to discuss potential areas for collective participations and opportunities to develop the sector (Agriculture).

Mrs. Frances said the strategy (ASGSIP 2021-2030) once finalized and endorsed would become the first ever Solomon Islands Agriculture roadmap that will guide the country in development of the sector in the next ten years.

"MAL 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 agriculture activities. There are also laws hosted by other government agencies that impact on agriculture activities. Therefore, it is only meaningful that we all have a plan that sets out collective interventions to



The government Permanent Secretaries and senior technical officers of the government and a rep from FAO during the consultation.

meet national targets in this national agriculture strategy.

"Now that the draft is ready, it is so important that it is reviewed and endorsed by all sector stakeholders before it is finalised. Ensuring all stakeholders review and agree to it add credibility to the process and enables collective ownership", said Mrs Frances.

"It is our (MAL) 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 a conduit where we can better facilitate collaborative efforts by all players in the agriculture sector," she added.

Mrs. Frances said that "taking a sector-wide approach in planning how to develop 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.

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 Organi-

zations (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 a similar consultation will be held on Tuesday 9th March for Provincial Secretaries and private sector including farmer group representatives. The next process after the final review therefore is to bring the strategy document to Cabinet for blessing.

The Permanent Secretary said that reviewing the current Act which is very old will be the next commitment so that the Act supports implementation of this roadmap. "We must have an Act that is relevant and captures today's new opportunities and challenges. The current Act was done even before independence that is the Agriculture and Livestock Act 1935. The only current Act in agriculture sector is the Biosecurity Act 2013."

Meanwhile, 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 one day of discussions.

"Your presence today, 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 strategy and most importantly getting more meat to say towards further validation of the ASGSIP 2021-2030 by other sectors," 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, livelihoods Social Stability and peace for our Nation, Solomon Islands.

He said the development of this ASGSIP 2021-2030 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 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 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 support in facilitating during the discussions.

Development of the ASGSIP 2021-2030 started in 2019 with a nationwide consultations to all provinces including Honiara by local consultants with SIG funding support.



Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Dr. Christain Ramofafia made a contribution during the consultation.



Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Ethel Frances made a point during the consultation.

# Biosecurity Solomon Islands

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# Training equip farmers, aims to boost farming activities



Farmer participants together with MAL officers and UNDP rep that attended the demonstration and training on Tuesday 30th March 2021.

Over thirty farmers of the Auki Market Vendors Association (AMVA) in Malaita Province has successfully completed an agricultural input demonstration and training conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) on 30th March 2021.

Held at Radefasu Community in Central Kwara'ae, the demonstration-training was made possible through UNDP Market 4 Change (M4C) Project support and conducted by MAL Coordinator National Agriculture Livelihoods Improvement & Export Based Expansion, MacDonnell Hiva and Machine Operator Moses Misi.

The hands-on training focused on showing farmers how to safely operate walking tractor power tiller and a garden base power tiller. This included identifying the tillers ma-

lor parts and functions, how to start the tillers, operating the tillers to plough and till the land, and basic machine care and maintenance. Farmers also attended a field demonstration where they were able to operate the tillers themselves in trial ploughing and tilling activities with MAL Machine Operator Moses Misi.

This was the first time for many of the farmers to see and use a power tiller machine and the training was crucial to prepare them to use the machines to boost their farming activities.

Speaking on behalf of the Auki Market Vendors Association Francis Fa'alimae said the Association is happy to take ownership of the machines and learn how to use the machines for ploughing in their farms from the Ministry of Agricul-

ture and Livestock.

"Before we used basic agriculture tools like knife, hoe and bars and now we will use the tillers. This is new knowledge for AMVA members and will move us to another level in our farming", he said.

"What we learnt today will help us in the future. We will see our crop production will increase."

Meanwhile, MacDonnell Hiva of MAL encouraged AMVA farmers to continue their cooperation and ensure the sustainability of the machines.

"The responsibility to manage, organize and lead members – especially farmer members – is now on your shoulders," he said.

"The Ministry wants to see how best AMVA farmers will use the power tillers to their benefit and show good results from the use of

these machineries.

"Use the machines, manage it well and achieve something out of it." The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in partnership with UNDP Markets for Change Project procured the agricultural inputs via the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi Partner Trust Fund in 2020. These included walking tractor power tillers, base power tillers, chainsaws and grass cutters all sourced from agricultural machinery suppliers in Honiara. MAL beneficiaries were identified under its National Food security and Enhancement program (Model Farm Project). Markets for Change Project beneficiaries are the Auki Market Vendors Association, Gizo Market Vendors Association and the Honiara Market Vendors Association.

Participants acknowledged that im-

# Stakeholders review, approves agriculture 10-year growth strategy for Cabinet sanction

Agriculture stakeholders has welcomed and thanked the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) for putting together the first ever National Agriculture Sector 10-year Growth Strategy and after a full day of review and validation endorsed the plan for Cabinet approval.

Representatives from Provincial Government Assemblies which include Provincial Secretaries and private sector including farmer group representatives commented and critiqued the strategy document during a stakeholders consultation held at the Kairos Conference room in Honiara on Tuesday 9th March 2021.

In her opening remarks, the Permanent Secretary of MAL, Mrs. Ethel Tebengi Frances stressed that "MAL is but one player in the sector to drive the execution of this Plan. All of us are in this sector and we must align our goals and objectives with this Plan, so we throw our best collective effort behind this roadmap as pathway to revitalise, modernize and commercialize the agricultural sector to contribute to the well-being and prosperity of all Solomon Islanders, ensuring food and nutrition security and increased economic growth."

Mrs. Frances further said that MAL want all stakeholders to take full ownership of the Agriculture Sector 10-year Growth Strategy and Investment Plan (ASGSIP) 2021-2030 as is EVERYONES PLAN – a national guide for improving Agriculture & Livestock sector productive capacity to realize its full potential for stimulating economic growth & stability, wealth creation, and justice and peace.

