



AGRI PARTNERSHIP NEWS

Bringing together business leaders, policy makers, and farmers to collaboratively unlock growth in the agricultural sector and facilitate new opportunities for farming families in the Markham Valley



Special Edition: Grow PNG Participated at the National Agriculture Research Institute 2024 Innovations Show

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

Opening Remarks

02

Transitioning from gardening to farming, Agribusiness presentation at the National Agriculture Research Institute Innovations Show - Minister's Seminar.

03

Grow PNG participated at the 39th Australia Papua New Guinea Business Forum and Expo in Gold Coast, Australia from May 13-15, 2024.

04

The Grow PNG team was invited by Tok Stret Consultancy to witness the signing of an Memorandum of Understanding with Small Medium Enterprise Corporation.

05

Grow PNG participated at The Church Partnership Program (CPP) Annual Forum.

06

The Women in Business and National Women's Day Conference on March 25th-26th, 2024.

07

Exploring Agricultural Opportunities: Grow PNG's Field Trip to the Watut River

07

Markham Smart Farmers Association Advances Agricultural Initiatives in Mutzing Meeting

08

The Trukai Smart Farmers Graduation on April 19, 2024.

9

Grow PNG Celebrates Markham District Development Initiatives

10

Grow PNG Agricultural Development Partnership: Exciting Developments in Agricultural Innovation

11

Upcoming Events

12

About Grow PNG

WELCOME

Opening Remarks



DAVID STEWART

Country Director, Grow PNG

Welcome to the second-quarter newsletter from Grow PNG!

Within this edition, we present you with updates and narratives concerning our projects, collaborators, and the remarkable influence Grow PNG dedicated staff are fostering within the community. This quarter has been bustling with significant initiatives and activities that have solidified our commitment to transforming agribusiness in Papua New Guinea. Here's a glimpse into our journey over the past few months:

Grow PNG has been actively participating in various agribusiness events. These events have provided us with platforms to showcase our initiatives, share knowledge, and collaborate with key stakeholders in the industry. Our presence has not only increased our visibility but has also strengthened our network with like-minded organizations and individuals passionate about agribusiness development.

We have joined forces with several local and international organizations, leveraging their expertise and resources to enhance our programs. These partnerships are aimed at driving innovation, providing technical support, and scaling up our efforts to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers across the region.

A major highlight of this quarter has been our follow-up initiatives from the Markham Investor Development Forum held on March 4th, 2024. We have made significant progress in connecting smallholder farmers to potential investors. By facilitating these connections, we are opening new avenues for farmers to access capital, technology, and markets. This initiative is a critical step towards empowering farmers, boosting productivity, and fostering economic growth in rural communities.

Understanding the on ground realities and the challenges faced by smallholder farmers is crucial. Accordingly, our team has conducted many field visits over the past few months. These visits have provided us with insights into the daily lives of farmers, their needs, and the impact of our interventions. It has also allowed us to offer on-site support, share best practices, and gather feedback to refine our programs further.

Looking ahead, we have an exciting lineup of events planned for the coming months. Our goal is to continue building the capacity of smallholder farmers, enhancing their knowledge and skills, and providing them with opportunities to thrive in the agribusiness sector.

We extend our gratitude to all our partners, donors, and community members who have been active contributors in this journey.



Transitioning from gardening to farming, Agribusiness presentation at the National Agriculture Research Institute Innovations Show - Minister's Seminar.

Grow PNG participated in the National Agriculture Research Institute Innovative Show, held on May 9th to 10th with the theme "Commercializing the PNG Agri-food system." The event aimed to advance Papua New Guinea's agricultural sector. David Stewart gave a presentation on 'transitioning from gardening to farming as a business' during the Agriculture Minister's Seminar Series.

He highlighted the need for private sector investment in agriculture in Papua New Guinea to support smallholder farmers and addressed challenges like land tenure, irrigation, and finance, emphasizing the urgency of finding solutions for agricultural development.



Farmers visited Grow PNG information booth during the NARI Innovations Show

Moreover, David emphasized initiatives to improve smallholder farmers' incomes in the Markham Valley through collaborations with various stakeholders. He proposed solutions like crop diversification and business principles, stressing the importance of agreements with buyers for consistent revenue. Additionally, he suggested integrating agricultural education into high school curricula to foster entrepreneurship and practical farming skills for long-term sector sustainability.

