



FOOD SECURITY SITUATION REPORT

Sitrep No: 03-2020

Reporting Period: 26 May -30 June 2020

Situational overview and summary of the impacts

- ❖ Three new cases of COVID 19 were reported recently after a month of no reports of confirmed cases, totaling to 11 reported cases in country. No deaths at this time.
- ❖ A fourteen days lock down has been imposed for Murray Barracks in Port Moresby, starting on 25 June, where the cluster of confirmed cases in Port Moresby are working.
- ❖ The new [National Pandemic Act 2020](#) together with 8 new measures were passed by parliament in addition to the existing 13 Emergency Orders in place. The new Act or the Public Health Emergency Act is to enforce the delivery of the National Pandemic Act.
- ❖ The measures put in place to control the spread of COVID 19 has affected the re-opening of provincial main markets, further impacting income of smallholder farmers and peri-urban and urban residents.
- ❖ Essential and basic [Food safety rules](#) at some main markets need to be in place before market authorities allow the recommencement of sales of cooked food, poultry and fresh fish.
- ❖ COVID 19 measures affect the long term benefits of small income earners.
- ❖ Reports show there is a general demand for fresh food supply in Port Moresby for high altitude fresh vegetables.
- ❖ Concerned citizens raised the need for protocols to govern the road side markets as there seems to be too many of them.
- ❖ COVID 19 creates an opportunity for provinces to take stock on agriculture interventions/ innovations to improve livelihoods.
- ❖ The deadly [African swine fever](#) continues to spread in the upper highlands with evidence of ASF related pig deaths detected in Western Highlands and Enga province.
- ❖ Reports by NAQIA suggest that the [Fall armyworm](#) has invaded Markham and Ramu valley in Morobe and Madang provinces.

National Pandemic Act 2020: On 2 June, Parliament agreed and extended the State of Emergency to 16 June to deliberate on how to manage the global COVID-19 pandemic, including the drafting of a public health bill on COVID 19. On June 17, 2020, a gazette was issued for the transition with the National Pandemic Act 2020 with new measures.

The Table below has the brief description of the new measures.

Measure	Description
Measure 1	International and domestic travel measures
Measure 2	Provincial Coordination Measures
Measure 3	Burial of deceased persons measures
Measure 4	Customs and duty supply
Measure 5	COVID-19 testing measures
Measure 6	COVID-19 surveillance and testing measures
Measure 7	Business and social measures
Measure 8	International arrivals COVID-19 measures

Though most emergency orders for instance the restriction to public movements were lifted, however the public were advised not to be complacent and to practice social distancing and personal hygiene standards. The government has allowed a range of small to medium businesses to resume in order to stimulate the bruised local economy.

Impact of COVID-19 measures in Kokopo, East New Britain

- In [Kokopo](#), cash flow was affected and a general food shortage was faced by not only those who were on lock down but others because of the restrictions imposed. There was lack of proper awareness before all services were shut down. They had not prepared for what was forthcoming.



