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Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock

**Supports, Promotes, Improves & Leads Agriculture Development in Solomon Islands**

#agriculturesolomonislands





## WELCOME

It is my pleasure as the Permanent Secretary of MAL to present to you the 6th 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 May-June. 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 establishes historic 3 million loan facility for farmers at DBSI

For the first time the government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) injected a historic 3 million loan facility for farmers through the Development Bank of Solomon Islands (DBSI) so that farmers throughout the country (Solomon Islands) can have access to credit facilities.

Permanent Secretary of MAL, Ethel Tebengi Frances, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MoFT), McKinnie Dentana and DBSI Interim Chief Executive Officer Tukana Bovoro signed the Grant Agreement on 28th June 2021 at the MAL Headquarter Office in Honiara. Under the "Agriculture Development Grant Agreement", MAL will deposit the 3 million grant to DBSI to put it for an agriculture loan, which the farmers can apply for to increase or boost their production. MAL/SIG is the funding agency while DBSI is the executing/implementing party. The agriculture loan facility at the DBSI is specifically tailored to address specific needs of the agriculture sector and that will enable access to credit facilities not only for farmers but those who process and exports agricultural products.

Permanent Secretary of MAL, Ethel Frances said,"Our people, let alone farmers, cannot access loans due to their inability to satisfy bank requirements. As most of our people are in the agriculture sector, I know it will benefit a good majority of them.

Mrs. Frances went on to emphasise that "not everyone will want to come and apply for projects in the government and so this loan facility is for them. It is for those who want to take pride in doing it on their own than relying on projects."

"I believe personally that one of the biggest problem we have in this country is 'project based' development. While this is good for service delivery it is not good in many ways for income generating investments. You will anecdotally prove it from the high rate of project failures. The success rate of projects is very low because of the lack of accountabilities and seriousness project beneficiaries placed on projects given to them. What we should do is enable access to credit facilities for our people and have credit products that is tailored for their needs and operating environment," Mrs. Frances said.

"As it is a loan facility, the process of selection will be done by the DBSI alone and MAL will hold them accountable for the success and/or failure of this program. As per agreed, DBSI will report half yearly to MAL and an annual audit will be carried out by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) to ascertain its successes. MAL intend to increase this support provided it satisfy its objectives."

The Permanent Secretary of MAL continue to explain that "as this is a loan facility DBSI bank will assess the ability of borrowers to repay so the first eligibility is that this is for those who are already in operation and wish to increase their farming or processing businesses. Those starting or in initial years of operation can still access support from MAL. This criteria may change as we progress and have lessons to learn from."

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MoFT) McKinnie Dentana said the arrangement is a fine example of achievement of the intention of the government policy in setting up of DBSI.

"There are some programs that the government would like to support under the DBSI Act and agriculture is one of the priority program. This arrangement through DBSI is one we really looked at during the setting up of the Bank. The DBSI is where we can channel such funding through and it can then support the farmers," PS Dentana explained.

He further said one of the reasons for supporting DBSI too is government wants to bring most of our farmers or Solomon Islanders from the informal sector to the formal activities sector. Our Solomon Islanders normally cannot receive support from commercial banks and one way of enabling this possibility is to develop this bridge to move them from the informal



PS MAL, Ethel Frances, PS Finance, McKinnie Dentana and DBSI interim CEO Mr Bovoro displaying signed copies of the Agriculture Development Grant Agreement. Standing on the back are MAL Departmental Directors with two reps from DBSI.

to the formal.

"So definitely from this arrangement our farmers will work closely with DBSI, who will train them in all aspect of financial services and bring them forward from that status up to a status where they can, not only access DBSI but also funds from other commercial banks. This is an ambition, and that is that we would like to see our Solomon Islanders progress from their informal settings to a more formal one where they can access fund." Mr. Dentana said assessment of applicants will be made on the Bank's requirements therefore banking requirements will be dependent on the bank (DBSI).

## “MAL intend to increase this support provided it satisfy its objectives.”

Meanwhile, DBSI Interim Chief Executive Officer Tukana Bovoro said on behalf of the bank management and staff they are very happy to be part of this government redirection policy and to be able to support MAL in its aim and ambitions because its purposes are also align with what the bank is doing.

"Our role is to put money out in to the rural areas and to our agricultural people in a sustainable manner. We are not only going to be giving money but we are hoping to be giving money in a way that also brings in certain disciplines."

However, interim CEO Bovoro said, "because our funds are limited, we want to target what we call the low hanging fruits, the ones that already in business by utilising the funds to support them become even better and become more stable and sustainable so that they can continue to work in the future.

"The bank is starting to achieve the purposes that it was set up for and this arrangement, is another step in a long journey," he said.

Under the Grant Agreement the bank will also conduct financial literacy training for farmers so they learn simple financial management technique that will allow them to repay their loan and still enjoy a good return.



# MAL supports Northwest Guadalcanal Noni farmers

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Guadalcanal Agriculture Extension Division has delivered farming tools to two farmer groups at Tamboko community in Northwest Guadalcanal, May.

The support included distribution of wheel barrows and pruning tools purposely to support farmers with their harvesting and to manage their noni trees to accessible heights for harvesting and at the same time enhancing increased yield per tree.

Chief Field Officer for Guadalcanal Province Mr. Joseph Wotomaru said the delivery included 10 wheel barrows, 10 loppers and 10 secateurs (pruning scissors).

