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Rice farming practical for Year 3 agriculture students

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Year 3 Agriculture students in the rice fields.

PRACTICAL lessons and field trips are a regular feature of learning at PNG UNRE.

Last Friday, 82 Year 3 Agriculture students from the Agriculture Business and Agriculture Production strands took to the rice fields for a hands-on session hosted by the University Farm.

The practical session was part of the *STA 311.2* – *Annual Crop Production* module, which focuses on propagation techniques of both perennial and seasonal crops, teaching students the various farming systems involved throughout the production stages.

Rice farming was selected due to its economic importance and status as a staple food crop in PNG. Its impact on livelihoods and the national economy makes it essential for students to understand how to manage rice production effectively.

Under the guidance of

technical instructor Mr Inia Bunsa, students learned seasonal crop propagation techniques, including land preparation, field lining, and actual transplanting. The focus was on giving students a clear understanding of the key steps required to establish a successful dryland rice crop.

Farm Manager Mr Alex Nugi explained that before fieldwork, students are taught theoretical aspects to give them an understanding of what they will encounter and do on the ground. Learning outcomes from the session will be assessed through field reports submitted by each student.

Mr Nugi said rice farming is an intensive system that demands consideration of environmental factors such as soil type, topography, fertility, and climate. With upland and wetland rice varieties requiring different management techniques, it is important to equip students with practical skills specific to each system.

Mr Nugi emphasized the need for continued support to the University Farm to sustain such practical learning experiences.

"The farm needs support in its efforts to provide industry-relevant knowledge to students. It should not have to improvise all the time. The University's goal is to prepare graduates with the knowledge and skills required by industry and the farm is essential to that mission."

The success of this practical was made possible thanks to the efforts of the Farm Operations staff and students who participated. Moving forward, plans are in place to continue using rice farming as an ongoing practical activity across various modules covering topics like plant anatomy, pest and disease management, farm mechanization, and agribusiness.

PNG UNRE collaborates with FRI to develop Clonal Teak Archive

PNG University of **Natural Resources and** Environment (PNG **UNRE**) is collaborating the Forest with Research Institute (FRI) in Lae. Morobe Province to establish a Clonal Teak Archive aimed at producing higher-quality teak trees.

Mr Sylvester Kulang from the University's Department of Forestry

spent three days at FRI to facilitate the transfer of superior teak clones from UNRE to FRI.

"So far UNRE has produced the best Teak Clones out from the two provenance Trials and one clonal trial established.

"The exchange of the Teak Clones between two institutions would help to develop an archive for cuttings to mass propagate to establish the best quality planting materials," he said.

The initiative is part of a broader Australia Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) project aimed at improving timber supply and



▲ FRI Clonal Teak Archive.

Transplanting of UNRE Teak Clones into Nonmisting boxes.

smallholder livelihoods in Papua New Guinea and Cape York Peninsula through the development of planted forests.

Teak (*Tectona grandis*), a fastgrowing hardwood with strong international demand, is one of the two priority species under study, alongside the rare native sandalwood (*Santalum macgregorii*).

FRI ACIAR Teak Project Coordinator Mr Anton Lata welcomed the collaboration, stating that it would greatly support the production of quality planting stock both now and in the future.



ACIAR Teak Project Leader Mr David Spencer emphasized the significance of the material exchange for the germplasm program shared between the two institutions.

"FRI has much of the clones selected from the best trees in PNG and we are taking the best clones from UNRE to make sure they are captured into

the program. The other ones we are sending from FRI to UNRE can be used for propagation for future activities within the University and the region," Mr Spencer said.

In addition, he is impressed that the Teak project has been successful in the province.

He commended the University for its contribution to the research.

"It's a great success story for ACIAR and for collaborators like UNRE and FRI. The outcome has been terrific," said Mr Spencer.

Empowering youth for marine conservation: The ENB Sea Keepers initiative

IN the coastal communities of East New Britain, the ENB Sea Keepers - a grassroots marine conservation group based in Raluana Village is making . preserving waves in marine ecosystems and empowering local youth.

Founded in 2020 by Emma Oliver, an academic at PNG UNRE, the initiative was established to equip people with knowledge to foster a culture of conservation. Its core focus areas include coral restoration, marine protected area establishment, and environmental education.

One of the initiative's standout activities is the Coral Training and Restoration Workshop held in Ialakua Village. More than 70 participants, including UNRE students and local youth, received hands-on training in coral rehabilitation techniques. The workshop not only delivered practical skills but also nurtured a deeper sense of environmental stewardship.

In addition to its conservation work, the ENB

Sea Keepers have teamed up with organizations like Kada Poroman Microfinance Limited to deliver financial literacy training to community members.

This partnership supports sustainable livelihoods by helping participants manage their finances while also contributing to environmental goals.

The impact of the initiative is also seen in the personal growth of its members. Mikai Homihau, a recent Fisheries graduate, shared how his involvement helped shape his career direction: "ENB Sea Keepers helped me discover my real potential to advocate for the significance of our marine environment," he said.

Next month, ENB Sea Keepers will be conducting a community awareness program to mark World Environment Day, further promoting their message conservation of and sustainable living; and inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards not just in East New Britain but in Papua New Guinea as well.

