

# 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 was formerly known as CLN2585D and now recognised by the ministry of agriculture and livestock (MAL).

It was recommended for its best quality and can grow in our climate and in any soil.

The project was made possible through a combination effort of MAL and the World Vegetable Centre – AVRDC based in Taiwan.

Global team leader of the centre, Dr Jaw-Fen Wang, who was also present at the launching, said she was pleased with the outcome of the research and the successful launching.

She said this new tomato variety should allow farmers to grow more tomatoes and also sell to the market to improve their income.

Not only that but to ensure more people to have access to tomatoes for consumption.

She encouraged the farmers to share the seeds with other local farmers in their communities.

Speaking to the Solomon Star in an interview last Tuesday during the launching Dr Jaw-Fen said she was happy with the collaboration.

AVRDC started working in the country since 2007 and has supported a lot of farmers.

Its an international non-profit organisation which conducts research and development on crop production and consumption.

Its aim is to support agriculture and decrease poverty while enhancing vegetable production and consumption around the globe.

AVRDC has branches in Asia, Pacific and Africa.

In the pacific it has only two offices in Honiara and Fiji.

The project in the pacific is to strengthen the capacity of the farmers to support sustainable intensification of crops.

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



Dr Jaw-Fen Wang, left, with acting permanent secretary of MAL Jimmy Saelea with the sample of the tomato.

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.

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

Dr Jaw-Fen said its important that farmers shared 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, cannot go soft during transportation from farm to market and can withstand the weather condition here.

She said seeds can be kept and used again.

Dr Jaw-Fen said her organisation will ensure that

seeds will be made available through a network of group and private sectors.

Dr Jaw-Fen who is a plant pathologist by profession said her organisation is looking at ongoing trials of vegetables which can be turned into cash crops just like the tomato.

She described the launching of the new tomato variety last week, as a historical event and hopes to see more varieties being launched in the years to come.

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 formerly 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 56 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. From a field trial on farmer's field in Guadalcanal, the average marketable yield was 16 tonnes per hectare.

It also showed some resistance to bacterial wilt, Tobacco mosaic virus, race 1 of the fusarium wilt pathogen and tomato yellow leaf curl disease.



Local farmer George Ri'ifalu with samples of the tomato plant.



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