

## **Didinet News Volume 6 Issue 5 April 2010 – news from Papua New Guinea**

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#### **News**

### **AusAID funds women's forum**

Funding support of K100,000 by AusAID towards the roundtable talk between the PNG Women in Agriculture Development Foundation (PNGWiADF) and key stakeholders in the agriculture sector in Lae recently was to ensure PNGWiADF has a strategic plan which is agreed and supported by the stakeholders. The development of the plan was a major outcome of the meeting with well defined vision and mission statements and values, which were collectively drafted by members of the new organisation.

AusAID Agricultural Programme Manager Hazel Mamae said the support was also to have PNGWiADF develop partnerships and collaborations with the stakeholders so that they all can work together in finding answers to improve food security and increase income.

"Partnership and collaboration is the way forward to develop the agriculture sector owing to its diversity and consequently the multiple stakeholders involved in the various stages of the production and value adding chain," Ms Mamae said.

The meeting took place at NARI Bubia from March 29-31, attended by about 23 registered groups and 12 associate members of PNGWiADF, covering 13 provinces and representing 3,000 women networks.

The forum was facilitated jointly by the Consultative Implementation Monitoring Council, Rural Industries Council and AusAID's Agricultural Research and Development Support Facility (ARDSF). Chief Secretary Manasupe Zurenuoc was the keynote guest while NARI Council, the Department of Agriculture and Livestock, commodity boards, agricultural research and development organisations, development partners, donors and NGOs were represented.

Ms Mamae said AusAID recognises the significance and potential of the PNG agriculture sector's contributions towards food security and income generation for the rural majority and will continue to support the development of the sector in a more strategic manner owing to its complexity. And because women have been the mainstay of agriculture, supporting their participation in the sector was vital, she said. She added that the agreed strategic plan will create a new chapter in women's efforts to improve food security and income and should set a direction for women's contribution in the agriculture sector.

Ms Mamae also highlighted AusAID's strategic programmes in agriculture in PNG – ARDSF (\$38 million 2007-2012), Collaborative Agricultural Research for Development Programme

with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (\$9.5 million 2008-2012), and PNG-Australia Quarantine Twinning Scheme (\$2 million 2006-2010).  
(Senior Anzu of NARI)

## **Self support missing in women issues**

Issues hampering the development of PNG women rest within women, according to Dr Jane Ravusiro, a Food Technologist with the PNG Cocoa Coconut Institute.

"They (women) cry for equality and respect from male counterparts, yet they lack cooperation, respect and most importantly the determination to support and push women issues to another level," she said at the PNGWiADF roundtable talk at Bubia in March.

"To empower the 90% of PNG women in rural areas, we need good teamwork with positive attitudes with respect for each others' opinions. Only then will women's voices become strong and men will realise that rural women are a great force with a voice contributing to the development of this country," Dr Ravusiro said.

"Let us not blame men for our weaknesses; we should appreciate their support since most men are not as bad as many women would think. Most men are understandable and respectful and without them we would miss this forum", she said.

The women shared strong commitment to make a difference in their agricultural practices and wellbeing through knowledge sharing and information exchange, training and practical support as many women in the rural areas are now being empowered through the network of PNGWiADF membership to share and learn from other groups.

(Josephine Yaga of NARI)

## **FPDA announces Award system for innovative women farmers**

Successful and innovative women farmers in PNG will be recognised through a new award scheme being initiated by the PNG Fresh Produce Development Agency (FPDA). This was announced on March 31 in Lae by Louise Aitsi, a FPDA Board member. Ms Aitsi said the award system will be facilitated not only to recognise the role of women in agricultural food production and rural development but also to motivate and encourage innovative farmers to grow more food and earn more money.

The award system, a first of its kind in agriculture and specifically for women farmers, will be an annual programme commencing this year. Ms Aitsi said the FPDA board had approved the scheme last year. She said the criteria and other necessary guidelines are being prepared and the official announcement with invitation for nominations will be made soon. The scheme is sector-wide for all women farmers and donor agencies and the PNG National Agricultural Research System will be invited to support it.

Meanwhile, FPDA has indicated that it will continue to work with women farmers of PNG in fresh produce development. Lucas Kindiwa, Manager for Production and Services Division, Crop Production Programme, told a women farmers' forum in Lae that FPDA's two programmes - Gender and Youth and Village Extension Worker - involve women and therefore the agency will continue to work with women farmers. Mr Kindiwa also stressed that partnership and collaboration shall continue within and among agencies and groups as no single entity can address everyone's farming needs. He said by all means, FPDA works in partnership with other line agencies, service providers, NGOs and groups in order to reach out wider.

FPDA's vision for the fresh produce industry is to develop a commercially and economically viable and sustainable horticulture industry by enhancing the productivity of farmers, traders, processors and others along the value chain.

