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REPORTS BY DAVID JAMES & LEILANI STEPHENS



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MANUFACTURING

A NATION AT WORK



The manufacturing sector in Papua New Guinea is predominately based on the country's agriculture and resources, or on the ability to gain access to local consumers.

South Pacific (SP) Brewery is an important part of manufacturing in PNG.

SP brands dominate the domestic market. Even the parent company, Heineken, achieves relatively modest sales when compared with SP's locally-produced products, including South Pacific Lager, South Pacific Export Lager, Kundu Lager, Niugini Ice and Paradise Lager.

SP Brewery was a one-brand company in 2001, but as consumer tastes have changed it has expanded its offering.

There are several international companies that are established manufacturers in PNG, including soft drink makers **Coca-Cola** and **Pacific Industries**, which makes the highly popular Gogo Cola, among other drinks and snacks.

Regional food company **Goodman Fielder** has some of its manufacturing operations in PNG.

There are several local PNG



Above: Trukai Industries, the rice producer, is a household name in PNG.

Right: Companies such as Monier and Steel Industries are manufacturing building materials and products in PNG.



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food manufacturers with strong track records, such as **Lae Biscuits** and **Paradise Foods**, which is the oldest food company in PNG and employs hundreds of Papua New Guineans.

The company produces biscuits, snacks and beverages and is also responsible for the Queen Emma chocolate range.

Top left: Thirst-quenching SP Beers.

Top right: Chocolate delights in the Queen Emma range.

Above: RD Tuna, one of PNG's key export companies.

While manufacturing only accounts for 3% of PNG's economy, it employs about half of the workers in the formal sector.

Exporter **New Britain Palm Oil**, for example, is the largest employer in the country, after the government. It has almost 25,500 permanent employees and supports 17,500 smallholder farms.

Processed tuna is another strong export industry, with **RD Tuna Cannery** and **Frabelle** being two of the important players in the sector.

Trukai Industries is the leading supplier of rice in PNG and is a household name in the country.

Not all PNG manufacturing is food and beverage related.

Monier, which is PNG's largest producer of construction and building materials, creates products for road construction projects and concrete for the building industry. Steel fabrication business **Steel Industries**, established 53 years ago, makes and distributes steel building products manufactured in PNG.

Atlas Steel is another major player in the sector.

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TECHNOLOGY

PNG, GETTING CONNECTED

Technology being developed by young and entrepreneurial Papua New Guineans is revolutionising the way things are done around the nation, from the way people shop to the way farmers sell their produce.

PGO!, for example, is PNG's very own DoorDash. The app allows you to track your takeaway food order in real time, from when you place the order to when it's at your doorstep.

Founder and Non-Executive Director, Andrew Kitum, is soon to expand the seamless on-demand delivery experience to include non-



Technology is steering consumers to online shopping.

food vendors, like grocery shops, pharmacies and SMEs.

Slowly edging into the eBay scene is new ecommerce site

Shop Direct PNG. Owner Andy Lapthorne says that, unlike competitors **Jungle** and **Shopsmart PNG**, he wants to upload digital content, too, such as Tok Pisin lessons and *bilum*-weaving tutorials. He has also developed **GoFeedMe**, a free shopping platform for food in PNG. The basic plan allows vendors to access sales reports, data analytics and tools to reach more customers.

ODESH, the first Papua New Guinean online ride-hailing service, is another recent innovation, now connecting taxi drivers and chauffeurs in Port



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A new digital platform called EDidiman is helping farmers track and set prices for their produce.

Moresby with customers in real time.

Small-scale farmers, meanwhile, are benefiting from the **EDidiman** digital market platform developed by Bougainvillean Jordan Becks. It provides a consumer price index that allows farmers to track prices of cash crops, so they may be able

to achieve best value for their product.

AgriKonnekt, another agri-tech startup, is being trialled in Central Province before it rolls out to the rest of the country. The platform provides a logistical arm, connecting farmers with transport to carry their produce. "We want

to sign up SME trucks (for the trial) that are already servicing routes going into Kairuku," says AgriKonnekt's Chief Technical Officer, Victor Tekwie.

Agbook, based in East New Britain, is offering a different kind of help to farmers: financial literacy programs. "This will help them transition from subsistence gardening to running a small, profitable business," says owner Nicole Isifu. Training is facilitated through workshops and self-paced videos.

Agbook will also be assisting PNG Agriculture Company in rolling out **AgUnity**, a blockchain-based app that allows farmers to make and receive payments through scanning QR codes, exchange information with buyers, and get a higher share of the profit.

