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## SIAQS on Newcastle disease watch



*Livestock Director, Barnabas Keqa, Chief Veterinary Officer, Emma Rooke and Director of Quarantine Francis Tsatsia face the media.*



*Paralysis in a chicken with Newcastle disease.*

The Solomon Islands Agriculture and Quarantine Service (SIAQS) has been mobilised in response to an outbreak of Newcastle disease along the West Papua and Papua New Guinea border.

SIAQS has suspended the import of all poultry and poultry products from Papua New Guinea. Quarantine officers have been instructed to step up inspections all aircraft, ships and cargo coming from PNG. Any poultry products from PNG found during this period will be confiscated and destroyed to prevent the spread of disease in the country.

Quarantine staff will travel to Choiseul and Western Province, Solomon Islands border with Papua New Guinea, and team up with Agriculture Extension Officers to start awareness programmes on Newcastle disease and other related Quarantine issues.

Newcastle disease is a viral infection that infects poultry and wild birds. The disease spreads quickly and can kill large numbers of birds which is why it is considered one of the most lethal diseases of chickens, along with avian

influenza (bird flu). Unlike avian influenza, the disease does not generally affect humans but in rare cases it has been known to cause conjunctivitis and mild flu-like symptoms.

When birds get infected, they can have swelling of the head, coughing, gasping, paralysis, loss of balance, or bright green diarrhoea. In some cases, large numbers of birds will suddenly die.

There is no treatment for Newcastle disease which is why it is important to prevent it entering Solomon Islands.

Farmers and the public should be vigilant for signs of disease. Anyone who sees signs of illness or sudden death in domestic or wild poultry or birds should immediately contact their local agriculture officers or SIAQS.

SIAQS can be contacted in Honiara at the Ministry's Headquarter on phone – 24657 or 24658, Henderson Airport on 36589 and the Point Cruz Seaport on 21294.

In the Western Province they can be contacted in Gizo on phone 60281 and in Noro on phone 61292 while in Lata Temotu province on phone 53033.●

# Boutique chocolate market eyes Solomon Islands cocoa

Although it was Kraft-Cadbury's interest in Solomon Islands that captured wide media attention last month, under the radar, Solomon Islands cocoa has also been attracting, the smaller but more exclusive boutique chocolate makers.

In June, Australian boutique chocolate maker Zokoko will hold talks with local exporter SOLKOM to access sun dried cocoa.

Although, Zokoko as a boutique maker will require less volume than mass producers, – it is understood that the company is willing to pay above market price to access high quality, premium cocoa.

Zokoko is well known for supplying chocolates and coffee to top food kitchens and restaurants around Australia including the Gold Coast.

Earlier this year Zokoko trialled chocolate made from 180 kg of solar-dried cocoa from SOLKOM with rave reviews from its top clients.

SOLKOM, a locally registered company jointly owned by four cocoa exporters from Guadalcanal, Malaita, Makira and the Western Province has been working on improving cocoa quality in the Solomon Islands.

SOLKOM is implementing a project funded by the Pacific Agricultural Research and Development Initiative (PARDI) to facilitate improved livelihoods for Pacific cocoa producers through premium market access.



*Zokoko - samples of premium chocolate made from Solomon Islands cocoa.*

The project is supporting SOLKOM and its network of producers on activities that aim to improve on the fermentation and drying of cocoa beans.

The project encourages the use of solar/sun drying and is trialling a number of solar drying methods and quality testing.

It is believed that good processing methods will produce top quality cocoa beans. Smoke-free beans offer the first step to accessing premium markets.

In 2012, Solomon Islands cocoa tested in Singapore and Australia showed unique flavour but the presence of smoke. Throughout the year SOLKOM worked with cocoa producers on improving fermentation and solar drying practices including process training by SOLKOM and the Commodities Export Marketing Authority.

At the start of 2013 a second batch of cocoa, that was sun dried, was sent for testing with the results showing zero smoke and excellent flavour. ●

## Agriculture Minister launches new Cocoa Policy

The Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, the Hon. David Tome, has launched a new National Cocoa Policy aimed at guiding the country towards producing 20,000 metric tonnes of cocoa by 2020.

