

MADE IN PNG

A SPECIAL FEATURE



THE COUNTRY'S PRIDE & JOY

Great things are happening in Papua New Guinea, and in this special feature we celebrate some of the country's manufacturing success stories.

Products made and created in PNG come in many forms, from chocolates and beer, to bridges and bricks.

This PNG ingenuity is derived from a variety of sectors, including smallholder businesses, creative minds working in the fields of fashion and technology, and bigger companies that have become household names.

They include companies like Monier, which employs hundreds of Papua New Guineans and is the biggest manufacturer of construction materials in the country, Trukai Industries, which is a leading supplier of rice, South Pacific Brewery, famous for its SP beers, and Paradise Foods, one of the country's biggest food manufacturers.

On the following pages we go behind the scenes of some of these companies and tell the stories of their remarkable enterprises.



PICTURE: GODFREY KAPTIGAU



THE NATIONAL LAGER OF *Papua New Guinea*

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'BUNGIM YUMI'



STRONG FOUNDATIONS IN PNG

When it comes to construction, Monier is the largest producer, supplier and distributor of construction materials and building products in Papua New Guinea. The products are used in everything from major projects to home renovations.

The Port Moresby based company employs about 300 staff, most of them Papua New Guineans, and has been in business in the country for more than 60 years.

Just look around town, and you'll find somewhere that Monier has been involved, including the LNG Project, APEC Haus, the Hilton Hotel, the ExxonMobil headquarters, several embassy buildings, the John Guise Stadium, and the Kumul overpass.

The name Monier dates to 1887, when Joseph Monier exhibited his inventions of iron mesh-reinforced concrete in the Paris Exposition. The modern day Monier, based in PNG, was established in 1958 and was purchased in 2005 by the late Chief Sir Theophilus G. Constantinou.

Monier operates several divisions, including quarry and sand material supply, ready-mix concrete supply, and finished concrete products. The latter consists of a specialist pre-cast division, a reinforced concrete pipes division, Masonry concrete blocks and a pavers division. Monier also has a specific plastic division known as Monier Water Solutions, which offers a range of water and



Monier is the largest producer of construction materials in PNG.

septic tanks as well as HDPE polyethylene (plastic) pipes. He says that externally, Monier is committed to the community it operates in, providing funding and facilities for a school in Port Moresby, as well as support for Buk Bilong Pikinini.

“Monier products are used in everything from major projects to home renovations.”

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Monier is part of the Constantinou Group, which places healthcare as a high priority for the community. The organisation provides support to Port Moresby General Hospital through the affiliation with the Sir Theo Foundations and has undertaken projects such as the Port Moresby General Hospital car park upgrade and assisting with the installation of the Lady Maria Constantinou Palliative Care Ward, which opened in 2020. These projects allow for the better allocation of hospital funds. During the recent pandemic Constantinou Group contributed its services to the healthcare industry to prepare testing centres around Port Moresby, and also contributed much needed funds to assist with the pandemic response at the Port Moresby General Hospital. ■

THE TOAST OF THE NATION

The South Pacific Brewery (SP) is one of the oldest and best-known companies in Papua New Guinea and the brewery's SP lager is one of its most popular products. The lager, in green cans and brown bottles, first came out on November 26, 1952. It won its first international recognition in 1964 and since then it has won several international Monde Awards, which recognise high quality in consumer goods. Since the 1950s, SP has played a significant role in supporting various community activities, from sports to cultural events, boat races, music



Blast from the past – SP lager as it looked years earlier.

festivals, and even local bands. One of the early sponsorships was for the popular local string band Gwadus. The current slogan for the beer is *bungim yumi*, which means bring us together. The company believes that the national beer does bring Papua new Guineans together to celebrate the great things about the country. “With all its diversity, only a few national brands can actually bring Papua New Guineans together from all walks of life and that is SP Lager,” says SP Brewery Managing Director Ed Weggemans. ■



TRUKAI INDUSTRIES LIMITED

INVESTING IN LOCAL RICE FARMING AND COMMUNITIES IN PNG





PICTURES: SUPPLIED BY PNGFP



The Rakia Gorge bridge in New Zealand is constructed of NuiDeck decking system made by PNGFP (left); the Bulolo Country Club and golf course (this picture); a mess hall made by PNGFP (opposite).

