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Pana harvest at Avuavu bulking site.



One of the varieties of pana introduced to the Weather Coast.

Pana and yam revival on track

'Weather Coast,' the name has it all.

For decades the farmers of South Guadalcanal's isolated weather coast region barely received good return from their food gardens and slowly lost some of the main staple root crops, like pana and yam.

Always hard hit by the unpredictable weather patterns, tropical cyclones, rough seas, heavy rainfalls and flooding, the climate is just but part of the villagers' daily lives.

This makes it extremely difficult for food gardens to produce better yields for families, resulting in food scarcity and insecurity.

But this is changing, thanks to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) funded project SWoCK, (Strongem Waka lo Community for Kaikai) currently implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Meteorology and Disaster Management (MECMD) through its Climate Change Division, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL).

SWoCK project works to strengthen the ability of communities in Solomon Islands to make informed decisions and manage likely climate change driven pressures on food production and management systems.

In particular, the project helps to promote and test community-adaptation activities, enhancing food security and livelihood resilience in pilot communities in the provinces of Malaita, Isabel, Choiseul, Makira and Guadalcanal.

"I used to follow my parents to our gardens after school but had never seen such a big harvest like this," said 15-year-old Hypolite Sadewacha of Avu Avu, South Guadalcanal.

The Grade Five student was among villagers that took part over two days in harvesting pana and yam at the Avu Avu bulking site.

"One mound of pana would only yield three to five roots, while for yam the sizes were very small, unlike what we are harvesting here," the young lad said.

The same sentiments were also raised by women farmers

from Talise and Haisere bulking sites that also harvested their food banks.

The average harvests of seven to 11 tubers were recorded per mound of pana at the three bulking sites. Each could weigh an average 8 kg to 11 kg.

Chief Field Officer for Guadalcanal Province, Hezekiah Vahimana said the harvest per mound would earn an estimated \$160 to \$170 when sold at Honiara's central market.

"The yield is remarkable."

"This is beyond what we expected when we planted the bulking sites," he said.

The harvest was part of ongoing activities carried out by the SWoCK project in South Guadalcanal's weather coast region.

"If this introduced system of farming can be adopted by the weather coast farmers using this high yielding varieties, I believe we will not experience food shortage even in times of disaster," young Hypolite said convincingly.

The project not only focuses on pana and yam, but also includes other roots crops such as cassava, sweet potatoes, taro, and kong kong taro as well as other emergency foods such as swamp taro (kakake) that can best survive weather conditions there to produce better yields.

Michael Quanafia, the Provincial Project Coordinator for Guadalcanal explained that after the harvest at each of bulking sites, the first group of farmers will receive planting materials to maintain the revival of pana and yam, while the five bulking sites are turned into farmer demonstration



Hypolite Sadewacha displays Pana with his harvest at the Avuavu bulking site.

sites.

The five bulking sites are Avu Avu, Haisere, Talise, Haleatu and Kumar. ●

Munda agriculture training centre

A multiple use training centre and integrated farming model to help train farmers across Western Province to improve their farming techniques and food production is in the making at the Vavanatita old farm in Munda.

The new Vavanatita farm setup is similar to the Republic of China Taiwan Technical Mission (TTM) farm, opposite the



Maize farm at Munda multi-agriculture training centre.

King George Sixth School in Honiara.

When the centre or model farm is fully established, farmers will be able to learn new knowledge and skills, both theory and practical or just by visiting the farm, said Agriculture Senior Field Officer in Munda, Mathew Sakiri.

"Experiences gained from the training centre or model farm will assist farmers with new techniques and know-how, so as to increase their food production.

Furthermore, it will support farmers with the adaptation and mitigation of the associated risks of climate change on their food security," Mr Sakiri highlighted.

Overall, he said, the training centre will offer all types of skills training in farming and agri-business to boost quality agriculture produce for Western Province's fast-growing tourism industry.

The "Multi Training Centre" is a partnership program between the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MAL) and the Republic of China (ROC) Taiwan Technical Mission.