With Solomon Islands producing between 4,000-6,000 metric tonnes of cocoa per year, the new policy outlines the development of the industry over the next seven years through the use of improved cocoa varieties, building the capacity of farmers, better market access and stronger partnerships.

In launching the policy at the Honiara Hotel on April 24, the Minister highlighted the crucial role of cocoa farmers, exporters, the Government, donors and cocoa stakeholders in working together to achieve 20,000 metric tonnes by 2020.

"It's a huge challenge for all of us, but through effective

partnerships we can achieve this target."

The Minister also highlighted the role of the private sector in taking the industry forward.

"I am pleased to see the private sector making big strides in exporting and marketing of cocoa overseas."

MAL's cocoa adviser Dr John Konam said the target of 20,000 metric tonnes by 2020 is achievable as the 23 million or more cocoa trees in the country are producing only 25 percent of their potential.

"The focus of the strategy is on rehabilitating cocoa crops, planting improved varieties with higher yields and developing better market linkages, so that farmers are managing and benefiting from their cocoa".

He added that the use of integrated pest and disease management in cocoa plantations has been beneficial to

farmers.

“This system involves targeted pruning, weeding and tree management practices that can help farmers to vastly improve yields from their cocoa trees.”

“We also need to bring plantations that were abandoned during the ethnic tension back into production and increase access to credit for the industry”.

The new cocoa policy was drafted towards the end of last year following intensive consultations between Ministry officials, cocoa farmers, exporters and cocoa sector members.

MAL Permanent Secretary, Frank Wickham said the policy is a good one with wide input from stakeholders.

The policy launch coincided with the launch of the cocoa genetic improvement work initiated with improved planting materials imported from PNG now planted at St Martin Rural Training Centre, Tenaru.

Agriculture officials described the policy launch as timely as Solomon Islands cocoa has come under the spotlight with heavy interest from overseas buyers including global chocolate maker Kraft-Cadbury.

Kraft-Cadbury officials met with MAL in March and are seeking 10,000 metric tonnes of cocoa annually for their



*MAL's Lokol Kaikai Stringband on show at the cocoa policy launch.*

chocolate production.

In addition boutique chocolate makers have also indicated their interest in using Solomon Islands cocoa.

The Minister thanked the Government of Australia for its support through the services of Dr John Konam as well as the World Bank and AusAID through Rural Development Programme for funding a wide range of capacity building programmes. ●



*Community members at work on the PACC demonstration site on Ontong Java.*

## PACC audit

A major performance audit was carried out on the Solomon Islands component of the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) project within the Research Department of MAL.

The audit looked at the effectiveness of the project in delivering its mandate of addressing the impacts of climate change, on food security.

The audit was carried out by Solomon Islands' Office of the Auditor General.

PACC Coordinator Casper Supa says the project was selected from climate change related projects to under go the audit.

“The outcome of this audit will help strengthen the project's work and other projects can use the findings to help their programmes.”

Supa says the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock opted for the OAG as the Government's main auditor to carry out the process.

The audit will look at how the project funds have been utilised, who is benefiting, what impacts the project is having on the ground and if it is delivering on its goals.

“We are very fortunate to have this audit. It has given us time to look back at what we've achieved and where we are going. It will also identify the gaps that need to be filled and to help us to focus on our priorities,” said Supa.

The audit covered both the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Ministry of Environment.

Supa says the PACC team spent the early part of 2013 collecting and gathering materials to facilitate the audit.

The OAG says the audit covered PACC operations from 2010 to 2012 and include an assessment on whether relevant legislation and regulations pertaining to PACC were compiled. The administration and supporting procedures of the ministries were also reviewed.