In conclusion, David emphasized the importance of a holistic approach to support smallholder farmers and boost economic growth in Papua New Guinea's agricultural sector. Grow PNG's involvement in the NARI Innovative Show demonstrates its dedication to driving positive change and solidifying its role in the country's agricultural development.



From Left: Dr. Mark Thomas, Senior Experimental Scientist at Commonwealth Scientific and Industry Research Organization (CSIRO), Peter Zund, Senior Research Scientist CSIRO, Mark Tinah, GIS officer National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI) and Julie Sip, Community Engagement & Implementation Lead, Grow PNG.

Grow PNG participated at the 39th Australia Papua New Guinea Business Forum and Expo hosted in Gold Coast, Australia from the 13th to the 15th of May 2024.

Grow PNG Country Director David Stewart, took center stage at the 39th Australia Papua New Guinea Business Forum and Trade Expo held at the Sheraton Grand Mirage Resort in Gold Coast, Australia, from May 13th to 15th, 2024.

Themed "Climate of Change: Opportunities for Business in Papua New Guinea," the forum provided a significant platform to explore the evolving political and economic landscapes, both internationally and within Papua New Guinea (PNG), amidst challenges like climate change, geopolitical competition, and shifting environmental and social frameworks. Moreover, it aimed to uncover new avenues for business growth and development.

The event commenced with the 43rd Annual General Meeting of the Australia Papua New Guinea Business Council on Monday, May 13th, 2024. Mr. Stewart, representing Grow PNG, offered invaluable insights into fostering economic opportunities in the pivotal Morobe Province, serving as the gateway to regional industrial and population centers.

During his presentation, David introduced the number of Grow PNG advisory council and shed light on the recent Markham Investment Development Forum 2024, hosted by Grow PNG on March 4th, 2024. This forum aimed to foster constructive conversations among investors, landowners, smallholder farmers, and Integrated Land Groups (ILGs). He added that smallholder agriculture has driven economic growth through the centuries from 18th century England to 19th century Japan to 20th century India, to Brazil, China and Vietnam today. GDP growth generated by smallholder agriculture has been shown to be at least twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth in any other sector.

"We need to make rural agribusinesses the main engine of economic growth in PNG. We need to make rural agribusiness a business opportunity for PNG youth ;And we need to make rural agribusiness a pathway out of poverty.

The incredible growth in production and incomes as a result of agricultural development, such as the Green Revolution in Asia in the 1960's, were grounded in interventions and reforms that supported genuine agricultural growth and that growth was led by smallholder farmers. Globally, food systems today are responsible for around a third of global greenhouse gas emissions. Agricultural expansion around the world is the single largest driver of deforestation. That is a significant concern for many large organizations. The Markham valley does not have that issue. The responsible investors in Agribusiness should see the Markham Valley as a natural fit. The sector is critical for both food security and poverty reduction.

David Concluded that the success of the forum in Lae and indeed at this meeting, lies in our ability to spark an agribusiness revolution in the Markham Ramu Valleys.



From Left: David Stewart, Grow PNG Country Director, Mark Foxe, Australian Consul-General in Lae and Jagdeep Dahiya, Country Director Australia Papua New Guinea Economic Partnership (APEP)



The Grow PNG team witnessed the MOU signing between Tok Stret Consultancy and SMEC.

Tok Stret Consultancy and Small Medium Enterprise Cooperation established a partnership with a Memorandum of Understanding signed on April 12th, 2024. The ceremony involved notable guests and marked a significant step towards collaborative growth. SMEC presented a Printer to TSCL symbolizing support and commitment to mutual success. The event highlighted the commitment to expanding networks and fostering relationships with key stakeholders for regional development.

Grow PNG's participation in this event was pivotal, providing an opportunity to strengthen engagement with TSCL and focus on connecting smallholder farmers in the Markham and Ramu Valleys to essential resources for capacity building. Through initiatives such as financial training and empowerment programs facilitated by Grow PNG's Gender Working Group, the organization is empowering local communities, particularly women, to take on more active roles in both agribusiness and community development. This collaboration underscores Grow PNG's work in fostering sustainable practices, empowering local communities to boost economic growth through agriculture.