Three technical experts from ROC under the Taiwan International Corporation Development Fund have been deployed and are currently based in Munda conducting



A soil tiller demonstration at the Munda training centre.

joint supervision development along with the local Ministry counterparts.

Since the roll out phase in early February 2014, growers had already planted a total of nine plots of different crops.

This includes lowland rice, fruit trees, tomatoes, corn and cabbages such as Saladeer and pak choi.

Several other crops such as dragonfruit and betel nut are still in the nurseries and are soon to be planted out in the field.

The proposed total land area for the Centre is 5 hectares. However, only 1.6 ha is being farmed with an average land area of 0.1 ha per plot.

Mr Sakiri said the total number of labourers at any one time is 20.

"Both men and women have been engaged in land clearing and field management as well as weed and

pest control," he said.

The senior field officer highlighted that the income derived from the farm will be shared three ways: 10% Farmers/Growers; 50% landowners; and 40% for the Centre's revolving fund.

TTM technical experts will complete their working contracts in 2015, and development supervision and management of the Centre will be transferred to landowners/farmers and MAL through its Agriculture Office in Munda.

The Vavanatita farmland is traditionally owned by the Daga clan who have willingly rendered the land for the development of the Agriculture Centre.

The first harvest is expected around August 2014. ●

Community help sought in GAS management

Communities throughout the country have been urged to participate fully in the fight to control, contain and manage the spread of Giant African Snail (GAS) in Solomon Islands.

MAL Permanent Secretary, Jimi Saelea made the call in his response to queries on the status of GAS in Solomon Islands.

Mr Saelea said community participation in the management of GAS is an important approach to rein in the spread of the pest.

"Report any new sighting of what you think could be GAS to any agriculture office near you. And you can kill the pest with chemical bait (free of charge) which can be collected from the Quarantine Division, at the MAL Headquarters in Honiara."

"Printed awareness material on GAS can also be collected from the same office and from other Quarantine offices throughout the country."

There are also stories of homemade methods of killing GAS.

"My house always runs out of table salt."

"Every evening, members of my household, armed to the teeth with

salt would stealthily seek out the snails and bombard them with a spray of salt."

"It is instant death to GAS," the PS revealed.

He further explains that the control programme is continuing, however the mode of operation has changed from eradication to containment and management.

"From the start, the programme was faced with resource limitations and irregular supply of chemical baits resulting in periods of non-availability of the baits.

This gave GAS an opportunity to multiply, resulting in high populations occurring in certain locations in Honiara and the surrounding areas such as the Guadalcanal Plains," the Permanent Secretary said.

The cost of the chemical bait also limited the quantity that can be procured at any one time.

At an appalling cost of SBD 1,000 per 20 kg bag that the only supplier in town charged, all the funds were used up on this, with little left for other activities such as community engagement and awareness.

"We have tried to buy the chemical direct from the manufacturer, but with no success since the agent is believed to have had an agreement with the manufacturer, to be the sole supplier."

"Someone is making money out of this. Although it seems we have slowed down, the containment and management programme will continue for as long as it takes," said Mr Saelea.

A surveillance programme is also continuing in other provinces to monitor possible incursions and eradicate where they are confirmed.

Until now, GAS is only found in Honiara and on the Guadalcanal Plains.

Like any new introduction of pest into an area with no known enemies, the pest population will explode and increase to a certain stage then it will level off when natural enemies start to get a taste for the delicacy.

This may take a few years, or many years, before we see the decline in the GAS population. Until then the national programme to contain and manage GAS will continue as long as resources are available.

"I do not advise people to cook and eat GAS because it is known to host parasites that can have adverse effects on humans," said the Permanent Secretary.