“17 farmers formed the two farmer groups and actually they are the ones (farmers) that will be benefiting directly from the support as they will be using the tools to improve their farming activities,” Mr. Wotomaru explained.

The distribution was part of MAL’s continuous support under its Sustainable Economic Growth and Export Strengthening (SEGES) programme, a Medium Term Development Programme (MTDP) of the ministry which is being implemented from 2020 to 2024 to boost farmer’s agricultural productivity and to improve their revenue earnings.

The main objectives of the 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



MAL Guadalcanal Agriculture Extension Officers hands over the tools and wheel barrows to Noni farmers at Tamboko Village.

Mr. Wotomaru said the recipients (farmers) are really happy and acknowledged MAL for the assistance which will certainly aid them in their farming undertakings.

He then thanked MAL Extension Department management for the facilitation and procurement of the farming tools and ensuring they are safely delivered to the farmers.

Eight more farmer groups are yet to be supported under this project support for Guadalcanal Province.

## Chale & Uzamba farmers trained on cocoa grafting for better production

Trainings on cocoa grafting was conducted for Chale and Uzamba Participatory Action Research (PAR) farmers in the Western Province.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Research Department conducted the field trainings recently at Chale farm in Marovo and at Uzamba farm in Vella La Vella Island.

Research Officer, Raymond Vava said the trainings are critical to ensure farmers get the necessary knowledge on cocoa grafting to increase production.

He further said that on-farm testing of selected imported cocoa genetic materials through grafting on PAR farms is part of the national cocoa genetic material improvement program which aims at improving cocoa planting materials for cocoa farmers to increase on-farm productivity per tree.

“PAR farmers in both sites visited were trained on how to do top grafting on young cocoa seedlings and chupons as well as side grafting on mature cocoa trees. The grafting training was conducted inside the cocoa plantation and performed on chupons and some seedlings that were prepared for the training. For most of the PAR farmers it was their first time to actually learn how to do grafting. During the training each farmer take turns to do side grafting on seedlings and mature trees. Benefits of grafting good genetic materials to increase on farm production was also explained to farmers during the training so that they understood the importance of grafting,” Mr. Vava said.

He said from the training it is anticipated that farmers would apply the acquired grafting skills and quickly adapt and spread the good planting materials within the farm to increase production per tree.

“A total of four new lots of potential hybrid clones were grafted at Chale farm during the on-farm testing of some potential imported cocoa genetic materials on the PAR farms visited. Some of the clones were side grafted onto mature trees while some were top grafted on seedlings,”Mr. Vava explained.

A new cocoa nursery for research related activities was also established by MAL at Mile six research station at Gizo during the trip. The nursery was purposely build to raise rootstocks for grafting of potential materials to establish a small cocoa observation plot which can also act as a source of budwoods for nearby cocoa farmers. Around 400 polybags were filled with soil and were sown with cocoa seeds for raising of rootstocks.

Director of Research, Helen Tsatsia said research normally takes years before results become available to farmers. “Therefore, MAL through its Research Department undertook the Participatory Action Research (PAR)



MAL Research Officer Raymond Vava (right) demonstrating to Chale PAR farmers how to do side grafting on mature cocoa trees.

approach and involve interested farmers in conducting research trials in their farms. Cocoa is one of the first commercial crop that Research Department has taken the PAR approach to conduct research to identify the best performing varieties in the farmers’ field,” Mrs. Tsatsia said.

Grafting has a lot of significance but in simple terms it means to join two living trees from the same family into one by tying a shoot or a bud with a standing tree. It has so many benefits and one particular gain is it improve yield performance of a tree and retain the desirable genetic characteristics of a mother tree.





# MAL looks forward to implement MEAs national activities with FAO



Participants of the inception workshop which include representatives from relevant government ministries, FAO, organisations and private sector.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) is looking forward to the implementation of national activities of the Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) in Solomon Islands with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations.

Deputy Secretary Technical (DST) of MAL, Michael Ho’ota uttered the statement during MEAs two days inception workshop/meeting held at the Heritage Park Hotel in Honiara from 13-14 May 2021.

Objectives of the meeting is to raise awareness on the programme’s objective and activities; scoping out strategic partnerships with civil society and private sector; refine and validate work plan for year 1 which include validating agro-biodiversity priorities areas, reaffirming preliminary sites/ province identified, reaffirming preliminary subsector (commodities such as cocoa, coconut and others) and scope strategic partnerships with civil society and private sector.

“The two days consultation mainly dealt with a component of the programme on the mainstreaming of biodiversity into agriculture and Solomon Islands is the selected focus country for intensified action in the Pacific Region. We (MAL) look forward to the implementation of national activities jointly with FAO,” Mr. Ho’ota said.

He 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.

“...it is common knowledge and studies have indicated effects of agriculture on the environment. Agriculture is known as one of our greatest triumphs and sources of environmental damage. Major environmental problems - Soil erosion – Sediment transport and deposition downstream – On-site pollution from overuse and secondary effects of fertilizers and pesticides – Off-site pollution of other ecosystems, of soil, water and air. It changes the environment major environmental problems such as deforestation, desertification, degradation of aquifers, salinization, accumulation of toxic organic compounds and Loss of biodiversity. Therefore, the manner in which we develop agriculture sustainably and environmentally friendly must now be seriously addressed in light of the increasing environment and land resources exploitation,” the Deputy Secretary Technical of MAL, Mr. Ho’ota stressed.

