

# AGRI PARTNERSHIPS

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

Grow PNG

SECOND QUARTER 2023

## Collaboration to revitalize soil and land information



The lack of a better soil suitability database for agriculture investment opportunities is one of the many reasons affecting the ease of accessing land for agricultural development for new investors, as well as expansion and diversification for the existing agribusinesses in the Markham-Ramu Valley.

To address that, Grow PNG Ltd is collaborating with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and partners with the PNG Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL), the National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI), the Coffee Industry Corporation (CIC), the Forest Research Institute (FRI), and the PNG University of Technology (Unitech) to manage and deliver the project on "Better Soil and land information on improving PNG's agricultural production and integrated land use".

On May 22<sup>nd</sup> -26<sup>th</sup> Grow PNG and the collaborative partners came together for a Project Inception Meeting at the National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI) Bubia, in Lae Morobe province.

The Australian Consul-General in Lae Mr Mark Foxe was the special guest at the meeting. He said the Australian Government is committed to supporting this project and through ACIAR, is supporting collaborative research between Australian and Papua New Guinea soil Scientists and Institutions to deliver improved soil and land data for improving the country's land use category.

The successful meeting included a field visit to the Markham-Ramu Valley and a technical team tour to the PNG University of Technology and the Forest Research Institute.

Grow PNG led the project team on the field visit and facilitated a successful meeting with landowners of the Markham Valley with the support of Markham District DDA and the project partners.

The project case studies will be developed in the Markham Valley, Morobe Province with a focus on Soil Testing, Suitability, and Land Use Planning.

# Women Farmers gain access to financial and digital services



Grow PNG continues its focus as a multistakeholder platform engaging and coordinating stakeholders and partners in the Markham Valley.

On April 18 Grow PNG engaged partners the Nationwide Miro Bank Limited (MiBank), Digicel PNG Cell Moni, and Agri Assurance Limited giving access to 200 plus smallholder women farmers of Ziampir Horticulture Group to financial products and services.

These women participated in the Financial Literacy Training Program in November 2022, under the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) Rapid Finance Facility Program in partnership with Grow PNG, Ag Book, Tok Stret Consulting Limited, and Digicel PNG Cell Moni with the support of Markham District DDA, and smallholder farmers of Ziampir.

The financial literacy training program is valuable because it equips women farmers with the knowledge to thrive in their farming ventures, said Mr. Nelson Sailas, Chairman of Ziampir Horticulture Group in Markham.

**“Once women are empowered with knowledge it gives them a new perspective and they start to see their farming as a business.”**

One of the achievements as a farming group is being part of the financial literacy training program with partners like Grow PNG, he said.

The training can be a game changer for farmers to release their farming potential especially when they gain knowledge in accessing banking services like savings and credit facilities. This will equip them to start small farming business ventures in the valley, said Mr Sailas.

I would like to see other complementary training on families working together so both women and men can attend the training together, I hope to see farmers work together and be encouraged in their farming.

The women farmers thanked the businesses for their time in coming out to the field raising awareness and giving access to farmers their products and services.

By opening bank accounts and using digital wallets and services the women can now make transactions, deposit, and save the income they make from selling their produce.

Grow PNG’s Stakeholder Engagement Manager (Agribusiness) Ms Ruthy Kusak said, Grow PNG's mission is to increase smallholder income by 20% within 8 years, and we will also know that increase in income through the bank records of the farmers.

# Access to financial and digital products and services made easier for farmers



Grow PNG successfully engaged Agri Assurance Limited and Digicel PNG Cell Moni Wallet on the 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> of May to 300 plus farmers of Ziampir Horticulture Group as part of the ongoing field engagement activity with its partners, and the smallholder farmers of Ziampir Group since April.

About 192 farmers of whom 142 were women insured their three crops and farms with Agri Assurance Limited, and 17 of those farmers were issued with Insurance Policies and Certificates of Currency for the different products under health, crops, and property that they insured.

209 farmers of whom 130 were women registered and activated their Cell Moni Wallet and can now conduct transactions using their mobile phones.

An old woman from the village cried because it was her first time opening a bank account. She said they don't have access to such financial services because of a lack of knowledge and understanding and also there is no proper training and awareness given to them.

Ziampir Chairman, Nelson Sailas expressed his appreciation to Grow PNG for engaging service providers and giving access to services to the farmers in the village. He said most of the time farmers spend a lot of money to travel to Lae without successfully accessing the service they need due to a lack of awareness of the type of financial products.