As far as public awareness is concerned, MAL is once again back on air through its weekly Famas Kona programme on the SIBC. Important issues such as

GAS and other agriculture topics will be put on air on a weekly basis, so keep listening. ●

De Makira Banana Festival

By Valonna Baker, Australian Volunteer, MAL

The first De Makira Banana Festival was held from the 4th to

7th June 2014 on Makira Island, Makira-Ulawa Province. The town of KiraKira, the provincial capital, was transformed as hundreds of people arrived to take part in the celebrations. The festival, organised by the Makira Tourism Association, was opened by the British High Commissioner for Solomon Islands, His Excellency Mr Dominic Meikejohn, OBE. Bananas were showcased in all aspects of the festival, including the costumes of the Banana Queen contestants and the floats used to transport them. Traditional dancers, who entertained the crowds, were also adorned in banana leaves and flowers. Bunches of bananas were used to decorate the stages and stalls at the festival venue and whole trees complete with bunches of bananas were transplanted around the festival site. The floral art competition, also based on the use of all parts of the banana plant, was an excellent opportunity for the entrants to display their skill and creativity.

were several varieties of the Fe'i bananas, locally known as Toroka, which unlike other bananas produce upright bunches. There



The Biosecurity stall at the Makira Banana Festival.

7th June 2014 on Makira Island, Makira-Ulawa Province. The town of KiraKira, the provincial capital, was transformed as hundreds of people arrived to take part in the celebrations. The festival, organised by the Makira Tourism Association, was opened by the British High Commissioner for Solomon Islands, His Excellency Mr Dominic Meikejohn, OBE.

Bananas were showcased

Makira is known for the great diversity of its bananas. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) and the Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) gathered together 46 of the 106 varieties of banana reported to occur on Makira Island. Visitors were very interested in the array of shapes, sizes and colours of the bananas on display. Among these



Miss De Makira Banana Festival Queen.

was also a great deal of interest in the yellow or orange-fleshed banana varieties. These bananas have health benefits, which include the potential to reduce Vitamin A deficiency, as they contain significant amounts of β -carotene (beta-carotene). While the focus was on bananas, MAL and KGA staff also promoted the health and economic benefits of growing and eating other traditional foods.

MAL Biosecurity Officers used this opportunity to conduct an awareness campaign about diseases of bananas, such as Fusarium wilt, banana bunchy top disease and blood disease. While these plant diseases do not occur in Solomon Islands, their introduction would have serious consequences in terms of food security for communities such as those on Makira, where bananas are a staple food. ●





Tikopia traditional dancers from Nukukaisi, Makira Ulawa province.

De Makira Banana Festival, Kirakira, June 2014



Winner of the banana floral art competition.



Biogas training workshop successful

By Bradford Theonomi, Solomon Star Newspaper

A biogas training activity conducted under the Choiseul Integrated Climate Change work programme was successfully held at the Taiwan Technical Mission in Honiara.

The two-week training started on June 10, with a design model biogas plant as a practical approach.

Stakeholders involved included the Secretariat to the Pacific Community (SPC) and GIZ, USAID, Taiwan Technical Mission (TTM) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL).

TTM Livestock Specialist, Donald Wang said the training was conducted to equip those involved in the project to help them transfer knowledge to the local farmers.

He said it was a model of simple design that uses pig manure to produce gas for cooking and the waste water for plant fertilizer.

"Using pig waste is cheap and

affordable, something worth doing in order to produce both cooking gas and fertilizer for plants at the same time," he said.

He explained that the biogas plant model is designed to suit a rural setting and is a good use of local material.

SPC/GIZ Development Advisor, Daniel Farkas said such technical expertise provided for by the Taiwan Technical Mission is indeed essential to the integrated climate change programme in Choiseul.

"It helps reduce carbon emissions with the involvement of local knowledge, and is a reliable but sustainable form of energy," Mr Farkas said.

"More so, it is one form of improving waste management systems, something that is usually lacking in many rural communities," he added.

GIZ Project-Land base Technist Davis Regal Alele said whilst helping on the carbon reduction, that mindset of having good sanitation and a

better livelihood through proper waste management is another aspect to this biogas plant.

He said the approach is new and the challenges are there.

"One major challenge is the technical side of it, which Taiwan Technical Mission managed to train and help design a simple and low-cost but effective biogas plant model," Mr Alele said.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock's Chief Field Officer Choiseul, Willie Tuita said the new approach is a way forward for local farmers.

He said the Ministry is grateful to be part of such an initiative and is keen to see the success of it under the Choiseul Integrated Climate Change work programme.

Joining the training were also farmers from Choiseul Province who will be directly involved in the initial roll-out of the designed biogas plant, including agriculture extension officers.●

New agriculture technologies key to mitigating climate change

Adapting new agricultural technologies and techniques are



Buma Farmers assessing the different cassava varieties during a field day.

key to mitigating climate change imposed risks on food security and livelihood for the Buma communities in West Kwaio, Malaita Province, Geralda Siru, an elderly mother and farmer of Maeana village said.

Located at the southern end of the beautiful Langalanga lagoon, Buma is faced with the risks of excessive soil moisture (waterlogging) and worsening soil and water salinity from sea water inundation of their agricultural land.

Food production in the area has been very low as well as their livestock, and their food security and livelihood at stake.

On 7 May, the PNG National Agriculture Research Institute

NARI – EU ARD project in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) restored hope for the community – the positive outcome of the cassava trial that the project carried out under their land conditions. NARI-EU ARD project & MAL began their activities in Solomon Islands in 2012 in three identified sites, Aruligo on Guadalcanal, Buma in Malaita and Hunda-Kena in the Western Province.

The sole aim of the project is to mitigate (reduce) climate change associated risks to food security and livelihoods for vulnerable small farming communities from the identified sites.

Cassava, yam and sweet potato are root crops that the crop component

of the project is addressing.

For Buma, cassava trials began in late November 2013 with the planting of eight different varieties and the nursery of different yam varieties.

The trials were conducted using new technologies and techniques to find out which varieties best suit Buma land conditions in terms of growth, yield, taste and size of the tubers.

Unlike the normal or usual way which farmers throughout the country are familiar with – that is planting three to four cassava cuttings each mound – the project planted just one cutting per mound.

A spacing of one metre between each mound was also part of the new lessons taught as well as the 30-centimetre length of each plant cutting.

While the farmers were excited to learn of the new approach they also had doubts that the new techniques would produce the exceptional results being promised. Seven months passed by and then, on Wednesday, 7th of May, the day of the test came: the Buma Cassava Assessment Field Day.

A day that the cassava plots have to be harvested for assessment and evaluation.

"I cannot believe my eyes today," Geralda Siru of Maeana village said.

"Only one cutting was planted but it produced better yields than our usual practice of three to four cuttings per mound."

"Look at the number and size of tubers," she pointed, "They are amazing. This is unbelievable," a surprised but excited Siru said.

She said the positive outcome of this cassava trial removed their doubts.

"I believe that if the same goes with yam and sweet potato trials, adapting these new agriculture technologies and techniques will surely mitigate the impacts of climate change for our communities."



NARI Crop specialist Elick Guaf demonstrating how to plant kumara.

"The capacity of our food production will be improved as well as food security and livelihood," Siru confidently said. Jules Damutalau, the Project Sub-coordinator told farmers that their participation in the day's evaluation trials was important in choosing which cassava varieties they think are more suitable for planting and growing in Buma.

Permanent Secretary, Jimi Saelea in his remark which was delivered by the Project Coordinator commended the participation of the community in the project.

"To you farmers, I advise you to obtain from the project team as much useful information as will be of help to you. Check which cassava varieties are doing well here."

"Your food security and livelihood depends entirely on you," Saelea said.

He urged the farmers to adopt whichever technology is presented to them but also do their own research and make sure what they get works for them. "The capacity of our food production will be improved as well as food security and livelihood," Siru confidently said.

