

# NORTH SOLOMONS PROVINCE

By Jacob Momoi,  
Provincial Rural Development Officer

Jacob Momoi was born at Buin in the North Solomons Province. He went to school at Turiboiru Catholic primary school then went to St. Joseph's high school at Rigu in 1963. After completion of high school he went to Vudal Agricultural College from 1969 to 1971. After graduating from Vudal he was posted to Boku in the North Solomons from 1972 to 1973 for about 18 months. He was appointed as associate Provincial Rural Development Officer for the North Solomons in June, 1974, was acting PRDO from October to November, and then appointed PRDO in December, 1974.



Jacob Momoi

Mr Momoi has attended a three-month livestock production course at Lae and a middle management course at the International Training Institute, Mosman, N.S.W., in 1973. In 1974 he went on a tour of Malaysia, India and the Philippines to study the extension services and farmer organizations in these three countries. His main interest is to develop the rural areas. He likes to spend a lot of time with the village people discussing their problems.

Mr Momoi's wife Pauline is a former MCH sister, but now stays at home looking after their 2½ year-old daughter.

Bougainville Island is approximately 209 km long and varies in width from 64 to 96 km. The small island of Buka lies to the north and is separated from Bougainville Island by the narrow waters of Buka Passage.

The province also includes many small islands and two isolated coral atolls: these are the Mortlock Islands 298 km to the north-east, and the Tasman Atoll 558 km to the north-east.



The dominant geographical features of Bougainville Island are the Emperor and Crown Prince Ranges which extend from north to south and rise to 2 500 m. Within the zone there are three volcanic areas: Mount Bagana which is an active volcano, Mount Balbi, 2 590 m high, a dormant crater and Mount Lololu which has a crater lake and fumaroles.

The interior is wild and broken, jungle-clad and inaccessible.

The climate of the province is similar to that of other tropical areas. Temperatures vary only slightly and remain in the vicinity of 27°C to 32°C. The average annual rainfall throughout the province is 3 632 mm per annum, with variation from 2 972 mm to 6 350 mm at Panguna.

There are extensive areas of volcanic soil particularly along the east coast of the main island. Buka Island is derived from raised coral atolls.

The vegetation is mainly tall rainforest. Coastal areas are covered mostly by pitpit with pandanus, and mangroves in more swampy areas.

Of the total area of 10 614 km<sup>2</sup>, less than half, 4 142 km<sup>2</sup>, is in use. Of this about half is used for expatriate-run plantations and other non-village uses.

Over the last ten years or so there has been considerable development of the road system in the province. The councils, the provincial government and the central government are continuing with the development of the road system. Access is satisfactory throughout all areas with the exception of more isolated areas such as the Eivo-Rotokas and Kongara areas.

Air services to the province are good. There are 17 airstrips for light aircraft in the province. All areas can be reached by light aircraft.

Outstations have access to radio communications. Radio Bougainville broadcasts for several hours a day.

The overseas wharves at Kieta and Loloho receive overseas ships regularly. The Loloho port has been developed with bulk loading facilities for copper concentrate from the Panguna mine. There are many smaller wharves that are serviced regularly by coastal vessels.

## PEOPLE

The North Solomons has a population of approximately 90 000 village people, and 10 000 from other provinces or overseas. The total manpower available for agricultural activities is 35 000. The number of growers is estimated to be well over 14 000.

Pidgin and English languages are widely spoken. There are six local languages in Buin district, nine in Buka and four in Kieta districts.

Generally the standard of health is high due to numerous health centres, aid posts and hospitals run by government and missions.



There are 132 community schools, 5 high schools, 7 vocational centres and 1 technical college. Other schools such as the Bougainville Copper Limited's Mabiri Agricultural Training School play an important role.

All schools now teach agricultural subjects but very few school leavers come back to their homes to take part in development. It appears the younger people with good education are reluctant to return home and assist in development.

The three main churches, Catholic, United and Seventh Day Adventist have a certain degree of influence, socially, politically and economically.

There are a large number of small self-help groups. The following are some of the self-help groups in each district: Buin-Siwai Cattlemen's Association, Pikei-Boku Association, Taipira Natural Work Group; Kieta-Koiano Association; Buka-Hahalis Welfare Society, Nakarkau Association, Teop Women's Fellowship Association.

## POLITICAL

Each village has its own leaders and with the formation of provincial government these men are responsible for the development of their own area. These leaders are not normally people with good education—they are persons respected for their common sense and actions to improve the community. There are also educated mature leaders among the village governments and businessmen.

The "Republic of North Solomons" Government was very active and effective. The supporters had strong feelings towards breaking away from the rest of Papua New Guinea. There is still a great deal of political awareness in the rural areas.

Since the re-establishment of provincial government, the top political body in the province is the Provincial Assembly. There are 19 elected members, and the Premier selects his six executive members from the members of the Provincial Assembly.

All capital works are now financed by the central government through the provincial government.

## ECONOMY

There are no major land disputes.