RAISING THE ROOF

PNG Forest Products is a company building PNG and the South Pacific, piece by piece.

If you are standing in a school, a health clinic or workers' quarters in Papua New Guinea, there is a fair chance the building has been made by PNG Forest Products (PNGFP). The Port Moresby based company is the largest supplier of timber housing and infrastructure projects in the South Pacific, delivering more than 10,000 buildings in the region and more than 2000 in PNG, including 1000 PNG school buildings. PNGFP supplies PNG's only kit-set buildings, engineered to PNG and Australian building codes, that are preservative pressure treated to protect from termites and rotting. The company also provides pressure-treated pine timber and plywood, and produces kit homes, modular bridges and bridge decking. The company's Managing Director, Tony Honey, says: "We are producing and

“ PNGFP is the largest supplier of timber housing and infrastructure projects in the South Pacific. ” exporting some innovative and interesting engineered wood products that are value adding to an otherwise basic piece of plywood.” He says modular bridges and decking are being exported to Australia and New Zealand, along with specialised railway bridge re-decking, sound barriers along Australian highways and rail corridors, and

scarf-jointed bus and train floors for Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia. The origins of the company go back to the early 1920s, when Bulolo Gold Dredging Limited (BGD) was developing alluvial mining operations in the Bulolo Valley. To facilitate this large-scale operation, housing was needed in the valley for hundreds of workers and their families. So BGD secured timber permits, established a sawmill and joinery, and set about building a town, complete with school and hospital. By the mid-1930s, eight dredges worked the valley floor, powered by BGD's own hydro-power stations. As the operation grew, so did the town and the need for more timber. To meet this demand, the Forestry Department eventually established a pine



nursery and reforestation program. More than 60,000 pine trees were planted in 1948, and each year thereafter. When the mining operation scaled down, BGD formed Commonwealth New Guinea Timbers Ltd and constructed a plywood factory. Plywood production and the export of the product overseas started in 1954, signalling the birth of a new industry. Today, PNGFP employs about 1300 Papua New Guineans and is committed to building a better future through sustainable manufacturing practices. Timber is sourced from renewable pine plantations managed by PNG Forest Services. Sawdust and wood chip waste from the mills are utilised to power the boilers for the veneer driers and kilns. PNGFP also works in conjunction with the Department of Environment and Conservation to ensure that the best environmental practices are maintained.



As a further commitment to sustainability, the company's manufacturing facilities in Bulolo are powered by its own hydro-power stations, one of which was originally established by the BGD company in the 1930s. Operating three hydro-power stations, with a fourth nearing completion, PNGFP

is the only independent power producer in the country that supplies hydro-power to PNG Power. In Bulolo, PNGFP also operates a supermarket, bakery, butchery, liquor store, hardware store, service station, country club, abattoir, poultry farm and a 600-hectare cattle farm, all servicing the town and surrounding districts. "Our future lies in adding value to our resources, whether it be timber, land or water," says Honey. "Improved recovery from our log supply is essential, as is developing new products for our Pacific region. "Continuing our diversity through power generation, forest products, and poultry and cattle operations develops employment and sustainable income. Continuing reinvestment in our business is the key to our continued viability and the core to our future success," he says. ■

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PNG COFFEE HITS A SWEET SPOT

Mary O’Brien reports that good things are on the brew in PNG.



PNG coffee beans (above);
coffee exporter Elijah Harro (left).

Papua New Guinea coffee is grown on mountain slopes, in rainforests and along fertile valleys. These areas are remote and coffee farmers often must walk for days over rough terrain to the nearest coffee station to sell their produce.

While we all love our daily coffee, few of us realise the hard work that goes into producing it. The best coffee is the arabica variety, grown by small farmers using traditional methods.

PNG coffee is ranked among the best in the world and often scores at the top end of specialty coffee grades, says coffee exporter Elijah Harro.

