Support for sustainable crops

By MOFFAT MAMU

LAST week a new tomato variety code named MAL-SI/LE/01/14 was officially launched in Honiara.

It is a new non-GMO variety that was bred in Taiwan.

The project is part of a global vegetable project which was started a few years ago to locate new tomato and capsicum varieties that can thrive in Solomon Islands climate.

Dr Jaw-Fen Wang, who did the research and development work, launched the variety in her presence last Tuesday.

She was happy with the collaboration with other local farmers in their communities.

Speaking to the Solomon Star during the launching, she said the tomato variety does not grow soft during transport from farm to market and can withstand the harsh weather condition.

She said its important that farmers planted the seeds in order for others to plant the tomatoes.

One of the farmers Rose Sese said she was one of those who recommended the tomato variety because the seeds can grow well in any soil, sweet to eat, can not go soft during transportation from farm to market and can withstand the weather condition.

Dr Jaw-Fen who is a plant pathologist said her organisation is looking at other tomato varieties for others to plant the tomato.

The acting director of agriculture research department Helen Tsatsia with acting permanent secretary of MAL Jimmy Saelea with the sample of the tomato.

At the launching last week seeds have been distributed to the farmers in and around Honiara as well as to Guadalcanal farmers.

The average weight is approximately 190 grams.

The acting director of agriculture research department Helen Tsatsia at the launching last week said MAL is encouraging such crop production and will continue on with launching of other vegetable varieties in the future.

She said such recommended seed is what the farmers who plant and not which are sold in foreign languages.

She acknowledged the partnership between MAL and AVRDC for the success of the project.

About the tomato

MAL-SI/LE/01/14 former known as CLN2585D is a determinate, fresh market tomato line bred at AVRDC – The World Vegetable Centre in Taiwan.

Development of the variety was carried out in AVRDC fields and green houses using standard pedigree method. It is non-genetic modified organisation (GMO) variety.

It is a strong plant that produces ripe tomatoes after 64 days after transplanting in Solomon Islands. Fruits are plum to square-round in shape with a light green shoulder. Generally, the intern fruit colour when ripe is dark red.

The average weight is approximately 190 grams.

The project in the Pacific is to strengthen the capacity of farmers to support sustainable intensification programs.

It means they identify high value crops and vegetables which can support cash crop and generate income for the farmers.

And in Solomon Islands tomato and capsicum are two crops being identified so far.

The selection of the tomato was done after years of research and trials in the country.

The tomatoes were put on trial in a number of farms around Honiara and Guadalcanal and was finally recommended by MAL.

The tomato variety was sourced from Taiwan.

A new recommended variety for capsicum will be released later after trials are being completed. The launching for this new variety will be announced later.

The next crop to be put on trial is chilli.

The acting director of agriculture research department Helen Tsatsia with the new recommended tomato variety.

Local farmer George Nivitala with samples of the tomato plant.

www.solomonstarnews.com