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Vital partnership with Fresh Produce Development Agency grows

Papua New Guinea's successful landowner catering company, PNG Mining and Petroleum Hospitality Services (PNGMPHS) has joined partnership with Santos and the Fresh Produce Development Agency (FPDA) to continue to improve livelihoods through sustainable agriculture business opportunities.

The PNGMPHS will help train communities in the Moran and Kutubu areas of the Southern Highlands to learn different vegetable and fruit farming skills and methods, including quality control, harvesting, packaging and marketing skills.

Santos Executive Vice President and Co-Head PNG, Leon Buskens, said the innovative project builds on existing agriculture programs, aimed at mitigating the lack of fresh vegetable and fruit value chain within communities in the Santos project impact areas.

"The communities have shown great interest in the initiative based on the number of farmer registrations," Mr Buskens said.

"We are now looking forward to the next phase which includes the construction of model farms in the identified communities of Moran and Kutubu.

"Santos is committed to creating positive and long-term impacts in the communities where we live and work, and we thank the FPDA and PNGMPHS for their commitment and valuable support which will help build economic resilience, food security and improve nutrition in our communities."

Since January this year, the FPDA project team together with the company's Sustainable Development and Community Affairs departments have been visiting the Moran communities of Kaipu, Baguale and Kegero and Kutubu communities; Soro, Inu, Waro, Man, Daka and Hegiso to raise community awareness and register interested people.

Through these engagements, the project team were able to gather views from local farmers on the types of crops to plant and the resources they had. Meetings and interviews were attended by mostly women and youth.

Santos has invested more than K3 million in the sustainable commercial agriculture project which is now being accelerated as COVID restrictions ease. FPDA is committed and will deliver under the partnership agreement.

Background

Santos, formerly Oil Search Limited, signed the MOU with FPDA in November 2020 to improve the livelihoods of the impacted communities in the project area. The partnership was supported with a budget of over K3 million to address the challenges of farming while creating opportunities for the impacted communities.

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This was after the Oil Search Socio-Economic Baseline report in 2018 which identified agriculture as the most preferred alternative livelihood activity for the people in Moran, Kutubu and Hides and Upper Kikori Communities.

The study highlighted some specific challenges relating to commercial agriculture in the Moran, Kutubu areas, including the lack of community knowledge, logistics, market access financial literacy, business skills and technologies for commercial agriculture expectations in terms of vegetable and fruit quantity and quality.

From the interviews conducted at Moran, crops proposed included sweet potato, broccoli, bulb onions, English cabbage, carrot, Irish potato, and zucchini. For Kutubu communities, crops suitable for low-land farming were identified including pineapple, banana, Chinese cabbage, English cabbage, corn, sweet potato, eggplant, capsicum, cucumber, and beans.

Ends.