Participants acknowledged that im-



Permanent Secretary of MAL, Mrs. Ethel Frances, seated center and flanked by Provincial Secretaries and private sector including farmer group representatives together with MAL departmental directors.

plementation of the strategy will be a huge challenge especially during these difficult times however similarly acknowledged that this strategy gives this country a clear guide on what need to be done to grow agriculture sector for a strong economy and improved livelihood.

"It is better to have a plan so we know how to get to where we want to be than no directions at all.

"Having this strategy is a big achievements for the Sector and so the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock must be congratulated", said the Provincial Secretary for Western Province Mr. Jeffrey Wickham.

The Chairman of the Northwest Guadalcanal Subsistence Farmers Association, Bernard Garo commented that MAL officers under the leadership of the Permanent Secretary Mrs. Ethel Tebengi Frances must be commended for the vision they have towards the growth of agriculture in this country by developing this plan as a guide for the next ten years.

Meanwhile, PS Frances said that the key to success is in having a robust workable implementation strategy and that this Sector Strategy

propose the establishment of an Agriculture Sector Advisory Council to oversee performances of the sector and advocate for legislative changes and resource mobilization and Industry Working Groups that brings the key actors or implementers around the industries they work in to discuss issues impacting their industries and opportunities to grow their industries.

"A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for this strategy is being disused with the Ministry of National Planning and Development who will take on the monitoring and evaluation of this plan" Mrs. Frances said.

"The role of provincial governments in planning and overseeing development of their agriculture sector was discussed, including ways where MAL and provincial governments can work collaboratively to improve agriculture extension services to farmers in their provinces and support market linkages with private sector."

Dr. Samson Viulu from the Prime Minister's Office on the government also made a presentation on the DCGA redirection policies.

Participants were divided into groups according to their industries to review the proposed programs and activities with the aim of validating and prioritizing where investment in their industries in the next four years should be.

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 one day of discussions.

"The inputs that you have given will go a long way in completing our strategy and most importantly getting more meat to say towards further validation of the ASGSIP 2021-2030 by other sectors," DST Ho'ota said.

DST Ho'ota then 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 support in facilitating during the discussions.

Development of the ASGSIP 2021-2030 started during last quarter of 2019 with a nationwide consultations to all provinces including Honiara by local consultants with SIG funding support and with supervision and advice by FAO International consultants.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted its completion in 2020 but MAL is grateful all is now coming to its final development stages. The final draft will incorporate inputs collected during all the consultation reviews and then forwarded to Cabinet for their considerations and blessings.

# MAL boosts San Isidro's farming capacity to produce more food

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) has enriched San Isidro Care Centre's (SICC) farming capacity to produce more food with the donation of vegetable seeds and tools to the centre on 5th April 2021.

SICC is a rural training Centre for Special Needs or people with disabilities, located at Aruligo in Northwest Guadalcanal.

"This generous assistance will help increase our capacity to produce more food for the students and eventually for small market to help us in our economy sustainability," Principal Sr. Maria Fe Rollo (SMSM) articulated when receiving the donation from MAL team which comprised of officers from the Extension

Department Headquarter and Guadalcanal Extension office and Planning Department.

"We are very grateful to MAL for this vegetable seeds and agriculture tools. Also recently we received a very generous help from MAL too through the livestock department poultry project, with a support of more than 200 layer chicks and feeds. These are very generous supports. I say generous, because it is not a learning tool for us especially for the students but it will more specifically help us improve our economic capacity and sustainability in the school/Centre," Principal Sr. Rollo stressed.

Speaking on behalf of the Extension Department Director (Super-

visioning), Director Planning of MAL, Peter Rarahabura said, "the reason why we are here today is not only to donate the support but to have a look at where are our potential areas in terms of providing food security in terms of future agriculture development.

"For so long MAL provide/ support individual farmers with tools but when we give that way it has no big impact as we have noticed over the years. "So now MAL try to look at supporting organizations, farmer groups and institutions that can come together, and where MAL can work together with them to boost agriculture development, be it on livestock or crops," Mr. Rarahabura explained.

He further said the Planning department, Land Use officers were also part of the team to look at the type of land system that we have with potential partners like San Isidro.

"This type of group (special needs) of people is a marginalize group that we sometimes do not assist them over the years and so today it paves way for us to work collaboratively."

Meanwhile, Principal Sr. Rollo said San Isidro Care Centre depend too much on land for food for students and for their learning experience on how to make use of land resource. "As a training Centre, it's a big learning process for us to make use of our land.

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FIELD DEMONSTRATION IN PICTURES.



# MAL rolls out distribution of BHC donated seeds & tools to farmers

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) continue to roll out distribution of the British High Commission (BHC) donated seeds and tools to the farming community across the country.

Distribution commenced on Friday 9th April 2021 with Betikama Adventist College (BAC) and St. Joseph Tenaru boarding schools got their first share of the cake.

British High Commission in Honiara on 18th January 2021 donated the seeds and tools to MAL and the ministry (MAL) as the implementer distribute the items to identified farming groups, education institutions and community groups in the country under its Livelihood Sector – Food Security Programme in response to the impact of Covid-19.

“This is an ongoing support programme of the ministry under Livelihood and is also part of government Livelihood Sector initiative under Covid-19 Strategy for the Agriculture Sector,” Chief Field Officer of MAL, Lily Wame said.

Mrs. Wame said the support is to ensure community members and education institutions establish and expand their food gardens with early maturing vegetable seeds and basic farming tools to increase food production capability.

“Distribution starts in Guadalcanal and Honiara and will spread to the provinces adding batches of seeds and farming tools for Western Province has already sent Sunday 11th April to MAL Extension office in Western where they will supervise distribution in the coming days and weeks with the Western border communities as priority.

“MAL Food Security Programme 2021 support from British High Commission is to address the Recovery Phase for Other Provinces while an Emergency Phase for Shortland Islands in the Western Province, Choiseul and Malaita Outer Islands for Malaita Province.

The Emergency phase referred to boarder areas that are higher risk to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Also travel restrictions is impacting livelihood of communities who live along the border with Bougainville as they often travel across the border to Buka Market to sale marine products like fish then buy vegetables and other necessities for their families. Therefore, this support is to assist these communities make gardens so they can still provide vegetables to their families,” Mrs. Wame emphasized.