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Buma farmers harvesting one of the cassava plots during a field day organized by the project

New agricultural technologies for women

A new method of planting sweet potato (kumara) was recently introduced to the women of Buma



Cassava taste testing.

and Maeana communities in West Kwaio, Malaita Province.

The new technique is aimed at improving the yields of sweet potato for the communities that are currently facing risks of excessive water or soil salinity problems as well as sea level rise due to global warming and climate change.

"I usually plant four to six potato tips per mound in my gardens," one participating farmer explains.

"But the yields were not really good."

That practice will soon change as NARI-EU ARD project in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), introduces a one-potato-tip per mound technology to the women.

Elick Guaf, NARI project crop specialist travelled all the way from Papua New Guinea to Buma, to explain and demonstrate to the women farmers the new gardening style.

"The spacing of mounds in the garden must be at least one metre apart to allow for the potato plant to have enough space for sunlight." Elick told the women.

"I plant facing the head of the

potato tip towards where the sun rises and lay it flat in the mound. Placing the vine flat in the mound is important as it removes apical dominance (where the main stem grows more strongly than others) but encourages more root and tuber development."

"Also notice that I have taken off leaves from the tip leaving only the top shoots, I did so to avoid getting pests and diseases to the new garden" he said.

He continued to explain that the main purpose of removing leaves from the planting material (vine) is to conserve water.

"Leaves provide a larger surface area where plant loses water through the process of transpiration thus removing leaves helps conserve water in the planting material and keeps it fresh."

"In addition, when leaves decompose, they produce heat in the mound so may affect the growing plant thus it is good to remove the leaves."

He strongly recommended that it is vitally important that tips collected for the new garden must be kept in a cool place.

"You may believe that planting one potato tip per mound will not survive, neither will it yield better."

"The answer will be known after the next four months, at its harvest

time," he said.

The crop specialist is however adamant that come harvest time for the plots, the women will see for themselves. The same trial has already been conducted in Papua New Guinea and results had been positive.

The planting techniques were conducted using new international and local potato varieties both which have been tested to have produced better yields at the Don Bosco, Teterere research field garden.

The new gardening style is part of ongoing research trial activities under the National Agriculture Research Institute NARI-EU ARD Project and MAL.

Scientifically known as *Ipomoea batatas*, sweet potato is among a list of root crops that the project is trialing out under its crop component in three different sites in Solomon Islands, namely Buma, Aruligo on Guadalcanal and Hunda-Kena in Western Province.

The crops are sweet potato, cassava and yam.

The project's primary objective is to mitigate climate change associated risks to food security and livelihoods for vulnerable smallholder farming communities in Western Pacific countries of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Specifically to improve the food



Buma women farmers participating in the new plant technique for kumara.

production capacity of small farming communities in areas where precipitation deficits and/or excesses and soil salinity problems are becoming significant threats to agricultural production and productivity. ●

DFAT-Australian Counsellor visits cocoa farm

By Rosemary Alabae, Assistant Information Officer, MAL



Brendan Peace, Counsellor for Strategy.

A one-day field trip to one of the cocoa farms at Bethseda, called Kebu farm located on East Guadalcanal took place on [30 May?]. The field trip was facilitated by the Cocoa Team within the Research Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. The Team hosts the DFAT, Honiara delegates on the 30th of May 2014.

The Research Team included Martin Jaiki (Deputy Director of Research and Head of Tree Crops), Dr John Konam, National Cocoa Research Advisor, Mr Raymond Vava currently understudying Dr Konam, Mr Geoffrey Oliou'ou and Mr Roy Timothy from the Extension Department, and Rosemary Alabae from the Information Unit.

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) delegation included Brendan Peace, Counsellor for Strategy, Performance and Growth

Programs, Georgie Penman, Luke Simmons, Second Secretary – Rural Livelihoods, and Judy Tarailopo, Australian Aid Program.

The Australian Government is assisting by making available Dr Konam's engagement in MAL to help with the development of its cocoa research work. Dr John Konam is engaged by DFAT via the Australian Volunteers International (AVI) programme. The field visit enabled the visitors to see various research activities on the ground.