Meanwhile, former Permanent Secretary of MAL and now the Assistant FAO Country Representative Mr. Jimi Saelea said FAO has the global mandate to improve levels of nutrition, increase agricultural productivity, and improve lives of rural populations through agriculture development.

He said one of FAO’s strategic global objectives is to focus on “Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner”. This is but one of the projects that FAO is implementing and will be implementing in the country. The project operates at the global, regional and national levels, thus for Solomon

Islands to be selected as the focus country in the Pacific region requires that we commit to make sure we benefit from the programme,” Mr. Saelea stressed.

He said the primary focus of the project (MEAs) is to promote mainstreaming biodiversity and sound pesticides management in agriculture.

“This initiative will contribute to achieving the Solomon Islands National Development Strategy, NDS-2016 to 2035 Objectives of which Objective 1: Sustained and inclusive economic growth through Agriculture &livestock. Objective 2: Poverty alleviated across the whole of the Solomon Islands, basic needs addressed and food security improved. Objective 4: Resilient and environmentally sustainable development with effective disaster risk management, response and recovery,” Mr. Saelea stated.

He said FAO remain committed towards supporting the development of sustainable agriculture, fisheries, forestry and environmental management of pesticides in Solomon Islands to ensure food security, livelihoods and healthy living for the households and people of our country.

Mr. Saelea also took the opportunity to acknowledge the role that government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology will play in ensuring this project achieve its objectives.

Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) - phase III Programme is an initiative of the Organization of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (OACPS) and is funded by the European Union, under the Intra-ACP envelope of the 11th EDF. The Programme is being implemented jointly by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The primary objective of the programme is to promote environmental sustainability in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries by strengthening environmental governance and the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

The target of MEAs are the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS) and indirectly the United Nations Convention to Combat Diversification (UNCCD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). FAO, in close collaboration with regional partners and national counterparts, implements a component of the programme on the mainstreaming of biodiversity into agriculture.

The programme operates at the global, regional and national levels. Solomon Islands is the selected focus country for intensified action in the Pacific Region.

The implementation of national activities will be jointly done by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) and FAO.

Representatives from relevant government ministries, FAO, national research institutes and organizations and private sector attended the inception meeting.





## Pest & Disease Management awareness for Falake community

Biosecurity officers of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) successfully conducted a one day awareness training on Integrated Pest and Disease Management for Falake community members in West Kwara'ae, Malaita Province on the 5th May 2021.

The training was conducted upon request by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) with the aim to address the problems of 'Aphids' on the Agro-Forestry site there and raise awareness on invasive pests and diseases to the community.

"Aphid (s) refers to any of various small insects, such as the greenfly, that suck the juices of plants for food," Jean Manepora'a who was part of the awareness team said.

She said Biosecurity Solomon Islands (BSI) permitted to carryout awareness and training on regulated pests which are of threat to the community's Agro-Forest farming project under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between BSI and JICA.

The training involved presentations and group discussion along with activities.

Mrs. Manepora'a said participants who are mainly members of the community expressed gratitude to MAL through its Biosecurity Department for facilitating the awareness training as it equipped community farmers with practical knowledge on pest and disease management.

"The training also enabled the participants to realize that biosecurity is not only MAL's responsibility but a shared responsibility by all Solomon Islanders to protect their community from invasive pests and diseases.

It was a worthwhile training although, time limit hinders important field activities," Biosecurity officer, Mrs. Manepora'a said.

Similar training was also conducted at Komuniboli community, JICA project site in East Guadalcanal on 15th April 2021 by the same Biosecurity awareness team which comprised of George Harunari, Gideon Suda and Jean Manepora'a.



Group photo of Biosecurity officers, Ministry of Forestry officers with community member participants during the pest awareness training.



Group discussion on the negative impacts of pests and diseases on the economy, environment and human health. Inserts are presentations.

## Seeds and farming tools delivered for Tikopia & Anuta communities



Deputy Director (supervising) Extension, Lily Wame hands over the seeds and farming tools to PM's Chief of Staff Robson Tana Djokivic as MAL officers and a rep from PMO looks on. From behind is a vehicle with loads of farming equipments/tools to go along with the seeds distribution.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Extension Department has delivered dozens of vegetable seeds and farming tools to remote communities in Tikopia and Anuta Island, Temotu Province.

The consignment was delivered through the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Friday 4th June and will be distributed to eight (8) identified communities or recipients in Tikopia and two (2) communities in Anuta by the Prime Minister's (PM's) delegation during the PM's visit to the two remote Islands this week.

PM and his delegation left for Tikopia and Anuta today (Monday 7th June) while a patrol boat transporting part of the delegation departed Honiara yesterday (Sunday 6Th).

Receiving the donation from Deputy Director (supervising), Extension, and her team was PM's Chief of Staff Robson Tana Djokivic.

While acknowledging MAL for the generous support, Mr. Djokovic said the seeds, tools and equipment made available by MAL will assist the remote communities of Tikopia and Anuta to establish nurseries, promote

income generating opportunities, further enhance agricultural developments and support their rural livelihood activities.

Deputy Director (supervising) Extension, Lily Wame said MAL is pleased to assist the communities and also thanked PMO for making the trip possible to guarantee such important support reached the remote islands.

