



HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY
PAPUA NEW GUINEA
16th SEPTEMBER



Golden Jubilee, Growing Futures: Smallholders at the Heart of PNG's Progress

Zifasing VOP Farmers Celebrate First Oil Palm Harvest

Smallholder farmers from the Zifasing Village Oil Palm (VOP) Project celebrated a milestone on 21 September 2024 with **their first harvest of Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB) weighing 5.3 tonnes**. Located in Wampar LLG, Morobe Province, the Project began in 2016 with support from NBPOL, when several clans voluntarily committed to oil palm planting.

In October 2021, the initiative was formalised under a Clan Land Use Agreement (CLUA), giving each farmer a 2-hectare block. Today, **more than 24 farmers from Orogawi and Yadzu customary lands** are harvesting and selling their crops to NBPOL's Erap Mill in Markham Valley.



Local land chief Kra Owaf shared, "I am satisfied that oil palm crop has finally been produced from our customary land. A few years ago, we never thought it would be possible to grow oil palm here to generate income".

Farmers are especially encouraged by the **regular fortnightly income**, which is improving livelihoods and stimulating local economic activities. The success of this smallholder scheme has also sparked growing interest in oil palm expansion among other landowners within Zifasing and across the wider Markham Valley.

"As Papua New Guinea marks its 50th year of Independence, smallholder farmers remain at the heart of our nation's progress. Their resilience and entrepreneurship show that oil palm is more than just a crop - it is a pathway to prosperity, education, and stronger communities. With NBPOL's support and commitment to sustainability, smallholders are helping power our mills, strengthen our economy, and shape a future of shared growth for the next fifty years and beyond."
-Nik Maziah, CEO NBPOL



New Britain Palm Oil

From Banking to Oil Palm – The Journey of Ezekiel Asimba



At 76 years old, Mr. Ezekiel Asimba displays the energy and drive of a man half his age. Today, he manages **22 hectares** of oil palm under the Popondetta Oil Palm Project in the Northern Province, selling his crop to Higaturu Oil Palm's mill. Still eager to expand, he continues to look for new opportunities.

Born in Kendetta Village at the foothills of Mount Lamington, Mr. Asimba was among PNG's first national bankers. In the early 1970s, he worked with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Port Moresby, trained at the Port Moresby Bankers College, and studied alongside the late Sir Mekere Morauta. He later returned to his hometown, as the first national Banking Officer in Popondetta.

In 1976 however, he left banking to pursue his passion for the land. His early ventures in cattle and spices proved unsustainable as he explained, "these commodities did not have a guaranteed market within the province". In year 2000, Mr Asimba planted his first 8 hectares across 4 oil palm blocks and has never looked back.

With his wife, **Frances**, Mr. Asimba raised nine children, 5 daughters and 4 sons, **funded their education up to university level through oil palm income**. Today, he is also building a self-contained Guest House on his block, further extending his entrepreneurial vision.

A strong advocate for the industry, Mr. Asimba believes that **oil palm is PNG's pathway to prosperity**. He calls on the Government to give the sector its full support and to invest in downstream processing, pointing to Malaysia as a model of how oil palm has powered national development.

Oil Palm Brings Prosperity to Namasalang Village

Situated on the West Coast of Kavieng District in New Ireland Province, the village of Namasalang is home to a farmer, Augustine Patan and his 1-hectare oil palm block, planted in 2012.

Augustine proudly shares how this small block has improved his family's living standards. Even in an area with limited access to basic services, such as poor road conditions, his trust in oil palm has never wavered. With a good understanding of field husbandry practices and careful management, his block has consistently produced about 20 tonnes of FFB each year.

A gentleman in his 50s and a father of nine, Augustine recounts with pride how the income from his 1-hectare oil palm block has enabled him to pay for his children's education and build a permanent home for his family. His oil palm earnings are paid into his bank account, while his cocoa and vanilla plots provide ready cash. Pineapples and fruits add to the income when in season, and the mangrove forest just 100 metres from his block supplies fish, shells, and mud crab (locally known as aluang), further supporting the household.

Augustine's success has made him a respected leader in his community. His story has shown others in Namasalang that oil palm is not just a crop, but a pathway to prosperity and a stronger future.