“People say our coffee has got a very nice taste – it’s balanced, clean and sweet,” he says.

Goroka businessman and farmer Harro was delighted with the reaction to the samples he brought to the Melbourne International Coffee Expo in Australia in September. About 25,000 people visited the trade show.

Harro founded Alpha Coffee, a collective of small farmers from the Eastern Highlands, about seven years ago. About 400 farmers supply beans to the collective.

“We represent our small-holder growers, and we want to assist our growers to find a market in Australia,” he says.

Coffee is grown in 18 of PNG’s 22 provinces and it’s the second-most important agricultural commodity, according to the World Coffee Research organisation. While the country supplies less than one per cent of the world’s coffee exports, it’s the second-largest producer of washed arabica in Asia.

It’s also one of the few cash crops in the country and it offers farmers a path out of poverty. In 2019, about 752,000 bags of coffee were produced.

The Eastern Highlands is the second-largest coffee-growing area after the Western Highlands. Alpha Coffee focuses ➤



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on single-origin arabica, a mix of the arusha, typica and PNG blue mountain varieties. These typically score between 85 and 89 points (which means 'excellent') on the international Q grading system for coffee.

Harro has his own two-hectare farm near Goroka. If 10 farmers each supply 30 bags of coffee, they will have enough to fill a shipping container and supply roasters directly, he explains.

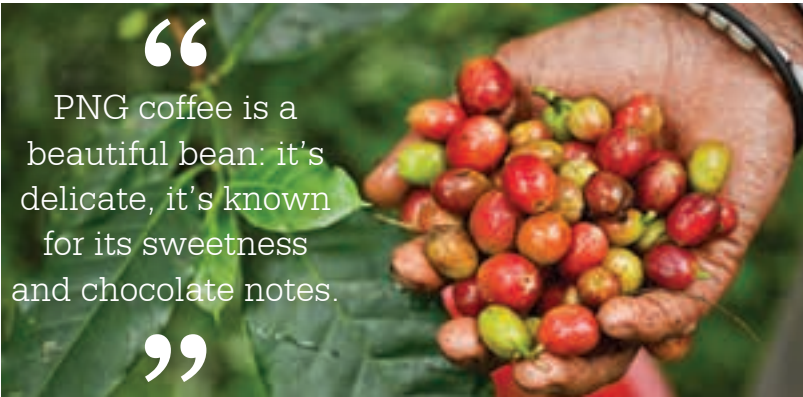
"We need to explore the possibility of getting the small grower to supply the small roaster and the only way to do it is through the consolidation of their stock," Harro says.

If small holders can sell directly to specialty roasters, they will earn between 25 per cent and 35 per cent more, he says.

The money from coffee helps families pay school fees, increases living standards and improves farming techniques.

Almost all PNG coffee is organic. It's organic by default because farmers use traditional methods and cannot afford pesticides or fertilisers. Unfortunately for PNG growers, it's often too expensive to go through the organic certification process, which takes years.

Quality is essential as small roasters are searching for high-grade coffee beans.



Harro says he had samples from 12 farmers for the expo but rejected eight because they didn't make the grade.

There is a strong demand in Australia, the US, Germany and Japan for quality PNG coffee. As Australia is the closest market, it is the most attractive one. Coffee is shipped and arrives within one to two weeks, and this means farmers are paid quickly.

"The future is bright if Papua New Guinea growers can focus on quality and increasing volume over time," says Jeremy Grennell, Australia's general manager of exports at Pacific Trade Invest.

"Coffee feeds a lot of families, and the coffee industry provides a really good income for those people that grow coffee," he says.

As coffee prices are rising globally, Grennell says Papua New Guinea farmers are in a sweet spot.

The other good news is that since August PNG has had a minister for coffee, which is thought to be the first coffee ministry in the world.

Harro hopes his country's coffee will get to more international shows in the future. "PNG coffee has its own story and it's a story we have to sell to be able to get out our message about it," he says. ■

THE ROASTER: GINA DI BRITA

Australian specialty coffee roaster Gina Di Brita is a big fan of Papua New Guinea beans.