People in this province tend to be cash-economy-minded, and goals are centred on the well-being of the community, possessing consumer goods, cars etc.

Copra and cocoa are the main crops.

The PNG Development Bank has financed large numbers of smallholder projects, in particular cattle and cocoa. The Development Bank finances six 1 400 layer poultry projects in the Kieta district.



There are no major secondary industries apart from small industries such as bakeries, soft drink manufacturers, a cement brick and pipe factory, and a boat building factory.

The most impressive industry is the mining operation for copper at Panguna. The mining production started in 1972 and it is expected that income from this industry will be about K400 000 000 in the first ten years.

The province has now established a headquarters for Savings and Loan Societies at Arawa and there are branches in all areas.

There is only one land rationalization scheme in the North Solomons and that is the Wainana Scheme in Buka district.

The Provincial Management team is very active. It has members of the public and government departments concerned with development, drawing up the provincial plan, evaluating the plans and setting priorities and then implementing the provincial programme.

#### AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

##### COCOA

In 1975-76 total production increased from 11 582 to 12 519 tonnes of which 6 220 tonnes was produced by Papua New Guineans. Production per grower increased by 8%.

There is a total of 20 091 ha of which 72% are producing and 28% are immature. The province has a number of producers' marketing co-operatives, through which the bulk of cocoa is marketed. The Bougainville Marketing Co-operative has been buying and exporting cocoa overseas from these co-operatives. There are also other firms which export cocoa.

Growers are handling most of their own processing and marketing due to improvement of roads.

In 1977-78 an increase of plantings of 9% is planned (up to December, 1978). New planting will be encouraged at Torokina, Aita and Eivo. An increase in production of 9% is also planned.

The Department will continue its assistance to growers in all aspects of management, processing and marketing of cocoa.

Expansion of processing facilities is planned.

In 1979 a further increase in production of 7% is expected.

Over the next four years 1979 to 1982 an annual increase in plantings of 5% is planned.





*A DPI Officer points out black pod rot on a cocoa pod. Cocoa is a major cash crop in the province.*

## COCONUTS

Production in 1975-76 was 21 601 tonnes of which 8 370 tonnes were produced by village growers, and 13 331 tonnes by plantations. The production in 1975-76 was 3% lower than in 1974-75, due to the low price for copra. People in the Buin area have lost interest due to low prices and leaf spot disease. The west coast people still have shipping difficulties in getting their copra to Buka or Kieta.

The Copra Marketing Board buys copra at Kieta and at Buka Passage.

There is a total 20 383 ha coconut palms of which 3 602 ha are not yet bearing and 16 781 are bearing.

A small increase of plantings of 2% is aimed at for 1977-78. Better seed nuts (from the Markham Valley) will be distributed to the growers. Smallholders will be encouraged to increase production by 10% during the period July, 1977 to June 1978, through better management and processing.

The Department will try to arrange improved shipping services to west coast people.

In the next four years this programme will be continued with a planned 2% increase in plantings each year. Farmers will also be educated in plantation management.



## COFFEE

There are 75 ha coffee trees between 310 growers, in the Kieta district. Production last year was less than 1 tonne.

The number of trees is decreasing due to lack of maintenance. This is because other crops have high prices, and also because coffee in isolated areas has to be carried out of the area by people due to lack of roads. However, road access to these coffee-growing areas will be improved in the near future. People are encouraged to have central processing facilities.

In 1976-77 output increased by 10%. No increase in plantings is planned at present but the Department will continue to provide assistance to growers and encourage them to improve quality by putting up central processing facilities.



*Headquarters statistician Peter Herrington demonstrates sample survey techniques to North Solomons staff.*

The Department will continue to liaise with the Provincial Government and other organizations and departments to try to provide a road from Kieta to the Kongara coffee-growing area in 1977-78.

Similar assistance will be provided to growers in future years.

## CATTLE

The total number of cattle in the province is 1 879 head. There are now 90 stocked properties of which 60 properties with 1 080 head are owned by smallholders.



An abattoir to slaughter cattle has been built between Kieta and Arawa. It aims to kill four beasts a week, increasing in 1977-78 to six beasts a week.

Cattle development is slow-moving due to shortage of staff and high cost transport, and lack of interest from the people.

In 1977-78 the aim is to increase the number of smallholder projects by 15 projects. Practical training will be provided for cattle project owners, to improve the management of pasture and stock. An effort will continue to promote more interest in large-scale cattle development of about 80 ha.

The Department provides disease testing under the National Disease Programme. It is expected that the North Solomons will be declared tuberculosis and brucellosis free, after completion of testing of all cattle.

In 1977-78 slaughter floors will be established at Buin and Buka. These slaughter floors will initially kill two beasts a week, increasing to three after they have been operating for two or three years.

In 1979 the number of cattle on Papua New Guinean owned projects will be increased to 1 500, on 70 smallholder and 3 large-scale projects.

Expansion will continue along these lines until 1981, when it is anticipated that the province will have 2 700 head of cattle on 120 smallholder projects and 10 large-scale projects.

