



National Agricultural Research Institute

## Vanilla Industry Issues



**NARI TOKTOK  
KER019E**

**December 2003**

Copies of this toktok and further information  
can be obtained from:



**National Agricultural Research Institute  
Wet Lowlands Islands Programme**

Lowlands Agricultural Experiment Station  
LAES Keravat

### **Information Centre**

P.O. Box 204  
Kokopo  
East New Britain Province  
Papua New Guinea

Telephone: (675) 983 9200 / 9145

Facsimile: (675) 983 9129

Email: [outreach.k@global.net.pg](mailto:outreach.k@global.net.pg)

[narilli@global.net.pg](mailto:narilli@global.net.pg)

## **THE INSTITUTE**

**The National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI)** was established by an Act of the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea in July 1996 as a publicly funded, statutory research organisation, to conduct applied and development oriented research on food crops, alternative food and cash crops, livestock and resource management issues. Besides applied and adaptive research, NARI is responsible for providing authoritative technical, analytical and diagnostic services and up-to-date information to the entire agriculture sector in PNG. The major targets are the smallholder semi-commercial farmers in the country.

The mission of NARI is to contribute, through applied research and technical services, to the development of the agriculture sector and realisation of the national goals by identifying, adapting and transferring agricultural technologies and information, so as to:

- Enhance the productivity, efficiency and sustainability of the smallholder agriculture, and
- Improve farmer income, food security and welfare of Papua New Guineans and the nation.

**This toktok was written by Gadi Ling, NARI Wet Lowlands Islands Programme in June 2003. The material presented is based on the best information available at the time of printing (December 2003).**

This problem not only reduces the income to growers but also has serious implications for the quality of cured vanilla in PNG and PNG's reputation as a vanilla producer on the world market.

## **Recommendations**

- **A code of practice needs to be developed for the PNG vanilla industry.**
- **Good quality standards and controls should be developed for all aspects of the vanilla industry to cover growers, buyers, curers, and exporters.**
- **Vanilla growers, curers and exporters need to be registered and trained as part of the registration process.**
- **A regulatory body has to be established to implement the registration of growers, curers and exporters and to monitor and implement the quality standards and controls.**

NARI has the capacity, expertise and willingness to provide information and training services for trainers in relation to all aspects of the code of practice.

areas the beans are stolen before they are mature and ready to be harvested by the grower.

Other countries, which have successfully established vanilla industries, have had similar vanilla industry issues. These countries introduced a code of practice and quality standards for their vanilla industry. These have included:

- **Registration and an identification system for vanilla growers.** Details of the location, the number and age of plants of each type of vanilla are recorded and verified by the registering authorities on an annual basis. Individual vanilla beans can be tattooed with a farmer's identification.

- **Registration of all processors and buyers.** They keep records of their vanilla purchases against the grower's registration identification number. Those records are also used to monitor production. Buyers are not allowed to buy immature beans and can only buy from registered growers to reduce stealing.

Stealing is one reason why a lot of vanilla is harvested while it is immature in PNG. The beans are either harvested green by the thieves and/or the growers are harvesting the immature beans, because they are scared they will be stolen if they are left to mature properly.

## Vanilla Industry Issues

### 1. Code of Practice for the PNG Vanilla Industry

Currently vanilla produced in PNG is generally of poor and variable quality. It is the harvesting and curing stages that most critically affect the final vanilla quality. The poor quality of PNG vanilla is partly because there is no code of practice (guidelines for growing, harvesting, curing, selling and quality standards) for growers, curers, buyers and exporters to follow. At present, there are people processing and exporting vanilla who have only limited knowledge about vanilla quality.

Exporters need to know the quality specifications of the vanilla market and their buyers' requirements. Good quality standards and controls need to be developed for all aspects of the vanilla industry to cover growers, buyers, curers, and exporters.

A code of practice for the PNG vanilla industry needs to be developed. As part of this growers need to be trained in agronomic techniques so they can produce good quality vanilla beans and harvest beans when ripe. Vanilla curers need to be trained in all aspects of vanilla curing and a registration system should be used to ensure all curers are adequately trained.

Vanilla curers also control the quality of the vanilla received from the farmers. If curers continue to buy immature vanilla beans, then the growers will continue to harvest immature beans.

The ultimate quality controller is the exporter. If exporters are willing to pay a lot of money for poor quality vanilla, there will be no incentives for farmers or curers to improve their quality. Exporters have to be aware of the vanilla quality they buy and pay a better price for good quality vanilla.

## **2. Vanilla Quality Specifications**

After curing the vanilla beans are ready to be sold. Vanilla beans for different markets and end uses will have different specifications, for example in the moisture content, the method of packaging or the size of bundles. Different buyers may require different specifications for vanilla depending on the intended end use of the beans.

For example, the whole bean market requires vanilla beans with a moisture content of about 20%. The essence market generally requires lower moisture content of about 17%. If it is necessary to reduce the moisture content to suit a buyer, it is best done after the curing.

Currently curers are selling vanilla with only limited knowledge of what exporters really require.

Exporters have to provide vanilla curers with detailed specifications and prices for the vanilla they want to buy such as:

- **moisture content of cured beans**
- **quality**
- **bean size**
- **bundle size**
- **material for bundle ties**
- **packaging**
- **minimum quantity of beans needed for sale**

Additional requirements may occur. The buyer has the ability to refuse or downgrade vanilla beans, if they are not the standard required.

**Information about buyers can be obtained from your nearest DAL, DPI or NARI office or from didiman stores.**

## **3. Vanilla Bean Stealing**

Stealing has become a major problem for vanilla growers throughout the country. Measures need to be put in place to limit stealing.

The problem is so bad that a number of good vanilla growers have stopped growing vanilla. In most