Supa says, in addition to the OAG audit a regional audit is being undertaken by Fiji based KPMG. ●

# Taiwan cements agricultural ties

The Republic of China (Taiwan), has strengthened its agricultural support to the Solomon Islands with the signing of a new Technical Cooperation Agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

The agreement covers cooperation through technical assistance in fruits and vegetable development, the screening and introducing of crop varieties, seed production, training of farmers and agriculture workers, assisting farmers in small-scale livestock, providing integrated training in various areas, and support for agricultural research.

The agreement builds on Taiwan's past

30 years of support to the agriculture sector including the Taiwanese Technical Mission and assistance to the National Rice Programme.

Taiwanese Ambassador Roy Wu said the agreement was one of the most important signed between the two countries.

Unlike previous technical cooperation agreements, the first signed in 1983, this one will not expire in four years, it will continue until termination.

"We are pleased and proud to observe that today there are plenty supply of locally grown rice, vegetables, fruits and pork in the market," Ambassador Wu said at the agreement's signing.

The Minister of Agriculture and Livestock the Hon. David Tome praised the ongoing cooperation and collaboration with the Taiwanese Technical Mission.

"I believe we in MAL - and indeed Solomon Islands - have yet to make full use of the technical expertise and agriculture technologies and experience that Taiwan can share.

"I urge my officers to make the most of this agreement for the betterment of our people."

The Agriculture Minister said the content of the agreement reflected the close cooperation and good work between ministry officials and donor partners.



***MAL Minister David Tome and Taiwanese Ambassador Roy Wu at the signing ceremony.***



***Taiwanese Ambassador Roy Wu leads officials during a song at the signing ceremony.***

"I am delighted that we have had very good consultations on the Agreement including the involvement of the Taiwanese Technical Mission Team Leader, Mission officers and the Permanent Secretary and senior officers of MAL.

The signing ceremony was capped off with the debut of MAL's in-house band, the Lokal Kaikai String Band.

The band performed over refreshments including songs by Permanent Secretary Frank Wickham and a duet with the Agriculture Minister.

Ambassador Wu and Taiwanese officials also took the stage to reciprocate with a round of Taiwanese songs. ●

# Cocoa variety programme launched

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock marked the launch of the national cocoa genetic planting material improvement programme with a series of plantings at the St Martin's cocoa farm in Tenaru on 26 April.

Under the programme MAL is trialling local and imported varieties of cocoa to test which variety best suits local conditions.

At St Martin's, 2,400 cocoa seedlings from Papua New Guinea are being

grown as part of trials to identify higher quality and higher yielding cocoa variety for farmers in Solomon Islands.

The introduction of new cocoa varieties is part of MAL's policy to boost national cocoa production levels to 20,000 metric tonnes by 2020. National cocoa adviser Dr John Konam said the plan is to screen the plants before they are sent into the provinces for further tests.

St Martin's is just one of many farms



***MAL Minister David Tome plants one of the new cocoa varieties.***

which is taking part in the programme.

Research groups of farmers are being set up in each province to find which local and imported varieties of cocoa perform well under different conditions.

The programme will also test which materials are preferred by international markets, so that farmers can better target their cocoa for export.

The Agriculture and Livestock Minister, the Hon. David Tome, thanked Papua New Guinea for providing the genetic material, St Martin's for hosting the plants and AusAID for supporting the services of cocoa adviser Dr John Konam.

He called on all cocoa stakeholders to support the new genetic material improvement programme which will have a major role in hitting Solomon Islands production target by 2020.

"As for local material we have some very good planting materials that we need to profile their characteristics and identify good yield with fine flavour characteristic to be



**Central Guadalcanal Member of Parliament, Peter Shanel and MAL Minister Hon. David Tome at St Martins.**

given to farmers. We have started it but it's a very big job and we need the cooperation of farmers and all players of the industry," said Dr Konam. ●

## Demonstration farm for Verahue Community



**Guadalcanal Principal Officer Mark Biloko leads a demonstration at Verahue.**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock has set up a demonstration farm at Verahue in Guadalcanal.

The farm, located at Verahue School, aims to help community members overcome common problems such as soil infertility, pests and disease and at the same show ways of improving yields.