#### RICE

There are at present only about 4 ha of rice planted, by a few schools and farmers. Most people have no interest in growing rice because it has a high labour cost.

DPI staff will continue to attend courses to learn about rice, and will assist those schools and farmers who are interested in growing rice.

#### SUBSISTENCE

The Department provides assistance to farmers and schools in improving their subsistence crops. Improved vegetable seeds and hybrid corn seed have been distributed.

DPI officers will help the Health Department to educate the villagers to eat more of the meat and vegetables they grow, instead of selling it. Villagers will be encouraged to grow more nutritious varieties of food. Two demonstration food gardens will be established in 1978 at Buka.

#### FRESH FOOD FOR SALE

At present K½ million of fruit and vegetables are imported into the province. There are seven contractors who supply Bougainville Copper Limited with fresh foods. In 1975-76 contractors supplied 1 684 326 kg of vegetables worth K300 000 to BCL.



Apart from these contractors, there are some commercial plots planted but fresh foods sold are mainly surplus from subsistence gardens.

In 1976-77 the Department and the North Solomons Fresh Food Committee reviewed pricing policy with the aim of encouraging the growers. A fresh foods specialist gives demonstrations and field training to staff and farmers.

Six pilot vegetable projects will be established in 1977-78 for demonstration purposes. An increase of production of 15% each year is planned.

A potato project is shortly to be set up in the Wokunai with the aim of replacing imported potato (approx.  $\frac{1}{2}$  million kg per annum) with locally grown ones.

Unfortunately the most suitable areas for growing fresh foods are isolated and therefore very difficult and expensive to transport goods from.

#### PIGS

Farmers have shown very little interest in advanced piggeries and there is not much change from traditional management. There are only a few pig projects which are being upgraded.

One 50-breeder project for rearing pigs is being investigated.

Bougainville Copper Limited is releasing about 300 pigs to village farmers. Generally village stock is improving due to the distribution of better breeds of pig by BCL vocational centres and some high schools.

The Department is encouraging villages to accept improved stock, and encouraging villagers to rotationally graze pigs on sweet potato, with protein supplements.



*Ducks are being introduced, both to provide food in the villages and for a cash income.*



## POULTRY

There are six 1 000-bird layer projects in Kieta, 12 broiler projects of 100 to 200 birds and six 2000-bird broiler projects.

Most people have a great interest in broilers. For the first six months of 1977 we had projects that could take 62 000 birds, at 2 000 to 3 000 per week. We have had difficulties in obtaining birds from Lae and Ilimo.

Village stock is being upgraded by introducing roosters of good breed.

Projects of 100 to 200 birds for village consumption are being encouraged.

Small broiler projects will be established in all areas that can easily be supplied with feed. These projects are to be operated as cheaply as possible using local materials wherever possible. The birds will initially be sold alive at local markets.

Bougainville Copper Limited has completed a poultry abattoir at Kieta. The Department encourages large projects which can economically transport live birds to the abattoir for sale.



*Broiler project. Some problems have arisen with deep litter (used here) so the Department intends to investigate use of cages.*



## LARGE LAYER PROJECTS

At present there are five large egg projects operating near Kieta. In 1975-76 the local projects produced 60 000 dozen eggs.

The aim is to establish 14 large projects of 1 000 layers so as to retain within the North Solomons the money now going to Australia for purchase of eggs, and at the same time provide income for local farmers.

Prospective farmers are now being encouraged to establish 200-bird projects to assess their capability, before requesting loans for large units. Because of many problems found in deep litter the Department is now investigating keeping birds in cages.

By 1979 central North Solomons should be self-sufficient in eggs. By this time the industry should be run as a co-operative, with very little intervention by DPI staff, apart from giving advice, such as in the case of sickness etc.

## RUBBER

There are approximately 13 000 mature trees in Kieta and Buin districts which are not being maintained. The rubber trees are scattered which makes rubber processing difficult. Rubber tree owners have cocoa so they have little interest in rubber.

In 1976-77 the province obtained advice from a headquarters rubber technologist but there has been very little interest from the owners.

Growers in Buin will be encouraged to build two small processing factories, to process cup lump and produce crepe rubber.

However, the low price for rubber restricts its popularity compared with other crops like cocoa. People are not interested in expanding the size of their plots.

## FISHERIES

The Department assists those people who are interested in fishing, although there is a lack of trained staff and of sea transport to get to the good fishing areas.

In 1974-1975 one Tongan fish trap and a smokehouse were built in Buka district. There are now four smokehouses.

In 1977-78 more fish traps and smokehouses will be built.

There are two ice-makers in the Kieta and Buka areas. Fishermen will be encouraged to use ice for sale of fresh fish.

Kerekeka Plastic Limited is now operating and fishermen will be able to use locally made fibre-glass ice boxes to keep the fish fresh for market.

A private contractor has started a business with a fishing boat in the Atolls. The boat, which is equipped with freezing and refrigerated storage equipment, travels around the Atolls and collects from six freezers and brings them to Kieta for sale.