

Family teams ASEM/2014/095

- We have begun work in our Islands Hub with key partners in Bougainville and New Ireland:
 - Bougainville Women’s Federation (BWF) - Our research communities are in Halia constituency of Tinputz LLG. BWF have asked us to focus on widows, which enables us to look more deeply into the strengths and challenges for this (large) group of women farmers and their families. The baseline workshops were held by Katja Mikhailovich and Pauline Gwatorisa in early March. Jeromy Kavi (our new NARI Research Officer) piloted the (MAD4TADEP) baseline survey tool and will return in April to conduct the full surveys. BWF will shortly appoint a Project Leader and a half time project assistant.
 - New Ireland Department of Agriculture and Livestock - Our research communities are Manggai and Luaupul in Tikana LLG. These communities are also part of TADEP PNG Cocoa HORT/2014/096 project which will provide opportunities to share data and to study the synergies/impacts of both projects running concurrently to support agricultural development. Again baseline workshops were held by Katja Mikhailovich and Pauline Gwatorisa in March and Jeromy Kavi will return in April to conduct the full surveys.
- Two of our partner agencies in the Highlands (Voice for Change, Jiwaka and Baptist Union, Mul-Baiyer district Western Highlands) are designing final activities for our Highlands Hub. BU will be locating the activity at an under-developed Women’s Resource Centre in Kwinkya which is centrally located in the Mul-Baiyer district. The Jiwaka activity will be in the Banz and Minj areas. These activities will also be part of HORT/2014/097 Sweetpotato project roll-out. Again we are very positive about the potential synergies.
- UniTech - Professor Abdul Halim has retired from UniTech and we look forward to working with the new Department Head, Dr Rajashekar Rao. UniTech will be undertaking evaluative research for us in the highlands over 2017.
- HELP PLEASE - We are looking for any PNG contacts who can do some videoing for us – the sites are in Port Moresby and near Kokopo, ENB.
- HELP PLEASE - We are also interested in hearing of anyone in Port Moresby who might like to work with our colleagues at PAU who are ready to put together a Financial Literacy Training Manual. The program has been piloted and is ready to be converted into a more formal manual that could enable others to use it across PNG and beyond. Please contact Barbara Pamphilon barbara.pamphilon@canberra.edu.au if you have any leads.

Canarium FST/2014/099

- No update provided.

Bougainville cocoa HORT/2014/094

Activities

- Grant Vinning toured chocolate makers around Australia with bean samples from Bougainville. Many of the samples came from the 2016 Bougainville Chocolate Festival gold winners. The reaction by most of the chocolate makers – “fruity”, “excellent flavour”, “like honey” – shows that the judges’ ratings truly reflect the overall industry assessment. Clearly Bougainville does indeed grow a great cocoa. All chocolate makers noted the absence of smoke and hammy flavours in the samples. This is something we must be continually vigilant about. A major lesson is that in the very competitive bean-to-bar chocolate market, chocolate makers are as interested in the story behind the beans – that is, the story of the grower, where he/she lives, how long have they been producing cocoa, do they do anything special with their beans – as they are in the beans themselves. Price is a not a major issue whereas the freight cost is a major hurdle.
- Unfortunately, the PNG Cocoa Board declined our invitation to include the “Gold” winning cocoa beans in the PNG entry for the Salon du Chocolat in Paris later in 2017.
- The Health and Livelihood surveys are almost complete in South Bougainville, under the leadership of Ignatius (Iggy) Nakuri. We have now completed 1,000 surveys using CommCare, and have generated detailed information about livelihoods, cocoa farming, living conditions and health.

These data will be analysed by the team, including Jess Hall as part of her PhD studies, and shared with relevant ABG Departments. Training for the Central and Northern surveys has started in Arawa on 27 March, under the guidance of Merrilyn Walton, Kirsten Black, Jess Hall, Grant Hill-Cawthorne and David Guest. ABG Department Secretaries Thomas Betitis (DPI) and Clement Totavun (Health) will attend.

- The ABG-DPI arranged a coordination meeting for donor-funded projects with the cocoa industry in Port Moresby on 28 February. David Guest attended on behalf of the ACIAR project, along with representatives of DFAT, ACIAR, World Bank PPAP, Cocoa Board, World Vision and NZ-MFAT. It was agreed that each agency would benefit from improved communication, using channels such as this Monthly Update.
- The AHC in Port Moresby, through their Commodity Support Facility, announced that it would organise the second Bougainville Chocolate Festival in early September 2017. It is encouraging to see an initiative of the ACIAR project being so enthusiastically adopted. The ACIAR project will continue to organise the Chocolate Competition component of the Festival.
- Plans are continuing to establish new DPI Research and Training hubs in South, Central and Northern Bougainville. The regional hub at Buin Southern Region is in progress and should be completed soon. Dr Konam is in Buin encouraging the VA to take ownership of the village hubs. In Central, preparations are underway for the Hub to be established at the Duncan Research Station while Dr Konam will travel on to Central to undertake a similar role as he did in Buin. In the North, materials are being gathered and the Hub will be established in the new DPI Station at Kaskurus, Tinputz. These hubs will include clonal budwood gardens, nurseries, cocoa fermentation and solar dryers, simple cocoa quality labs, livestock facilities, food gardens and training and resource centres. The Konga DPI station in Siwai (South Bougainville) is ready to take in goats from UNRE. Designs of the plan are ready to be implemented once the goats are delivered.
- Sam Rangai, the Bougainville Project Manager, will step down in April after leading the initiation of the project over the past year. His role will be filled by Theodore Kisu until Joachim Lummani returns from his PhD studies later this year. We are indebted to Sam for his wisdom and guidance during the important early stages of our project, and he will continue to consult and remains on our Stakeholder Reference Group.
- We welcome Skaidy Gulbis to our team. Skaidy is based in Sydney and will help with logistics and administration.

