



Media Release

Market Development Facility | April 2020

New partnership announces support to rural farmers during COVID - 19 lockdown

Up to 82,000 households in four provinces will benefit from a new partnership agreement signed in Lae. The partnership is between Australian-supported Market Development Facility (MDF) and Outspan Limited.

Through this partnership, MDF will support Outspan in conducting an awareness campaign that will guide cocoa and coffee aggregators and smallholders on the nature of COVID-19 and the precautions they should adopt during buying and selling.

The partnership will target up to 100 Local Level Governments (LLGs) in Morobe, Eastern Highlands, East New Britain and East Sepik Provinces. Outspan's extension teams will train smallholders, aggregators, farmer groups and local members of churches on safe hygiene and preventive measures to practice when buying and selling. This support will also include Personal Protective Equipment for trainers (PPE), distribution of hand sanitizers in village churches and fermentaries and soap to each household for hand washing.

At the signing, MDF Country Director Sharif Islam said that the trainings will ensure farmers and key players in the upstream market are ready and equipped to continue market chain supply if the deadly virus spreads and lock down continues.

"With uncertainty of how long the pandemic will last, we have to be ready. If there is total lock down, the farmers will not be able to move to sell, in such a scenario, the aggregators trained through this intervention will link lockdown small holders to market. And importantly, people will have food on their table." Sharif said.

The COVID-19 lockdown declared by the PNG government in March has already taken a huge toll on all involved in the agriculture sector.

Mr. Basavaraj Mashetty who represented Outspan at the signing said that with decline in the market supply chain, everyone will be affected.

"We are already experiencing a drop in supply from farmers and it is not looking good for business. This will affect workers, cut in wages, families and everyone involved will be affected, even farmers," he said.

Mr. Basavaraj further stated that with this support, he hopes to work closely with provincial health authorities in the four provinces to have key health messages on COVID-19 reach as many farmers as possible to bring some normality to the market supply chain in PNG.



“We will support Provincial Health Departments and our farmer contacts on the ground to drive key preventive messages like hand washing, social distancing and basic hygiene practices to as many villagers as we can.”

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Papua New Guinea: Level 10, MRDC Haus, Musgrave St., Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea