



AGRI PARTNERSHIPS

Fourth Quarter –
October to
December 2024

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

18 December, 2024



From left: David Stewart, Country Director of Grow PNG; the late Bohage Bebinaso, CEO of Markham District Authority; John Gaif, President of Markham Smart Farmers Association; and a representative from The Voice Inc. PNG officially launched the Markham Smart Farmers Association during the World Food Day celebrations on October 31, 2024, at Mutzing Oval, Markham Valley, Morobe Province.

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Special Edition: Inaugural World Food Day Celebrations in Mutzing Station Markham Valley hosted by Markham Smart Farmer Association with major sponsor Markham District Development Authority and supported by The Voice Inc PNG and Grow PNG.

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Opening Remarks



DAVID STEWART

Country Director, Grow PNG



WELCOME

As the year comes to a close, we reflect on an incredibly impactful and challenging quarter—one defined by remarkable achievements and continued dedication to advancing agricultural development in the Markham and Ramu Corridor of Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea.

Over the past few months, Grow PNG has been at the forefront of facilitating and supporting various agribusiness events, creating valuable platforms for landowners and investors to explore potential partnerships. These events have been a continuation of our efforts from the "Growing the Markham" Investor Development Forum held on March 4th, 2024.

A major highlight has been the inaugural World Food Day celebration, hosted by the Markham Smart Farmers Association with the Markham District Development Authority as the major sponsor. This event was facilitated and supported by Grow PNG through stakeholder engagement, event coordination, and sponsorship management.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the events and initiatives in the coming months. Our ongoing mission is to empower smallholder farmers by facilitating platforms that bring together stakeholders and individuals to promote agricultural development in the Markham and Ramu Valleys.

I am incredibly proud of the dedication shown by the Grow PNG team and the remarkable impact we've had within the communities we serve.

Inaugural World Food Day Celebrations in Markham Valley Highlight Sustainable Agriculture and Community Collaboration

Markham, Morobe Province – October 31, 2024 – The inaugural World Food Day celebrations took place



The late Mr. Bohage Bebinaso delivering a remark on behalf of the Markham District Development Authority and the Member for Markham, Hon. Koni Iguan, during the World Food Day celebration at Mutzing, Markham Valley.

at Mutzing Oval, Markham Valley, on October 30-31, 2024, attracting over 1,000 attendees and showcasing the rich agricultural heritage and hard work of local smallholder farmers. The event was hosted by the Markham Smart Farmers Association (MSFA), with major sponsorship from the Markham District Development Authority (MDDA) and the Markham district member, M.P. Hon Koni Iguan, along with additional support from organizations such as Grow

PNG Ltd and The Voice Inc PNG. The objective was to promote sustainable farming practices, highlight the crops of smallholder farmers, and encourage partnerships among local farmers, agribusinesses, and financial institutions.

The celebrations featured a variety of activities that engaged both the local community and visitors. Highlights included live performances from local bands, traditional singing groups, cooking

“This event marks a significant step in promoting our agricultural potential,” said Mr. Bebinaso

demonstrations, and the best food display stalls, with major sponsors like K92 Mining Ltd, Farmset Ltd, Mainland Holdings Ltd, Trukai Industries, The Voice Inc PNG, and the Markham Food Cooperative Society

providing substantial support for the event. These sponsors underscored the importance of community collaboration in promoting agriculture and food security.

Markham Smart Farmers Association President John Gaif, in his remarks on the first day of the event, acknowledged the great support of their member Hon. Koni Iguan in driving this event, as well as the district authority for being the major sponsor and all the stakeholders and partners who supported and participated.

On the second day of the event, local and provincial officials gathered to express their appreciation for the success of the inaugural World Food Day celebration. Although the Markham District Member, Hon. Koni Iguan, was unable to attend, District CEO Mr. Bohage Bebinaso delivered an important speech recognizing the efforts of the MSFA and its president, John Gaif, along with the support of Grow PNG and The Voice Inc PNG.

Mr. Bebinaso praised the MSFA for their dedication to agriculture and their ability to adapt when the event was rescheduled from its original date October 16 date due to national examinations. He emphasized the importance of the Markham Valley, often referred to as the "food bowl of Papua New Guinea," in driving the country's agricultural future.