The Kebu farm is a family owned farm with up to 10,300 cocoa trees, planted as hybrid seedlings. Dr Konam explained that over the last three years, under the AUSAID CLIP project, it was realised that there is high genetic variability so the team are trying to highlight that this high variability needs to be addressed to get the best out of other investment into cocoa. The Kebu farm is a good example for farmers taking the lead to improve the genetic materials on their farm. MAL Research only provides advisory support while the farmer does the actual work. During the visit to Kebu farm, the farm owner, David Kebu Jnr, led the tour around his family's cocoa plantation.

The touring of the 10-hectare cocoa plantation ended with planting of two cocoa seedlings by Mr Brendan Peace and Ms Georgie Penman.

After the Kebu farm, the visitors were also shown around the nursery where Raymond Vava is currently collecting potential elite local material at Henderson Greenhouse Area, Post-Entry Quarantine. The DFAT delegates were shown local materials, about 30 collected from around Guadalcanal. There was also a handing over of tools, materials and equipment from DFAT team to the Deputy Director Research, Martin Jaiki representing the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. The items provided included two chainsaws and accessories, quality nursery tools, including grafting knives and tapes, and secateurs as they are exactly what was required to carry out the cocoa research activities.

A very happy Head of Tree Crops Section, Martin Jaiki said, "The objective of MALs' National Cocoa Development Strategy is to achieve a national production of 20,000 metric tonnes dried beans by 2020. However there is always unsettled production and challenges to achieve this target but we still strive to achieve this target". "Receiving



Brendan Peace hands over tools to Martin Jaiki, Deputy Director of Research and Head of Tree Crops.

from you such assistance boosts our cocoa research team's morale and I assure you that we will utilise this support from you to achieve our objectives in improving cocoa

planting material in Solomon Islands".

The MAL Cocoa Research Team intends to mass produce, through bud grafting, both the local and

PNG materials, now held at St Martin for replicated planting at Don Bosco Institute at Teterere, Guadalcanal Plains and also a duplicate planting at Garanga FES in Isabel Province. ●

Biosecurity Column

By Bob Macfarlane, Biosecurity Adviser, MAL

Overview of MAL's Biosecurity Project

The Australian funded Biosecurity Development Program (SI-BDP) is targeted at strengthening the Solomon Islands biosecurity system to safeguard the country's plants and animals while facilitating domestic and international trade in agricultural produce. The project has been running now for seven months and it is time to report on progress.

What is biosecurity?

All readers will have an idea of what quarantine is but few will really know why we are now using the term 'biosecurity'. Strictly speaking quarantine is about things that happen at the border, that is, the measures we take to make sure plant and animal imports and exports do not carry pests. Biosecurity, however, takes in activities on either side of the border in addition to activities

at the border. That is, we try to understand what is going on in countries that export to us so we know what risks we might be exposed to; and we try to keep track of our own pest issues on this side of the border including managing any new pest arrivals (incursions). We also negotiate the quarantine entry conditions for Solomon Islands plant and animal exports to other countries.

A new Biosecurity Act was passed by Parliament in May 2013, it is designed to establish Biosecurity Solomon Islands (BSI) (previously Solomon Islands Agriculture Quarantine Service) and enforce the activities needed to carry out biosecurity. Currently, we are preparing new regulations needed to implement the Act and plan to have these in place in August/September. During July and August we will be holding an induction course for all staff to introduce them to the new regulations and the activities needed to implement them. Expect to see and hear about



Bio-security officer inspecting machineries at the Point Cruz seaport.

significant changes in the way biosecurity operates over the next few months.

Activities:

Late last year, we held a workshop on pest risk analysis (PRA). This is the process we use to determine whether imports are safe or, if not, what measures we should put in place to ensure that they can enter the country without bringing pests and diseases. Mostly this concerns plant materials (including wood) and animals or animal products, but biosecurity takes an interest in anything coming over the border. For example, we try to ensure that all vehicles, including logging machines and earthmoving machines are clean and free of soil. The workshop was attended by several junior and senior staff to ensure there is a wide understanding of the process and its importance.