Di Brita, who owns Numero Uno Coffee Roasters in St Peter's in Sydney, is also an international coffee judge.

She says she was blown away when she initially sampled some of the Alpha Coffee.

"PNG coffee is a beautiful bean: it's delicate, it's known for its sweetness and chocolate notes," she says. "It's got a balanced acidity."

She believes this coffee is special because of the environment where it's grown, and the traditional methods used.

"It's quite nice as a single origin and it's good as a filter coffee and we can roast it to suit."

Di Brita co-founded the International Women's Coffee Alliance in Australia and won the Eleonora Genovese Australian Coffee Woman of the Year award in 2019.

She travelled to PNG three years ago and formed a connection with the farming communities there.

"I fell in love with the story and the people behind the coffee," she says.

Di Brita, who used to be a tobacco farmer in Australia's Far North Queensland, understands how difficult it is to grow any produce.

"Being an ex-farmer, I really do connect very quickly and passionately with people of the land."

After suffering setbacks and seeing production drop in recent years, PNG coffee is making a comeback, Di Brita believes. Younger baristas and roasters have yet to discover how good PNG coffee can be.

Women play a very important part in the coffee-growing industry, she says. There are many women growers who own their own coffee gardens.

"The women are such a vital presence in every sector of the coffee journey – they really are the backbone of all the coffee regions."

"Some carry bags of coffee on their heads and walk for a couple of days until they get to a local market to sell their coffee; it's extraordinary."



FEEDING THE NATION





LIFTING THE LID

ON PNG'S FAVOURITE CHOCOLATES

Karina Makori, the General Manager of Queen Emma chocolates, tells *Paradise* about the business of making chocolate.

Since starting production in 2016, Queen Emma chocolate has become one of Papua New Guinea's most recognised and loved products. The brand is named after Emma Coe, a Samoan who settled in PNG in 1878, set up large coconut plantations and started growing cocoa. She became so well respected that she

became affectionately known as Queen Emma of New Guinea. Her namesake chocolate is so popular that today 120 tonnes of it is churned out annually by Paradise Foods Limited, one of the biggest food manufacturing companies in PNG. Karina Makori, the General Manager of the company's chocolate operation, says the chocolate is natural, with no added preservatives or deodorising agents.

"We use only best cocoa beans bought directly from smallholder farmers, so when you buy a bar of Queen Emma chocolate you know you are helping PNG growers," she says.

How many different chocolates do you make?

Our current range comes in three flavours: dark, milk and white chocolate. We have four sizes, beginning with a small treat-size 15g to the 140g family sharing block. Then, we have a range of catering products used for pastries and desserts, which are easy to use even for home cooks, such as chocolate chips, chocolate buttons and cocoa powder. And for those who want to make their own yummy chocolates, we have ingredients such as cocoa liquor, cocoa butter and roasted cocoa nibs.

Which chocolate bar is most popular?

The most popular is our white chocolate bar. It's a very different taste

to usual white chocolate, not too sweet, and it is great for ganache. Several leading cake makers use it for wedding cakes.

What's the secret to the success of the chocolate?

I think the success is in the cocoa beans we use. Our Papua New Guinea cocoa is really an explosion of flavours. There's a variety of bitter, sweet and fruity flavour notes.

Are they sold overseas?

We are already exporting bulk cocoa ingredients like cocoa liquor, butter and powder to Australia and New Zealand. Recently we went overseas to scout the international market and we were overwhelmed with the interest shown for our products. We are in the final stages of embarking on expansion of our chocolate factory, so we are excitedly looking forward to having Queen Emma chocolate bars sold soon in supermarkets internationally.

Are all ingredients, such as cocoa, sourced locally?

Yes, it all comes from PNG. We are currently supporting over 2000 farmers in Bougainville, Morobe, Milne Bay, Madang and Central provinces.

How many people are employed making chocolate?

Our team has grown from two part-time staff hand-making and hand-wrapping chocolates in a small room to 35 full-time Papua New Guinean staff. ■



Karina Makori says more than 2000 smallholder farmers in PNG supply cocoa for Queen Emma chocolates.



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