Farmset Ltd representative, Jenny Kusa, presented the sponsorship prize to a farmer group representative for their winning display in the Best Food Display Competition.

"This event marks a significant step in promoting our agricultural potential," said Mr. Bebinaso. He also recognized the important role played by all partners and stakeholders, particularly in providing valuable support to farmers and the local community during the event.

In his address, Mr. Bebinaso proposed that the World Food Day celebrations become an annual event, with suggestions to rename it the "Markham Marafuri Festival" or the "Banana Festival," reflecting the banana's role as a staple food in the region. The idea of making the event an annual or biannual celebration was enthusiastically supported by attendees.

The World Food Day celebrations not only showcased the agricultural diversity of the valley but also provided a platform for local farmers, both men and women, to display their crops and share best practices. The event's success underscores the efforts of the Markham Smart Farmers Association, the strong support of the district authority, and the contributions of supportive partners and stakeholders.

The success of the inaugural World Food Day celebrations reflects the hard work of the Markham Smart Farmers Association, the Markham District Development Authority, their partners and support from the Markham local community in driving agricultural and economic development in the Markham Valley. With growing support and enthusiasm for the event, there is hope that it will continue to expand and serve as a model for similar agricultural celebrations within Morobe Province and across Papua New Guinea.



A farmer association from Finschaffan District, Morobe Province, showcased their organic variety of rice at the World Food Day celebration in Mutzing Station, Markham



K92 Mine Ltd sponsored the prize for the Best Food Display, along with consolidated prizes for other farmer groups that participated in the competition.



Mainland Holdings Limited proudly displayed its stall at the World Food Day Celebrations in Mutzing, sponsoring the Best Cooking Display award



Kokokas Industri Koporesen showcases their organic and virgin coconut soap and products, proudly collaborating with the Correctional Institute Service, Lae.

World Food Day Breakfast Sparks International Investor Interest in Markham Valley

On World Food Day, October 16, 2024, Grow PNG participated in the Grow Asia Annual General Meeting in Singapore. The event brought together key stakeholders from the public, private, and civil society sectors. Grow PNG hosted a Breakfast Session, where important discussions about agriculture in Markham Valley and Papua New Guinea took place. The session was led by Grow Asia Executive Director Beverly Postma and Grow PNG's David Stewart. The purpose of the breakfast session was to present investment opportunities in the Markham Valley and promote sustainable agricultural food systems and landscapes of the region. The session also highlighted Grow PNG's initiatives in the valley, carried out in partnership with the Markham District Development Authority and local smallholder farmers.



Grow Asia's Annual General Meeting, held on World Food Day, 16 October 2024,

Key highlights shared during the breakfast by David Stewart included the issuance of land titles, made possible through the support of the Grow PNG Advisory Council, the Markham District Development Authority, and the Morobe Provincial Government. Grow PNG facilitated the issuance of these land titles in the Markham Valley with ongoing funding support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Secure land tenure is a key driver

Through the Grow Asia model, Grow PNG was able to develop strong partnerships with government bodies, the District Government of Markham Valley, and private sector agribusinesses," she explained. "Grow PNG's role is to build trust and act as a convener, which resulted in the issuance of the land titles to the Incorporated Land Groups."



Ruthy Kusak David, Grow PNG Country Program Manager

of resilience, providing local communities with the foundation needed to grow, expand, and innovate within the agri-business sector, which leads to sustainable investment and economic empowerment. Moreover, Grow PNG Country Program Manager

Ruthy Kusak-David shared insights on Grow PNG's learning and experience with Grow Asia's model of stakeholder engagement and partnerships.

“Through the Grow Asia model, Grow PNG was able to develop strong partnerships with government bodies, the District Government of Markham Valley, and private sector agribusinesses,” she explained. “Grow PNG's role is to build trust and act as a convener, which resulted in the issuance of the land titles to the Incorporated Land Groups.”

Senior Adviser for Innovation at Grow Asia, Paul Voutier, supported Ruthy's comments by sharing his experience supporting Grow PNG as a convener. These discussions sparked new ideas for addressing the unique challenges faced by local farmers, particularly smallholder farmers and women-led businesses in the valley.