Moreover, the partnership between TSCL and SMEC symbolizes a new era of joint ventures driving socio-economic development. By combining strengths, they aim to unlock opportunities and innovate together. SMEC looks forward to collaborating with Grow PNG to expand their impact and spearhead sustainable development projects for positive change.



Grow PNG team with and other partners of Tok Stret Consultancy



Tok Stret Consultancy and President of Lae Chamber of Commerce and Industry, John Byrne shared some remarks during the occasion.



SMEC Representative and Tok Stret Consultancy Signing Owner, Julliane Terry Byrne signing the MOU.

Grow PNG participated at The Church Partnership Program (CPP) Annual Forum.

Grow PNG attended the annual Church Partnership Program (CPP) forum held on 11th of June, at the Lae International Hotel in Lae Morobe Province. This longstanding initiative, supported by Australia Papua New Guinea Economic Partnership (APEP) since 2004, aims to enhance the delivery of public services and goods to all Papua New Guineans, with a special focus on vulnerable and marginalised communities. Represented at the event was our Country Director, Mr David Stewart and Country Program Manager Ruthy Kusak David. Ruthy was one of the panellists at the plenary discussion on the topic of Public Policy Influencing where she highlighted the need for significant investment in rural infrastructures, and she responded to two panel questions;

For some public policy is a new or unclear term. How would you describe it?

“Public Policy can be defined theoretically in so many different ways and everyone in the room would know what it means. However, representing our rural farming communities and landowners in the Markham - Ramu Valley, I am not able to see tangible substance to the definition of public policy on the ground. Public Policies are made and exist at high level and often do not translate down to the beneficial level of rural communities, particularly in the Agriculture Sector. Having a policy in place is one thing and actually seeing it being implemented is another thing altogether. So being on this panel, I am hoping to learn from different actors on how this forum would influence the gap between public policy and policy implementation”.

What practical policy do you need from the government of PNG to grow agriculture in the Markham Valley? What are the barriers to PNG’s government implementing these policy changes?

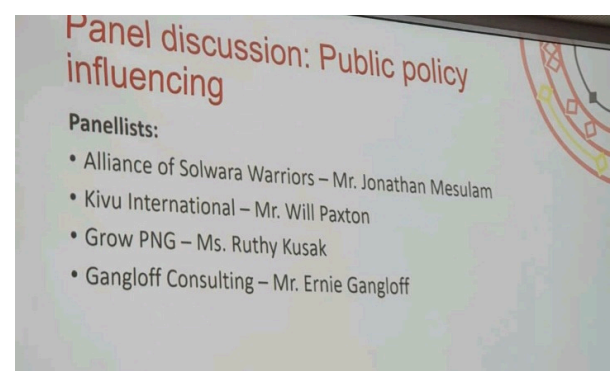
“The Government has goals and visions to grow the Agriculture Sector through Medium Term Development Plan with emphasis on local sourcing for in country downstream processing of rural agricultural produce; however, the existing public policy on infrastructure is not enabling. Basic infrastructures such as commodity roads and bridges connecting rural communities to District stations, then to high end markets are absent. Public infrastructure to support supply chains like water bores, irrigation systems, cold chain facilities and consolidation centers at a designated points would ease the cost of transportation and reduce the loss of quality and freshness of agricultural supplies. The non-existence of such basic infrastructures results in our rural communities and farmers missing out on income opportunities while export market demand is increasing. This is a failure of governments at all levels”.

Ruthy added, *“Public Policy design process should be inclusive at all levels and all segments of the value chain in order to fully capture all aspects. All voices need to be heard from bottom up during Scoping and Vetting of policy design so everyone benefits evenly from the policy”.*

Grow PNG will continue our work to support sustainable development and improving lives of Papua New Guineans. We thank CPP for this incredible platform to share and learn, while we look forward to more collaborations.



Ruthy Kusak David, Grow PNG Country Program Manager at the Annual Church Partnership Program, Lae International Hotel.



The Women in Business and National Women's Day Conference on March 25th-26th, 2024.



Grow PNG participated in the Women in Business and National Women's Day program in Morobe Province on March 25th-26th, 2024. The event, organized by The Morobe Provincial Government and Morobe Council of Women in collaboration with The National Council of Women, focused on championing women's rights and opportunities. The program included an Annual General Meeting themed "Invest in Women - Accelerate Progress," emphasizing women's role in socio-economic development.