MAL is supporting boarding schools like Betikama and Tenaru not only to support their learning but as boarding schools it want to encourage schools to go into farming and provide students with more healthy food. Also it is good to support schools manage their costs as part of their preparation for any covid-19 pandemic restrictions – that is saving money for future disasters or restrictions.



Chief Field Office of MAL, Lily Wame handed over the seeds to BAC Principal, Partinson Bekala as flanked by MAL officers. On the left is BAC Agriculture Science Teacher Mr. Kendrick Tangoéha with the donated watering cans.

ing and provide students with more healthy food. Also it is good to support schools manage their costs as part of their preparation for any covid-19 pandemic restrictions – that is saving money for future disasters or restrictions. Receiving the items, Betikama Adventist College (BAC), Principal,

Mr. Bekala said he wants to see the continuation of the programme in the future. Sharing the same sentiments is BAC Agriculture Science Teacher Mr. Kendrick Tangoéha.

Mr. Tangoéha reaffirmed that the seeds and tools will really help students in their field practical work

**MAL is supporting boarding schools like Betikama and Tenaru not only to support their learning but as boarding schools it want to encourage schools to go into farming and provide students with more healthy food. Also it is good to support schools manage their costs as part of their preparation for any covid-19 pandemic restrictions – that is saving money for future disasters or restrictions.**

Partinson Bekala expressed gratitude to MAL for seeing fit to support the school with the seeds and tools.

Mr. Bekala also extended his appreciation to the British High Commission and the people of Great Britain for the kind donation through MAL to guarantee farmers or people access good quality seeds and tools to support them with their farming activities.

“This is a timely support as it will provide practical aspect to students especially in agriculture and also supplement food for the school. This is a way forward for BAC as we are also preparing to implement our cassava project soon which was also supported by MAL.”

which will contribute a lot towards their school assessments – especially form 3 and form 5.

“The support is well-timed. Thank you MAL,” he said.

Principal of St. Joseph Tenaru Secondary School, Abraham Hihiru while applauding the government through MAL for the kind assistance assured the ministry that the items will be utilized for its envisioned purpose to support students in their practical learning – especially agriculture students and also make sure the seeds are planted to complement food for the school.

The support is part of the ongoing agriculture support programme that the ministry is implementing under its Livelihood Sector initiative

## Key points

- British High Commission Office in Honiara donated the vegetable seeds & tools to MAL

- MAL as the implementor distribute the items to farmers

- The support is to ensure community members and institutions establish and expand their food gardens with early maturing vegetable seeds and basic farming tools to increase food production capability.

- The support which came under MAL Livelihood initiative is also aimed at supporting and encouraging farming groups, education institutions and community groups to make gardens around their houses or grow vegetables to subsidize food costs as aligned to the national government food security programme to counter the impacts of Covid-19.

to support and encourage farming groups, education institutions and community groups to make gardens around their houses or grow vegetables to subsidize food costs as aligned to the national government food security programme to counter the impacts of Covid-19.■

## MAL boosts San Isidro’s farming capacity to produce more food

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“SICC is a training Centre for our young people especially with hearing and speaking disability (Special Needs) and we are very much dependent on the land, and our agriculture activities is a learning process but also as a way of living here providing food for students,” she said.

At the same time, Chief Field officer of MAL, Lily Wame thanked SICC for accepting the assistance and she said the assistance is part of the ongoing support programme of the ministry under Livelihood and is also part of the Government Livelihood Sector initiative under Covid-19 Strategy for the Agriculture Sector to ensure farming groups and education institutions establish and expand their food gardens with early maturing vegetable seeds and basic farming tools to increase food production capability and also subsidize food cost as aligned to the national government food security programme to counter the impacts of Covid-19.

British High Commission office in Honiara early this year donated the seeds and tools to MAL and the ministry (MAL) as the implementer distribute the items under its Livelihood Sector – Food Security Programme in response to the impact of Covid-19 to the farming community.

The Centre educates disabled young people from the ages of 14 and over, over a period of three years. Courses offered are English, Maths, Business, Sign Language, Agriculture, Life Skills, Carpentry, Woodwork, and Practical Trade and Skills.

The centre’s mission is to advocate for basic human rights for people with disabilities, the right to education and an opportunity to build their skills and self-esteem to enable a life of dignity and wellbeing.

The Centre registered 45 students this year alone and they came from various provinces across the country which include Temotu, Malaita, Makira, Western, Isabel and Guadalcanal province. ■



ABOVE: Principal of San Isidro Care Centre, Sr Maria Fe Rollo (SMSM) was overwhelmed as she receives the donation from Chief Field Officer of MAL, Lily Wame.

BELOW: San Isidro special needs students waves their hands as a gesture of appreciation/thank you to MAL for the generous support.



# Malaita farmers supported with farming tools, materials

More than 40 farmers in Malaita province has received boosting assistance of agricultural tools and materials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) under its Sustainable Economic Growth and Export Strengthening (SEGES) programme on 25th March 2021.

These are projects that farmers applied for in 2020 under MAL SEGES programme, a Medium Term Development Programme (MTDP) of the ministry (MAL) which is being implemented from 2020 to 2024.

“Project recipients (farmers) were really happy and acknowledged MAL for the support.

“Coconut farmers at Baunani Land Purchase Cooperative (LPC) in West Kwaio, upon receiving their coconut tools and materials, expressed gratitude and appreciation to MAL saying they will definitely use the assistance to speed up the completion of a dryer so that they could start producing copra and buying of green coconut fruits from farmers around and start using the dryer to dry coconut,” Chief Field Officer of MAL and Coordinator for Cash



Left, Chief Field Officer of MAL and Coordinator for Cash Crop – Provinces, Roy Timothy with agriculture extension officers of Malaita province during the delivery. Inserts are pictures of the actual delivery.

Crop – Provinces, Roy Timothy said. He said the support is to guarantee farmers enhance productivity and improved their revenue earnings. “For Malaita alone, 16 coconut farmers, 15 cocoa and 10 kava farmers were assisted with farming tools and materials as funded under the SEGES programme,”Mr.