She said the assistance was part of the ongoing support programme of the ministry under Livelihood and also part of the Government Livelihood Sector initiative under Covid-19 Strategy for the Agriculture Sector to ensure farming groups, communities and 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.

The support was co-funded by the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) through MAL and the British High Commission Office in Honiara.





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



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.

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 (Supervising), 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.

“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.



# Sape farm expects more cassava export by 2022

One of the Government funded agriculture projects through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), Sape farm is bearing successful results as its cassava tubers now exported overseas since last year with more export expected this year and in the coming years as there is huge interests and demand for cassava.

Managing Director of Sape farm, Dr. Paul Bosawai Popora says. He said last year, Sape farm in partnership with Varivao Holdings Ltd exported 14 tonnes of (its) cassava tubers to Australia, the first export after its establishment in 2018.

“And in April this year, Sape farm delivered its second export of 15.834 tonnes of cassava tubers yet again through Sape-Varivao partnership to Australia. This second export included 4.9 tonnes from one of our (Sape farm) out grower which generated a total of 20.734 tonnes under Sape farm management,” Dr. Paul said.

At the moment Dr. Paul is embarking on alternatives to make direct export possible with the construction of a processing facility.

“I am now trying to build a processing facility. It will be simple to make export possible. I have purchased some materials and the farm boys do the construction work. We expect to do more export next year (2022) on our own,” Dr. Paul said.

He said “Sape farm believes in empowering out growers so, for the export Varivao did in April, we provide 15.8 tonnes and our out grower Ben Pogular supplied 4.9 tonnes of cassava tubers. It is the vision of the sape farm to engage our out growers in all export activities we do.”

While acknowledging Varivao Company for the partnership, Dr. Paul took the time to explain the processes that they went through during harvest and also its challenges.

“We harvested at night from 7pm to 6am and then we cut both ends. We do this to reduce post harvesting deterioration rate. We harvest an average of 3 tonnes per night. It involved a lot of work but we managed to do it with the hard work of the farm workers.

“The challenge is to process within a short period of time. If we have a

storage facility, we will be able to harvest during the day and control our loading quantity. However, with the great team work, we are able to meet the harvesting quantity Varivao needs,” Dr. Paul explained.

On the Sape-Varivao partnership Dr. Paul said, it is ideal for now but to go commercial they need consistent harvesting and export.

“I thank the Varivao management for buying the cassava tubers from us and our out-grower. We really need consistent export to which we now already have our buyers ready for up to three (3) containers a month. We only need a processing facility to make this possible.”

When asked regarding the root crop (cassava) potential to the local economy, Dr. Paul said cassava has known potential and unknown potentials.

“We have to do it right and indeed it will aid our economic growth. Only if we have appropriate mechanisms like processing facilities then going into large scale farming would be possible to absorb farmers who are cultivating this root crop (cassava) and in that way it will encourage more people to engage in cassava farming,” Dr. Paul emphasised.

In May 2020, the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) and Sape farm management signed a 2.7 million funding support agreement that will see cassava root crop transform into an industry in the future.

Of the 2.7 million support, about 1.7million was used up to support establishment of the farm last year 2020. The 1 million still outstanding will be used to support construction of the farm processing facility and needed equipment. Sape Farm is co-financing the processing facility.

The funding agreement and partnership was an initiative to support the government’s Food Security Programme and it would cater for farming machineries and tools, processing and refrigeration machines and working capital.

“While cassava has been here with us we have not been able to go commercial and export so it is time we do that.” Dr Paul said, he is so humbled by the MAL support that is making Sape Farm the leader in cassava commercial farming in the country.



Pictures depicting activities performed by farm workers during harvesting of cassava at night at the Sape farm in April 2021 for export in partnership with Varivao Holdings Ltd.



# Farmers undergo agri-machine demonstration



MAL officers and UNDP rep with farmer participants that attended the field demonstration on Wednesday 17th March 2021.

More than 20 farmers undertook a demonstration on safety, management and operational procedures on agricultural/farming machines at the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Research Centre at King George IV (former TTM) East of Honiara on Wednesday 17th March 2021. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Solomon Islands through Markets for Change (M4C) Project led the demonstration on a Power Tiller, Toyama Walking Tractor and a Power Base Garden Tiller for farmer participants in West Guadalcanal and farmer representatives from Honiara Central Market Vendors Association (HCMVA).

The demo focused mainly on instructions to safety and use, identification of major parts and functions, machine operation, driving instructions, ploughing/tilling instructions, machine care and maintenance. The farmers were also taken through field demonstration to encourage them to see and adopt the technology.

MacDonnell Hiva, MAL, Coordinator National Agriculture Livelihoods Improvement & Export Based Expansion (ALEBE) said the demonstration exercise was a success.

He said the farmers were impressed at the field demonstration as some of them for the first time got to have the feel of a power tiller machine and how it operates.

Mr. Hiva said such demonstration exercise is very crucial to prepare farmers before they can be given such machines/tools to boost their farming activities.

Speaking on behalf of the farmers is Moreen Sariki, President for Honiara Central Market Vendors Association (HCMVA).

She said the demonstration exercise is important as it help farmers sharpen their skills and knowledge on the operation and management of such machines.

Mrs. Sariki then thanked MAL and UNDP for making the event possible and also for identifying issues affecting farmers through the purchase of

farming machineries that will be distributed to farmers to improve their farming activities.

