

Consita the coffee taster



WITH her shy smile and easy demeanour, it's easy to underestimate Consita Basse. Partially blind, she has been using her enhanced sense of taste and smell to grade coffee as a taster for Monpi Coffee Export Limited (MCEL) since 2006.

As part of her job, Consita tastes 100 cups of coffee per day and is working towards becoming its champion cupper.

After completing grade 8, the lass from Manam Island in Madang Province was selected to continue to grade 9 in 2004 but was apprehensive about continuing without her friends to help guide her.

So, she stayed home until 2006, when Monpi was looking for coffee tasters. In spite of her initial hesitance, the local parish priest at Faniufa suggested that Monpi hire her. Consita has since grown to love her work.

"I enjoy being a taster and am grateful that Monpi has given this job to me. Everyone from my bosses down to my workmates are so supportive. I can't picture myself anywhere else."

During the coffee season there is a lot of tasting to be done: once the green beans are brought in and roasted, they have to be tasted and tested for aroma, consistency and flavour.

"In grading coffee, a supplier is given three cups of coffee where each cup is tasted to see if it has the same smell, essence and if there is uniformity. If one of the cups is not the same as the other, we then have to roast the beans again," she said.

She has attended cupping trainings at the Coffee Industry Corporation (CIC) in Goroka and learned how to grade coffee by attending Q-Grading courses in Sydney and Melbourne.

Consita has also been to Switzerland, where she learned how to improve the quality of coffee according to Starbucks standards.

Reflecting on her disability, Consita used to doubt herself frequently. Working at Monpi has gradually changed that by building her confidence.

When she's not at work, the mother of two is busy at home with her sons Joseph Jr, seven and three-year-old Blasius.

"All we have to do is look past our disabilities and try to take the plunge, find something we're good at. For me it is tasting coffee and I want to be the best cupper one day," she said.

An important aspect of Australian government funded Market Development Facility's work in Women's Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Growth is in supporting our partners to enhance and empower people with disabilities in the community. Through its sister Company MCEL, MDF partner SMS has been supporting these efforts by employing people with disabilities like Consita.

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Based in Goroka, MCEL buys coffee through its export partner Sustainable Management Services (SMS) from smallholder farmers and sells to established export markets.

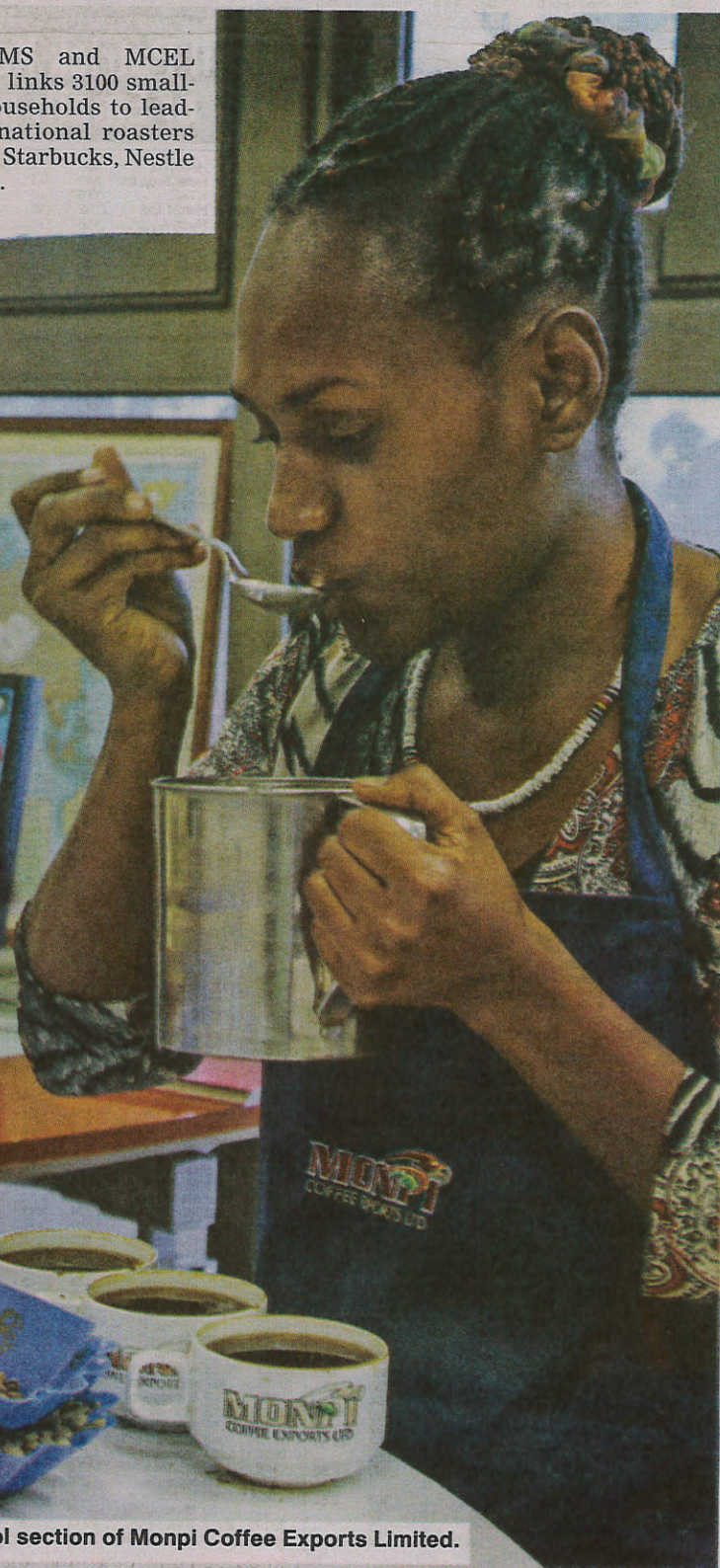
SMS's export partner, Monpi Coffee Export Limited (MCEL) then buys the coffee from the farmers and sells to established export markets.

This arrangement be-

tween SMS and MCEL currently links 3100 smallholder households to leading international roasters including Starbucks, Nestle and Kraft.



At home with her sons Joseph Jr and Blasius.



CONSITA Basse at work in the Quality Control section of Monpi Coffee Exports Limited.