Timothy stated.

He said the farmers are chosen from the four regions of Malaita province adding due to limited funds, the ministry not able to support all farmers.

Donated items for coconut farmers include; Axes, Bush Knives, Straight spades, Yam spades, Sharpening

files, Shade clothes and wheelbarrows. For cocoa farmers, they received pruning shears, loppers, pruning saws, pole pruners, ladders, chainsaws and shade clothes while Kava farmers supported with garden hoes, garden forks, secateurs, shade clothes, buckets, loppers, washing brush, nettings and wheelbarrows.

The four main objectives of the programme (SEGES) is to;

- Make sure farmers, associations, producers, buyers and exporters are empowered to increase productivity and to increase revenue earnings.

- Enhanced copra productivity through rehabilitation and support to CRB activities

- Enhance Cocoa Productivity through Rehabilitation and Genetic improvements

- Support Kava developments to increase productivity in all the Provinces

Central Province and Isabel are on the next distribution list that soon to be carried out by MAL in due course. ■



# Biosecurity conducts integrated Pest and Disease management awareness

Biosecurity officers of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) conducted a one-day awareness training on integrated pest and disease management for Komuniboli community members in East Guadalcanal on 15th April 2021.

Focused on pest control, specifically on Giant African Snail (GAS), the training was conducted upon request by Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) with the aim to address attack of GAS on its (JICA) Agroforestry project site there, raise awareness for community farmers on invasive pest and aware them on signs of (new possible) pests.

Jean Manepora'a who was part of the awareness team said the awareness-training was a success with the establishment of a biological control agent for GAS by their team at the village/community.

"There was an MOU signed between BSI and JICA under its (JICA) project on Capacity Development for Sustainable Forest Resources Management in Solomon Islands. The MOU is to permit BSI to carry



Biosecurity officers, JICA rep and Ministry of Forestry officers with community member participants during the awareness-training.

out awareness and trainings on regulated pests like Giant African Snail (GAS) and Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) at its project sites of Agroforestry which are established at Komuniboli in East Guadalcanal and Falake community in Malaita province. Now, that we have done with the first one, a similar training under the same project is anticipated

for Falake community members in West Kwara'ae, Malaita province in due course."

Mrs. Manepora'a said it was encouraging to see the whole community came out in numbers and help out with the establishment of four blocks of biological control trial sites, with New Guinea Flat Worm (platydemus Manokwari) be-

ing used for the biocontrol of GAS. "The awareness-training really equipped the community members as they acquired practical knowledge and techniques on the management of pest and diseases.

"Establishment of the biocontrol agent at the site/community is a project that BSI firm with Komuniboli community under JICA's agroforestry project as part of a collaborative efforts to control the spread of GAS within the vicinity." Biosecurity officers involved in the awareness are; George Harunari, Gideon Suda, Jean Manepora'a and Samson Kauli.

GAS, *Lissachatina fulica*, previously known as *Achatina fulica*, arrived in Solomon Islands in 2006.

It was first reported at Ranadi, Honiara and is believed to have arrived in the country on logging equipments that had been landed without biosecurity clearance.

MAL through its Biosecurity department has carried out active campaigns to eradicate it but after that proved impossible, to reduce its impact and contain it to the outbreak area.



ABOVE & BELOW: Pictures of the awareness training which include presentations and field demonstration along with activities. The awareness-training was a success with the establishment of a biological control agent for GAS by their team at the village/community.



# Agriculture support heralds MAL-CSSI new partnership

A new era partnership to boost agriculture development focusing on strengthening food production for food security has materialized between the Ministry of Agriculture (MAL) and the Correctional Services of Solomon Islands (CSSI).

The new partnership was acknowledged during a handing over ceremony of seeds and basic farming tools and materials by MAL to CSSI Tetere Correctional Centre (TCC) in Guadalcanal Province on 15th April.

"This occasion (handing over) heralds a new era in a partnership between MAL and CSSI in agriculture development, more specifically in food production for food security and as an opportunity in giving the CSSI inmates opportunity to learn farming practices as part of their rehabilitation process," Deputy Secretary Technical Michael Ho'ota said on behalf of the ministry's (MAL's) Permanent Secretary.

"Now that this partnership begun, the ministry is looking forward in participating in partnership with CSSI on other agriculture development aspirations that it (CSSI) has.

"Our technical team stand ready to assist you in technical matters relating to production of agriculture crops and livestock," DST Ho'ota assured CSSI Commissioner, Gabriel Manelusi during the handing over ceremony.

"As CSSI commissioner, I am feel very honored and pleased to receive these items on behalf of CSSI," Commissioner of CSSI Gabriel Manelusi said.

Commissioner Manelusi said while CSSI is looking forward for MAL continuous support, he said the assistance has established a partnership that will grow and strengthen both organisations collaboration in agriculture development, especially in food production for food security and as an opportunity in giving inmates the prospect to learn farming practices as part of their rehabilitation development."



Deputy Secretary Technical (DST) Michael Ho'ota handover the seeds and farming items to the CSSI Commissioner, Gabriel Manelusi. On the right is Tetere Correctional Centre Commandant (Superintendent), Steve Machaiah.

He said the support will boost the real need of progressing the capacity or rehabilitation program of the Correctional Centre (Tetere) for inmates as well as equip and prepare them before they can go back to the communities.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ho'ota said the Democratic Coalition Government for Advancement (DCGA) in an efforts to address the impact of the Covid-19 on our economy redirected and streamline its policies which resulted in the following policies for agriculture sector;

- Develop and Strengthen Production of Export Crops.
- Facilitate and support the development of Commercial Agriculture.
- Enhance Food Security and the Livestock industry to alleviate rural poverty.

"The occasion we witness here today is part and parcel in the implementation of the government of the day policies," Mr. Ho'ota said.

