



# 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 valley.

SECOND QUARTER 2021

## Grow PNG welcomes new Executive Director

Grow PNG is pleased to announce that John Simango is the new Executive Director for Papua New Guinea.

Mr Simango comes from a development background, having extensive experience as an advisor and consultant working with various Australian Government programs over the last 15 years. He has also worked in mining, banking and fast-moving consumer goods companies.

In his first official stakeholder engagement, he participated in a Food Systems Summit Dialogue held on May 13.

Mr Simango said, Grow PNG was thrilled to participate in the Food Systems Summit dialogue facilitated by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nation, and the Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) as the national convener, and supported by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The event, one of few critical ones before the national dialogue later this year was well attended virtually, and physically by sub-national partners, from parts of Momase and Highlands.

“Grow PNG as a partner in facilitating Sustainable Agriculture, is encouraged to see government and FAO conducting this dialogue in an all-inclusive manner to include the voice of farmers, small holders, agribusinesses, civil society partners, gender, and youth. There is a need to also include the disability, marginalized and disadvantage groups,” Mr Simango said.

He commended the government and FAO in developing an all-inclusive national pathway towards a sustainable food system for PNG as it delivers on achieving the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals.

Grow PNG has its footprint in the Markham valley, one of the biggest potential food bowls in the country. Its purpose is to provide a platform to facilitate engagement of investors in the agribusiness, engaging farmers, smallholders, government and other important stakeholders within the food supply chain.



**Mr John Simango**  
**Executive Director**



## New Executive Director highlights achievements and outlines future plans

Grow PNG accomplished several important workstreams aligned to its vision in 2020. These included the development of a Land Access Guide launched in February 2021; establishment of the Grow PNG Advisory Council; and establishment of the SME Working Group; conducted the Household Income Baseline Survey for Markham District and organized and hosted three learning events.

Grow PNG's new Executive Director, John Simango said Grow PNG had to adjust to the challenges brought on by the pandemic to continue to deliver important projects.

"We had to review our work strategy to ensure continued progress in our mission. It is important to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on farming and understand the extent of disruptions put upon the supply chain. Priority issues such as food security and sustainability of the country's food supply chain requires collaboration between stakeholders in the agriculture sector and at different levels of government.

"Looking forward, we are increasing our investment into activities that will specifically target the female population in the Markham valley and provide support for women who depend on agriculture for their income.

We intend to identify and document examples of existing gender inclusion practices and for these case studies to be disseminated among partners and encouraging greater attention to gender inclusion. We will also continue to support our Working Groups, particularly a key activity being the roll out of the awareness of the Land Access Guide.

"Improving the livelihoods of farmers in the Markham region by 20% remains our focus. It is a tall order but a goal that can be achieved by engaging different levels of stakeholders – farmers, community, agribusinesses and government," Mr Simango said.

The Markham region plays an important role in shaping the national agenda on food security and industrial growth associated with an agriculture-based employment generation.

Grow PNG is looking forward to establishing this agenda through some of the work it has already done such as soil sampling, household income survey, land access consultation, and land access guide.

These insights will help us evaluate the valley's potential contribution to agriculture growth in Papua New Guinea," Mr Simango said.



*Grow PNG and Hore Agricultural Suppliers*



*Land Access Working Group Meeting*



*Food Systems Summit Dialogue*



## Strengthening District Partnership

Grow PNG team met with Markham District Administrator Bohage Bebinaso and Member of Parliament (MP) Koni Iguan and had a discussion about agriculture development in the Markham valley.

The team led by Executive Director John Simango visited the district headquarters at Mutzing on May 26. The meeting was critical to continue strengthening the on-going partnership and work Grow PNG is doing in bringing partners together to unlock the Markham valley for potential agribusiness investments and development.

Markham MP Iguan thanked Grow PNG for providing the platform to connect farmers, agribusiness and markets.

**“It is important for partners to inform and involve the district on what they are doing in the valley, so that the district leadership and government continues to support and complement their efforts,” he said.**

Land access, agriculture SME growth and cooperative societies participation in the food supply chain were the main discussion topics.

MP Iguan said there are registered land groups which the district administration supported through identification and registration that are now ready to participate in any agriculture investments.

District administrator Mr Bebinaso said it is important to ensure proper connection is made with farmers and potential investors in the country and abroad to develop the massive Markham valley land.

A Land Access Guide was developed by Grow PNG's Land Access Working Group in partnership with PNG Lands Department, government agencies, private sector partners and landowners. The guide aims to ensure ease of access for land for agriculture opportunities within the valley.

An SME Working Group has been established and focuses on developing agriculture SMEs and cooperatives. Its work will complement the district agriculture and economic plans.

Mr Simango said strong and transparent partnerships is important in agriculture development.

“Grow PNG is a partner who understands the importance of partnership and ensures the partnership landscape is properly networked to achieve successful farmers and agribusiness outcomes. Stronger partnerships and increased trust between civil society, government, agribusiness, and farmers is key to improving income for the rural farmers and will ensure an improved livelihood.

