



FOOD SECURITY SITUATION REPORT

New Ireland, Manus and Western Province

Sitrep No: 07-2020

Reporting Period: October - December 2020

Situational overview of COVID-19 in PNG

As of 13 December 2020, there are now 725 COVID-19 confirmed cases and eight deaths in Papua New Guinea. Of these cases, 601 patients have recovered, and 76 cases are still active. The eighth death was of a 49-year-old male from West New Britain Province. To date, COVID-19 cases have been reported in 16 provinces.¹

Table 1. COVID-19 cases in PNG

Province	Total
National Capital District	361
Western	204
West New Britain	103
Eastern Highlands	13
Central	9
Western Highlands	9
Morobe	6
East New Britain	5
East Sepik	3
Enga	3
Milne Bay	2
New Ireland	2
West Sepik	2
Southern Highlands	1
Autonomous Region of Bougainville	1
Hela	1
Total	725

The 12 National Pandemic Measures are still in effect. The following table provides a brief description of the 12 National Pandemic Measures.

Table 2. PNG COVID-19 National Pandemic Measures

Measure	Description
Measure 1	Revocation of All Previous Measures
Measure 2	International Travel Measures
Measure 3	Domestic Travel Measures
Measure 4	Provincial Coordination Measures
Measure 5	Burial of Deceased Persons Measure
Measure 6	Customs Duties Measures
Measure 7	COVID-19 Testing Measures
Measure 8	COVID-19 Surveillance and Testing Measures
Measure 9	Business and Social Measures
Measure 10	Mandatory Mask Wearing - Port Moresby
Measure 11	Public Transport – Port Moresby
Measure 12	COVID-19 Vaccination, Testing and Trials

New Ireland COVID-19 Measures

The New Ireland Provincial Taskforce has, on August 10, 2020, issued eight COVID-19 Provincial Measures. The table below provides a brief description of the eight Provincial Measures.

Table 3. New Ireland COVID-19 Measures

Measure	Description
Measure 1	Transportation: Air, road and sea transportation
Measure 2	Health
Measure 3	Schools
Measure 4	Markets: Town markets and

¹ Papua New Guinea Joint Agency Task Force National Control Centre for COVID-19 (2020). <https://covid19.info.gov.pg/>. Date accessed: 15 December 2020.

	Betel nut markets
Measure 5	Other Essential Services: Freight services, postal services, airlines, port services, fuel suppliers, security services, communication services and national judiciary services
Measure 6	Supermarkets/Shops and Hotels
Measure 7	Churches
Measure 8	Enforcement of New Ireland Government Laws

Manus COVID-19 Management Control and Prevention Measures

- Manus Province has no COVID-19 cases to date. Hence, for Manus, the National Controller, David Manning, issued measures for *COVID-19 Management Control and Prevention* on 20 July to control the spread of the virus into the province. Generally, the measures were for workplace strategies to prevent COVID-19 amongst staff and clients; emergency measures relating to work environment and movement; Manus provincial administration staff or public servant conduct measures; private sector and business house measures; and domestic travel by air and sea.

Impact on food supply and livelihoods

- The **Kavieng town market** was closed on 24 March 2020, following the nationwide lockdown and reopened in early September 2020.
- During the lockdown, and State of Emergency period (SOE) (which ended in early June) after the 14-day lockdown, the restrictions were enforced in the Province, not allowing transport in and out of **Kavieng** and Namatanai Districts, but only allowing for essential services.
- This resulted in a dramatic decrease in the supply of fresh produce and fish to **Kavieng**, affecting the food supply chain.

