

Malinda Marvin

“Degree or not, land is Life”

Over 10 years in the sale and aggregation of fresh produce

“Women should not limit themselves because of their educational background when it comes to agriculture. Degree or no degree, we have land to create many opportunities.” This is a bold statement by Malinda Marvin, a rural water and sanitation engineer in Papua New Guinea. Malinda has been involved in the sale and aggregation of fresh produce for over a decade now.



Early career progress

From Anumba village in Okapa District of Eastern Highlands, this soft-spoken lady spent her childhood watching her grandmother tend to their land. Malinda's grandmother taught her extensively about the land, covering topics such as seed and soil identification, weather prediction, as well as planting and weeding skills.

Malinda graduated from [Divine Word University](#) in 2006 and joined the Salvation Army Social Services as a community development trainer. She later joined mining company [Barrick Gold](#) as an Environment Officer. Between 2009 and 2014 she was contracted to [Live and Learn Environment Education \(LLEE\)](#), an international NGO, as their Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Engineer. She left and worked for Oxfam for a year. In between she provided consultancy services where fitting.

She also worked extra jobs on the side – freighting fresh vegetables and fruits to K-Mart (a local supermarket in Kimbe), Super Value Stores (SVS) in Lae, Vanimo and Port Moresby between 2010 and 2012.

Starting her own business

Malinda returned home to Goroka in 2018. She took a leap of faith and started her own company, Foya Fresh Produce, and started farming crops such as zucchini, french beans, capsicum and tomatoes. Excitingly, Malinda had the opportunity to begin supplying crops to two tertiary institutions. She also saw the opportunity to assist other subsistence farmers, so she worked as a middle-man – this time purchasing cauliflower, broccoli and capsicum from farmers in Mul-Baiyer in the Western Highlands and other vegetables like tomatoes, cabbages, carrot in Goroka to meet her buyers' demands.

As a farmer, Malinda wants the government to address the limitations many smallholder farmers and aggregators like herself face, especially in rural PNG. She also advocates for the government to secure international markets, subsidized freight costs, and converts the 97% of customary land in the country to semi-commercial and commercial farming land where farmers can scale up to make better use of specialized farming skills.

Diversifying into mushroom farming

With her core business established, Malinda enquired at Juncao Mushroom Centre, a mushroom tuber-producing center managed by the EASTERN Highlands Provincial Natural Resources Division in partnership with the Chinese Government in Goroka. She received in-depth training on planting, nurturing, handling, and storing mushrooms. Fresh from her training, she planted 600 tubers of mushrooms and has since started supplying locals and restaurants in Goroka.

Hopes and dreams for the future

Malinda's dream is to use her experience as a farmer and fresh produce supplier to set up a storage and supply hub that receives produce from farmers and delivers it to bigger markets.

"My other ambition is in specialized organic farming, working with farmers to grow and supply specific organic produce to the markets within PNG and export around the world. Providing consistent market opportunities for specialized farmed crops will keep every villager busy on their land. They will happily toil the land knowing the products have a market that is readily available. With my level of qualification and experience, I am adamant to make this work, so we don't lose the value of our land in front of our children. As our land is our life and this principle must be alive in our lives and passed on."



Malinda farms zucchini, capsicum, and tomatoes among other