- The six villages near Kokopo that were on lock down were mainly urban villages and rely heavily on main market for food supply. They were greatly affected. During that time, food stores and canteens ran out of food and people went onto borrowing from canteens. There was shortage of rice at shops during the lock down. Also, the price of fresh vegetables increased during the lock down.
- A general consensus amongst communities in East New Britain (ENB) to respond to the communities that were on lock down in the provision of store bought food and fresh garden vegetables and starch. It was also noticed that gardening had increased during the lock down period. Like the other provinces, when the lock down restriction was lifted, the prices of produce went lower than expected. E.g. a round cabbage that usually cost K10 was sold at K5 due to an over-supply of fresh produce.
- The closure of kaikai bars during the lock down forced people to turn to garden vegetables. Locals said that this was good for ENB given the high rate of diabetes. People went onto the removal of flower gardens and planting food gardens. Moreover, there was shortage of planting materials especially the imported crops such as cabbage and sweet corn and capsicum.
- In Kokopo, the impact measures imposed on COVID-19 was evident from those in the private sector. For instance, a women (widow) was on full payroll during the 3 months of the lock down however, her pay during this period, she was paid from her leave balance. This was because the company had ceased operations. Those without leave balance (in the same company) were put on payroll but on credit basis where their pay will be deducted upon resumption of duties.
- This person said, the company in the process exhausted her leave balance and went onto deducting from her retirement leave eventually exhausting her leave retirement where she had accumulated over 26 years of service with the company. Apart from the short term impact which was the shortage of food, she expressed that this was a negative impact of COVID-19 restrictions on her livelihoods as she is a widow.
- Others that lost their jobs and income and were hit hard the most were people without land to be able to farm as well as those who were employed as cleaners, security guards, drivers, shop keepers and worked in hotels, resorts, lodges and shops that had to close as a result of the lock down.
- Bus fares have increased after the lock down. The route fare, Kokopo to Rabaul increased from K3 to K5 and the route Kokopo to Sikut and Talvat increased from K5 to K7 and has not returned to normal.
- Market officers noted the need for sales of livestock such as chicken and fish at the main market. On a related note, communities are more involved in breeding of village chicken.
- **Food safety** is a concern, whilst fresh food are allowed to be sold at most main markets, cooked food, poultry and fresh fish will not be allowed until food safety rules are in place.
- The Kokopo Market Authority aims at introducing the concept of bulk selling where the produce is bought and resold to the road side market sellers.
- ENB like other provinces had not received any funding to boost food security and economic activities.
- The East New Britain Fresh Produce Company are planning their first shipment of fresh food into Port Moresby. They will be supplying fresh produce of at least 20 foot (40 000 kg) through the shipping entity under the ENB Development Corporation.
- Taro amongst many other crops has been considered to be supplied. The company has plans to roll out the 'Community Sweat Labor' initiative to serve as a backup to supply fresh food for the shipment.
-

Impact on livelihoods in Alotau, Milne Bay province

- In Alotau, food security, agriculture and market supply, fisheries and tourism were greatly affected. This further impacted on livelihoods and income. The loss of income had immense impact on the informal sector. There was shortage of feed for tilapia fish as well.



- Despite the new normal with the International restrictions, there is impact on Alotau's tourism industry. For the last three months, there were no cruise ships compared to pre COVID months January 2020 where they had 3-4 ships docked in Alotau. Tourism provided income to vendors who sold fresh fruits, nuts, artifacts, baskets and necklaces to the tourists. They have not had any of these ships for the duration of the COVID lock-down.
- The member for Alotau Open distributed bags of rice and other food items during the lock-down to urban residents in Alotau. Additionally, the provincial government supported with relief items. During lock down, these urban residents were provided boats to the residents in Alotau to return home.

Impact of COVID in Alotau

- In Alotau, the Market Authority is managed by Huhu LLG of the Alotau District and not necessarily managed by the Town market Authority like other provincial centres.
- The sales at the Alotau main market is arranged into rotation of sales from vendors from 3 zones of locations around Milne Bay as per the days listed; Zone 1 for Monday and Thursday and Zone 2 for Tuesday and Friday were allocated to people from Huhu LLG in Alotau to do marketing, while Zone 3 for Wednesday and Saturday was allocated to people from further areas in Alotau District, such as Maramatana and Daga LLG, and from other districts such as Samarai-Murua and Kiriwina-Goodenough. This is the current arrangement that was in place since the lock down. This is so the women have 1.5 meters distance apart when selling. At the market, cooked food are still not allowed for sales. There is a tank and water tap installed for handwashing for use. Social distancing was observed by the sellers but not fully adhered to by the buyers as people need to move around to purchase their goods.

Impact on livelihoods from the changes in market schedules

- In Alotau, the vendors who sold fresh food 5 days a week had their sales affected from this rotation of zones. A spice vendor (who usually sold ginger, capsicum, chilli, garlic and onion) made approximately K420 per week. Now that she can't sell 5 days but 2 days a week, her sales profit obviously dropped to K180. A vendor who sold hand-made baskets (Milne traditional bags made out of coconut leaves) would earn roughly a K1500 from a monthly sales. That had dropped to K800 per month. For the ad-hoc sellers at the market, the rotation arrangement did not really affect them.
- Residents living in Alotau indicated that they had been affected from the hike in vegetable prices from the road side markets (similar observation in other centres). The extra cost on each item at the road side market ranged from K1.00 to K2.50 and the quantity of fresh vegetables or each item were less than that sold at the main market.
- The province has commissioned SME survey as well as the continuation of provincial support to the Bubuleta Resource Center where seeds and planting material and aquaculture trainings are held.
- The provincial government is in discussion with National Development Bank to have loans available for the province.
- Apart from other development partners, in the area of markets, JICA has invested in the market infrastructure in Alotau. **It was also observed that ICCC has been active to address price issues and hikes in the province.**

