



LOCAL

# Training inspires SI farmers and exporters to improve cocoa quality

FARMERS and exporters attending a training with international cocoa buyers visiting the Solomon Islands are now determined to produce better quality cocoa for the specialty chocolate market.

Organised by the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Programme, the training was held on Thursday, October 20 at the Commodities Export Marketing Authority facilities in Honiara with about 30 farmers and exporters in attendance.

In their presentation, French chocolate maker Raoul

Bou langer and buyer Mathieu Bours of Le Cercle du Cacao in Belgium helped participants understand the value of good quality cocoa to premium chocolate makers.

They emphasised the importance of harvesting, fermenting and drying cocoa beans away from smoke so as to avoid the smoky taint usually associated with beans sourced from Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

"It is important to know which country, region, province and village the cocoa has come from because the story is important to

us. You can sell bad beans once but you can sell good beans for a long time," said Mr Bours.

Island Cacao Chocolate owner Martyn O'Dare from the UK told the farmers their role is crucial as they are the first part of the chain building up to quality chocolate production.

"You are the start of the chain. We know you can grow really good cocoa and it is imperative for us to have good flavours," he said.

Simon Mannie, a representative of KTC Cocoa Exporters in SI said the training made a big difference to the

farmers who are now better informed about producing quality cocoa and the potential of the niche chocolate market.

"Based on the resources we have in people of this calibre, and given our agricultural background, we now know exactly what needs to be done to produce quality cocoa that can enable us to enter the niche market. We can't compete in the bulk market, as we don't have the volume, but we're looking towards producing quality products that meet the market demand. That's the direction we're heading in," he said.

Cathliro representative Ijeoma Behulu lauded the PHAMA Programme's efforts to link buyers to farmers and exporters.

"It is very important and helpful to us, especially as a developing country, that PHAMA can link us with the global buyers, because obviously we can't do it alone. I've only known about the bulk market, but now I know that there are other markets available. They demand good cocoa, which we can provide, so we're definitely going to separate the cocoa beans and supply quality cocoa to the niche market."

S&K Brothers Cocoa Exporters representatives echoed similar compliments.

"Today's training is very new and important to us. We got a lot of information today, and we want to shift (our focus) and try our best to get into this specialty cocoa market. Looking at what we have now, we are capable and we will return to our farms and start to implement what we've learnt."

The training marks the end of a 3-week trade visit organised by PHAMA which took the buyers to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

## Arnavon Conservation rangers undergo housekeeping training

OVER the weekend, the turtle conservation rangers at Arnavon Island underwent a Hospitality, Food/ Beverage and housekeeping training organised by Mrs Marina and Mrs Dilly Maezama, who are local experts and trainers in this sector.

The training was part of the organisation's strategy in empowering its rangers as referred to "the heart of the project" and in turn raise their standard of performance in the region.

Topics covered during the training were, Quality Customer Service, Office/Front Office, Reservation, Meet and Greet, Basic Communication skills, Cross Cultural Issues, Problem Solving, Checking the guests, Personal Grooming & Hygiene Housekeeping, quality customer service., Preparing of Basic Menu Plan, Housekeeping, Food & Beverage.

The activity was held at Kerehikapa research station at Arnavon Island group from October 19 - 20, 2016.

It was timely for this training to be hosted at the operational level as it will add value to the increasing number of guests coming to this unique island, where you will experience nature at its best and a flagship site in conservation in Solomon Islands.

In an interview, Mr Dickson Motui stated that this training has given the rangers insight on how they should perform when they have guest on site.

He continues to say that there were a lot of experiences they had with guests on things that they have learnt from the past two days and it is very promising for the rangers as they will explore their potentials in this sector.

The monthly supervisor for Kerehikapa station Mr Francis Routanis is very optimistic at the end of the training that his rangers can now perform high standard customer service to our guests and partners who may come to the islands in the near future.

It was understood the organisation is utilising its local personnel in carrying out specific activities as and when it is required.

The project coordinator is very positive with this strategy as it will bring empowerment to the locals and bring sense of belonging to this current conservation effort at the Arnavon Islands.

---ACMCA PRESS



Mrs Dilly Maezama during theory session at Arnavon Islands \_ by ACMCA



Mr Dickson Motui during housekeeping practical at Arnavn guest house by ACMCA



Preparing of dining table \_ Francis and Dickson at Arnavon Islands by ACMCA