

NATION

NARI starts five-year El Nino study

By VERONICA FRANCIS
ASTRONG *El Nino* event is due next year and may bring severe drought conditions to most parts of PNG and it will be severe than those experienced in 1997.

Director general of the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) Dr Raghunath Ghodake said this yesterday during the launch of a five-year research project aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change on food security and livelihoods in vulnerable areas of PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

He said climate change was a global problem and PNG was like any other country faced with it and the most imminent risk was the increased frequency of strong *El Nino* events and the severe drought conditions it would bring to most parts of the country.

It is understood this

project will try to determine agricultural technologies to alleviate climate change risks to food production in Western Pacific countries.

Ghodake said this research project aimed to improve the food production capacity of small holder farming communities in areas where precipitation deficits, excess soil moisture and soil salinity problems were becoming significant threats to agricultural production and productivity.

“Eleven communities across the three countries will directly participate in the implementation and eventually up to 2.4 million people will benefit from the project,” he said.

The National learnt that the project is funded by European Union (EU) to the tune of K10.4 million and implemented by NARI, who contributed 20% in partnership with the Ministry of Agricul-

ture and Livestock, Solomon Islands department of agriculture and rural development, Vanuatu and the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences in Vienna, Austria.

Head of the delegation of the European Union to PNG, Ambassador Dr Martin Dihm said it was very important to look at sustainable agricultural development in PNG.

He revealed that EU prioritised climate change in PNG and he called on partners to foster more agricultural investment to alleviate the risks of climate change.

After the official launch of the five-year research project, an MoU was signed between NARI and the Solomon Islands for an ongoing capacity building project and a copy of the signed document between NARI and EU was handed over to the partners.