Impact on small livestock and fish farmers

- In Mt Hagen, the most affected livestock farmers were the day old chick farmers. They were affected because of their reliance on poultry feeds. Day old chicks' supply that were usually supplied by retailers the, Chemica and Farmset were affected during the lockdown.



- Smallholder and semi-intensive pig farmers had to switch to local feed because of the inability to maintain supply of commercial feeds. The feed ingredients of smallholder livestock such as pig and poultry that are usually comprised from grain, soybean, sorghum, maize were affected. Unlike other livestock they could use local feeds, however the development on local feed is yet to be fully developed.
- For fish farmers in Mt Hagen, the lock down had affected them because most of the fish feed are imported and the PNG private sector (unlike poultry and piggery) has not really bought into the idea of producing fish feeds locally and reselling back to farmers.
- The cost of fish feed is expensive. National Fisheries Authority has subsidized this cost for 50 per cent before the COVID situation, however, during the lock down, the imported fish feed supply was affected.
- Tininga Limited was also noted to be providing marketing opportunity for smallholder farmers, buying trout fish for retail sales in Mt. Hagen.

Impact on fresh produce, market, trade and seed supply:

- In **Mt Hagen**, the market is still closed since the lock down period as a result of water and sanitation issues. The market facility is undergoing maintenance to resolve the issue.
- For this reason, the road side markets serve the urban residents with fresh produce (namely, *Council camp, Doorbel, Pangia market office, New town Bakery, Kalakai, Keltica and Kawei*).
- Women noted that at this road side markets, the sales of their goods don't sell quick

enough by buyers/customers. Random buying at the roadside markets slow buying compared to bulk selling.

- Tambul Nebilyer District is renowned for its sales in fresh food crop bulking and selling. It is the main supplier for broccoli, cauliflower, English potato, cabbage, carrot and other food crops to Mt Hagen, Lae and Port Moresby.
- Farmers from Tambul Nebilyer suffered the consequences of the lock down where most of their commercial food crops perished as they were unable to sell in bulk.
- Main issue for most farmers in WHP is now transporting fresh produce from Mt Hagen to Lae to reach the wharf to benefit from the Freight subsidy scheme.
- Farmers in the Western Highlands are now happy that restrictions along the main National Highlands Highway has been lifted for fresh produce trade movements along the highway. Farmers had identified that during the lock down, the opportunity to bulk and supply fresh produce out of Hagen and Western Highlands increased.
- The lock down disrupted the sales of seeds of commercial fresh food seeds. This caused the seed prices to increase, e.g. 100 gram of cauliflower seed packet was usually K150 was reported to be sold for K400 after the lock down.
- This was also because the main suppliers of seeds in Mt Hagen are Brian Bell, Farmset, Tininga and Chemica were also affected with the seed supply disrupted from Lae, hence, ripple effects felt by farmers who were purchasing these seeds. In overall, social distancing was not observed in Mt Hagen.
- In **Mendi**, Southern Highlands, there is so much of greens and sweet potato, banana and green leafy vegetables. Most of the fresh food produce sold in the area are bought from Mt Hagen and resold at the Mendi market and the smaller markets near and around the town area.



- Most of the communities have good education for farmers in Southern Highlands.
- Many people in SHP live in remote rural areas and are impoverished. They lack basic information on health, hygiene and sanitation, hence, the need for more awareness on COVID-19.
- In Southern Highlands, the proportion of men working in the agriculture sector is the highest compared to other provinces in the country. This may have an effect on households if COVID-19 hits.