On March 26th continuation of the program with a symbolic solidarity walk from Eriku Oval to the Sir Ignatius Kilage Indoor Complex, marking National Women's Day and paying homage to the indomitable spirit and achievements of women across the nation.

David Stewart was honored with a special invitation as a Guest of Honor. In his address, David underscored Grow PNG's work to women's empowerment, particularly through initiatives focused on financial literacy training and enhanced access to banking services. The event itself aligned with Grow PNG's Gender Working Group mission and its aim to expand access to financial products through partnerships with financial institutions. The Grow Her Inspirational Stories were being shared at the information booth, which highlighted the achievements and journeys of women making a difference in their communities. This initiative aims to inspire and encourage more women to take leadership roles in various sectors. Grow PNG's presence at these events underscored its dedication to promoting gender equality and supporting women's empowerment.

The event ended with Governor Luther Wenge giving an emotional speech acknowledging women's contributions. David was praised for his work with smallholder farmers and honored as a chief by being presented with a tusk necklace and headress. Bilum mothers and Wau Women expressed gratitude towards Grow PNG and partners.

Looking ahead, Grow PNG expressed eagerness to partner with women's associations that have shown interest in collaborating.



Exploring Agricultural Opportunities: Grow PNG's Field Trip to the Watut River

On Friday, May 3rd, David Stewart, embarked on a significant field trip with a landowner group to Wonkins Village along the Watut River in the Wampar Local Level Government, Huon Gulf District, Morobe Province. This visit aimed to explore agricultural opportunities in an area renowned for its fertile land and abundant water supply.

Wonkins Village is part of the Majim Community, also known as Babuaf, and is inhabited by the Leron Clan, one of the three clans constituting the Babuaf Landowners Association, associated with the Wafi Golpu Gold Mine. The primary purpose of this excursion was to assess the availability of land for potential agribusiness investments and to meet with the incorporated land group officials.

Accompanied by the landowners, Mr. Stewart ventured into the heart of the region travelling in a large dugout canoe, keen to evaluate the land's potential for various agricultural ventures. The journey along the riverbanks provided an opportunity to observe the natural features of the area, crucial for determining its suitability for different crops and agricultural practices.

Discussions during the trip focused on several key aspects:

Soil Quality: The team evaluated the richness of the soil, essential for high-yield crop production.

Water Access: The ample water supply from the Watut River is vital for irrigation and sustainable farming.

Topography: Understanding the landscape's layout helps in planning efficient land use and agricultural activities.

These factors are instrumental in determining the feasibility of commercial investment in agribusiness ventures in the area.



Landowner group and David Stewart travelling to Wonkins Village along Watut River

The field trip offered valuable insights into both the opportunities and challenges associated with agricultural development along the Watut River. Through firsthand observation and dialogue with the landowners, Grow PNG gained a deeper understanding of the local environment's potential for sustainable farming practices.

Markham Smart Farmers Association Advances Agricultural Initiatives in Mutzing Meeting

The Markham Smart Farmers Association meeting in Mutzing on April 5th, 2024, marked a successful gathering of over 20 attendees. Grow PNG participated in the meeting as one of the association's partners, providing direction and guidance for sustainable smallholder production and supporting efforts to increase income for smallholder farmers. Grow PNG's involvement underscores its commitment to enhancing small-scale agricultural production and boosting the livelihoods of local farmers.

Key highlights included plans to merge the upcoming Trukai Smart Farmers Graduation with a fresh produce product display, promoting local consumption and supporting community institutions. Discussions also addressed World Food Day celebrations, with a focus on increasing farmer participation and fostering agribusiness ventures. The unanimous approval to launch the Markham Smart Farmers Association during World Food Day marked a significant milestone in advocating for agricultural development.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to addressing challenges and fostering partnerships for sustainable agricultural growth in the Markham District. Grow PNG will continue its work to collaborate with its partners in driving transformative change in the Markham and Ramu valleys.



Grow PNG and the Markham Smart Farmers Association at Mutzing Station, Markham District, Morobe Province.

The Trukai Smart Farmers Graduation on April 19, 2024.



Grow PNG participated in the Trukai Smart Farmer Program Graduation Celebration on April 19, 2024, where over 140 graduates, including 27 female rice farmers, received certificates. The event highlighted the graduates' role in promoting the program's success and their potential to impact communities and stakeholders positively. CEO Alan Preston emphasized their importance in driving individual success and contributing to Trukai Industries' growth.

