

EAST NEW BRITAIN PROVINCE

By Fred Embi, Provincial Rural Development Officer

The overall climate in the area is typical of the New Guinea islands region, with north-west monsoon and south-east trades. The north-west monsoon season is between December and March, bringing rain and humidity. The south-east trades season is generally drier and occurs between May and October.

The average maximum temperature is 32°C and the average minimum is 23°C. The annual rainfall averages 2 234 mm, with an average number of wet days of 188.



Fred Embi

Fred Embi was appointed Provincial Rural Development Officer for the East New Britain Province in March, 1974. He has been with the Department of Primary Industry for about six years. He was born at Beporo in the Northern Province, educated at the Anglican Mission primary school and at the Matyrs' High School, and went to Vudal Agricultural College between 1968 and 1970. His first posting was to Laiagam, where he spent two years, then to Mendi for one year, where he became an associate PRDO, and was acting PRDO for a time, before his permanent appointment as PRDO Rabaul. Mr Embi is married with one son. His wife Notburga works as a sister at Nonga Hospital.

The total area of the province is 15 994 km². The area is generally mountainous. On the northern side are a few patches of flat swampy area covered by pitpit. The southern side is mountainous with deep valleys making cultivation difficult.

In the Gazelle Peninsula the soil is volcanic pumice with 10 cm of topsoil of a clayloam type. In the Baining area and towards the western border the soils are typical black soil ranging from 15 to 30 cm in some areas.

The vegetation is rainforest throughout the province with patches of flat pitpit swamp on the northern slopes and kunai patches on the southern side.

In the Gazelle Peninsula almost every bit of available land is cultivated for cash crops or subsistence gardening. There is a high population growth rate in this area. Mountain slopes and valleys are cultivated marginally.

In the Baining area and Pomio district the terrain is very rugged and difficult to cultivate especially in the Pomio area. With a smaller population in this area mountain slopes and valleys are rarely touched.

The Gazelle Peninsula is well covered by good road systems. The Pomio district is all mountainous and because there is less development in the area there are no road systems. On the northern side where logging activities are going on the logging company is building roads mainly for logging purposes.

There are five airstrips in the Rabaul district and three in the Pomio district. The area is well served by light aircraft. In the Rabaul area Powell Harbour is serviced by light aircraft twice daily, and Pomio strip has flights three days a week.

There is a good telephone system in the Gazelle Peninsula. Radios are installed at all outstations.

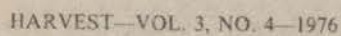
Transport is adequate in the province.

People

The population is estimated at 100 000. The total potential agricultural workforce, men and women, is estimated at 44 660.

The province is generally well served by government and mission hospitals, health centres and aidposts.

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The level of education is very high especially in the Gazelle Peninsula. The province has over 22 000 students at 102 community schools, 8 high schools, 3 teachers' colleges, 2 technical colleges and 5 vocational centres. The national diploma level agricultural college was established at Vudal in 1965. It caters for students from other South Pacific countries as well as Papua New Guinea.

There are 12 main language groups in the province. These are Kuanua, Baining, Butam, Makolkol, Nakanai, Mengen, Kol, So, Tomoip, Sulka, Mamusi and Mioko.

Most land disputes have been over alienated land and these have been influenced by political movements. With the government land acquisition scheme the problem has become better but there are still a few groups disputing over land.

There are five churches represented in the province. The Catholic and United Churches are the main influences and take part in agricultural activities and education.

There are about 30 self-help groups. The main ones are Tavakikil Group, the To Wartovo and To Waninara Groups, all farmers and traders, the Walmatki Group and the Poiniara Group, both cocoa processing groups, and the Ulagunan Correspondence School.

Political

There are four councils: the Gazelle Trust (tax rate men K4, women 50 t), the Greater Toma Council (men K16, women K4), the Lassul Bay Council (men K8, women K2), and the Warkurai Nigunan (men K5, women 50 t).

The three main political groups are the Warkurai Nigunan (Mataungans), the Warbete Kivung and the Greater Toma Council.

There are no local government council agricultural committees at present.

Members of the national parliament are: regional member, Damien Kereku; Rabaul, John Kaputin; Gazelle, Martin To Vadek; Kokopo, Oscar Tammur; and Pomio, Koriam Urekit. All participate in agricultural development.

Provincial Government was established in June, 1976.

Economy

The main crops are cocoa and coconuts. There are 150 plantations in the province. Approximately 80 % of the plantations are interplanted with cocoa and coconuts. Plantations and missions run cattle, and there are two Papua New Guinean owned cattle projects.

There is one Department of Primary Industry research station, the Lowlands Agricultural Experiment Station at Keravat. Kurukakaul Livestock Station near Rabaul was used for breeding and distribution of livestock. However, Vudal Agricultural College has taken over breeding and Kurukakaul is now a holding and transit station for stock from Vudal.

There is a cordial factory and a copra oil factory.

There is a main Savings and Loan Societies office in Rabaul, and eight small sub-branches in the Gazelle Peninsula. Members obtain loans to buy PMVs, trucks etc. Pomio district has no Savings and Loan Society facilities.

Due to a shortage of land, there are no land rationalization schemes. There are five main land settlement schemes, Sunam, Keravat, Warangoi, Illugi and Vunapaladik. The Department of Natural Resources is helping people to purchase expatriate plantations. The government then hands the plantation, which was originally under traditional ownership, back to the people.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Cocoa

There are 12 300 ha of village plantings, and 32 800 ha of plantation cocoa. Annual production is 7 000 tonnes from village plantings, and 17 000 tonnes from plantations.

Cocoa cuttings from dieback-resistant clones are being distributed to village farmers. Approximately 60 000 cuttings were distributed between May, 1974 and July, 1975. The supply of clonal cuttings has not been sufficient to cope with demand.