- However, after the SOE period, transport restrictions have been relaxed but the main market closure up till early September caused difficulty for fresh producers and fishers, especially fishers from the coastal areas and islands in Kavieng District, and fresh producers from the Lelet Plateau in Central New Ireland who are the main suppliers of fresh produce (especially vegetables), to sell their goods.
- The supply of fresh produce and fish to **Kavieng** town and peri urban residents is greatly affected and reduced as a consequence of the market closure. As a result of the main market closure, market vendors have been forced to sell their food goods outside of **Kavieng** Town in small roadside markets in peri-urban areas, causing an increase in roadside markets. This has caused urban residents to make their way out of town to look for fresh food, which is a costly exercise.
- An assessment², conducted during the SOE period, on the impacts of COVID-19 on fishing and coastal communities in New Ireland Province, identified the government measures and restrictions as major a disturbance affecting the communities' food security. The communities were using pre-existing food security safety nets during this COVID-19 crisis, such as engaging in sago production as sago can be preserved for long periods without undergoing spoilage, and some practicing barter trade of fish with other communities for fresh produce.



Figure 1: Chickens were substituted with Ducks

- There have also been reports of an increase in households in **Kavieng** District, especially peri urban

² LMMA Network, PNGCLMA and WCS-PNG. (2020).
COVID19 Update #5: PNG. 16 July 2020. LMMA Network.

areas of Kavieng Town, cultivating food gardens in response to food shortage to their households during and after the lockdown and SOE periods.

- Apart from the impacts of COVID-19, before the lockdown, there were reports from people in rural areas in **Kavieng** District, of wild animals (such as birds) changing their feeding habits and diets to feed on food crops cultivated by villages, such as cassava. Also, the rural people have reported that the feeding habit of wild boars have been more aggressive than usual in recent years. This was reported to be linked to human activities, such as gardening and housing, affecting these animals' habitats, thus, impacting their feeding habits.
- In **Manus Province**, the major impacts of COVID-19 on food supply to households in Lorengau town and peri urban areas occurred during the 14-day lockdown period which began on 24 March 2020. This was mostly due to measures on the limitation of trading days and hours of shops and food markets, including the **Lorengau** town market.
- Social distancing amongst vendors in the Lorengau market, and road and sea PMV passenger capacity limitations were imposed by the **Manus** Provincial Government and local police in accordance with the national emergency orders issued by the PNG Government during the lockdown period.
- Shops and markets had their trading days reduced to Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays only, and most supermarkets were closed early at 4pm.
- These measures caused decline in food supply to households in Lorengau town, Los Negros Island, rural areas of mainland **Manus** Island, islands and outer atolls. The settlement population of Lorengau town were the most impacted as they rely on income from informal trade, especially from the market sale of foods and other goods, to purchase food from shops for consumption.
- The **Lorengau town** market and ward had a decline in food supply, especially of vegetables and fish, as a result of these measures.
- The transport restrictions greatly affected fishers and fresh producers from both the mainland and surrounding and outer islands to access **Lorengau town**, which is a central trading hub in **Manus** Province, to earn daily income, hence, affected the

fishers and fresh producers' food supply and intake during the lockdown.

- It was reported that during the 14-day lockdown, most households, both in urban and rural areas of Manus Island, resorted to backyard gardening to sustain their food intake. Also, the working-class population, including public servants, had to do backyard gardening as the measures affected their access to food. As a result of the increase in back yard gardening, there is now an increase of vegetables into the **Lorengau** market.



Figure 2: Road side market assessment by FAO staff

- The main suppliers of fresh produce, especially vegetables, fruits and peanuts, to the Lorengau Town market and ward markets, are from the Lou and Baluan islands, which have highly fertile volcanic soil. Also, people from the rural areas of the **Manus** Island supply Lorengau with fresh produce.

Impact on food safety and trade

- The COVID-19 restriction on transport during the lockdown and SOE, main market closure greatly impacted the income generation of fresh producers, fishers, and fresh produce resellers in **New Ireland**.
- Main market vendors, mostly women, were forced to sell their fresh produce at the roadside markets and expressed that there had been a great decrease in their supply of fresh produce, mainly from the Lelet Plateau wholesalers. Also, there were reports of fishers from the *Tigak* group of islands suffering from income loss as they mostly depend on the sale of their catch for income to sustain their livelihoods.
- Fishers from Kavieng district were severely affected as most of them (mostly women) sell their catch at

the main market. They have suffered greatly from income loss due to the main market closure.