The breakfast discussion resulted in valuable feedback and expressions of interest from key investors, who see this presentation as an opportunity to explore potential investment partnerships in the Markham and Ramu Corridors.



David Stewart, Grow PNG Country Director, and Bev Postma, Grow Asia Executive Director, serve as hosts during the breakfast session of Grow PNG.



Grow PNG showcased Nakama Coffee from Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea, during the breakfast session on World Food Day in Singapore.



Investors and the Grow Asia regional team engaged in discussions during the breakfast session on the Magnificent Markham and the work of Grow PNG.

Looking ahead, Grow PNG will continue to encourage new investments in the region. By building partnerships with global investors and sector leaders, and through collaboration with Grow Asia, Grow PNG aims to create scalable solutions that benefit smallholder farmers and their communities

Grow PNG Shines at the 61st Morobe Agricultural Show, Highlighting Key Agricultural Initiatives

Grow PNG made a notable impact at the 61st Morobe Agricultural Show, held under the Australian High Commission Pavilion on October 19th to 20th, 2024. The event attracted over 1,000 attendees, who visited the Grow PNG booth to discover the organization's significant contributions to local agriculture and sustainable development. The showcase spotlighted Grow PNG's vital work in the Markham and Ramu Valleys, where the organization is promoting sustainable farming practices and improving local agricultural methods. This participation offered attendees a unique chance to engage with Grow PNG's team and learn about the organization's ongoing efforts in supporting agriculture and rural development across Papua New Guinea.



Field Visit to Upper Markham Valley - Watarais Area: Empowering Women Farmers

On Friday, 15th November 2024, Grow PNG organized a community engagement field visit to the Upper Markham Valley in the Watarais farming areas. The visit brought together key partners, including the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and an official from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This important visit was made possible through Grow PNG's strong partnership with K92 Mining Ltd.'s External Affairs & Sustainable Development Team, who coordinated the visits to local farms.



Visit to the K92 Mine External Affairs and Sustainable Development Head Office, with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Fiona Lynn (DFAT official), and the Grow PNG team.

The purpose of this visit was to engage with women farmers and better understand their daily farming activities. The team explored the farming techniques being used, the types of crops produced, and the community's dietary and nutritional habits. The visit also aimed to identify the challenges women farmers face and find opportunities to improve their livelihoods and build resilience in the valley.

Both women and men farmers in the area shared common challenges, such as limited access to infrastructure, irrigation systems, and reliable transportation for their fresh produce. The impacts of climate change and seasonal droughts were also significant concerns.



Despite these challenges, farmers from Papua village shared inspiring stories of how, through ongoing partnerships with stakeholders, they had been able to produce high-quality fresh produce and earn a steady income through capacity building programs. This income allowed them to invest in building permanent homes, purchase materials for construction, send their children to school, and provide balanced meals for their families.

The team also visited the Maniape One and Two villages, where they were warmly welcomed by the community. The villagers offered delicious local food and engaged in meaningful discussions about their farming practices, daily lives, and future aspirations.

The day concluded with a tour of the K92 Mine site, highlighting the importance of continued collaboration among all stakeholders.

Grow PNG extend our appreciation to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for their continuous funding support. The participation of the IFPRI team, whose expertise and insights were invaluable in assessing the needs and opportunities for agricultural development in the region. Special thanks go to K92 Mining Limited's External Affairs & Sustainable Development Team for their excellent coordination, which made this field visit a success.



This field visit served as an important opportunity for Grow PNG to engage with local farmers, especially women, and better understand the specific challenges and opportunities within the Upper Markham Valley. Moving forward, Grow PNG will work closely with IFPRI, and K92 Mining Ltd to develop and implement targeted interventions that address infrastructure gaps, improve farming practices, and increase resilience to climate change. Support women's empowerment in agriculture, ensuring that local farmers have access to the necessary tools, training, and markets to thrive.

Grow PNG will continue our work in facilitating sustainable development and fostering stakeholder engagement in the Markham and Ramu Valleys, through ongoing collaboration with our partners.

