



A SPECIAL BUSINESS REPORT

FORGING AHEAD

HOW PNG HAS BECOME A MANUFACTURING SUCCESS

Whichever way you look at it, Papua New Guinea's manufacturing sector is in good shape with homemade and homegrown products. They come in many forms and shapes, whether it's construction material from Monier, beer from SP Brewery, chocolates from Queen Emma, kit homes from Atlas Steel, food products from Paradise Foods or rice from Trukai.

On these pages we celebrate some of the companies and individuals who have made the moniker of 'Made in PNG' something to be proud of.

We speak to many involved in the sector, including Jerry Kapka from Kongo Coffee, who says a lot of his success lies with smallholder farmers who supply him with high-quality coffee beans, and to George Constantinou, the CEO of Monier, who praises his hard-working staff and management.

Murray Woo, the Chairman of the Manufacturers Council of PNG, says a lot of products now carry the 'PNG Made' logo.

"The logo is only available to all financially paid members (of the Manufacturers Council). The biggest thing about 'PNG Made', it's well-known, it's well-accepted, and we have very good feedback from it," he says.

"We need to continuously make the case for people choosing a PNG-made product over an imported

product. To ensure that our consumers' trust in 'PNG Made' is well placed, the council has also ramped up its monitoring of our member's operations and practices to ensure that all goods carrying the logo are made in compliance with the rules and standards that underpin consumer safety."

He says that tariff reforms that were introduced in 2017 have created more employment and given local consumers and businesses more options to buy PNG-made goods.

The Manufacturers Council has seen an increase in membership numbers in the manufacturing of food and beverages such as cordial, soft drinks and boutique alcohol products. There is also an increase in membership from the construction industry.

Successful manufacturing also relies on a healthy retail and distribution network to feed products into, and this is now better than ever, he says. ■



PICTURE: MORGAN ROBERTS

Chairman of the Manufacturers Council of PNG, Murray Woo (left); PNG beers from SP Brewery (top right); coffee beans from the Highlands (second right); Paradise Foods (third right); at work at Monier (fourth right); PNG-made goods off the shelf in Port Moresby.





A GROWING ENTERPRISE

Mary Tao reports on a farming enterprise that is supplying major shops and hotels in Port Moresby with fruit and vegetables.

The 9 Mile Farm has become Port Moresby's biggest supplier of fruit and vegetables over the past 12 years. The six-hectare farm is growing 24 types of crops, and its production of over 20 tonnes per week has allowed it to penetrate 80 per cent of the capital city's market. Major shops, hotels and catering companies are the farm's main clients.

The farm also supplies to Lae and to outer centres like Kokopo and Manus. It is the only farming operation in the country to acquire the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) certification, confirming food safety from farm to fork.

The 9 Mile Farm is one of 10 brands under Innovative Agro Industry (IAI), a subsidiary



9 Mile Farm's Reth Natividad says there are plans to expand into international markets.

under global project development company LR Group. IAI has been headed by chairman and executive director Ilan Weiss since its inception in 2011.

Behind the 9 Mile Farm's production are its 235 employees, who receive regular training on sustainable farming techniques and general skills. "The company is committed to the local community by actively engaging in the employment of PNG nationals, thereby

contributing to job creation, community support and overall economic growth," says sales and marketing manager, Reth Natividad.

Plans to export the farm's produce are underway. "The farm aims to expand its horizon by venturing into international markets (including Fiji and Micronesia), exploring new opportunities, and diversifying its agricultural portfolio on a global scale," says Natividad. ■

SMALL WONDERS

Smallholder farms are the key to success for Kongo Coffee, Paul Chai reports.

Focusing on small, premium-quality coffee producers may come with some challenges, but it is also the secret to the success of Kongo Coffee.

Kongo Coffee sources its beans from over 100 smallhold farmers, some of whom produce beans at the highest altitudes in Papua New Guinea.

"Coffee produced in the higher altitudes takes longer to develop and it concentrates the quality and the flavours," says Jerry Kapka, Managing Director of Kongo Coffee.



Kongo Coffee's Jerry Kapka says the best coffee is grown at the highest altitudes in PNG.

"The higher the altitude, the better the coffee."

But Kapka readily admits that with such a geographically diverse collection of coffee farms comes some challenges.

"The main problem we have is transport, the quality of the roads is an issue, and we have issues with people trying to move

their coffee to market," Kapka says. "The international demand is there, the market is there but sometimes we have supply problems."

Based in Simbu Province, PNG's third-largest coffee-producing region, Kongo has an annual coffee production of around 120,000 bags or 7200 tonnes.

