PRESS RELEASE

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AGRICULTURE ASSISTANCE FOR FLOOD-AFFECTED

Farmers who lost crops and livestock during April’s flash floods are beginning to receive assistance under one of several different programs.

Those who need the most help are being prioritized, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL).

Over the long term, MAL will try and help everyone whose livelihoods were damaged or destroyed.

“Right now we want to make sure the worst-affected farmers receive the assistance that will help them the most,” MAL Extension Services Director Michael Ho’ota said.

The UNDP-funded SWoCK (Strongem Woaka lo Community for Kaikai) programme will aim to address those identified as being most in need.

“We will be prioritising the activity most important to their livelihood,” Mr Ho’ota said.

“It does not make sense to just deliver seeds to everyone, for example, because not everyone’s livelihood depends on crop farming.”

“If you’re a cocoa farmer and we set you up with chickens, it will be no good to you. We need to make sure people receive the right thing,” he said.

To identify the hardest-hit farmers, and what assistance will help them the most, MAL is working from lists from their initial assessment, carried out 12-20 April, as well as lists from NGOs who helped with these surveys.

Mr Ho’ota said MAL is currently finalising this list, and aims to start distributing materials this month.

Some farmers are involved in more than one enterprise, such as pigs, chickens and food crops.

These farmers will receive help with the activity that they benefit from the most, said Mr Ho’ota.
“By addressing their greatest need, we will help make sure the communities are back on their feet more quickly.”

MAL is working on ways to assist those who are not helped under this year’s SWoCK programme, according to Mr Ho’ota, so eligible people may be helped next year under a different programme.

Mr Ho’ota said MAL would try to make sure all assistance programmes are similar in their design, and give similar assistance to those deemed to be in need.

These programmes form part of the overall livelihood and food security recovery work for those affected by the April floods.

They follow on from the distribution of livestock feed immediately after the flood, during the initial relief phase. This was the first activity MAL rolled out, with the assistance of the World Society for the Protection of Animals, which donated $150,000.

Many of these government-funded activities are benefitting disaster-affected areas, said Mr Ho’ota.

These government-funded activities include setting people up with livestock projects – for example a piggery, a poultry house, floriculture vegetable gardens, root crops, cocoa, and coconuts.

To make sure there is enough to help as many people in need as possible, Mr Ho’ota said MAL would like to make sure people understand they can not receive help under more than one programme.

“We have to try and help everybody. If people have received assistance already, they must think of their neighbours who have not received any assistance yet,” he said.

“People can not keep all the assistance for themselves, we need to be fair.”

FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Michael Ho’ota
Director Extension Services
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
+677 27987 / +677 741 3847
michaeltapa@hotmail.com