The team visited a farmer site in Upper Markham Valley, Watarais.



Fresh lettuce crop grown in Watarais, Markham Valley



Emily Schmidt International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) representative with woman farmer at Upper Markham.

Papua New Guinea Resource Information System(PNGRIS) Workshop Advances Land Use and Soil Mapping in Papua New Guinea

A delegation from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) visited Papua New Guinea from November 11-21, 2024, for Trip #9 of the Papua New Guinea Resource Information System (PNGRIS) project. The focus was on land evaluation, with a three-day workshop held at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology and a field trip to the Markham and Upper Ramu valleys.

The workshop brought together key partners from the Department of Agriculture and Livestock, National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI), Papua New Guinea Forest Research Institute (FRI), Papua New Guinea Coffee Industry Corporation (CIC), Papua New Guinea University of Technology's School of Agriculture, and Grow PNG Ltd. This



Presentation by CSIRO partner, Peter Zund on Regional Desktop Land Evaluation methodology and mapping process



PNGRIS partners workshop participants at Sandover Building, Unitech, Lae

collaboration facilitated cross-sectoral discussions on soil mapping, land evaluation and use for agricultural purposes.

Key objectives of the CSIRO visit included conducting workshop on Land evaluation, soil survey, crop suitability criteria and sampling methodology. Additionally, field reconnaissance meeting, landscape assessments and soil sampling.

Important key topics covered in the PNGRIS project included: Capacity Building on Digital Land Resource assessment (DLRA), Digital Soil Mapping (DSM) for Land use, and Regional Land Evaluation Use case studies. Participants were taken through the practical aspects of soil survey, crop suitability assessments in

DSM, and sampling techniques. A case study focused on catchment-scale crop suitability, examining soil attributes for crops like robusta coffee and balsa wood was also discussed.

Digital Soil Mapping techniques included statistical-based sampling strategies and site and soil profile methods. Using QGIS software, participants created digital maps and analyzed soil and land attributes based on data from WorldClim and crop suitability studies

The workshop concluded with plans for a field trip to engage local farmers and agribusinesses partners in the Markham and Ramu Valleys.

PNGRIS Team Conducts Field Engagement and Soil Sampling in Upper Markham Valleys

On November 18, 2024, the Papua New Guinea Resource Information System (PNGRIS) project team began a field trip to conduct landscape assessments and soil sampling in the Upper Markham Valleys. The team, consisting of CSIRO and Grow PNG members, started their journey from Lae, heading to Mainland Holdings Limited (MHL) farmlands. After completing biosecurity protocols, they met with MHL

Farm Manager Dr. Chaudhry Muhammed Mayo and conducted landscape assessments and soil sampling at Creek Farm.

The team then proceeded to Sasiang Farm and Middle Farm, collecting soil samples at several locations. In the afternoon, they visited Leron Bridge, where they conducted further assessments at the Leron coffee nursery site.

The PNGRIS project team convened for a reconnaissance meeting on the 2nd day with Ramu Agri Industries Limited (RAIL). Dr. Marnie Light welcomed the team



Landscapes assessments and soil sampling at Mainland Holding Limited's Middle Farm, Leron

and introduced the RAIL team. Dr. Mark Thomas provided an overview of the PNGRIS project, outlining its objectives and highlighting the partnership with Grow PNG and agribusinesses such as RAIL and MHL.

RAIL Manager Eric Wise discussed the company's operations, which span 40,000 hectares used for beef, oil palm, and sugar production in Ramu and Markham plantations. He expressed his support for the inclusion of RAIL's land in landscape assessments and soil sampling, emphasizing the value of the data for the company's future land use planning.

The team then visited several field sites, including Dumpu, Surinam, Bumbu, and Gusap plantations. They conducted landscape assessments and collected soil samples at varying depths for analysis. The fieldwork concluded at Gusap Plantation before the team returned to Mutzing and Ramu.

On the fourth day, the team visited Dabua village, where they were welcomed by community leader Baida Isi. Dr. Thomas reassured the community that the soil samples collected in 2023 were still under analysis



PNGRIS partners introduction and Project brief with Ramu Agri Industries, Kuniata Conference room, Ramu Sugar

at the University of Technology (Unitech), with results to be shared when available. Soil samples were collected from two sites for further analysis and mapping.