British High Commission in Honiara on 18th January 2021 donated the seeds and tools to MAL and the ministry (MAL) as the implementer distribute the items to identified

farming groups, education institutions and community groups in the country under its Livelihood Sector – Food Security Programme in response to the impact of Covid-19. Mr. Ho'ota while acknowledging the British people through the British High Commission Office in Honiara for the donated seeds and tools said the main objective of the Livelihood Sector as hosted by MAL under its Covid-19 Preparedness and Response Strategy is to boost Food Production by growing early maturing crop to reduce the impact of Covid-19 on Food Security and the livelihood of the people of Solomon Islands.

Commissioner Manelusi also took the time to thank the British High Commission office in Honiara for the donation of the farming items through MAL where facilitate the activities.

"It's an honor to receive these agriculture farm equipments. These equipments will really help our farming industry here at Tetere especially during this Covid-19 season. Also with the redirection of the government and besides limited

resources that we have, these support will boost our activities here at the Centre as we continue to develop capacity development of our inmates," Commissioner Manelusi said.

"As Commissioner, I am really touched by this support, because we have struggle on how we can progress for the future of our inmates. How can we develop them proper, equip them proper on farming practices so that when they go back to the communities they can be able to engage in farming activities – especially at the community level where it can progress our economy development."

TCC has involve in various farming program activities which include; piggery, poultry, vegetable farming and forestry. These farming activities were part of the CSSI rehabilitation program which aim to equip inmates with skills and knowledge more especially on farming practices and other activities hosted by the Centre.

Inspector and TCC Farm Manager, Mark Seiroa said he is happy for the support.

"Often times we find it hard to procure quality seeds. We use to pay seeds from the Chinese shops but somehow some manage to germinate, some just rotten and died.

"What you provided will help our inmates in farming activities as part of our rehabilitation program here to equip them with necessary skills and knowledge on farming practices. We will enjoy working with the tools. Thank you for the support," Mr. Seiroa expressed.

DST, Mr. Ho'ota and the CSSI Commissioner, Mr. Manelusi together with the MAL and CSSI officers as accompanied by Inspector and TCC Farm Manager, Mr. Seiroa also took a brief tour around the Centre (TCC) and observed the farming activities that are taking place there. Various vegetable types with a total of 70 packets, basic farming tools and materials were donated to TCC.



CSSI Commissioner Gabriel Manelusi

Some of the Tetere Correctional Centre inmates.

MAL DST Michael Ho'ota



Biosecurity Solomon Islands (BSI) is one of the departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL). Guided by the Biosecurity Act 2013, and associated regulations and orders, BSI is responsible for maintaining effective biosecurity to protect the country (SI) from pest and diseases, controlling pests and diseases that may enter the country, negotiating market access requirements for agricultural goods being exported and facilitating trade in compliance with international standards.

Currently BSI is on alert mode as it monitors African Swine Fever (ASF) as reported in neighboring Papua New Guinea (PNG). As part of the efforts it also banned the importation of pork products into Solomon Islands since July 2020. You might asked, *what is ASF?* well, provided below are facts about ASF for your awareness.

# The facts about ASF

## What is African swine fever (ASF)?

African swine fever (ASF) is a highly contagious haemorrhagic viral disease of domestic and wild pigs, which is responsible for serious economic and production losses. It is caused by a large DNA virus of the Asfarviridae family, which also infects ticks of the genus Ornithodoros. Although signs of ASF and classical swine fever (CSF) may be similar, the ASF virus is unrelated to the CSF virus. ASF is a disease listed in the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code and must be reported to the OIE.

## Transmission and spread

The epidemiology of ASF is complex and varies depending on the environment, types of pig production systems, the presence/absence of competent tick vectors, human behaviour, and the presence/absence of wild pigs. Routes of transmission can include:

- direct contact with infected domestic or wild pigs
- indirect contact, through ingestion of contaminated material (e.g. food waste, feed, or garbage)
- contaminated fomites, or biological vectors (soft ticks of the genus Ornithodoros) where present.

## Public health risk

ASF is not a risk to human health.

## Clinical signs

Clinical signs and mortality rates can vary according to the virulence of the virus and the type/species of pig: Acute forms of ASF are characterised by high fever, depression, anorexia and loss of appetite, haemorrhages in the skin (redness of skin on ears, abdomen and legs), abortion in pregnant sows, cyanosis, vomiting, diarrhoea and death within 6-13 days (or up to 20 days). Mortality rates may be as high as 100%. Subacute and chronic forms are caused by moderately or low virulent viruses, which produce less intense clinical signs that can be expressed for much longer periods. Mortality rates are lower, but can still range from 30-70%. Chronic disease symptoms include loss of weight, intermittent fever, respiratory signs, chronic skin ulcers and arthritis. Different types of pig may have varying susceptibility to ASF virus infection. African wild suids may be infected without showing clinical signs allowing them to act as reservoirs.

## Diagnostic

ASF may be suspected based on clinical signs but confirmation must be made with laboratory tests, particularly to differentiate it from classical swine fever (CSF). Guidance on diagnostic tests for ASF can be found in the Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals.

## Prevention and control

Currently there is no approved vaccine for ASF. Prevention in countries free of the disease depends on implementation of appropriate import policies and biosecurity measures, ensuring that neither infected live pigs nor pork products are introduced into areas free of ASF. This includes ensuring proper disposal of waste food from aircraft, ships or vehicles coming from affected countries and policing illegal imports of live pigs and pork products from affected countries. During outbreaks and in affected countries, control of ASF can be difficult and must be adapted to the specific epidemiological situation. Classic sanitary measures may be employed including early detection and humane killing of animals (with proper disposal of carcasses and waste); thorough cleansing and disinfection; zoning/compartimentalisation and movement controls; surveillance and detailed epidemiological investigation; strict biosecurity measures on farms. As observed in Europe and in some regions of Asia, the transmission of ASF seems to depend largely on the wild boar population density and their interaction with low-biosecurity pig production systems. The good knowledge and management of the wild boar population and a good coordination among the Veterinary Services, wildlife and forestry authorities are required to successfully prevent and control ASF. Depending on the epidemiological situation, the involvement of the soft tick vector should also be considered in the control programme.

