



**Bucoli Green
Farms**

Cultivating Better Practices and Productivity for Baucau Farm Labourers

MDF supported Bucoli Green Farms, a small-sized commercial farm in Baucau, to create additional part-time jobs, income, strengthen staff capacity and increase production capacity.



The Company

BGF was established in Baucau in 2009 by Dr. Philip, a Kenyan surgeon, with the specific objective of successfully growing vegetables. The farm started on a 200-sq. m piece of land. Over eight years, it grew to a 25-hectare farm engaging in horticulture, aquaculture and livestock. BGF produces vegetables including bitter melon, long beans, short beans, chilli, eggplant and onion, with tomato being their main cash crop.

The company employs 25 full-time staff and 50 part-time workers (two days a week for picking), over 80% of whom are women.



The Context

Agriculture production in Timor-Leste has historically been a challenge due to inconsistent water sources, limited availability of seed, soil fertility issues and erratic weather¹. Knowledge of how to grow crops other than rice and maize is often limited, along with the inputs and technical management needed to improve productivity.

Supermarkets have a weekly demand of 3000kg of tomatoes, and it is estimated that the open market can consume double their current supply.

Before the intervention with MDF, BGF produced 1157 kg of tomatoes a week, sold approximately 70% to the open market and 30% to supermarkets in Dili. However, for both markets, demand was higher than BGF's supply.



The Challenge

BGF was struggling to increase production due to a lack of technical supervision: all farm operations were managed singlehandedly by Dr. Philip. The team was missing the technical expertise needed to monitor activities, identify early signs of problems and increase supply.

Additionally, in 2014, a pest attack caused the farm to incur severe losses, forcing it to reduce its staff from 100 part-time workers to 15, and negatively impacting growth.

¹ (MDF, 2015). Systemic Change Pathways: Agribusiness, Processing and Rural Distribution



The Solution

Based on these factors, MDF signed an agreement with BGF in February 2017 focusing on improving BGF's technical skills, management structure and farming tools.

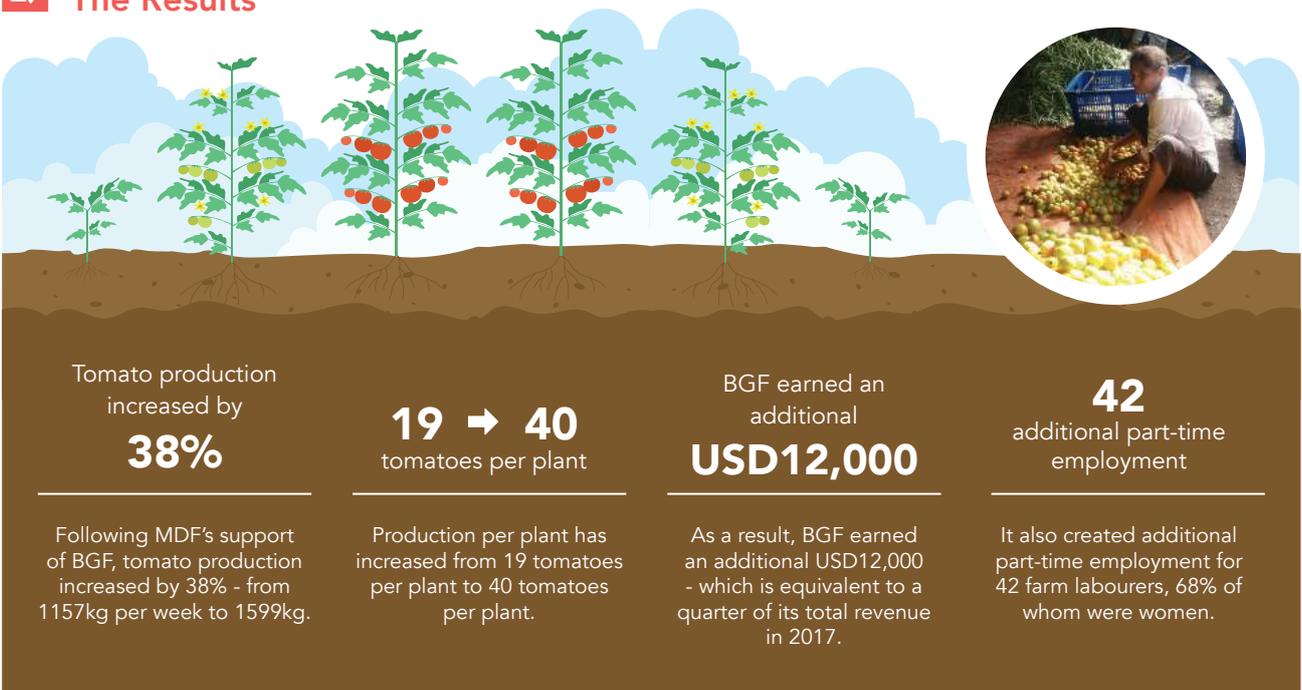
MDF began by helping BGF to strengthen its technical management by recruiting two local field officers to work as a bridge between Dr. Philip and farm labourers, and to take responsibility for day-to-day monitoring.

A broad range of agro-tools, such as pumps and sprayers were then bought with MDF support to facilitate an increase in production.

MDF also assisted BGF in recruiting an international horticulture expert, who reviewed existing farm protocols and developed new ones to replace outdated practices. These included adding a step of applying pesticide and fertiliser at the seedling propagation stage to increase resistance to disease, altering the dosage and ingredients in decomposers, and encouraged stricter management of part-time staff during harvesting.

These practices were disseminated through trainings and mentoring, both of technical and field staff, over a period of eight months during three separate visits. Additionally, the newly recruited field staff (who form the missing middle management roles) were also trained by the expert

The Results



Quote from the field

During a recent monitoring visit, Dr. Philip stated,

“After the training, the field staff and farm labour can identify disease and pest attacks in the early stages of production. They escalate issues to management and we quickly resolve the issue.”

The farm labour also validated that the field staff can now provide ongoing training and support on technical issues.