Throughout the trip, the team received strong support from both commercial agribusinesses and local communities, highlighting the potential benefits of the PNGRIS project for smallholder farmers and agribusiness partners.



Landscape assessments and soil sampling at Ramu Beef, West Leron Plains.



Landscape assessments and soil sampling at Gusap site, Ramu Sugar Estates

Papua New Guinea Resource Information System Project Team Holds Successful Community Awareness Session in Markham Valley to Promote Land Use Research

On October 20, 2024, the PNGRIS team held a community awareness session in Mutzing, Markham Valley, at the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) Kaiapit Circuit Building. Nearly 40 participants attended, including landowners, clan leaders, and representatives from the Umi-Atzera, Leron-Wantoat, and Onga-Waffa Local Level Governments (LLGs) of Markham District. Notable attendees included the Umi-Atzera Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) Project Manager and a Patrol Officer, DDA Women's Rep Ms Betty Peter, and Kaiapit Circuit Women's Coordinator Ms Yanda John, all gathering updates on the project.



PNGRIS partners and community leaders brief meet and greet session at the Markham District Head Quater, Mutzing Station



PNGRIS Community Awareness Meeting at the Kaiapit Circuit, Evangelical Lutheran Church Building, Mutzing

Ms. Julie Sip, Implementing Partner Project Lead from Grow PNG, introduced the session, while Dr. Mark Thomas, CSIRO Project Leader, shared details about the PNGRIS project. He explained that the mission was to have discussions with local landholders and commercial lease holders, assess landscapes and do soil sampling. Dr. Thomas emphasized that the project aims to test a model for the Markham Valley that could be applied to other provinces across Papua New Guinea. Soil samples collected during the project will be analyzed using advanced models to provide critical data on soil properties, map out land boundaries for land use planning and policy development.

Mr. Eki Ronuc, Senior Oil Palm Project Officer for Markham District and Ms Salome Zongesia, District Agriculture Officer highlighted the importance of the PNGRIS initiative on the need to match land use planning to land capability, and the importance of demonstrating viability of plans to investors. District Agriculture Manager Mr. Philip Giame and Orori Community Ward Councilor Mr. Tom Francis echoed this message, emphasizing the value of such projects for community development. The session revealed communication gaps between local level governments and the district, offering an opportunity for improved coordination in future development projects

The afternoon concluded with a visit to Orori village, organized by Mr. Francis, where the team, conducted soil and topography assessments, and collected samples for further analysis.

Grow PNG Hosts Third Gender Working Group Meeting

On December 9, 2024, Grow PNG hosted the third Gender Working Group Meeting at the Ross Kekedo Building, Papua New Guinea University of Technology. The event was attended by over 10 experts, including representatives from academic institutions, church organizations, farmer cooperatives, and agricultural research institutions.

The meeting aimed to create a platform for open dialogue about the gender-specific barriers that hinder progress in agriculture. The discussions focused on how cultural norms and traditional values often create disparities between men and women, impacting their access to resources, decision-making power, and opportunities for economic advancement.

One key topic of conversation was the need for capacity-building programs that address these challenges and promote gender equality. Experts shared insights on how such programs could empower both men and women by providing equal access to training, tools, and knowledge. These initiatives would help break down the barriers created by cultural expectations and enable greater participation from women in agricultural development.

The meeting also explored how men and women, despite their different roles, can benefit from collective support in agricultural initiatives. By focusing on creating inclusive, gender-sensitive approaches, Grow PNG and its partners are working to build a more equitable agricultural sector that supports the economic and social progress of all individuals, regardless of gender.

As the Gender Working Group continues its efforts, Grow PNG remains committed to fostering inclusive growth and providing opportunities that encourage both men and women to thrive in agriculture. The insights shared during this meeting will inform future projects and initiatives, ensuring that capacity-building programs address the real-world challenges faced by communities in Papua New Guinea.



Gender Working Group stakeholders meeting at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology



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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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.