Guadalcanal Principal Field Officer, Mark Biloko says the idea to set up a demonstration farm came about as a result of community consultation under the Participatory Rural Appraisal activity organised by Component Two of the Rural Development Programme.

"For this community food security was identified as the number one concern.

"Their soil is not fertile because of continuous cultivation,

they have problems with pests and diseases, and they lacked planting material.

"As this community is responsible for supplying Honiara's market it is important that the solutions to this problem are shared as widely as possible, which is why we opted for a demonstration farm," added Biloko.

Crops on the farm include beans, corn, watermelon, peanut, mukuna beans and rice. Biloko says chickens and pigs will be brought onto the farm once pens have been constructed. Manure from the livestock will be used as fertilizer for the farm.

Biloko says the demonstration farm teaches farmers best practices such as

crop rotation, the use of natural crop repellent and composting.

"We don't use fertilizer or insecticide. Instead we teach farmers how to make liquid fertilizer and how to use natural crop repellent such as Neem or Derriss. You can't use insecticide as it takes up to two weeks before it is safe for consumption. The crops here are early maturing and farmers can't afford to wait two weeks before selling at the market."

Records of all activities at the demonstration farm are kept to show farmers the outcome of the work at Verahue.

"By using crop rotation we want to show the farmers how much can be made by using the same 10 m x 10 m plot throughout the year, as opposed to cutting down bush and making a big farm."

Even records of the type and amount of seeds being distributed are kept to measure the farm's impact.

"It's good to see whether these seeds are also used in other

parts of Guadalcanal," said Biloko.

Biloko says community support has been strong with with parents coming in every Wednesday to clean and maintain the farm.

"Ideally we want this farm to be for the students of this community, for them to maintain it and learn the best agriculture practices of farming for their community."

The money from all produce sold by the farm goes back to the school with students rushing to plant as much as they can ahead of the schools bazaar in July.

"My hope is that by the end of this year more farmers in the community will take the skills and knowledge from the demonstration farm and set up their own gardens.

"This will benefit consumers in Honiara as it will mean more fresh fruits and vegetables, that are organic." ●



**MAL officers demonstrate how to make fertiliser to community members.**

## Fighting Giant African Snails through drama

Humour, story telling and acting are being used to spread awareness and knowledge about Giant African Snails amongst communities in Honiara and Guadalcanal.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock has engaged the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) drama group to visit communities and promote awareness on Giant African Snails and pass on knowledge on how to deal with the pest.

Since 2006, the incidents of Giant African Snails infestation have continued to increase throughout Honiara and its outskirts.

According to Quarantine officials Giant African Snails were introduced to the country through used logging equipment. Since then the invasive species has destroyed countless number of gardens around the greater Honiara area and has affected farmers.

Quarantine Information Officer, Leon Boso, said that drama has been engaged as part of the fight against Giant African Snails because of its effectiveness in conveying important messages.

"Drama is good as it is entertaining yet educational. It can hold the attention of both the young and old and at the same time pass on vital information."

The drama covers the history of the spread of Giant African Snails and it highlights what communities can do to fight the pest in their own areas.

MAL Permanent Secretary, Frank Wickham, says the drama will add a new dimension to the current Giant African Snails work being done by Quarantine. ●

## Strange but true

In this issue of *Agrikalsa Nius* we look at a number of unexplained agricultural phenomena as reported by our staff. These were among the questions put to MAL staff at a gathering attended by about 70 women in Isabel Province.

**Q:** From Tatamba my big rooster (skinny neck breed) roams around daily with my female duck. Last week the duck laid an egg. Will the expected chook be a duck or a chicken or a cross-breed (a ducken)?

**Q:** From Kia my female pig has been housed in its own pen all the time. I'm the only one feeding and taking care of it but suddenly it got pregnant. However, I had never seen it being near or with a boar. What could have caused the sow to be pregnant without a boar?