He is happy that Agri Assurance and Digicel Cell Moni have made it easier for the farmers to access the products when they were engaged to come to the village.

Mr Rick Philip Grow PNG Smallholder Engagement Coordinator, said Grow PNG is encouraged to continue bringing together service providers through its network in such field engagement. Most of the time lack of access to information creates doubt in farmers to start small. We are happy that through partnership and collaboration with these financial institutions, information, and services are made available to the farmers.

Grow PNG provides a multistakeholder platform that encourages and welcomes partners to such field engagements where smallholder farmers can easily access the relevant financial services and products.



# Grow PNG and partners during field engagements at Markham District



Grow PNG and partners MiBank, Agri Assurance, and Digicel PNG Cell Moni.



A woman farmer registering her Digicel Cell Moni Wallet.



Mr Nelson Sailas, Chairman of Ziampir Horticulture Group gave his remarks.



Women farmers line up to open their Hibiscus Bank Accounts with MiBank.



Digicel Cell Moni team representative giving his remarks on the Cell Moni Wallet product.



Agri Assurance team representative giving his remarks on Agri Insurance products.



Women Farmers of Ziampir Horticulture Group.



Traditional dish of Markham cooked in clay pots.



Grow PNG as guests with the women farmers' representatives.



Mr Rick Philip, Grow PNG Smallholder Engagement Coordinator.



A woman farmer received her certificate of currency after Insuring her cocoa farm.



Women farmers were shown how to use Cell Moni Wallet on an android phone.

# Grow PNG participates in Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Summit

Grow PNG attended the Special Economic Zone(SEZ) Summit in Port Moresby on the 8<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> of May.

The summit brought together global and local experts, business leaders, investors, government officials, and other stakeholders.

Grow PNG's attendance at the summit was an opportunity to learn about the concept of a special economic Zone and to explore how that can drive sustainable investment opportunities in the resource-rich sector of PNG, in agriculture, fisheries forestry and others.

Grow PNG's footprint the Markham Valley is one of the potential agriculture corridors in the country.

Ms Ruthy Kusak Stakeholder Engagement Manager said, It is logical with the government's objective to diversify its economy and agriculture as a focus, the Markham Valley corridor is at a strategic location as the food bowl with access to the main national highways, airport, and the largest port.

Grow PNG is encouraged to see how Markham Valley with its strategic location can be an ideal location for agribusiness investment opportunities.



From Left: Ms Ruthy Kusak(Grow PNG), Mrs Jacinta Warakai Manua (Acting Secretary For Department of International Trade & Investment), Ms Alma Lance(Grow PNG)

# Grow PNG joins other country partnerships in a Grow Asia Retreat



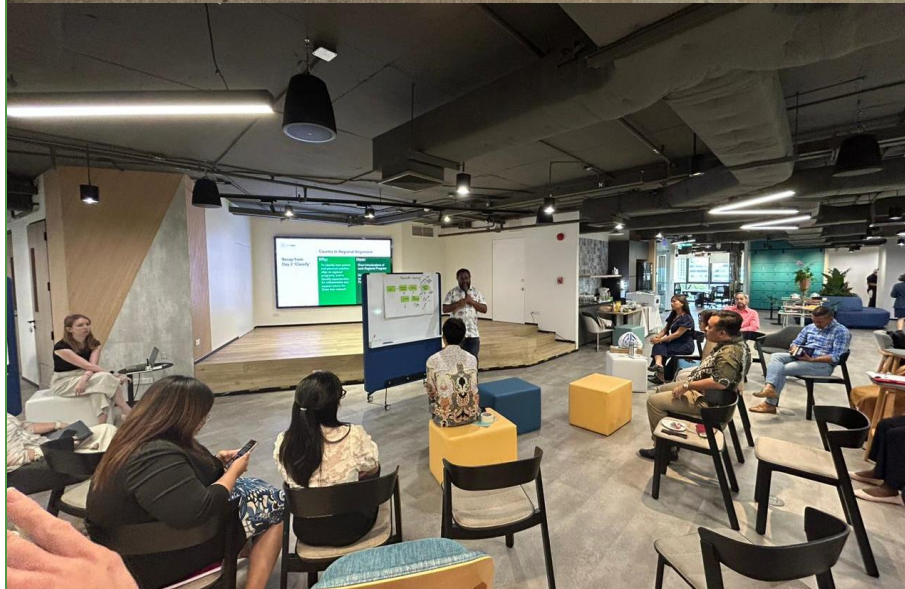
Grow PNG took part in a very productive and engaging Grow Asia retreat in Bangkok, Thailand.

