



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 alley.

FIRST QUARTER 2021

Land Access Guide, a valuable resource

In this edition, we feature the launching of the Land Access Guide on February 17, 2021. The event took place at the Department of Agriculture and Livestock Northern Regional Centre at Erap in Markham Valley.

Following the findings of the Land Access Study Report, Grow PNG's Land Access Working Group officially launched a Land Access Guide for landowners and agribusinesses on 17 February 2021. The Guide and its Appendices seek to provide advice and resources to help customary landowners, investors and agribusinesses reach a durable agreement for agriculture investment in crops cultivation and production on customary land. The Land Access Guide is a valuable resource, and its principles and processes can be applied to unlock the potential for agribusiness investment and other investments.

The launch brought together representatives of local, provincial and national governments and international organisations such as the UN-FAO from Lae and Port Moresby and farmers and agri-businesses operating in the Markham Valley. Guests of honor include Member for Markham District and Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Honorable Koni Iguan; Ongga-Waffa local level government Council President and Morobe Provincial Deputy Governor, Honorable Willie Simbisi; Secretary for Department of Agriculture and Livestock, Daniel Kombuk; Australian Consul-General, Lae, Mark Foxe; and Regional Director for Department of Agriculture and Livestock, Southern Region, Ario Movis.

Emphases were made from various key speeches about the importance of the Guide, how it would potentially benefit the customary landowners, farmer groups and likewise, the potential agribusiness investors. In his keynote address, Mr. Foxe said the guide is quite a comprehensive document, providing the regulatory context, processes for accessing customary land for agribusiness; internal clan negotiations and communication; organizing customary groups for land access; opportunity for assessment for land use for agribusiness development; investor negotiations; agreement structures; farming models; approaches to revenue sharing and most importantly conflict resolutions.

He said local and inclusive economic development is especially important at this time given the challenging economic circumstances of COVID 19 and realizing opportunities through agriculture is important for Morobe and PNG's economic recovery.



Australian Consul-General, Lae, Mark Foxe presenting the guide to Markham MP Koni Iguan. Mr Iguan is also the deputy speaker of parliament. At his left is Ongga-Waffa LLG Council President of Markham, Willie Simbisi. Mr Simbisi is also the deputy Morobe Governor and a member of Grow PNG's Advisory Council.

Mr Foxe ended his speech in the Tok Pisin language. "Mi hamamas long stap wantaim yupela tete. Em bikpela samting mipela wokim nau long Grow PNG wantaim Land Access Working Group ikamapim dispela buk. Em soim wanem ol rot yumi iken bihainim long surukim wok blong graun na toktok namel long ol papagraun, bisnis na gavaman."

("I am pleased to be with everyone today. It is an important event to celebrate the work of Grow PNG and the Land Access Working Group for the development of the Guide. The guide sets the pathway for the people of Markham to follow, if and where there is interest to develop the land. It also provides proper negotiation process between land owners, Investors as well as the Government.)

Government departments and agencies such as the Department of Lands and Physical Planning, Department of Agriculture and Livestock and Investment Promotion Authority were involved in the development of the Guide along with large agribusinesses such as Trukai Industries Limited, NKW Fresh, Agmark, farmer groups and cooperatives.

Social Environmental Research and Consultancy Services Ltd (SERACS) was engaged to develop the Guide, which was produced after much consultation and review by the Land Access Working Group and Grow PNG team.

Australia continues agri investment

Markham is a district with the potential for agricultural development. This district and surrounding districts in Morobe are home to all of PNG's sugar industry and increasing share of PNG's largest agricultural export industry, oil palm.

The area is also a rapidly increasing source of cocoa and for fresh produce, which benefits from road linkages to PNG consumers in the Highlands, Morobe and Madang regions, and by port to the Sepik, New Guinea Islands and Southern regions.

“For these reasons, the region is a focus for an Australian funded investment in fostering agricultural development through collaboration with industry, hence the establishment of Grow PNG.”

Australian Consul-General, Lae, Mark Foxe made these remarks in his keynote speech at the launching of the Guide.

Mr Foxe presented the [Guide](#) (Volume 1 of three documents) and [Appendices](#) to the guide (Volume 2), which contains samples of relevant government forms to the Markham Member of Parliament Koni Iguan.

He said the Government of Australia through the Papua New Guinea-Australia Comprehensive Strategic and

Economic Partnership is committed to continuing its cooperation on agriculture, food and water security; and to improve nutrition and promote agricultural trade.

Grow PNG is funded by Australia through an arrangement whereby oversight is provided by Grow Asia under the World Economic Forum, an organization that pursues synergies in private sector collaboration towards agricultural development.

The organization has been operating in PNG since May 2019, until recently led by Ivan Pomaleu, now Secretary of PM & NEC. In its start-up phase, the area for operations has been defined as the Markham Valley, because of the high number of agribusinesses operating in the region (New Britain Palm Oil Limited (Ramu Agri Industries), Mainland, Trukai.

In 2020 and with the support of the Markham Students and Staff Association of the PNG University of Technology, Grow PNG initiated a [Baseline Household Income Survey](#) for Markham district.