Agrikalsa Nius would like to invite our readers to write in with their own explanation for this weird but true agriculture incidents. Email your possible answer to these incidents at [mal.agrikalsanius@gmail.com](mailto:mal.agrikalsanius@gmail.com)



*MAL Minister Hon. David Tome and Moses Pelomo prepare to plant cocoa.*



*Cocoa farmer David Kembu Jnr leads the tour of his family's cocoa plantation.*

## Cocoa Tour

In April the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock the Hon. David Tome led a tour of the Kembu cocoa farm in East Guadalcanal.

The tour looked at the different practices taking place at cocoa farms around the country including grafting, cloning

and integrated pest and disease management.

Cocoa farmer David Kembu Jnr shared with visitors the methods he is using to optimise his cocoa production such as the screening his cocoa plants to find his best performing plants. ●



*Cocoa stakeholders mark the tour of the Kembu plantation with a photo opportunity.*



*Above: MAL officials at the Kembu farm in Bathseba.*

*Below: Cocoa farmer David Kembu Jnr and Cocoa Adviser Dr John Konam.*



# PACC looks at new approach for Sikaiana

Solomon Islands is heading to its second project site in Sikaiana, Malaita Outer Islands following the successful start of fieldwork in neighboring Ontong Java last year.

Like in Ontong Java, the project in Sikaiana will look to improve food security by working with communities to improve farming techniques, plants varieties and managing of gardens.

Senior Research Officer (SRO) Jules Damutalau says the first step will be to carry out a rapid Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment to gauge the priorities of the communities.

"The situation on Sikaiana is different

from Ontong Java, so we have to get data from communities on what type of help they need and want," said Supa.

While the vulnerability assessment for Ontong Java was conducted by a contractor, for Sikaiana, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock will play the lead role with the support of stakeholders.

"For the vulnerability assessment we want to involve Environment, Fisheries, Forestry and Infrastructure Ministries along with UNDP and different stakeholders to come and work with us on the ground, as we visit the communities."

The findings of the assessment will then be presented to the PACC National Steering Committee in order to get funding for the projects activities on the ground.

"During the first quarter of the year we have been looking at our methodology and how we will implement the project on the ground.

The PACC project is a regional initiative aimed at promoting adaptation measures that will increase the resilience of communities against the impacts of climate change. In the Solomon Islands the project is focused on improving foodsecurity. ●



Soil scientist, Simon Iro Sefa.

Simon Iro Sefa is on a mission to make soil management a priority for the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the agriculture sector.

For the New Zealand-trained soil scientist, soil is the foundation of all agriculture development.

"Soil is the source of life. It provides our food and is the foundation of agriculture. We need to care for our soil and then it will care for us. If we don't recognise the soil then it will not look after us. It's our source of life for the future and today."

Currently the Ministry's focus on soil is through MAL's Land Use Department however Sefa says more resources need to be allocated to soil work so that MAL and the country can fully

## Staff Profile: Simon Iro Sefa Making soil matter

benefit from soil research.

"This includes setting up an agriculture and soils laboratory which will be the heartbeat for soil work.

"It will also create jobs and opportunities for young soil scientists. Most of all it will help us develop as a country."

Out in the field, Sefa says it is vital that the Ministry has up-to-date information on soil types so proper action can be taken to help farmers.

"Regardless of whether or not the soil is fertile, what really matters is the productivity of the soil. This involves working closely with farmers, as they are the ones that know the history of their soil. From this information we can come up with ways of managing the soil to be more productive."

Hailing from North Malaita, Sefa's education included primary school at Ngalibiu Primary School, Su'u Secondary School in West Kwaio and King George the Sixth in Honiara.

He studied agriculture at the University of South Pacific's Alafua Campus in Samoa. Returning home he worked within MAL's Livestock Department before seeking further studies overseas where he took up a post-graduate course on soil science at Massey University in New Zealand.

Sefa then continued with a Masters

degree which he completed with distinction and did his thesis on soil fertility where he studied the fertility of beef cattle farms in Solomon Islands.

He says the findings of his thesis shows that soil fertility in Guadalcanal Province is generally five times higher than in Malaita Province.

This he says has been reflected in national agricultural development in these provinces.