The retreat was from the 27<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> of May where all the Grow Asia country partnerships came together to learn and share strategies from each other and project the way forward.

It was a great time to network, communicate, and learn about the different work programs running in each country to better understand their focus areas.

The retreat also provided the opportunity for each country partnership to share learnings on the work they're doing and how it is aligned with Grow Asia's overall mission.

It was an opportunity to also engage and strengthen relationships with each country's partnership members and overall build trust and team effectiveness.



# Partnership to improve seed multiplication, food security, and climate change

Grow PNG continues to promote sustainable agriculture partnerships by adding value to its partner's projects, and this is usually done through a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

One such project is assisting to set up a small farm irrigation system for the government-run Erap Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) station through an existing MOU.

This project supports DAL's program in improving seed multiplication, food security, and climate change adaptation. This DAL regional farm has supported farmers in the Markham Valley, Morobe Province, and the Momase Region.

The project connects well with Grow PNG's efforts in developing a vegetable value chain ecosystem of vegetable farmers in the Markham Valley Agriculture Corridor.

Grow PNG is excited to work with Erap DAL on planning the launching of the Project which is set to be announced in the coming months.



## Grow PNG participates in the Wau-Waria Development Forum



Grow PNG continues to receive recognition for the work it's doing on stakeholder engagements and particularly, landowner mobilization and training programs.

Grow PNG was invited to participate in the District Development Planning Process of the new Wau-Waria District of Morobe Province on June 27.

Grow PNG shared key learnings on "Rural Economy Development" from the agriculture sector from its experiences within Markham Valley to assist the district in its development planning process.

The district development plan is a Government of PNG-mandated 5-year plan that sets the foundation and parameters to guide development in a typical district in the country. This plan is connected to the LLG and Ward Planning process of a district in the country. This plan is connected to the Morobe Province Kundu Vision 2048, and the higher-order plans of the GoPNG MTDP4, PNGSDP30, and V2050.

Grow PNG spoke on growing the rural economy based on Land Access, Smallholder Agriculture development, and Agribusiness partnership.

"We are happy to continue sharing key learnings across our multi-stakeholder platform to benefit our rural communities. Sharing of learning and advocating for rural development, income generation and benefits to farming family households is an important line of work for Grow PNG."



## Grow PNG through Agriculture Partnership

### Better Soil and land information on improving PNG's agricultural production and integrated land use.

Having adequate Land and soil data can inform smallholder farmers and agribusiness investors about soil and land suitability for growing food crops and cash crops.

An adequate database will enable businesses to make informed decisions around crop production and integrated land use.

Grow PNG's work program on Land access has interestingly taken the next step to look into the land audit database for the Markham Valley.

With the upcoming soil research project by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) to improve the existing PNG Resource Information Systems (PNGRIS), Grow PNG saw that it's logical to continue its work on land access as a collaborative partner.

Grow PNG has done earlier soil studies in Markham in 2020 and is happy to partner with and continue the soil studies in this project.

The study will collect data on soil suitability around the Markham Valley. Information about land use, management, and soil degradation risks will also be shared.

Grow PNG is encouraged and looking forward to working with the collaborative partners and landowners in the Markham Valley to see the development and progress of the project.

The project is a 4-year soil study research between Australia and Papua New Guinea, that will enhance soil information and promote sustainable food production. The project aims to improve PNG's ability to gather accurate soil and land data using current technology.

Read more about the project here: [Revitalizing Soil Information in Papua New Guinea](#)



### How We Work

#### Building Trust & Partnerships

#### Improving Knowledge and Information

#### Facilitating Working Groups



AGRI PARTNERSHIPS is a quarterly newsletter produced and published by Grow PNG.

It aims to communicate and create awareness about the work of Grow PNG and its partners.

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Established in 2019 in Lae, Morobe Province in Papua New Guinea, Grow PNG is a not-for-profit subsidiary of Grow Asia Partnership Ltd and an Australian-funded initiative under the PNGAus Partnership, supported by the World Economic Forum to help implement the United Nations Sustainable Development Strategy.

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