“Everyday women spend a lot of time in the garden and with such support like this, I believe it will ease farming work and improve farming productivity.”

Two staff from Tongs Corporation, supplier of the Power Base Garden Tiller, were also part of the demonstration as they go through with farmer’s details on the safety, management and operational procedures of the machine (Power Base Garden Tiller).

The programme was part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) National Food security and Enhancement program under its Model Farm project aimed at Promoting and assisting vulnerable communities to improve Food and Nutritional status to ensure every households have access to nutritious food to promote healthy and happy family and to reduce increased cases of Nutrition Disorders in Solomon Islands.

Under the programme, MAL together with UNDP and its stakeholders will deliver the following activities;

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

The Model Farm Projects is being implemented in six provinces which include; Makira, Isabel, Central Islands, Choiseul, Western and Guadalcanal province.

The machines was procured by the UNDP Solomon Islands Markets for Change (M4C) Project with funds from the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund with approval from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

Beneficiaries of the machineries are farmers who are members of the Honiara Central Market Vendors Association, Gizo Market Vendors Association and Auki Market Vendors Association.



PICTURES OF FIELD DEMONSTRATION.





Biosecurity Director, Francis Tsatsia and Solrice Country Manager, James Bradford displays copies of the signed documents as flanked by Biosecurity Compliance Officer, Samuel Hone (left), Biosecurity Officer, Samson Kauli and a rep from Solrice.

# Deal to protect Solomon Islands from biosecurity risks sealed

Biosecurity Solomon Islands of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) has entered into a new partnership agreement with Solrice Company to restrengthen its Compliance against entry of exotic pest and other biosecurity risks into the country.

The two years Compliance Agreement was signed by Biosecurity Director of MAL, Francis Tsatsia and Solrice Company Country Manager James Bradford on 17th June 2021 at the Solrice Company Office at Ranadi in East Honiara.

The agreement permits Biosecurity to monitor the movement of imported containers of rice for human consumption to their approved premises for unpacking and thorough inspection; enable biosecurity compliance and auditing to monitor and carry out thorough inspection of imported rice at the wharf or at the Solrice Company premises to prevent biosecurity risks; conduct training for Solrice employees on inspection, in absence of Biosecurity staff upon arrival of rice consignment and ensure Solrice complying to the agreement as aligned to Biosecurity Act 2013 and regulation 2015.

Director of Biosecurity, Francis Tsatsia said it is crucial to have such legal arrangement with Solrice as the country's leading rice supplier to ensure all imports (must) be systematically examined to ensure pest such as khapra beetle (*Trogoderma granarium*) and others not present here do not enter the country. "Khapra beetle is native to India, but has spread to many parts of Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. khapra beetle (*Trogoderma granarium*) is a serious pest of stored grains, rice, oilseeds and dried foodstuffs."

"Under this agreement, both parties agreed to collaborate for the protection of the country from biosecurity risks with the department of biosecurity to provide training in relation to the compliance agreement and

other biosecurity related matters to Solomon Rice Company employees," Mr. Tsatsia said.

Other companies or importers of rice into the country are expected to sign the same Compliance Agreement with Biosecurity in due course.

Mr. Tsatsia said the signing is a step in the right course for the country as Biosecurity is concerned to ensure the country is safeguarded from incursion of pests, diseases and other biosecurity risks. He added the signing also rejuvenated the prior agreement that firmed between Biosecurity and Solrice Company but has not been practiced for some years.

Solrice Company Country Manager James Bradford said the signing of the Compliance Agreement is an extremely important partnership.

"As a responsible company in the country it is of upmost importance that we are complying to and in most cases exceeding all the requirements of the Country. As a major importer of foodstuffs into the Solomon Islands and sourcing product globally we must adhere and work with Biosecurity to ensure we keep the borders safe and do not let in any harm that would affect the countries agriculture, livestock, fauna and flora. In turn Biosecurity have the confidence in us to perform our business without hindrance and with assurance we are acting within the agree parameters," Mr. Bradford said.

"Ultimately working with Biosecurity we can ensure the standards are set and maintained for the industry and in turn these requirements within the agreement can be rolled out to all importers who would be held responsible for their actions in meeting and maintain the requirements.

"It is a solid step in the right direction.

"We always place the strengthening of our relationship with Biosecurity for any incursion of newly introduced pest and disease in the country as a priority," Mr. Bradford stressed.



Biosecurity Director, Francis Tsatsia and Solrice Country Manager, James Bradford shake hands of agreement as they display the signed documents.



Biosecurity Director, Tsatsia and Solrice Country Manager, Bradford put ink into paper during the signing of the Compliance Agreement .



# Renbel Kava farmers receives tools, express gratitude to MAL

Kava project recipients in Renbel Province has expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL). This was after MAL through its Agriculture Extension Division in Renbel delivered essential farming tools to three farmer groups in May under its Sustainable Economic Growth and Export Strengthening (SEGES) programme.

Recipients of the tools are; GOTO Farmers Association kava expansion project group; FJ kava expansion family project and Renkav kava new planting family project.

Other two recipients that earlier received their projects are; BLN Kava expansion family project and Vaikava food bulking family project. A total of five projects is funded by MAL for Renbel Province.

In a small but significant ceremony to hand over the tools to the recipient groups at Tigoa station, Provincial Premier Willie Tuhagenga on behalf of his executive expressed gratitude to the ministry (MAL) through Renbel Agriculture Division for its continuous commitment and support towards farmers within the province.