- There were no significant changes in fresh produce prices in roadside markets, however, there were reports of decrease in the quantity of food sold as per the usual price, such as bundled greens and sweet potato heaps, and decrease in the quality of greens sold.
- Roadside market vendors who sell fresh produce, mostly greens, sweet potato, cassava, tomato, ginger, among other vegetables, expressed that they are now earning less income than they usually do before the lockdown in **Kavieng**. Some of the vendors experienced total income loss during the lockdown and SOE.
- During the lockdown, most hotels, restaurants and kaikai bars were closed. This had a negative impact on their revenue. Also, some shops and supermarkets had to reduce their trading hours.
- There were reports of some shops repackaging frozen chicken products. There were also reports of rice prices increasing in a shop in Namatanai district. The Independent Consumer and Competition Commission stepped in to investigate this issue.
- The lockdown in **Manus Province** greatly affected the income of mostly market vendors who sell their fresh produce and fish in the Lorengau town market and ward markets. Amongst these group are people from settlements in the town area, people from peri-urban areas, and fresh producers from rural Islands, Lou and Baluan Islands. As a result, most of these people experienced income loss, and some even total income loss, which again, also affected their ability to procure food.
- In **Lorengau** Town, the prices of some foods sold in markets and shops are relatively higher than those sold in other provinces, for example, a can of 340 grams Ox and Palm corned beef sold at the usual K12 retail price, is sold at K18 in some shops in Lorengau. This is due to the high costs of operating a business in Manus Province because of high logistics and transport costs in shipping and air transport to the province. With the restrictions, the corned beef price increased further to K20
- As a result of high business operating costs in Manus, water transport/PMV cost remain a pre-existing issue affecting fishers and fresh producers from

surrounding and outer islands of Manus, especially Lou and Baluan Islands, who bring their goods to sell at the **Lorengau** Town market and ward markets. This is because the price of fuel (zoom) sold on the islands is high, around K25 per gallon in Lou, resulting in higher passenger fares from the islands, for example K30 per person from Lou. This in turn affects the price of food, especially vegetables, sold by vendors from the islands, in **Lorengau**.

For example, sweet potato and cassava usually sold in heaps in other Provincial markets are sold per tuber at around K1 and K2, and even K6. The price of vegetables sold by market vendors from the mainland were observed to be lower and sold in relatively larger quantity than those from Lou and Baluan.

Figure 3: Balaun women selling fresh food at



Lorengau Market

- Food safety in **Lorengau** has become a concern for the informal caterers and their customers. Mothers have become aware and are taking measures to ensure the food they prepare and sell are packed safely in plastic and Styrofoam packages.
- However, there still needs to be more awareness into food safety as some cooked food seller are turning back to selling food without packaging, for example, those selling mumu sago, mumu cassava, fried fish, and a few other cooked foods.

Impact of COVID-19 measures on cocoa and copra, and other cash crops

- In **New Ireland**, there were no restrictions on the export of cash crops, however, decrease in buying

prices and measures on government shipment affected revenue of businesses and income generation of farmers.

