

# Edith Babul

'Mama Guava of Munum'

**20 years**  
Fieldwork under her belt

**5 hectares**  
of land to care for

Edith Babul is no stranger to farming. On her fruit farm, Edith grows Hybrid Indian Guava, Abiu (Pouteria Caimito), Custard Apple, Chocolate Fruit (Black Sapote), Soursop, and citrus fruit. She also rears chickens, ducks, and pigs, and has dreams of leaving her farm under her daughter's management as she takes up another adventure in farming overseas.



## Dreams of guava farming

Edith's journey in farming began in 2001, the year she first tried her hand at harvesting. One day, she set up shop at Lae Market, with two boxes and one bilum full of Indian Guava. While she was hopeful to sell her fruit, she couldn't believe her luck after receiving K350 within a few minutes of being at the market. That same day she told her husband "Someday, I will resign from work and go into full time guava farming."

Seven years later, Edith received a call from the Morobe [Women in Agriculture](#) team, with an invitation to attend training at the prestigious [National Agriculture Research Institute \(NARI\)](#), hosted by members from Australian Women in Agriculture. Without this training, Edith may never have quit her day job and moved into agriculture full time. She quit her job the next year and hasn't looked back.

It was all uphill from there, after Edith was selected for a scholarship in Queensland, Australia, that changed the trajectory of her farming career.

"After resigning in 2008, I stayed in my village of Munum and tended to my farm. In 2009, NARI worked with Australian Women in Agriculture to send farmers from Papua New Guinea to Australia for training, and I was one of them. I trained in Australia from 2011 until 2013."

## Hard work and a little bit of luck

Edith's hard work coupled with a little bit of luck meant she was selected to attend a workshop that taught her new farming methods and the confidence to apply what she had learned. "I was one of the lucky recipients of this scholarship that saw 10 of us selected to attend a three- and half-month course at TAFE Queensland. The training opened my eyes to different farming methods, and I got to learn about budding, grafting, marcotting, and pest management."



Mama Guava and a sweet Abiu fruit



Edith selling her fruit at the market

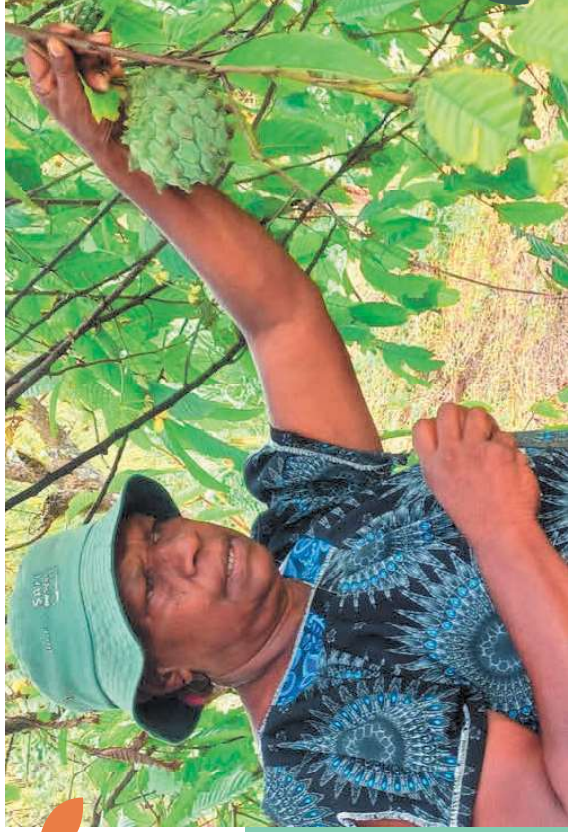
## 10,000 trees and counting

Edith has 10,000 fruit trees on her farm and is eager to expand, but she needs to raise more money to finance the expansion. Indian Guava trees are no longer rare to come by, as these trees have been planted by many other farmers in the years since her first trip to the market. This doesn't stop Edith from selling, but only motivates her to dream bigger!

## Training the next generation of farmers

As part of her fundraising activities, Edith charges different fees for groups that want to visit her farm. "For every visit, and knowledge shared on the farm, I try my best to make money so I can pay for my staff."

Edith has two employees and often employs students who wish to earn some pocket money during their school holidays. She pays a small sum for them, just to make them happy, and built a small bungalow for the students to stay overnight.



Edith and a custard apple. Custard apples are creamy and sweet.

Other streams of income for Edith come from growing *abika* (*abelmoschus manihot*), also known as spinach, taro, banana, pawpaw (Papaya), and yam, and the hosting of any Christmas parties or get-togethers for local companies who envision some quiet time away from the city. "They can come, pay their fees and we prepare the lawn and barbeque for them."



A bungalow that students use during school holidays

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**Next time you're in Lae, and would like to visit Mama Guava, give her a call before you drive down to her block!**