“On behalf of my executive, we are indeed so excited to witness this handing over of kava project tools to the successful farmers and group. Thank you MAL provincial Agriculture division for the effort spent in supporting our farmers within the province and especially recognizing the farmer’s interest in this undertaking (kava farming).”

Premier Tuhagenga said he looks forward for many more similar agriculture assistance from the ministry through its extension division for other agriculture enterprises in the future for Renbel farmers.

One of the project recipients, Jimmy Festus of Hatagua village, West Rennell also registered his appreciation.

“I am so thankful for MAL and the Renbel agriculture extension division for the assistance by supporting us with these farming needs through our projects. I have been longing for such assistance like this for quite a long time but today it has proven by the responsible ministry for its commitment in supporting agriculture growth and livelihoods which I want to thank MAL for it. Now I have the necessary farming tools that will help me and my family improve and expand our current kava farming plot to achieve our aims,” Mr. Festus expressed.

Chairperson for GOTO farmers Association group, Mr Damien Peseika, also expressed his gratitude on behalf of his group.

“I’ am so thankful for MAL for this great help rendered to our group for supporting us with the farming tools.

“This is a long-time issue for our group to have our own farming tools and I hope these tools will help in improving the efficacy of our farming task more productively in building our livelihood,” Mr. Peseika said.

Meanwhile, MAL Extension Officer in Renbel, Florence Kwai on behalf of MAL acknowledged the sentiments shared and happy to see the assistance brought smiles on the recipient’s faces.

“The ministry recognized your efforts and is pleased to assist. This assistance came as a result of your hard work and having trust in kava farming. I hope this tools will give you the confidence and faith to start and continue expanding and improving your farming tasks. Indeed, you are contributing much in the development of kava to increase its production within our province.”

Ms. Kwai urged the farmers to use the tools with care and look after them well and at the same time challenged them to work harder and show to others that they can do it. “Be the key model kava farmers for Renbel province. Together we can make a change within our rural farming communities for better living.”

She then thanked MAL for its continuous assistance towards Renbel agriculture Extension Division.

Tools delivered under the projects included; wheel barrows, garden hoes, bush knives, garden forks, axes, square spades, poly bags and shade clothes.

**“I am so thankful for MAL and the Renbel agriculture extension division for the assistance by supporting us with these farming needs through our projects.**



MAL Extension officer in Renbel, Florence Kwai hands over kava project farming tools to the representative of Renkav new kava planting family project.



One of the project recipients, Jimmy Festus of Hatagua village, West Rennell.

Project recipients, Jimmy Festus of Hatagua village



# Aola piggery farmers undergo ‘Animal Husbandry’ training

- Training aimed at equipping farmers with the knowledge especially on animal husbandry and management.
- The training was timely and important for the community since they have a lot of pigs which are poorly managed Deputy Director of Livestock, Hearley Atupule said.

Total of 33 piggery farmers at Aola Community in East Central Guadalcanal has participated in a three days’ workshop training on proper animal husbandry and management. Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services of the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock (MAL) conducted the training from 7th-9th June, following an assessment report from livestock officers that earlier went to Aola on 17th April 2021 to attend to and assessed reports of pigs being died off in the region. The training aimed at equipping farmers with the knowledge especially on animal husbandry and management. Livestock officers also used the opportunity and assessed the farmer’s potentials and limitation in the livestock industry. “The training was timely and important for the community since they have a lot of pigs which are poorly managed and also some are roaming around the villages,” Deputy Director of Livestock, Hearley Atupule said. He said the training involved theory on the first day and practical sessions and farm visitation on the second/final day. “It was a success as it imparted farmer’s new knowledge about animal husbandry and its importance,” Mr. Atupule said.

Practical activities performed included the following;

- Feed mixing formulation
- Castration
- Iron injection
- Teeth clipping
- Tail-docking
- Anti-biotic injection
- Disease observation on farm site
- Nutritional advice on farm site

The farmers acknowledged MAL through the Livestock Department for the timely and important training and vowed to put into practice what have been learned from the training. The livestock team members included Hearley Atupule, Deputy Director Livestock, James Pogula, Principal Livestock Officer Guadalcanal, Max Lazarus Principal Livestock Officer Research and Samson Kauli Senior Biosecurity Officer. A separate program for certificates presentation for participants will be held in due time.



Above pictures of demonstration activities performed by livestock officers during the training for farmers at Aola in East Central Guadalcanal.



# Cocoa farmers benefited from MAL rehabilitation programme

Two cocoa farmer groups in North and Central Guadalcanal are the latest beneficiaries of chainsaws under the Sustainable Economic Growth and Export Strengthening (SEGES) Programme of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL).

They are Samba cocoa farmers and John Manengelea from the Unity Co-coa Enterprise from Ghaobata and Vulolo wards.

Chief Field officer for Guadalcanal agriculture Extension, Joseph Wotomaru said the support was part of the cocoa rehabilitation initiative under MAL SEGES programme 2020 – 2024 which aimed at empowering farmers and buyers to improve productivity and revenue earnings.

He said the chainsaws will help the beneficiaries to maintain and rehabilitate their ageing cocoa farms to improve cocoa tree vigour and yield. “The chainsaws were given to farmers with farms over 20 years and trees over grown, purposely to conduct radical pruning.”