Grow PNG's main objective of the survey was to appreciate and understand the incomes and problems of small-scale agricultural producers in the valley. Information will assist Grow PNG in engaging and building partnerships with agribusinesses, farmers, government agencies and other stakeholders and is of use to PNG Government officials, such as Markham District, for their own planning.



Any organisation is welcome to become a partner of Grow PNG and its Working Groups. Partners are expected to have an interest in the country and agriculture, a commitment to supporting smallholders and rural development and an openness to partner with other organisations in a pre-competitive space.



Member for Markham, Koni Iguan.

MP stresses on importance of effective partnerships

Any agribusiness investors interested to work with customary landowners in Markham District must involve the district government authorities at the initial stage of land development negotiations.

This is to avoid future disputes that could lead to many years of legal battle, costs to both parties and to secure the agribusinesses investments.

Markham MP Koni Iguan made these statements while sharing some past experiences of land access arrangements.

He said agriculture investors are bypassing the Markham district public service officers and are negotiating directly with the customary landowners.

“Such practices have resulted in land disputes and eventually court cases that takes a long time to be resolved.

“Currently district officers are involved in the process of settling some of the land disputes.

“Public service officers from the districts office are not usually aware of what is happening on the land hence, they do not have record of who is coming into partnership with which customary landowner group or a farmer group, and through what partnership arrangements. On the other hand, with respect to the district officers, the reason why the agribusinesses are not consulting the district authority offices responsible is because of the lack of efficiency and consistency in the required public services,” Mr Iguan said

He said a good example of land dispute causing a project to halt is the Hamama Rice project land dispute.

“The Hamamas Rice project was an investment between a large agribusiness and a farmer group in Markham, however the Hamamas rice brand is no longer selling on the shop shelves,” Mr Iguan said.

He said it is important that agribusinesses work with the district office first before going onto establishing any partnership agreement deals with customary land owners.

He encouraged everyone to use the Land Access Guide including the people and the Markham Administration team and work with the Grow PNG Land Access Working Group on where collaboration can be made to improve land access and agribusiness investments.



From top to bottom:

1. Singing group leading the guests.
2. Mr Foxe presenting the guide to Mr Iguan.
3. Grow PNG's Working Group Coordinator, Ruthy Kusak in a news interview with EMTV.
- 4-6. Farmers getting information from Trukai, Ramu Agri and PNG Biomass.

Farmers encouraged to use Guide in land negotiations

The Land Access Guide is a tool that can be used to increase landowner participation in economic development said Onga-Waffa local level government (LLG) president for Markham Willie Simbisi.

Mr Simbisi who is also the deputy governor of Morobe province said customary land owners through the guide can be in a position to properly organize themselves and enter into an arrangement with investors in the agribusiness space to realize the agricultural potential of their land.

“Many small holder farmers and clan groups within customary land owners in Markham District who own the land will have access to this guide which will help them in their internal clan negotiations and communications on how best to put their customary land to productive use.

“This event that brings us together today makes me happy in a special way as this marks a milestone achievement for Grow PNG in bringing together business leaders, policy makers and farmers to collaboratively unlock growth in the Agriculture sector and to facilitate new opportunities for farming families in the Markham valley,” Mr Simbisi said.

He said Markham Valley was once claimed by our founding Prime Minister and Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare as the ‘food bowl’ of Papua New Guinea and I believe with this guide, it will be a dream come true.

He said regardless of the challenges being faced in Markham district in relation to land issues, the Guide is a way forward to increase indigenous participation in the economy and give greater attention to rural and village development and self-reliance. He said these strategic pillars are underpinned in the PNG Vision 2050 and that is Human Capital Development, Gender, Youth and People Empowerment, Wealth Creation and Goal Area 4 of the Morobe Kundu Vision 2048 which also aims at making communities

become self-reliant, self-contained, self-supporting and self-financing.

“I see the Land Access Guide as a tool or mechanism that can be used to implement these strategic pillars in a holistic approach through working in partnership with the wards, LLGs, Markham district, and Morobe provincial government, government sectors, private sectors and NGOs. I support the enforcement of the Guide produced by Grow PNG, which will undoubtedly have a positive impact in the rural communities of Markham district,” Mr Simbisi.

He thanked Grow PNG for the great initiative and encouraged stakeholders in the agricultural sector and agribusiness to continue to support Grow PNG in its programs and continue to drive the development agenda in the district.

Women in agriculture representative, Maria Linibi who also spoke at the occasion in her supporting remarks said the Guide will guide the land owners, farmer group leaders and cooperative society directors on the right path.

“Land owners will now know the right person to talk to for example, agribusiness or an interested investor,” said Mrs Linibi, president of PNG Women in Agriculture Foundation.

She said some land owners have been misled when linking up with an investor or misled into wrong partnership deals which have led to so many failed agribusiness projects and partnerships deals in Markham Valley.

All IPA legislative procedures and processes published in the Guide are aligned to the PNG Company Act.” - Investment Promotion Authority Managing Director, Clarence Hoot.



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

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