The present programme is to replant unproductive areas with more die-back resistant cocoa cuttings; to increase plantings in the Wide Bay and Baining areas when road



Member of the Cocoa Industry Board and president of the Gazelle Trust, Tuit Tomarum (centre) with PRDO Fred Embi (left) and a cocoa farmer, inspecting cocoa beans at the Davoon Fermentary. (Photo by M. H. M. Belfield)

access becomes available; to upgrade management practices and to improve processing facilities.

This programme will extend over the next two years.

In 1978-79 processing facilities will be constructed in the Wide Bay and Baining area.

Coconuts

Village plantings of coconuts are about 32 400 ha and plantations are 40 500 ha. The annual production is 9 000 tonnes of village copra and 27 000 tonnes of plantation copra.

Approximately 80 % of plantations are interplanted with cocoa.

Coconut Products Limited has a copra oil factory in Rabaul.

Land shortage, political pressures, cult activities and transport problems all place some obstacles to development of this crop.

In 1976-77 an increase of plantings by 5 % is planned in outlying areas as road access becomes available.

An increase of production of 10 % will be

achieved by improving managerial practices. Improved quality will be achieved by improving processing, transport and storage facilities.

This programme will be continued in 1977-78.

Coffee

There are only about 3.6 ha of coffee. People are becoming increasingly interested in coffee due to present high prices although there are still marketing problems.

Existing plantings will be maintained, and plantings will be increased by 5 % in 1976-77 when the road over the Warangoi River is completed.

The Department will assist in marketing of parchment beans.

Rice

There is one rice project at Ulugunan vocational centre and various trial plots in the villages.

Trial plots will be established for interested farmers, and the Department will assist in processing facilities. The main aim is to

encourage rice as a subsistence crop, not for cash.

Pepper

There are only 4 ha planted, with a production of about 150 kg.

Pepper is more or less treated as a sideline crop or hobby and is usually tended by old men and women.

The 1976-77 aim is to increase plantings by 20 % and increase production by 30 %.

Other suitable spice crops may be introduced on the recommendation of the research stations.

Fresh food sales and subsistence

Supply of fresh foods in this province is abundant, with sales through local markets meeting the demand.

A freezer and storage unit have been installed in Rabaul.

A Departmental officer will maintain contact with subsistence farmers particularly in adverse conditions to ensure that any

shortage is avoided. He will encourage subsistence farmers to sell their surplus to main centres, government institutions, etc.

Imported food will be replaced where possible.

Fruits and vegetables will be sent to other centres for sale as charter backloads.

Cattle

There are two cattle projects with 31 head. Plantations and missions run cattle under coconuts, with a total of about 1 600 head.

There are about 300 to 400 wild buffaloes on a mission plantation in the upper Wide Bay area. These buffaloes are being brought under control.

There are also about 20 head of wild buffalo in the Bainings area, but they are being eradicated.

The Department assists with repair and maintenance of yards and crushes on smallholder projects.

In 1976-77, eight to ten new cattle projects will be established. Land disputes may restrict



Weighing cocoa beans at the Davaon Fermentary. The fermentary is owned and run by New Guinea Islands Produce Co. Ltd. (Photo by M. H. M. Belfield)

this programme

Tuberculosis and brucellosis testing of all animals is being carried out, and will be completed in 1976-77.

A buffalo fly eradication programme will be carried out in 1976-77.

In 1978-79, when road access to the Bainings area is completed, five projects will be established in this area.

Pigs

Pigs are run in the villages. There are seven pig fattening projects near the Rabaul town area, but expansion is slow due to lack of weaners.

In 1976-77 the number of projects will be increased to 15, if enough weaners are available.

Management practices will be upgraded and improved. Regular veterinary services will be maintained.

Poultry

There are five poultry projects around Rabaul. A large number of birds are run in villages.

The poultry projects will be increased in conjunction with the pig projects. Management practices will be upgraded and improved. Regular veterinary services will be maintained.

Possible restrictions to this programme may be a shortage of day-old chickens, and the cost of feed.

Wildlife

A wildlife reserve for megapodes is being set up in the Matupit area.

The Warangoi people are being encouraged to set up a wildlife committee.

Interested persons will be encouraged to start crocodile farms.

Fisheries

There are ten existing fishing groups. The province has an ice-making machine, and a 10 tonne freezer in Rabaul.

Department of Primary Industry staff are attending fisheries training courses at Madang.

In 1976-77 the number of fishing groups will be increased from three to ten.

The Department will improve fishing methods of fishermen, will continue maintenance of nets and equipment, demonstrate fishing techniques etc. We will continue supply of ice and encourage fishermen to buy ice boxes.

Fish inspection is carried out on foreign fishing vessels.

Produce inspection

Rabaul is the main centre for produce inspection. Over 16 100 tonnes of copra and 34 800 tonnes of cocoa are handled annually. Inspectors are sent out from here to all centres of Papua New Guinea. A new inspection office and depot have been completed, and staff training is being improved.

GOVERNMENT TO RUN GARAINA TEA PLANTATION AS A BUSINESS

The Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Boyamo Sali, announced in October that the Government plans to operate the tea plantation and factory at Garaina in the Morobe Province as a business venture over the next two years.

The tea plantation was established in the late 1940s as a nursery to provide tea seedlings for planting in the highlands provinces as well as to see if Garaina area was suitable for tea-growing.

Mr Sali said although some people expressed their desire to buy the plantation,

the Government wanted to operate it as a business venture first so that if it proved profitable the Government would sell it to the people.

If not, there would be no alternative but to close it down.

Mr Sali said the plantation was very expensive to maintain compared to the highlands area because of air freight and road transportation costs.

He said expenditure on the plantation over the past two years amounted to about K140 000.