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FOOD & AGRI-BUSINESS

DELICIOUS PROSPECTS



During this COVID-19 era, there has been a marked shift in food consumption to locally made. Smallholder Papua New Guinean businesses are innovating products ordinarily of the imported variety, such as peanut butter, jams, rice and wine.

Gudi Foods' organic peanut butter from Milne Bay can't keep up with the feverish demand of its customers. Even its roast nuts – seasoned with sea salt, chilli garlic and salted caramel – sell out.

Yanua Kitchen Marmalades, also Alotau-based, but already a household name for all-natural spreads, may soon add to its range a coconut jam.

Of course, there are older players like **Highlands Honey**, which is packed and distributed by **New Guinea Fruit Company Limited**; they started out in 1997 making ginger, tamarillo, elderberry and strawberry wines. A serious honey alternative is **Mountain Honey** from Goroka,



Top: Jams from Yanua Kitchen.

Above: Highlands Honey, a PNG stalwart.

praised as this year's best honey at the SME Awards.

A 30 member-strong cooperative society in Hisiu, Central, is selling homegrown medium-grain

Kairuku red, purple and white rice. Red and purple rice contain more antioxidants than brown rice. The society also makes herbal teas such as moringa and lemongrass, aloe vera juice and ground turmeric.

An up-and-coming coffee brand, **Central Mamina**, showcased its beans at North America's largest specialty coffee expo in October. This arabica coffee is from Koiari and Goilala.

Owner Nellie Varmari, dubbed the 'Coffee Queen' by Western coffee culturists, "grew up in the Highlands playing among coffee cherries," so her nose for quality is so fine-tuned she can tell if any of the 40,000 farmers that supply her have used fertiliser.

Up in Karamui, Simbu, cocoa farming is breaking new ground, with a variety of dark chocolate. Bean samples in 2019 ranked in the top 50 at the World Cocoa of Excellence Show. The beans were noted for their smoky taste.

CASE STUDY

FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

The Friends in Agriculture Cooperative Society is making wine out of homegrown red grapes in the coastal village of Hisiu in Kairuku. "Everyone was so surprised grapes could be grown here on sandy soil," Chairman Pastor Ikupu Vaki says with a laugh.

His 10-metre x 2-metre vineyard started bearing fruit in 2014, after his son brought him his first grape seeds from Port Moresby. Initially he sold single bunches for K4 or K5 to villagers at the barter system market every Saturday. Kairuku is one of the districts in the country still practising this traditional system of trade: vendors from nearby Mekeo villages go to



Hisiu to exchange their fish for garden food, betel nut, and mustard.

Only three years ago Pastor Ikupu started experimenting with making red wine: picking only the ripest grapes, he cleaned them thoroughly, crushed them, added a bit of sugar then allowed them to ferment for 21 days before straining the liquid and rebottling for two to three months more.

Some of the wine is sold for K10 per bottle and some is given to the local Christian Life Centre Church for communion. The pastor plans to extend his plantation, scale up, and get licensed to start selling to major town centres.

THE ARTS

CREATIVE MINDS AT WORK

Papua New Guinea is home to world-class creative minds, be they fashion designers, artists, jewellers or other artisans.

Tabu Warupi was named Designer of the Year for her seductive bird of paradise-inspired collection at the inaugural PNG Fashion Awards (see our full story on Page 34). Warupi was just one of many talented PNG designers to be showcased at the awards and accompanying runway show.

Jewellery makers, not often counted among serious fashionistas, are also making strides, with **Miss Ray Jewellery** growing an 3000-strong following on Instagram with her handmade

clay earrings.

For accessories with a pandanus bent, there's **Faumori** ('pandanus girl' in the Toaripi dialect), also on Instagram. She sells woven clutches, table runners, coasters, and wall hangings as well.

Some students from Sydney's Australian Film Television and Radio School with ties to PNG are putting together a short film called **Pasifika Drift**. It's about a young multiracial PNG dad who delivers a stolen car to some bad people on the same night his girlfriend goes into labour.

"There are some surreal elements incorporating traditional dance and music," says director Alana Hicks, who also wrote the award-winning short **Chicken** in 2019, based on her own experiences growing up as a migrant in Australia.

In the fine art space, the paintings of Milne Bay artist **Noah Kawatalu** have been showcased at the National Contemporary Arts Exhibition.

Swapping a paintbrush for a stylus, **Shawk23 Design** (pictured) and **Media** are fusing traditional culture with digital art in

brand collaborations. The Moana-esque designs have been used for everything from uniforms to commercials for clients like NCDC and Paradise Foods.



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