Professor Ora Renagi from the Papua New Guinea University of Technology emphasized nurturing agriculturalists for economic sustainability. Mark Foxe from the Australian High Commission urged graduates to drive progress in Papua New Guinea.

David Stewart delivered a motivational address centered around the theme of independence, invoking the national anthem "We are Independent and free" and urging graduates to transform from gardeners to innovative farmers. Stewart stressed the untapped potential of Papua New Guinea's land and encouraged graduates to leverage their farming knowledge to generate income and prosperity.

Looking ahead, Grow PNG reaffirmed its commitment to the development of the smallholder farmers in the Markham and Ramu Valleys, alongside stakeholders, government, and policymakers. The organization aims to elevate the productivity, profitability, and environmental sustainability of smallholder agriculture in these regions, building upon the success of initiatives like the Trukai Smart Farmer Program.



Grow PNG Celebrates Markham District Development Initiatives



Markham District, PNG — Grow PNG was invited by Hon. Koni Iguan M.P., Member for Markham District, to the launch of the Markham District 5 Year Development Plan 2023-2027. This event, held on March 29th, also marked the opening of the new Markham District Administration Office Building (Koni Iguan Haus) and Gama Village Courthouse.

The event drew an impressive turnout of over 1,000 attendees, including prominent figures such as Prime Minister Hon. James Marape M.P., Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Lands and Physical Planning Hon. John Rosso M.P., Morobe Governor Hon. Luther Wenge M.P., Minister for Agriculture Hon. John Boito M.P., Minister for Finance and Planning Hon. Rainbo Paita M.P., and Minister for Labour and Employment Hon. Kessy Sawang M.P., among others. The presence of these esteemed leaders underscored a collective commitment to the development and growth of the Markham District.

A significant highlight of the event was Prime Minister Marape's announcement of a 5 million Kina allocation to the Markham District Development Authority, aimed at improving youth participation. This funding is a major boost for agricultural growth and development initiatives in the Markham and Ramu Valleys.

Prime Minister Marape also acknowledged Grow PNG for their ongoing efforts to assist the Markham district and its youth in enhancing agricultural income in the region. This recognition underscores the vital role Grow PNG plays in empowering local communities, fostering sustainable agriculture development, and creating investment opportunities in the Markham and Ramu Valleys.

Grow PNG remains dedicated to its work of driving agricultural innovation and supporting community development in its journey towards agricultural growth in the Markham and Ramu corridor.

Grow PNG Agricultural Development Partnership: Exciting Developments in Agricultural Innovation



Grow PNG had recently joined a field trip organized by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Team and the in-country partners to explore potential project sites in the Markham Valley. The project is on "Better Soil and Land Information to Improve PNG's Agricultural Production and Integrated Land Use Planning" project, supported by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). The trip was held on 7th May 2024, marked a significant step in the efforts to empower local communities, enhance sustainable agriculture, and pave the way for transformative investment opportunities in Papua New Guinea.

Grow PNG's role in the partnership is multifaceted and crucial for the project's success. With established footprints in the Markham Valley, Grow PNG acts as a bridge between smallholder farmers and the Markham District Development Authority. Their primary responsibilities include facilitating connections between smallholder farmers and project partners in collaboration with assistance from MDDA to ensure effective collaboration and communication. The purpose of Grow PNG's involvement is to disseminate information about the project to local communities, ensuring they are well-informed and actively involved. Additionally, Grow PNG aims to share its expertise in local agricultural practices and land use with CSIRO and other partners, contributing to the development of effective and sustainable agricultural strategies. Importantly, Grow PNG also ensures that relevant data and findings from the project are shared with all stakeholders, including local farmers, to promote transparency and mutual understanding.

The diverse team, comprising members from CSIRO, National and Provincial Department of Agriculture and Livestock, PNG Forest Research Institute (FRI), Coffee Industry Corporation (CIC), National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI), PNG University of Technology (UNITECH), and Grow PNG Ltd, convened to embark on this journey of exploration and collaboration. As the first point of entry into the Markham Valley, a team from Markham Development Authority (MDDA) also accompanied the PNGRIS team for the community entry and awareness.