## Geographical distribution

ASF is present in wild and/or domestic pigs in regions of Asia, Europe and Africa.

- World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

## SINU agriculture students visits MAL



On 13 March 2021, eight students undertaking Bachelor of Science in Tropical Agriculture at the Solomon Islands National University together with their Lecturer, Willie Waroka (pictured) visited the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL). The visit was part of their learning process to learn about the ministry's functions and responsibilities. Brief presentations done by each department responsible of officers aided the students so much as they acquired knowledge about the ministry's core responsibilities through its different departments. Lecturer, Willie Waroka thanked MAL management for accepting their request and also acknowledged staff for their time and for the important presentations which would help the students understand the structure and functions of the ministry.



## Further farming materials for SPK farm

On 4 March 2021, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL)through its Guadalcanal Extension office delivered additional farming materials to SPK farm. The delivery was part of the initial support of farming tools donated by MAL Guadalcanal Extension Office to SPK farm in September last year. The donated items include one 25kg Blitzem Snail/Slug Killer, two shade cloth 1.8m x 50m and two rolls chicken mesh 1/2 inch x 3ft x 50m which cost SBD\$4,560.00. The bonus distribution was necessary to ease with the proper construction and completion of SPK farm nursery house/shed whereas the snail bait/killer will be used to control the attack of African Snail in the farm. The farming materials was acquired under the Covid-19 Livelihood 2020 budget.



# News in brief

## MAL heads visits Grasshill Farm Project



A high level delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) has visited Grasshill School Farm Project along the Tina River road, Malango ward in Guadalcanal Province on 20th April 2021. The delegation comprised of MAL's Permanent Secretary, Ethel Teben-gi Frances, Director Livestock, Banabas Kega, Director Extension, Andrew Menanolu, Director Planning, Peter Rarahabura and other senior officers. The visit was to see development of the farm project and discuss potential areas that may require government support through MAL. The farm is still in its initial stage but yet it is making progress. Currently Grasshill School is embarking on livestock farming, and they have started with ducks, chickens and cows for breeding purposes in the initial establishment.

## Solomon Islands Government Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock TENDER NOTICE

Tender Reference Number: MAL/MTB/01/21  
Central Tender Board Reference: CTB/C08/21  
Name of Project: **BIO- SECURITY OFFICE REFURBISHMENT WORK - HENDERSON**

The Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock invites interested eligible Contractors to submit tenders for the Construction of Works for the BIO-SECURITY OFFICE REFURBISHMENT WORKS AT HENDERSON. Full details are provided in the attached Technical Specifications, Schedule of Activities and Drawings.

Bidding will be conducted through the Competitive Tendering procedure specified in the SIG Financial Instructions 2010 and the Procurement and Contract Administration Manual, and is open to all eligible Tenderer. The contract will be awarded the lowest responsive evaluated tender.

Interested eligible Tenderer may obtain further information from:

1. Paul Gregory ( Secretary MTB), PALalo@sig.gov.sb
2. Crispus Fanai ( Deputy Director) cfanai@biosecurity.gov.sb, and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below:

**Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock**  
**P.O. Box G13,**  
**Honiara, SI**

From 8:00am to 4:30pm or on the website: www.solomons.gov.sb.  
A complete set of Tender documents in English may be obtained by interested Tenderer on the submission of a personal or written application to the address below:

**The Secretary -MTB**  
**Ministerial Tender Board**  
**Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock**  
**P.O. Box 13**  
**Honiara, SI**

A non-refundable fee of \$150.00 upon receipt from the Ministry of Finance and Treasury for the Bidding Documents. Tenders, comprising the documents identified in the Instruction to Tenderers (ITT), and following the requirements of the ITT, must be delivered to the address below:

**Secretary – CTB**  
**Ministry of Finance & Treasury**  
**P.O. Box 26**  
**Honiara, SI.**

**At or before 2:00pm on Thursday 10th June, 2021.** Tenders shall be valid for a period of 14 days after the deadline of Tender submission. Late or incomplete Tenders will be rejected. Tenders will be opened in the presence of the Tenderers' representatives who choose to attend at the address below:

**Leaf Hut**  
**Town Ground**  
**Ministry of Finance & Treasury**  
**P.O. Box G26, Honiara, SI.**



## MAL conducts CRB awareness at St. Martins RTC

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Research Department has successfully delivered a one-day awareness on the management control of Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) for St. Martins Rural Training Centre (RTC) Agricultural students at Tenaru in Guadalcanal Province.

Held on 20th April, the awareness was conducted upon request by the centre's Principal Valeriano Kwany with the aim for the Agriculture students to learn about the long term management control option of the pest (CRB) using fungal pathogen, a biological agent to control the pest population.

"CRB is now here to stay with us and MAL is now looking at long term management control options," Director of MAL Research Department, Helen Tsatsia said.

"MAL Research plays an important role in the long term management options for pests and diseases through its plant protection team. Support in terms of finance, more qualified officers and other resources is critical for the implementation of long management control



Freda Mudu Research Officer (left) and Norman field Technician (right) demonstrating the release of fungal pathogen in the artificial breeding site at St Martin RTC.

strategies," Mrs. Tsatsia said.

Mrs. Tsatsia said long term management options include the combination of more than one control method called Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and she

said IPM strategies to manage the population of CRB are Sanitation, Chemical and Biological Control. "All the methods require the support of farmers and other relevant stakeholders."

The Director explained that biological control of CRB can be done using virus called *Oryctes Nudivirus* and a fungus species, *Mertarhizium anisopliae*. "It is commonly known as green muscardine fungus (GMF). The biological agents have to be imported from overseas.

"Commercial GMF is very expensive and MAL Research has gone into producing its own supply of the fungal spores locally," she said.

The coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB), *Oryctes rhinoceros*, was discovered in Honiara in January 2015. The ministry (MAL) has carried out active campaigns to eradicate and contain it within outbreak area but was not able to do so. To date it is now confirmed that the CRB has spread to some parts of the provinces except for Choiseul province and the worst infected provinces are Malaita, Guadalcanal, Makira (mostly Ulawa), Central Province especially Russell Islands and Ngella and Rennell and Bellona and Malaita Outer Islands (MOI). Coconut industry and other palms are vulnerable to the invasive pest attack. ■

## MAL boosts RTC's farming programs

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) boosted two Rural Training Centres (RTCs) agriculture programs with the donation of vegetable seeds and tools on Friday 9th April 2021.

They are St Martin's Rural Training Centre at Tenaru and Don Bosco RTC at Tetere in Guadalcanal Province.

The support was made possible under MAL's Livelihood Sector initiative to support and encourage farming groups, education institutions and community groups to make gardens around their houses or grow vegetables to subsidize food cost as aligned to the national government food security programme to counter the impacts of Covid-19.

Chief Field Officer of MAL, Lily Wame said supporting farming groups and education institutions which include Rural Training Centres that active in growing vegetables is critical to make sure they expand their food gardens with early maturing vegetable seeds and basic farming tools as well as increase food production competency.

"Participating communities, Rural Training centres and Secondary schools that are active in growing vegetables are identified by our normal Provincial Agriculture Extension office network.

"Supporting boarding RTC schools like St. Martin's and Don Bosco is very important and such support is not intended to only support their (students) learning but as board-

ing schools MAL want to encourage schools to go into farming and provide students with more healthy food.

"Also it is good to support schools manage their costs as part of their preparation for any Covid-19 pandemic restrictions – that is saving money for future disasters or restrictions."



Mrs. Wame thanked the RTC's management for accepting the support though quite small but assured that MAL as a mandated ministry responsible for agriculture development in the country will continue to support the farming community to guarantee farmers or people improve their farming activities and make sure they have healthy and nutritious food available.

Receiving the support on behalf of St. Martin's RTC is Principal, Valeriano Kwany and Agriculture teacher, Madam Anna Mae.

"This is a timely support," excited Principal Kwany said.

He said such assistance is critical at this time of pandemic as everyone

(citizens) taking substitutes to mitigate the impact of Covid-19.

"This will not only improve our school farming programs, but, it will also boost our agriculture student's practical knowledge as well as complement food in terms of fresh vegetables for the school as part of subsidizing food cost," Mr. Kwany said.

Agriculture teacher, Madam Anna Mae while expressing her gratitude to MAL for seeing it fit to assist the school said the support is not only well-timed but important to the school agriculture segment an area where she's been taking care of since then.

"These tools and seeds are really a bonus for the school especially agriculture division as it will help students in their practical learning.

"We have students from almost every provinces undertaking training here and many are interested in agriculture. And accessing basic farming tools is one of our greatest need to do farm work. So, this support will boost our practical

field activities (farming) as well as improve food production for the school," Ms. Mae said.

Meanwhile, Don Bosco RTC senior instructor, Francis Ngaovera while sharing the same sentiments thanked MAL for the assistance.

He said the support brings hope for students especially in agriculture as it will help them enhance their practical training and also produce food for the school to support food cost.

Mr. Francis said he wants to see the continuation of the programme in the future and want closer working relationship between MAL and RTC's and schools around the country to enable improvement of the agriculture sector.

British High Commission in Honiara early this year donated the seeds and tools to MAL and the ministry (MAL) as the implementer distributed the items under its Livelihood Sector – Food Security Programme in response to the impact of Covid-19 to farmers.

The Food security programme is aimed at reducing the impact of Covid-19 in Honiara and provincial urban centres and rural communities with the aim to strengthen farming groups, education institutions and communities' capacity and increased their production.

Guadalcanal province starts off distribution last week with extension of delivery to other provinces and communities expected in due course. ■

## MAL establishes Integrated Land Management Committee (ILMC)

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock through the Integrated Forest Management Project (IFMP) of which the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations is the implementing agency has successfully established its Integrated Land Management Committee (ILMC).

The committee (ILMC) core responsibility is to provide general oversight of project execution related to sustainable land management and improved decision making in production landscapes.

The project goal is to strengthen and complement ongoing efforts by the Government of the Solomon Islands and its partners in order to promote new approaches to sustainable forest management that is socially viable, economically feasible, and environmentally sound. Technical Advisor, FAO Mr. Raushan Kumar said the project has the aim of implementing integrated management of protected and productive forest landscapes for sustainable community development and multiple environmental benefits.

"One of the objectives of this project is mainly concerned with Integrated Land Management (ILM), and thus the committee (ILMC) was established as part of fulfilment of this objective and where the role would be to provide support as well as carry out monitoring of activities within this focal area," Mr. Raushan said.

The committee (ILMC) held its inaugural meeting on 29th April 2021 at the SIBC conference room in Honiara and was chaired by MAL Permanent Secretary Supervising, Michael Ho'ota, Technical Advisor, FAO Mr. Raushan Kumar, and Assistant FAO Country Representative Mr. Jimi Saelea, who spoke about the projects and programmes implemented by FAO of the United Nations. Mr. Douglas Yee, National Programme Coordinator of the IFMP facilitated the meeting. The meeting was attended by wide range of stakeholders involved in sustainable land use and its management.

Assistant FAO country representative, Jimi Saelea said Integrated Land Management (ILM) is the second component of the Integrated Forest Management Project (IFMP) currently implemented in Solomon Islands and is funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by FAO under the country's program framework (CPF-2018-2022). "This component (ILM) practically deals with agriculture and forestry. The establishment of this committee (ILMC) is a requirement



The Integrated Land Management (ILM) committee members during their inaugural meeting on 29th April. Other member reps were not able to make it to the first meeting due to other official commitment.

under the IFM project. The committee will eventually function within the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) as a technical working group under the Agriculture Oversight Committee of the Agriculture Sector Growth and Investment Plan (ASGIP) 2021-2030 which I understand will be launched later this year," Mr. Saelea explained.

He added that unsustainable use of land for agriculture and to some extent forestry has been blamed for land degradation and soil infertility and he said these are issues that needs serious attention now to avoid future disasters. "To address these issues both government and

country. About 35 percent of GDP is generated by subsistence agriculture, and nationwide, 92 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture in some way.