Kongo is constantly looking to stay ahead of not only the inherent challenges but also the competition, so it has been making constant improvements to the coffee production process.

The focus for improvement has been to lift the quality of the green beans, which are the backbone of Kongo's export business, by upgrading factory equipment.

Kongo Coffee is also a champion of the local community, working to continuously train farmers but also address social and economic issues in the villages in which it does business. ■





A CRACKER OF A CELEBRATION

Paradise Foods has celebrated 90 years in business with the release of a new flavour in its range of crackers.

Paradise Foods has marked its 90th anniversary with the launch of a limited-edition cracker flavour called EmNau Mumu Pik. The flavour is only available in stores for five months from its launch date last October.

The inspiration behind Mumu Pik is the tradition of highlands-style mumu preparation, combining the savoury goodness of pork with a selection of carefully chosen spices.

The company's research and development department dedicated two years to perfecting the flavour through sensory activities conducted among Paradise Foods employees and external EmNau consumers.

The company says the flavour captures the essence of a cherished family gathering.

The launch follows the success of previous product innovations, including the EmNau Beef and Onion biscuit in 2019, marking the rebranding of EmNau into the 85g packet. Subsequent new product developments introduced Choc Chip Cookies in 2020, Smart Start Breakfast Biscuits 70g, and Kala Cookies in 2021.

In addition to the new flavour, Paradise Foods has made substantial investments in its production capabilities.

The company installed a state-of-the-art cracker-making line costing more than PGK60 million at its Malahang site in Lae late last year.

Michael Penrose, the Group Chief Executive Officer of Paradise Foods, expressed his enthusiasm for this new venture.

"We have expanded our distribution warehouse to cater for this uplift in production and are excited to have the new cracker line operating," he said.

The company has also implemented technological upgrades at its Taraka site to enhance the company's production efficiency and output. ■

A Paradise Foods worker shows off the new cracker range, which is available for a limited time.



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GOING WITH THE GRAIN

Paul Chai reports that Trukai has introduced training initiatives to help its rice growers.

Helping its trusted network of farmers to reach its potential is just one of the smart ways that Trukai remains the number one rice supplier in Papua New Guinea.

As the leading supplier for rice to PNG for over half a century, Trukai Industries knows that its key relationship is with its farmers. That is why the company introduced its Smart Farmer Program in 2022 in cooperation with the Papua New Guinea University of Technology in Lae.

The program is a short-term training initiative that helps them optimise their farming businesses.

Andrea Tagamasu, public relations and communication manager for Trukai, says that the program has been so successful that last year it was extended.

“We have helped 220 people so far from one university, so we were looking to expand the program,” says Tagamasu. “Recently we signed up with the Pacific Adventist University and we have had a lot of applicants coming from around the country and they have a lot of good things to say about the program.”

The product pillars of the group are the Trukai rice brand (the premium offering), the Roots brand for middle-income earners and the Wontok brand, set at a lower price point. The company employs over 100 people across PNG.

PICTURE: SUPPLIED BY TRUKAI



Trukai is the number one rice supplier in PNG.

“
Our agriculture team teaches people how to get more yield and how to grow rice in the most sustainable way.”

The Trukai team headed to the annual Morobe Show in October last year to showcase its sustainable practices, many of which underpin the Smart Farmer Program. It is a multifaceted approach to growing rice that looks at how to put nutrients back into the soil, how to manage cash flow while waiting for crops and complementary plantings like bananas and peanuts.

“We teach our smart farmers about all aspects of irrigated rice farming,” says Tagamasu. “Our agriculture team teaches people how to get more yield, they learn about pests, both good and bad, and how to grow the most rice in the most sustainable way.”

This sustainable way of working also forms part of the company’s corporate social responsibility. Trukai has long believed in giving back to the community through events like the Trukai annual fun run, which has been going for 20 years.

Tagamasu says it is this idea of giving back that has helped the rice producer weather what has been a challenging few years.

She says the key business issue at present is the increase in freight and storage charges.

“But it is the loyalty that the people have for our brand that has helped us stay the distance, many people have grown up eating Trukai rice and have been loyal to the brand over the years,” she says. ■



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HOME GROWN HOUSING

Carmel Pilotti reports on the rise of Atlas Steel as a major supplier of kit homes.

PICTURES: GODFREEMAN KAPTIGAU & SUPPLIED BY ATLAS STEEL



Atlas Steel started making kit homes in 2007 and has since become the premier supplier of prefabricated homes for Papua New Guineans, according to the company's branch manager Peter Browne.