“District leadership and government partnership through ongoing dialogue, engagement and involvement is critical to create an enabling agribusiness growth environment,” he said.



*Mr Simango, MP Iguan (Centre) and Mr. Bebinaso*



## Private sector Partnership



LCCI President, Mr. Byrne (Left )and Mr.Simango

Lae in Morobe province is the industrial Hub of Papua New Guinea .The city has a vibrant commercial sector involving importing, exporting, manufacturing, re-packing and transportation services to the highlands province and throughout the country

This is where industry and business coverage ,problems emerge and possible solutions found.

Lae Chamber of Commerce (LCC Inc) provides a key platform in raising the voice of private sector in the Morobe Province.

Importantly, it also provides that platform for connectivity of the private sector and farmers .

Grow PNG provides a similar platform in connecting farmers ,agribusiness ,investors and markets.

Grow PNG's Executive Director, John Simango met with Lae Chamber of Commerce President, John Byrne, on June 3 to discuss ways to encourage growth of the sector, especially connecting farmers to agribusiness ,investments ,and markets within PNG and Overseas

“Grow PNG Land Access Working Group ,and SME Working Group are the key levers for farmers to connect with the private sector partners to grow the economy .

“We will continue to dialogue with Mr Byrne and his team so we ensure the private sector in Lae and Morobe province is effectively networked to achieve successful outcomes for farmers and agribusinesses. Ultimately, ensuring stronger partnerships and increased trust between private sector and farmers including civil society, government, agribusiness. This is key to improving income for the rural farmers households to ensure an improved livelihood,” Mr.Simango said.

Partnership at the leadership level between such key business body as LCCI and Grow PNG is critical to create an enabling agribusiness growth environment .



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## PNG-Australia Partnership Program –Markham valley Economic Corridor



*From Left: Mr John Simango, Mr Mark Foxe, MP Koni Iguan (centre) Mrs Veronica Waffi and Mr Bohage Bebinaso.*

Australian Consul-General, Lae, Mr Mark Foxe and Mr John Simango ,Executive Director Grow PNG visited Hon Koni Iguan MP Markham, and his district team, headed by DDA CEO Mr Bohage Bebinaso at Mutzing district headquarter on June 21.

The visit was to consolidate the support by the Australian Government to the district. The soon to be open district hospital was a superb building, funded by the tax payer of Australia. The team inspected the facility and was impressed with the soon to be completed health facility.

Grow PNG is also another Australian Government funded program that supports the district in Agriculture Investments, and works within the food supply chain connecting farmers of Markham valley to the markets.

The meeting held between the partners agreed to align their plans to work together. Hon Koni Iguan MP made an undertaking to share his district's plan so the partners will discuss the alignment in a follow-up meeting in the coming weeks.

Grow PNG has more recently, through its working group, completed a Land Access Guide that will now be delivered as a training program in coming months to the Integrated Land Groups, and others who are willing to provide their land for agriculture and livestock development. This will be followed by micro small and medium agribusiness training and capacity building.

Further work in engaging agribusinesses to develop certain crops and livestock in a focused manner is also underway. Inclusive to our work is a gender mainstreaming workshop which is also planned in the coming months.





## Asean food systems need transformation

[Asean food systems need transformation | The Manila Times](https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/06/17/business/agribusiness/asean-food-systems-need-transformation/1803539)

The Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) recently hosted a dialogue aimed at making the region's food systems stronger and more sustainable.

Results of the "Breaking Silos: Transforming Agricultural Education and Research toward Sustainable Food Systems in Southeast Asia" dialogue will be used to inform the first-ever United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in New York this September, Searca director Glenn Gregorio said.

Noting that food systems were still recovering from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Gregorio said the May 18, 2021 gathering brought together 56 participants in three discussion sessions.

"The dialogue discussed the transformations needed in education and research for higher education institutions in the region to establish the future direction for food systems and accelerate collective action to this end," he added.

At the upcoming UNFSS, inputs from all over the world will be used to identify sustainable solutions for the future of food.

David Nabarro, strategic director of the Food Systems Summit Dialogues Support Team, said "individual and collective actions are significant to build a future of food that is sustainable and equitable."

Agnes Kalibata, the UN Secretary General's special envoy for the 2021 UNFSS, told the dialogue that the world's food systems were valuable instruments of change as they touch every aspect of human existence.

"Food is powerful. The food we eat brings us together as families, as communities, and as nations. It underpins our cultures, our economies, and our relationship with the natural world," Kalibata said.

Gregorio said the dialogue covered a diverse array of perspectives, including those of the academe, government, agro-industry, farmer groups, and the youth, to draw out new knowledge, research findings, and policies in agricultural higher education that are needed in the next decade.

Read more <https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/06/17/business/agribusiness/asean-food-systems-need-transformation/1803539>

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

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