Earlier this year, we ran two activities as follow-ons to the PRA workshop. One was a special workshop for the BSI risk analysis staff alone, in which they practiced the steps needed to carry-out



Baggage check at the Honiara International Airport.

specialist techniques for assessing weed risks associated with imports of new plants. Weed risk analysis (WRA) will help us decide whether it is safe to allow the importations of some plants because they may become weedy in this new environment. The most frequent request for importations of new plant products is for ornamental plants and we need WRA to help us decide first whether to allow them into our country at all. Once this is done we can then decide how to treat them to ensure they do not bring new pests with them.

The second activity aimed to introduce staff to the concept, principles and practice of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement (SPS) under the World Trade Organization (WTO) and was delivered to all Honiara based Biosecurity Officers. These principles are fundamental to the worldwide agreements that most countries, including Solomon Islands, have signed up to, and control how plant protection, quarantine and biosecurity are managed in every country. Staff were pleased to learn that what they do here is part of an international regime and is controlled by standards set by these international agreements. For example, many

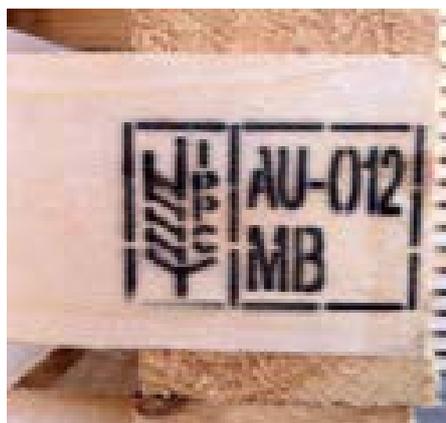


Fig. must be treated, reshipped or destroyed.

were particularly interested by the internationally agreed standards for the treatment and movement of wood. Several staff had been concerned for some time about wooden packing material coming in with cargo and were pleased to hear that its treatment is managed under an international agreement. Any wooden item, e.g. pallets, that does not carry the international wood treatment symbol,

Fig 1., must be treated, reshipped or destroyed.

Early this year we also ran planning workshops on strategy and governance, and biosecurity systems and procedures with biosecurity officers from the Australian Department of Agriculture. These workshops, for senior staff, were designed to lay the groundwork for activities over the remainder of the project and in particular the next few months as we prepare

new 'procedural manuals' and 'working instructions'. The final major activity undertaken over recent weeks is work to revise and reissue import specifications for plants and animals and plant and animal products. This important document will be published in two new manuals. The first will be an internal manual for biosecurity staff and will include all of the scientific, technical and operational information that officers need to prepare import permits for plants and animals and plant and animal products. The second manual will be for importers, agents and the general public, and provide an overview of what people need to do to import plants and animals or plant and animal products safely and a summary of the import requirements.

These are just some of the activities that the SI-BDP, in collaboration with Biosecurity Solomon Islands (BSI) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, has run since it started. More are planned over the next two years including more than twenty specialized training, development and scientific activities. Our goal is to strengthen BSI's ability to protect Solomon Island's plant and animal health from risks from exotic pests and diseases. ●

For more information on stories in this newsletter or agriculture enquiries contact the Agriculture Information Unit within the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

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For the latest agriculture news and stories catch Famas Kona every week on the national broadcaster SIBC at 8.30pm on Monday and 7.30pm on Wednesday.

The Agriculture Information Unit is the public relations arm of the Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock. Its role is to disseminate agriculture information to the public and

farming communities using radio, newspapers, television, online and print media.

Library

The Solomon Islands National Agriculture Information Centre is closed due to staff re-assignment.

The library has a major collection of books and information on Solomon Islands agriculture. Members of the public and students are encouraged to visit the library when it is reopened for information on agriculture in the Solomon Islands and around the world.