PNG families, Browne says, make up most customers and they favour high-set homes because of the country's tropical climate.

The kit homes are built at factories in Lae and Port Moresby, with about 750 workers including engineers, draftspeople, builders and factory production workers manufacturing 10 to 20 homes monthly.

With a range of homes for varying family sizes, prices range from PGK45,000 up to PGK300,000 for four- to five-bedroom homes.

A major trend for aspiring homeowners in PNG is to buy land first and then to build a home afterwards. The prefab homes have proved to be an easy and affordable option, Browne says.

He says Atlas offers full service from building onsite to connecting to utilities.

"There are many hurdles to jump over and other uncertainties when building a home. We help you understand what these hurdles are, and we help you understand how to overcome.

"We are there for you for the whole journey and we are also there after you move in to help you with the upkeep of the home."

As an additional quality and value for money guarantee, Browne says Atlas homes come with durable steel frames, giving them a longer and maintenance-free life, being able to withstand fire, termites and the elements.

The lavish interiors are fitted with timber, with cabinetry done by Fletcher Morobe and glass from Quality Glass & Aluminium, keeping standards high with trusted suppliers. ■



“The prefab homes have proved to be an easy and affordable option.”



High-set homes are popular in the Atlas Steel range (above); an interior and a verandah of one of the homes (far left and left).





BUILDING CAPACITY IN LOCAL RICE FARMING & SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES IN PNG

Trukai Industries' Certificate in Irrigated Rice Farming is a program conducted under a five-year partnership with the PNG University of Technology's Agriculture Department and the Pacific Adventist University, under Trukai's Smart Farmer Program.

Established in 2022, the training has proudly certified more than 120 local rice farmers with plans to empower more than 1,000 farmers by the end of 2023.

Trukai has one of the most extensive agricultural programs, investing millions of kina in rice research, science, technology and development. Trukai continues to support local rice farmers by enhancing their rice cultivation skills, strengthening families, building communities and reaffirming our commitment to the people of PNG.





NATION BUILDING



Monier has been involved in some of the biggest building projects in PNG. Here, CEO George Constantinou gives an insight into the company that employs hundreds of Papua New Guineans and has an impeccable safety record.



Monier's CEO George Constantinou (top); the company has 364 staff members, some of them pictured (above).

Q Monier has quite an imprint in Papua New Guinea. When did the company start here and what does it manufacture?

A Monier Limited was established in PNG in 1958 and purchased for the Constantinou Group of Companies by the late Sir Theophilus (George) Constantinou in 2005. We offer a range of high-quality products to suit the commercial, industrial and domestic sectors. We are the largest producer of construction materials and building products in the country.

Q Which sections of the company are the biggest and busiest?

A The quarry and masonry sectors are the largest of our eight sectors. Our masonry products are made at our 9 Mile location with a variety of masonry block and paver options. Our Nebiri quarry is in the National Capital District, and we can produce more than one million tonnes of aggregate products annually

“
As a family-owned business, we have always taken a safety-first approach.
”

for a variety of purposes from ready-mix concrete to road aggregates.

Q Which major projects in Port Moresby has Monier been involved with?

A Some recent projects include aggregate supply to the LNG Project, the Japanese Embassy, the American Embassy, APEC Haus, Hilton Hotel, Airways Hotel and the Port Moresby Sewerage System Upgrading Project. We have also been fortunate to be

involved in the material supply for several road and airport projects around PNG such as the 9 Mile to Laloki Road reconstruction and the NADZAB Airport Redevelopment Project.

Q How many people are employed, and in what types of roles?

A Currently we have a total of 364 staff members and 96 per cent of our workforce is made up by nationals. All our line managers are nationals of PNG. Upskilling the national workforce is a founding principle of our company.

Q Recently you passed 700 days without an injury that has caused a staff member to take time off work. That's an impressive achievement in the construction industry – how was it achieved?

A This is not doable without the hard work of all staff and management ensuring that all safety procedures that are in place are adhered to. Having globally recognised international standard accreditations for health and safety management systems ensures that we uphold ourselves to a high standard. As a family-owned business, we have always taken a safety-first approach with all our businesses, and this has been a key priority for my family since day one.

Q Does the company have any plans that you can share?

A We have recently received a new mobile concrete batch plant in addition to our mobile laboratory testing and mobile crushing equipment. Mobile batching plants allow us to mix wherever the pour is required, ensuring quality, consistent concrete on-site. This will allow Monier to start producing concrete further away from our 6 Mile plant and offer our core services throughout PNG. ■



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