PNG cocoa HORT/2014/096

- From 13 to 18 March Kula Daslogo conducted further training for his team of Cocoa Model Farmer-Trainers (CMFTs) in New Ireland in collaboration with the Training Team from Kairak, University of Natural Resources and Environment (UNRE), Vudal, and assisted by Trevor Clarke and Alfred Nongkas. The Bank of South Pacific conducted a training session on financial literacy. The involvement of the New Ireland Provincial Government in supporting the expansion of the ACIAR program has progressed following a detailed submission to the government by Alfred and Kula. Jimmy Risimeri and Chris Toli are preparing a submission for similar support in East Sepik.
- During her visit to New Ireland to begin a component of the Family Teams project there, Katja Mikhailovich met with Trevor and Kula to discuss the on-going collaboration between our projects. Katja worked at the two villages, Mangai and Luapul, as arranged by Kula in November.
- On 16 March Phil presented a poster outlining the project at the Inaugural Meeting of the Pacific Research Community of LaTrobe University. Several PNG students in Melbourne showed an interest in the project, including one with a family cocoa plantation in New Ireland.
- Trevor, Alfred, John Konam and Phil, along with our Provincial Coordinators Jimmy and Kula, and our DPI contact person in East Sepik, Clement Neingou, attended the Inception Meeting for the ACIAR Soil Management Project SMCN/2014/048 held at UNRE on 22 March and the PNG Cocoa Coconut Institute on 23 March and discussed collaboration between our projects in the design and conduct of two main field trials in East Sepik and New Ireland. The challenges faced in conducting statistically sound field trials on smallholder cocoa plantings were discussed and possible designs

suggested. Phil will visit East Sepik with Kanika Singh and the CCI Agronomy team to help locate a suitable site for the soil fertility field trial on kunai grasslands at Wingei. Jimmy will guide the visit to a site where he has established collaboration with farmers. During the visit Phil, Jimmy and Chris Toli will also visit several CMFTs and especially the Yekimbole CMFT (Nola Sasingian) to support the building of a solar dryer there. Phil will then visit Aitul in Madang to review progress in establishing the team of CMFTs there before travelling to New Ireland to work with Kula and the Soils Team in locating a suitable site for a field trial.

- Baseline surveys have been completed in East Sepik and Madang. It emerged that the field staff were not confident in the use of the CommCare App and reverted to use of paper forms.
- A test batch of cocoa was dried successfully in the solar dryer at Tokiala, even though the weather was very wet. It has become evident that the design and construction of the dryers is critical, especially the extent of overhang in the roof vent (should be at least 60cm), the slope of the roof (should be at least 33°), and the orientation and overlapping of plastic sheets on the roof (the strips of plastic film should be laid along the length of the dryer with the upper strips overlapping the lower ones as on a thatched roof). Several batches of cocoa have been dried in the solar dryer at Tavilo under the supervision of Kenny Francis, who has been recording environmental conditions and moisture content of cocoa beans during the drying process. Portable pH meters were delivered to Kenny for further testing of the solar dryers.

Sweetpotato HORT/2014/097

Plans for March

- The inception meeting for HORT/2014/083 “Developing improved crop protection options in support of intensification of sweetpotato production in Papua New Guinea” was held at NARI HQ in Lae in the first week of March. Project participants from NARI, FPDA and UniTech attended along with Australian partners and DFAT and ACIAR representatives. Workplans were discussed and rapid deployment of a ‘best bet’ weevil management strategy using pheromone trapping at the TEAM trial sites in Asaro region will be implemented in April/May.
- Phil met with NARI and FPDA following the inception meeting to review project activities. Multiplication of clean seed and distribution to farmers is progressing well at the Asaro, Minj and Hagen Central TEAM sites. Around 30 commercial farmers have received material for crop performance trials. The varieties Gimani, Wanmun and Whagi Besta are being multiplied. The introduction of more varieties for distribution is a priority based on identification of desired commercial varieties through the value chain mapping survey.
- FPDA have agreed to expand their trialing of the CommCare app to allow them to increase speed and volume of information being delivered to commercial farmers. Trialing of digital data collection for market price surveys and of grower training and engagement activities conducted through the Village Extension Worker (VEW) network will proceed through 2017.
- Phil was interviewed by ABC Rural radio about the project. The interview was broadcast in regional Queensland where the Australian sweetpotato industry is located and was also picked up and broadcast by Radio Australia in the Pacific Beat program. A summary of the interview is available on-line at www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-22/agronomist-teaching-png-to-commercialise-sweet-potato/8375476 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-22/agronomist-teaching-png-to-commercialise-sweet-potato/8375476>
- QDAF, ANUE and CQU team members meet in Canberra in mid-March to review Australian activities and
- Chris Gard will travel to PNG in the first week of April to meet with Department for Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs representative to discuss how we can work with the District/LLG in the target areas, coordinating training activities to build the capacity of the District. Chris will also visit the TEAM sites to meet with VEW farmer groups and communities to develop community development plans.
- Phil Brown, Craig Henderson, Mike Hughes and Sandra Dennien are scheduled to visit PNG in early May.