(Senior Anzu of NARI)

## **'Promote bee farming for women'**

Maggie Seko, president of the Eastern Highlands Women in Agriculture Association has called for more government assistance to promote women's involvement in bee farming. Mrs Seko appealed for more awareness, training and extension support to encourage women to take up bee farming. Mrs Seko told the national honey bee workshop in Goroka recently that many women were interested and excited about bee farming because it did not require much land or space, meaning bee hives can be set up in the backyard. It was not that labour-intensive but required proper management and training for women to become successful bee farmers.

Mrs Seko was among a dozen of women who participated in the two-day workshop, the first ever for the honey bee industry. She was happy that one of the workshop recommendations was for more efforts in promoting women in bee farming.

"My association, representing women in agriculture, is pleased with the outcome of the honey bee workshop which has included women in the participatory process and in the revival of the industry," said Mrs Seko.

"More women are showing interest in bee farming and are preparing to be actively involved but they need more awareness and training, regular extension visit, credit support and other assistance."

Mrs Seko urged that women be given special preference in bee farming and that more women should be trained to become expert bee farmers so that they can train the women themselves.

Highlands Farmers and Settlers Association Secretary, Wilson Thompson, and Eastern Highlands Beekeepers Association Chairman, Jonah Buka called on the government to provide more funding and resources to its agencies that will play an important role in promoting the honey bee industry.

Stephen Rere, a leading farmer who buys honey and also trains farmers in agri-business management, urged bee farmers to learn how to manage their funds wisely, be more self-reliant and to raise their own capital instead of waiting for government handouts. He urged them to do one thing at a time.

Bee farmer, Tony Dirua, said 30 years was a long time for the honey bee industry to move forward and stressed that government assistance is vital in revitalising the industry. He said the farmers needed motivation and more assistance from the government.

A longtime bee farmer in Chimbu Province, David Bane, said farmers were willing to produce honey but they needed good technical advice, training and proper beekeeping equipment.

Managing Director of New Guinea Fruit Company, James Watson, who is also a buyer and processor of honey bee, said his company was keen to work with the government in building up the industry. The company is prepared to set up a buying system, with hand operated extractor machines visiting beekeepers in the highlands provinces.

"There is world shortage of honey and PNG honey is of high standard. Export of honey is unlimited. New beekeepers in remote areas will benefit from the new buying system being proposed."

(Soldier Buruka of DAL)

## **Honey bee workshop a major success**

The first-ever national apiculture (honey bee) consultative workshop held in Goroka recently has been hailed as a success. More than 200 participants attended a two-day workshop to discuss the status of honey bee development, in light of the varroa mite infestation in honey

bee colonies, and find the way forward for the industry. Many were bee farmers, processors, queen bee breeders and producers from the highlands region.

Many participants agreed that it was a fruitful meeting and they hoped to see positive changes in the near future. They stated that the successful outcome of the workshop will assist in creating awareness and interest among farmers and stakeholders in helping to develop a sustainable honey bee industry.

The theme of the workshop was "Understanding the importance of apiculture (honey bee) industry and its economic potential". A road show comprising displays of various aspects of honey bee production was another highlight of the workshop held at the National Sports Institute.

The key recommendations were based on government intervention on improved credit, subsidy and tax concessions, extension and training, information dissemination, research on farming systems, regular surveillance on pest and diseases, standardised equipment and supplies, breeding and distribution of queen bee and colonies, promoting women in bee keeping, and standardised processing and marketing.

Honey is in demand and is fetching high prices and is a potential revenue earner in the export market.

(Soldier Buruka of DAL)

## **First somatic clones for Robusta coffee in PNG**

The search for an elite Robusta coffee planting material for lowland farmers is keeping the Coffee Industry Corporation (CIC) Ltd on its toes as various techniques are being experimented. Unlike the Arabica coffee, which is widely grown in the Highlands, Robusta coffee in PNG has had little research done and literature for further improvement of Robusta stock is limited.

Robusta coffee is grown in the lowland regions. Distribution of planting materials in PNG is done by providing either cloned coffee trees from selected superior or elite trees, or seeds from good reliable Robusta populations. The latter being disadvantaged as seeds are not always true-to-type or like their parents.

To minimise the use of seeds, CIC's research arm in Aiyura, Eastern Highlands Province, is currently employing two methods to clone Robusta coffee:

- Conventional method of pith nurseries to generate new plants by using coffee suckers from known trees and
- A tissue culture technique called somatic embryogenesis.

The latter manipulates Robusta coffee leaves to create new plants in a laboratory environment.

CIC is now faced with the challenge of training trainers and farmers on this new variety, expanding nursery capacity in lowland areas and ensuring that *Omuru 1* is compatible and productive in the field.

(Yvonne Ngutlick of CIC)

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