- Cocoa and Copra are some of the main generators for household income in the province. There were no reports of major impacts on cocoa and copra production in New Ireland. However, there were reports of cocoa and copra buying prices decrease during and after the lockdown and SOE. In this respect, cocoa was mostly impacted.
- Cocoa wet bean prices dropped from around K2 to K1.50 per kilogram, and price of a standard (60 kilogram) bag of dried cocoa beans dropped from around K346 per bag to K280 per bag. This has impacted cocoa farmers.
- There is currently only one cocoa buyer and exporter in New Ireland Province, Emirau Marine Products Limited. Copra farmers were allowed travel passes during the lockdown and SOE to transport their copra to sell in Kavieng.
- In New Ireland, there is only one cocoa and copra buyer and exporter, Emirau Marine Products. As a result, all buying prices for both cash crops are set by the company. Coffee is also produced in the Province. There is an estimated 11,000 Robusta and 22,000 Arabica coffee plants planted on the mainland of New Ireland. The production of coffee has not been impacted greatly, however, during the lockdown and SOE, the vessel restrictions to transport the coffee out of the province has caused the harvested coffee to lose its quality overtime. There is a new coffee factory undergoing establishment in East New Britain to alleviate this problem.
- As a result of food shortage to the households of cocoa and coffee farmers, due to the effects of COVID-19 measures, there have been reports of these farmers leaving cocoa and coffee and practicing food crop production to support their households' food supply and consumption.



Figure 4: Green leaves were in abundance during lock down when markets closed.

- Emirau Marine Products Limited reported no major impacts on their supply of cocoa and copra. Although, transport restriction had a slight impact on their supply of cocoa from local farmers, the only major impact was on their cocoa and copra buying prices, which reduced significantly as result of international markets buying prices decreasing by around 30 to 40 percent.
- The 14-day quarantine on cargo ships during the lockdown and SOE slowed down exports from Emirau and affected the quality of cocoa and copra exported.
- The company also exports aluminum and seashells. These were also affected due to decrease in overseas buying prices.
- As for oil palm, there are no reports of COVID-19 impacts to oil palm production and export.
- Logging operation were shut down during the lockdown due to restrictions on COVID-19 international travel and health reasons.
- Also, there was an increase in the interest of rice production among rural communities in the Province after the lockdown.
- The current major project conducted by the New Ireland Department of Primary Industries is the cocoa rehabilitation project for the Cocoa Pod Borer (CPB), providing CPB tolerant cocoa clones to farmers, and so far has rehabilitated 500 hectares of cocoa plantations in the Province. This project has been impacted by the COVID-19 measures, particularly travel restrictions.

- In **Manus Province**, due to high business operating costs, there is no buyer or even an exporter of cocoa, copra and rubber. DAL assists local farmers' income from these cash crops by buying their cocoa and rubber and selling to exporters in Lae, Morobe Province. Copra production is almost non-existent in the province today, as most copra producers are now producing virgin coconut oil from their coconuts. The Manus Provincial Department of Agriculture and Livestock subsidizes the buying price of rubber at K3/kilo which is K1/kilo at export price.
- There were no restrictions on the production and sale of these cash crops in **Manus** during and after the lockdown. Also, there were no major impacts to the production and sale of these cash crops from COVID-19.
- However, the Cocoa Regiment company, a newly established cocoa group of farmers who are currently at their development stage, mainly training farmers and undergoing nursery work, have experienced great impacts from COVID-19 measures and restrictions. As a result, they are now behind schedule in their planned production phase and training of farmers. This company is located on Manus Island, in the *Lelebupi* Local Level Government.

Impact on small livestock farmers and fisheries

- The lockdown and SOE impacted livestock production, especially of poultry, and fishery exports from **New Ireland Province**. During these periods, there was a halt on day old chicks' supply from Tablebirds and Zenag from Morobe Province. This impacted the production of smallholder poultry farmers and their income generation. As a result, a lot of stock feed were unused and went spoilt. Some poultry farmers are still recovering from income loss due to the lockdown.



