

New executive director highlights achievements and outlines future plans

Grow PNG accomplished several important workstreams aligned to its vision in 2020. These include the development of a Land Access Guide launched in February 2021; establishment of the Grow PNG Advisory Council; 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 to earn an 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, 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 through 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 the 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.

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.

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