Looking into the future, Sefa, says increasing awareness and information is vital to spread knowledge about soil fertility. He says there is a big need for radio programmes and for the hands-on work of community groups and NGOs.

For Sefa, the Kastom Gaden Association has set the standard through its work with communities on organic farming and dealing with soil fertility.

"Soil demonstrations are good because you show farmers what to do and then the results of your work can be seen by the outcome of the demonstration."

He says farmers need to be discouraged from slash and burn. These practices he says are still happening in rural areas and farmers need to know that this is destroying vital nutrients and resulting in low soil fertility. ●



# Building teamwork and cooperation through sports

Come every Monday and Wednesday after work, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock's parking lot is converted into an outdoor volleyball court for MAL's volleyball tournament.

The competition pits 14 teams from different departments in a round-robin competition that will end in September.

It's an intensive competition with staff representing their departmental colours and department pride on the line with each game.

Deputy Director of Quarantine, Patteson Akipu, who is in charge of MAL's sports committee, is convinced that the competition has boosted team spirit and cooperation among department staff.

"It is a good way for teams that work together in the office to interact on a different level.

"In this setting we get people to cooperate and work together on the sports field."

The idea to start the volleyball tournament came about as a way to maintain the health of staff.

"We participated in the Inter Ministry Sports League last year but when it ended, we saw the level of fitness amongst staff started to decline.

"So we thought we'd come up with a fun way to maintain fitness levels."



*The MAL Corporate team at the tournament uniform parade.*

He added that it was also a chance for agriculture staff from different departments to get to know each other.

"We're such a big Ministry, with offices scattered around Honiara, so this is a good chance for staff to meet and to interact."

Akipu says the feedback has been positive not only from within the Ministry but also outside, with other government ministries looking to start up their own competition.

The Agriculture and Livestock Minister Hon. David Tome and the Permanent Secretary Frank Wickham are also active members of the competition in representing MAL's corporate team. ●

# Information and communications boost

The capacity of MAL's Agriculture Information Unit has received a boost with the recruitment of broadcaster and journalist Ben Rakai as interim Chief Information Officer.

Rakai, a former television reporter and producer at One Television will assist the Information Unit as it looks to increase its communication programme through its Famas Kona radio programme broadcasted by Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, its monthly e-newsletter Agrikasla Nius and a new video/TV programme formulated by One Television.

MAL Under-Secretary (Administration) David Patternot said Rakai's term will be for the interim period while a recruitment exercise is underway to fill the role of Chief Information Officer while a recruitment exercise is underway.

"The Information Unit plays a very important role in getting information out to farmers, stakeholders and members of the public on the programmes that the Ministry is running as well as awareness issues."

Following on the success of the *Agrikasla Nius* we are now looking to increase our presence on radio and soon to be on television as well as our overall media presence with



*Ben Rakai, films a joint press conference organised by Livestock and Quarantine.*

more press releases and coverage of agriculture events and development.

The unit will be looking to cover more stories from farmers in the provinces. ●



*Jimi Saelea, harvesting during taro trials at the Fote Field Experiment Station, Malaita, 1988.*



*Jeremy Rua (Farming Systems), Richard Pauku (Entomology), Morgan Wairiu (Soils and Nutrition), Kaora Tioti (Chief Field Officer, Guadalcanal) outside the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, 1988.*

## Flashback

In this issue *Agrikalsa Nius* takes a tour down memory lane with MAL staff to a time, not so long ago. ●

## Temotu's purple breadfruit

Breadfruit is the staple diet of the people of Solomon Islands' Temotu Province.

One species of the plant that is unique to the islands of Temotu is the purple breadfruit. As far as the team at *Agrikalsa Nius* is aware, the purple breadfruit is not found in other parts of the Pacific.