We are currently experiencing regularly occurring variabilities in climate change impacts and effects such as heavy rainfalls, hot and dry spells, extremely high and low temperatures, coastal sea level rise, coastal salinity and infiltration, these effects threaten food security and agriculture, infrastructure, and other resources that provide for the wellbeing of men, women, and children of Solomon Islands.

"The manner in which we use Land

**"The manner in which we use Land must now be seriously addressed in light of the increasing environment and land resources exploitation.**

non-government actors must collaborate."

While acknowledging MAL Permanent Secretary, Ethel Frances and Permanent Secretary Supervising/Deputy Secretary Technical (DST) Michael Ho'ota for the formation of the committee (ILMC) Mr. Saelea said the establishment of the committee is critical to ensure stakeholders are kept informed and the projects implementation are guided and kept on track.

Meanwhile, Permanent Secretary Supervising of MAL, Michael Ho'ota said Agriculture is an important sector for the Solomon Islands' national economy as it sustains 85 percent of the rural population with food crops, cash crops, and livestock for their daily livelihoods, food, and social security.

"Agriculture holdings account for 40 percent of the landmass of the

must now be seriously addressed in light of the increasing environment and land resources exploitation. The fast increasing population demands more food and incomes that in turn put more pressure on the land and other resources. In the rush to satisfy these needs most people are unaware that they are contributing to negative results like soil degradation, low soil fertility, low crops productivity, and the current increasing health issues such as malnutrition and lack of economic wellbeing resulting in poverty," Mr. Ho'ota emphasized.

He further stressed that these activities result in more problems like uncontrolled subsistence practices, water catchment deforestation and reduction, nutrients leaching and depletion, use of agro-chemicals detrimental to the environment, clear felling of forest lands, open

mining activities, just to mention some of the leading adverse activities that come about with no consideration to proper land use planning. "With all the issues said and the demand from both the national government and our rural populace I am pleased to note that under the Component 2: Integrated Land Management: reviews and revision of outdated and ineffective policy, regulatory and legal frameworks governing land use in the country will be done. Further more thorough assessment of impacts of current land-use practices on biodiversity, land degradation and ecosystem services will also be conducted and this will feed into the review and revision; providing the policy makers with reliable information to base their policies and strategies on and most importantly the establishment of a multi-sectoral coordination mechanism to ensure the sectoral frameworks are streamlined and complementary rather than contradictory," Mr. Ho'ota highlighted.

Mr. Ho'ota thanked the newly appointed committee (ILMC) members for accepting their appointments and he reiterated that the Integrated Land Management Committee (ILMC) will be the main advisory body for the implementation of integrated land management component 2 of the IFM Project.

ILMC members are representations of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Forestry and Research, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey and the Solomon Islands National University (SINU) through the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Kastom Garden Association (KGA) and Live & Learn agency. ■



# MAL rules out African Swine Fever (ASF) in death of 21 pigs at Aola

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Livestock Department has ruled out any African Swine Fever (ASF) incursion in the country but confirmed death of 21 pigs at Aola communities in East Central Guadalcanal was related to poor pig husbandry and management practices by farmers. This was after a six-member team (pictured) from the ministry's Livestock Department and Biosecurity Department attended and investigated reports of pigs and piglets being sick and die-off from some farmers at the region on 17th April 2021.

Deputy Director of Livestock and Veterinary Services of MAL, Hearley Atupule who headed the team said the swift response was taken as part of the ministry's alertness and preparedness to contain any possible incursion of ASF in the country. "ASF is not present in Solomon Islands at the moment, but there are reported cases recorded in Papua New Guinea (PNG) which is a great concern to us and we must not take it lightly but always stay cautious and take required measures to ensure the country's pig industry is protected from the virus-related disease. ASF is not a risk to human health." Mr. Atupule said his team attended and investigated the reported cases and established that the infections and deaths were caused by animal welfare, through poor husbandry and management associated to poor housing, feeding and water, animal health issues and lack of knowledge by farmers in handling and raising of their animals to support their livelihood. "The cause of sickness and some death were resulted from high level of both internal and external parasites affecting the animals (pigs).



"These are also associated with poor feeding and the conditions where the animals were confined in. The smaller animals were also susceptible to extreme weather conditions such as heavy rain, wind and high humidity, thus the piglets were getting pneumonia, slow growth, diarrhoea and other health issues, that may cause their illness and eventually resulted to the deaths. We also gathered information that apart from four farmers interviewed, there were also other

farmers who experienced the same incidence. The signs and symptoms that were reflected by the farmers and evidences that we saw from the animals examined and diagnosed does not support the presence of African Swine Fever (ASF) in the region or community. Therefore our response team collectively declared and ruled out the incursion of African Swine Fever (ASF) from the cases that were reported," Mr. Atupule explained. The team also provided general animal health services to

the farmers there which include; anthelmintic and antibiotics drugs injections, castration and removal of needle teeth to young piglets. An awareness talk on the ASF and the importance of Biosecurity including the current ban on importation of pork into the country was also delivered to the community farmers by the team.

MAL through its livestock department is sketching plans to organise a training for farmers in the region in due course. However, as part of MAL's commitment to certain ASF not enters the country, the government through the ministry of agriculture banned pork products except for few approved importers importing meat into the country from Australia only with strict importation rules.

According to World Organisation for Animal Health, African swine fever (ASF) is a severe viral disease affecting domestic and wild pigs and is responsible for serious production and economic losses. "This transboundary animal disease (TAD) can be spread by live or dead pigs, domestic or wild, and pork products. "Furthermore, transmission can also occur via contaminated feed and fomites (non-living objects) such as shoes, clothes, vehicles, knives, equipment etc., due to the high environmental resistance of ASF virus. "There is no approved vaccine against ASF (unlike classical swine fever ('Hog Cholera') which is caused by a different virus). "Historically, outbreaks have been reported in Africa and parts of Europe, South America, and the Caribbean. More recently (since 2007) the disease has been reported in multiple countries across Africa, Asia and Europe, in both domestic and wild pigs." ■



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