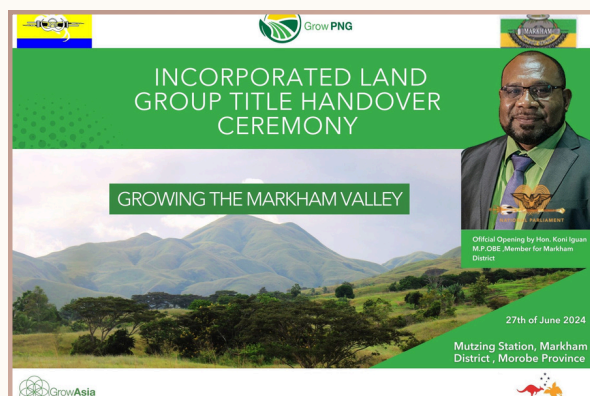
The team assessed soil, topography, and environmental factors in various locations like Orori, Leron, and Wawin for sustainable agriculture. Community engagement was crucial, with shared visions, project objectives, and benefits discussed with villagers to drive positive change and empower local farmers.

The project will assist in building better soil and land information database by providing an update, digitize and be more relevant to landowners and potential investors to source data for crop investment and land use decisions. By enhancing sustainable agriculture and paving the way for transformative investment opportunities in Papua New Guinea, this project aligns with Grow PNG's mission to support and uplift smallholder farmers.



RECENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS

STAY TUNED TO LEARN ABOUT RECENT EVENTS AND PARTICIPATE IN THE UPCOMING EVENTS HOSTED AND SUPPORTED BY GROW PNG.



RECENT: THE INCORPORATED LAND GROUP TITLE HANDOVER CEREMONY

The Incorporated Land Group Title Handover Ceremony was hosted by the Markham District Development Authority and supported by Grow PNG at the Mutzing Station in the Markham District of Lae, Morobe Province. The event was held on June 27, 2024.



UPCOMING: THE MARKHAM LANDOWNER INVESTOR DIALOGUE

The “Markham Landowner Investor Dialogue” is a follow-up event derived from the successful Grow PNG “Growing the Markham” Investor Development Forum held recently. The event aims to bring together investors and landowner farmer communities to discuss opportunities for investment and partnership in the valley. Furthermore, to give investors an opportunity to pitch ideas directly to the landowners for agricultural investments. The event will be hosted by Grow PNG on the 26th of July, 2024 at Mutzing Station in Markham District, Lae, Morobe Province.

Grow PNG invites all interested organizations whether non government organization, business or co-operation to join us as partners. Partners should be in agriculture in the Markham region, committed to supporting smallholders and rural development, and open to collaborating in a cooperative space.

ABOUT US



Grow PNG, launched in 2019 and based in Lae, stands at the forefront of transforming the Markham Valley agricultural corridor. This area is poised for rapid agricultural growth with key crops like palm oil, rice, cassava, sorghum, maize and tree crops like cocoa, coconut, cashews and macadamias. Significant scope also exists for the farming of cattle and goats to lift protein consumption in Papua New Guinea.

Our Vision: Grow PNG aims to accelerate agricultural growth in the Markham Valley, striving to increase smallholder household incomes by 20% within eight years. We are achieving this through:

- **Effective Working Groups:** Addressing collective challenges, driving policy changes, forming new partnerships, and developing innovative business models.
- **Stronger Partnerships:** Building trust and collaboration between civil society, government, agribusiness, and farmers.
- **Improved Knowledge and Information:** Providing all stakeholders with the information needed to make better decisions.

We are a broker in Papua New Guinea's agribusiness sector: an organization that farmers and landowners can approach to help maximize the potential of their land and which investors can approach to identify business models that work. Grow PNG is also brokering private funding to support agribusiness development in the Markham and Ramu Valleys, ensuring sustainable growth and development for the region.



Grow PNG is a non-profit organization. An Australian Government Funded Initiative under the PNG-Aus Partnership and is part of the Grow Asia network, an initiative of the World Economic Forum based in Singapore with partnerships in four other ASEAN Countries; Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia. Grow PNG is a broker in Papua New Guinea's Agribusiness sector; an organization, farmers and landowners can approach to help maximize the potential of their land and which investors can approach to identify business models that work. Based in Lae, Papua New Guinea, the gateway to the Markham and Ramu agriculture Corridor.



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