Impact of COVID-19 in Mt Hagen, Western Highlands Province

- In **Mt Hagen**, in terms of providing a solution to farmers with access to markets, the Tininga Limited, a local company in Mt Hagen¹ and its stakeholders such as NARI had identified a demand for fresh food supply in Mt Hagen to Lae and Port Moresby. It was noted that the fresh vegetables flown into Port Moresby the same day was on high demand and in particular the high altitude crops and fresh food from Mt Hagen during the lock down period.
- Also in **Mt Hagen**, with the establishment of its *Hilens Fres* Business plan in January 2020, that enables access to markets by farmers. Four hundred farmers around the Tambul and Tomba areas through NARI have benefitted from this arrangement. Farmers' produce are bought by Tininga at a price of K3.50 per kg. Tininga is able to buy up to 1000 kg per week of broccoli, 600 kg per week cauliflower and any quantity for English potato. Tininga supports bulking and freighting into Port Moresby using the Air Niugini and PNG Air airlines. There is more opportunity provided to farmers by *Tininga*. *Hilens Fresh* specializes in high altitude food

crops such as asparagus, Broccoli, capsicum, carrot, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, banana, French bean, *kaukau*, lettuce, mandarin, onion, oranges, pineapple, potato, spring onion, taro, tomato and zucchini.

- The company is also selling commercial seeds (Terranova) at a low cost of K5 per packet to farmers to produce and sell in bulk back to the company. The company also plans to go engage with farmers on food processing given the new normal regulations on food safety.

Supply and demand for fresh produce in Port Moresby

- In **Port Moresby**, the demand for fresh food and market supplies increased in general.² This was evident when Gordons market had an increase of fresh produce sales from 7 tonnes to 15 tonnes. The Bismarck shipping also had an increase of fresh produce transported from Lae to Port Moresby from 720 to 1080 tonnes per shipment. Supermarkets such as Foodworld had doubled its weekly sales.

Markets

Province	Name of market	Comments
Western Highland	Mt Hagen market	Market closed. Many road side markets.
Southern Highlan	Mendi market	Market open No social distancing
East New Britain	Kokopo market	Open 3 days a week Vendors selling at 1.5 metres ap
Milne Bay	Alotau market	Market open Selling arrangement in 3 zones Vendors selling at 1.5 metres app
Central Province	Port Moresby	All markets open

EMERGING BIOSECURITY ISSUES

African swine fever:

- WHP has now been included and declared as the ASF infected province along with Southern Highlands, Enga and Hela. Spread of ASF has been by far the

¹ Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) certified

² Data coCollection on the supply/ and demand of fresh produce in Port Moresby, FPDA, 2020.



most in Enga. NAQIA has activated the National ASF Emergency and Response Task Force. The Task Force empowers Chief Veterinary Officer and team to make informed decisions to respond to ASF. The composition of Task Force comprised of members from the following entities; NAQIA, DAL, Department of Health, Transport, Police Department, Faith-based, Red Cross, PHAMA Plus, DFAT, MFAT, FAO and DMT Secretariat. DAL is working with NAQIA in providing awareness to the non-infected provinces to support provincial governments with their preparedness plans for ASF.

Fall armyworm:

- The Fall armyworm is primarily an insect pest to corn, rice and sugarcane. More than 99 % of the PNG population grow sugarcane. Corn is grown by smallholder farmers and in large scale by Ramu. The insect pest that has a wide host range and is capable of feeding on more than 350 plant species including

beans, *kaukau*, orange, pawpaw, tobacco, strawberry, etc. Modelling suitability shows that PNG is extremely suitable for the pest to thrive. It has been reported that the Fall armyworm has spread to Wau and Ramu areas in Morobe and Madang provinces in addition to its existing presence in Daru Western Province. Confirmation of the pest is yet to be established officially by NAQIA in Morobe.

Acknowledgements: *NARI, FPDA, DAL, NAQIA, DFAT, KIK, Southern Highlands Provincial Government, Milne Bay provincial government, East New Britain provincial government, East New Britain Development corporation, Eats New Britain Produce Company, Kumul Agriculture Limited, AgBook Agribusiness Training and Advisory Limited, sellers and consumers at Mt Hagen, Alotau and Kokopo market and Members of the Papua New Guinea National Food Security Cluster members.*