In Temotu breadfruit is used for nambo where it is sun dried heated and baked. It is then packed away as food storage to be eaten during the cyclone season or when the general food supply is low. ●



*Above: Regular breadfruit side by side with the purple breadfruit.*

*Bottom left: Purple breadfruit being prepared for nambo.*

*Bottom right: Women during nambo preparation.*



# Recipe: Solokokoa drink

## Promoted by CEMA

Prepared by Pitakia Moses Pelomo, endorsed by CEMA



**Step 1:** A kettle of water should be on the fire to be used later to mix with the cocoa bean for the hot Solokokoa drink.

**Step 2:** Collect a handful of well-fermented and dried cocoa beans.

**Step 3:** Remove the shells or cover of the dried beans.

**Step 4:** Put into strong pot a "Vanuatu Pot" is ideal and roast over slow but steady fire using charcoal of coconut shell after the flames have died.

**Step 5:** Continue to stir the beans to prevent beans from burning. Continue for 15-20 minutes until beans started to shine (oil evaporating) and chocolate flavored smell is sensed.

**Step 6:** Pour the roasted beans into a pounding wooden bowl or smaller "Vanuatu Pot" and pound with a stick just like you do for cassava or ngali-nut.

**Step 7:** Use the pounding stick to break the beans into pieces or granules like powder.

**Step 8:** Continue and increase pounding rate until the bean powder becomes oily and liquid with as small granule size as desired.

**Step 9:** Once the cocoa powder has melted (paste) and granule sizes acceptable, the cocoa paste is ready to be used for a delicious and energizing hot drink.

**Step 10:** Size of drinks depends on own choice- One or half a tea spoon of cocoa paste is enough for a large cup or mug. For communal drinking, 1-3 table spoons is enough for a kettle or large pot.

**Step 11:** Add boiling water to the cup or drop the desirable number of table spoons of cocoa paste into the kettle or pot of boiling water and stir until cocoa paste dissolves.

**Step 12:** Add sugar or milk (powdered or liquid) as desired and stir and test for taste.

**Step 13:** Ready for sharing

This batch was added powdered milk and sugar. Note the Chocolate-with- milk color

Bean paste dissolved well although there are small granules at the bottom which some people like to eat while they drink.

Alternatively, you can sieve/strain the small pieces if you prefer

**Step 14:** Come and get it- bring your cup/mug

**Step 15:** Drink to your heart's content. This group, pictured, enjoyed it so much they came for a second and third round! ●

# Process of organisational development for MAL

By Malcolm Bell, RDP

Consultations as part of MAL's organisational development started in April with a three-day intensive workshop for senior headquarters officers at the Maravagi Resort, Central Province.

The consultations included the Permanent Secretary, under-secretaries, heads of department and others.

The consultations which included individual and group assessments, reviewed the capacity of MAL, in particular its planning, management, operations, structure, systems, processes and culture.

Malcolm Bell who facilitated the first workshop activity, commented that "these consultations required participants to make assessments of organisational capacity and structural elements, both before the Rural Development Programme (RDP) commenced and now, agree to a consensus opinion of MAL culture, both now and desired, and also express their attitudes to aspects of MAL's organisational structure."

He added that all those attending participated extremely well in the formal part of the programme with excellent information being collected, and this continued into the informal part of the programme, with the Chief Planning Officer's guitar being used at times late into the evenings accompanied by well lubricated vocal chords. Here was the beginnings of a potentially world renowned Lokol Kaikai String Band!

A similar programme was conducted in Honiara (6-8 May) for other senior officers including Chief Field Officers from headquarters and provinces plus key staff members. Following this second round of consultations, members of the RDP team and the Under Secretary (Administration) will visit provinces for further and more focused consultations regarding structural options and required systems, responsibilities and competencies. ●



*Consultations take place at Maravagi Resort.*



*Group work takes place during consultations.*

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

**Ph:** 22143/22144 **Email:** mal.agrikalsanius@gmail.com

For the latest agriculture news and stories catch Famas Kona every week on the national broadcaster SIBC at 8.30pm on Monday and 7.45am 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 now open.

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 for information on agriculture in the Solomon Islands and around the world.

## Opening hours

**Monday & Wednesday**

**1:30pm - 4:00pm**

**Friday**

**9:00am - 11:30am**