

INTRODUCTION

As a developing country with over 80% of the population living in rural areas, Papua New Guinea must depend on its rural industry for its survival, growth and prosperity.

Rich and powerful nations of today did not get there through some magical formula. They had to start from the beginning - and that means agriculture. Countries like America, Britain and Australia had their wheat, cattle and wool. In Papua New Guinea we have the three 'C's' - cocoa, coffee and copra - as our main agricultural products.

Cocoa was introduced into Papua New Guinea in 1905. It has taken nearly 80 years to become one of the country's main exports, and a source of financial revenue for many Papua New Guineans.

In the last financial year alone cocoa exports earned over 41 million kina for Papua New Guinea. Cocoa provided economic livelihood to people in eleven provinces - the North Solomons, East and West New Britain, New Ireland, Northern, Madang, East Sepik, Morobe, Manus, Milne Bay and Central Provinces.

Papua New Guinea cocoa makes up only a very small proportion of the world production. Therefore we still have room to increase production. Not only will this boost our export earnings, but also will involve more rural people in the cash economy, and establish a more solid base for further development.

So how do we increase our cocoa production and improve our product? I think the answer lies in research.

Without research we cannot hope to have the information needed to help us grow better cocoa, fight cocoa diseases and pests, develop better management practices, and so on.

The Cocoa Board recognises the importance of research in the development of the cocoa industry, and is treating it as one of its top priorities. It has employed two pathologists, one plant breeder, one spray application specialist and one economist. There are plans to recruit others.

Through these people, the board is working with other researchers in the Department of Primary Industry, the private sector, and overseas institutions to gather as much information as possible to help develop the cocoa industry in Papua New Guinea.

We can spend a lot of time, money and effort on research,

but this will be wasted unless the information is made available to interested people so that it may be used. It is therefore important that we make use of every outlet possible to publicise the results of the research.

I would like to congratulate HARVEST on its decision to publish this special issue on cocoa, which contains some of the more recently written articles about the industry. Some will be of practical use to growers; some are for general background information.

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Chairman

Cocoa Board of Papua New Guinea