“Some smallholder cocoa farmers especially in Guadalcanal Province are not equipped with the necessary tools and practices to rejuvenate their aging cocoa farms and I believe such support would help them maintain and revitalize their old farms, than to establish new cocoa farms that would take up three to four years before yield.”

The four main objectives of the SEGES programme 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



Extension Assistant Field Officer Moses Losi hands over chainsaw to Samba Cocoa Farmers representatives Ismael Boboli and Christian Bonai of Samba community, Ghaobata.

## Livestock team assesses National Piggery project site in Gizo

A delegation from the Livestock and Veterinary Services Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) has successfully ended an assessment and implementation planning tour to the National Piggery (Pig Breeding) project proposed site at Mile six in Gizo, Western Province on 1st June 2021.

Led by the Deputy Director of Livestock, Hearley Atupule, the team comprised of MAL Chief Field Officer for Western Province Sipuru Rove, livestock officers, senior field officers, and field officers.

“The purpose of the tour is to assess the farm site and plan implementation with provincial coordinating team in order to guide the development of the National Piggery project which was approved by the government in the 2021 development budget,” Mr. Atupule said.

He said it was a successful tour and one that would assist the ministry in its planning with the information now available to start developing the site.

Mr. Atupule added that priorities now is to clear the area, acquired an architectural building plan, put out tender for construction of the building and procured essential assets for the project.

The team also visited the current provincial piggery house which was on progress construction for expansion.

An estimated amount of \$2,000,000 was allocated by the national government towards the establishment and equipping of the National Piggery project in this year’s development budget.



Above & below are pictures of sites visited at Mile 6.







The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) has established artificial breeding sites (ABS) for the management of Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) at Luaniua Island in Malaita Outer Island (MOI).

Establishment of the artificial sites were conducted on 18th June 2021 by a team of two officers Wilson Ninivai, Chief Field Officer (CFO) from the Extension Department and Joe Keniratoa from the Research Department of MAL.

Mr. Ninivai said establishment of the sites was part of the ministry’s effort to manage and control the spread of CRB in the island as well as in the country.

“Luaniua has reported the presence of CRB lately and it is important that ABS’s is established and we apply *Metarhizium anisopliae* fungus into the ABS to control its spread. The fungus (*Metarhizium anisopliae*) is a biological control agent that is effective against all the different life stages of the beetle,” he said.

He said apart from the establishment of ABS, they were able to collect adult CRB samples for dissection and larvae for rearing and also do dam-

age assessment.

The trip was funded by SIG/MAL through its Extension Department under the Livelihood Sector.

Meanwhile, the fight to control the spread of the deadly beetle, CRB that continue to threaten the country’s coconut industry and other palms is not yet over as MAL through its Biosecurity department is preparing to roll out another cleanup campaign (second phase) in some parts of the country this year with funding support from the New Zealand Government.

The beetle (CRB) has spread to most parts of the provinces and the worst infected provinces are Malaita, Guadalcanal, Makira (mostly Ulawa), Central Province especially Russell Islands and Ngella and Rennell and Bel-lona and Malaita Outer Islands (MOI).

The coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB), *Oryctes rhinoceros*, was discovered in Honiara in January 2015.

Coconut industry and other palms are vulnerable to the invasive pest at-tack.



Joe Keniratoa from the Research Department of MAL assisted by Luaniua Island community members to set up the ABS.



Chief Field Officer Wilson Ninivai and Joe Keniratoa of MAL at work during the establishment of the ABS at Luaniua Island.

# Need help and advice on CRB?

Call Biosecurity Emergency Center on  
free-toll number

# 131





# Plant Health Clinic promoted at CIP appointed day

Farmers and the general public in Tulagi Central Island Province (CIP) are privileged to learn about plant health and diseases affecting plants and crops thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) in partnership with Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) for organising the promotion activity.

The stall promotion on Plant Health Clinic (PHC) and Disease Awareness was conducted by officers from MAL together with SPC rep based in Honiara during Central Province second appointed day held in Tulagi on 29th June 2021.4

Apart from the plant health and disease awareness, officers also provided awareness and disseminate important information's to farmers on important agriculture cash crops like kava, melon and other crop production, and Food security information during the day.

The event provided an opportunity for officers to provide advice for farmers struggling to control pest and disease affecting their plants and root crops as well as supported them with advice on practical and long-term management practices to ensure farmers care for their crops more effectively for increase production, income generating and promoting nutritional and food security for farmers and consumers.

Highlight of the day was a visit to the MAL stall by the Honourable Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and his high level delegation.

Senior Field Officer Patrick Fiasi who was part of the team said his team was feel honoured to have the PM and his respected delegation paid a visit to their stall and asked questions concerning the importance of the PHC program and other programs that the ministry is undertaking where they (offers) were able to respond to them.

He said to witness people of such high calibre show interest to know about PHC and its benefits to our farmers is encouraging.

Mr. Fiasi also took the opportunity to highlight to the PM and his delegation the services that the Extension department is providing to the rural farmers and the many challenges that it usually face in its service provision.

"The PHC and awareness attracted a lot of farmers and people during the day as they visited the stall to learn about the importance of PHC and collect informational materials (brochures) on pests and diseases as well as access agricultural production information's. The event was a success," Mr. Fiasi said.

Plant Health Clinic's (PHC's) are currently delivered through the MAL extension services.

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 is the major funder towards Plant Health Clinic programmes through its Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) in collaboration with commissioned organisation SPC to train Plant Health Doctors which include MAL Extension officers, Research, Biosecurity and SPC PHC assistant officer based in Honiara under its ACIAR HORT/2016/185 funded project in partnership with MAL to carryout PHC trainings for farmers in the country in response to emerging pest and disease threats to horticulture across the pacific region.



PM Sogavare and Premier Manetiva listen attentively as a member of the MAL team Patrick Fiasi responded to queries about how effective the extension department is in the provinces.



Secondary students and members of the public visited MAL stall to collect agricultural information materials.



PM Sogavare and Madam Sogavare inside the MAL Plant Health Clinic stall as members of his delegation flanked around the stall.



PM Sogavare and CIP Premier inside the MAL Plant Health Clinic stall as they learn more about the importance of PHC.



Plant Doctors, Patrina Ziokera of SPC Honiara office and Caroline Harunari of MAL Extension serves members of the public.



# Wainoni Women undergo vegetable production & management training

A three-day of theory and practical training on vegetable production and management was successfully held for West Wainoni Council of Women at Taekeni village, ward 12 West Wainoni in Makira-Ulawa Province. Runs from 25-28 May, Women in Agriculture Extension Services Officer, Josephine Harunari and Principal Agriculture Field Officer, Petra Urahora from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) Makira-Ulawa Extension Division facilitated the first ever training. Rural Development Programme (RDP) funded the training with the aim to improve vegetable production/farming so they can be able to sell quality vegetables at the market to earn income and improve their livelihoods. “The training was all about vegetable production and management right from site selection to transplanting and pest and disease management. It involved theory training in the morning and field practical training in the afternoon for the 30 participants,” MAL Extension officers who facilitated the training said. They said the participants expressed happiness with the



Photo of participants and facilitators of the vegetable and management training.

training as it was the first ever to be held for them. Participants also learnt about soil sterilization (soil mixing) of ground and manure to improve soil fertility.

## MAL establishes first ever Noni observation plot at Mile six, Gizo

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) through its Research Department has established the country’s first ever Noni observation plot at Mile six in Gizo, Western Province. The noni observation plot will support MAL Research officers to generate vital information for the development of the crop through research with regard to data collection and other research related activities. MAL Research Officer, Raymond Vava said a total of 150 noni seedlings were transplanted into the field (observation plot) with five plants per phenotypes. “It took us two days to do transplanting.” In August last year, MAL Research Officers conducted a one-week preliminary survey to assess Noni (*Morinda Citrifolia*) in certain parts of Western province particularly in areas around Munda in West New Georgia, Saerangi in Gizo and Vonunu in Vella La Vella. “The objective of the survey was to identify the number of varieties pre-



sent in those locations and study their morphological characteristics as well as their geographical distribution. The field survey was important in order to identify potential varieties that can be cultivated for commercial production. From the three main locations surveyed, a total of 30 noni plants phenotypes were assessed and evaluated for their morphological characteristics and will be subjected to further field observation to collect data on yield performance. “The establishment of the noni observation plot at Mile 6 station in Western Province has been carried out successfully with the transplanting of 30 noni phenotypes that were collected from sites surveyed last year. This noni observation plot was the first to be established by MAL Research in an effort to generate vital information for the development of this crop through research. Data collection and other research related activities pertaining to this work will be carried out progressively in the future,” Mr. Vava explained. He thanked MAL Chief Field Extension officer for Western Province Rove Sipuru, agriculture extension officers and the Solomon Islands National University (SINU) agriculture practical students who have helped in the raising of the noni seedlings and assisted in field transplanting exercise. 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.



# Biosecurity



## Fall Army Worm poses potential threat on our crops

Fall Army Worm (FAW) *Spodotera frugiperda* is an invasive pest that has about 80 potential hosts including many food crops. It is native pest of tropical and subtropical climates of the Americas and is a major pest of corn, sugarcane and rice.

Fall army worm is a mothpest but the larvae is the damaging stage. Its distribution has widespread Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, arrived late 2020 in northern Queensland and in early 2021 was found in Papua New Guine which has potential significant damage to important crops like corn, sugarcane, and rice.

The vast spread Fall Army Worm in PNG is alarming Biosecurity Solomon Islands to alert farmers and the public of this invasive pest. Along the route of the spread, Solomon Islands is at risk of this invasive pest. In addition, the growing international trade, transportation and other potential pathways have contributed to the spread of this pest along with the help of the adult moths are strong higher fliers with the wind assistance can travel up to 1000km in a life time.

Biosecurity is alerting the national borders while maintaining restrictions of movements, farmers also do watch out for symptoms of this invasive pest.

1. Larvae chew the leaves, especially corns, sugarcane
2. Seedlings cut at the base
2. Leaves are badly ragged
3. Holes are made on the older leaves, edges are eaten and cobs are bored



Damage



## What to look for/Identifying Fall Army Worm

Adult moth



Male moth has white spot at the tip and near the centre.

Female moth forewings are greyish brown in colour.

Cluster eggs



Eggs are pale yellow in color and are covered with layer of scales and are found on under leaves.

Larvae



Larvae is the damaging stage. It has light colour inverted" on the head and four black spot on the second last segments of the body

## Fall Army Worm not yet present in Solomon Islands.

## Report a pest or disease



Hotline 24657 or 36038



Toll-Free  
Number

▶ **131**