Figure 5. Sea food sold at Lorengau market

- Pamex Limited, a fishery exporting company of fish and shellfish from **New Ireland**, experienced major impacts to their fishery exports due to suspensions of domestic and international flights during the lockdown and SOE. Upon resumption of flights, the company is slowly recovering. Pamex had to suspend its operations for a while as a result.
- In **Lorengau** Town, smallholder poultry production was greatly affected during the lockdown and SOE, as Tablebirds and Zenag stopped supplying day-old chicks, due to flight suspensions by local airline companies. Stock feed supply was also affected due to irregularity in cargo ships travelling to Manus.
- In terms of fisheries, Silan Limited, a private company engaged in a public-private partnership with the Manus Provincial Fisheries, buys fish from local fishers and sells in bulk to supermarkets in Western Highlands Province and to catering companies. COVID-19 measures have caused the company to lose its markets in Mt. Hagen, Western Highlands Province, as it supplies fish to the Tininga line of supermarkets in the town. Also, the measures caused the company to stop selling its fish to other customers outside the province, such as the Fubilian Catering Services which provides catering for Ok Tedi Mining Limited. This resulted in job losses in the company and local fishers not being able to sell their catch.

Impact on social protection, food demand and support

- Food demand had increased in **Kavieng Town** due to the decrease of supply of fresh produce into the town. This was a direct result of the main market closure and was evident as urban residents were travelling out of town to roadside markets to purchase fresh foods. There were also reports of thieving in food gardens in rural and peri-urban areas of Kavieng which directly indicates that people experienced food shortage in these areas.
- There were also reports of increase in domestic violence, especially violence against women, and adultery cases where married women had to engage in sexual activity with other men to get money to purchase food for themselves or their household.
- During the lockdown, some PMV operators had to suspend their operations because of the limited



number of passengers imposed in PMVs for 15-seater PMVs down five passengers. This greatly impacted their revenue.

- Schools in the **New Ireland** had to close during the lockdown period. The suspension of classes impacted the National Fisheries College in Kavieng.
- The electorate member for Namatanai District provided food supplies to hospitals in Kavieng and Namatanai Districts, and also to secondary boarding schools in New Ireland during the lockdown.
- There were no reports of food supply assistance to vulnerable populations in the province, especially cash-for-food households who experienced food shortage, and also no assistance to fresh producers, fishers and livestock producers to sell their goods during and after the lockdown and SOE periods.
- In relation to law-and-order issues, there has been an increase in homebrew production during and after the lockdown and SOE periods, as people are looking for opportunities to gain income. Also, there were reports that some women who used to sell foods at the main Kavieng market turned to producing and sell homebrew as a means of generating income for their households during the market closure. Furthermore, child abuse was reported to have increased during the lockdown and SOE.
- In New Ireland, there is an old age (for people of age 65 years and over) and disabled persons' (people living with disability) pension fund that is funded by the Provincial Government. These pensioners receive K500 fortnightly. There is also a Roof Over Head subsidy fund, from the Provincial Government, that provides roofing supplies to residents of the Province at very low costs. These funds helped sustain the livelihoods of its recipients who were impacted by the lockdown and SOE.
- In **Manus Province**, there were no formal assistance from the Provincial Government for food assistance to vulnerable groups in the population during the lockdown, although, people in Lorengau town had raised concerns to the Provincial Government regarding shortage of food to their households. The government, however, urged public servants to return to their villages during the lockdown, and allowed them to still be on payroll. There were no social protection measures or assistance being

offered to fresh producers, livestock farmers and fishers in the province during the lockdown and SOE.

- Recently during the independence period, an exchange program was initiated as a response to COVID-19 impacts on fresh producers from nearby islands in Lorengau. The program, initiated by the working-class women within the Manus Provincial Government, was to assist women from Lou Island who cannot afford to bring their fresh produce to Lorengau markets due to high transportation costs. The program took place in **Lorengau town**, involving the working-class women exchanging cooking utensils with the island women for their fresh produce.
- In Manus Province, in general, people were not really compliant to the COVID-19 pandemic measures. Social distancing was practiced in the Lorengau town market, but to a very minimum. There were no market authorities observed to be enforcing social distancing. There were no COVID-19 WASH facilities, such as hand sanitizers and hand washing sinks, observed in the market. However, a public toilet is available in the market.

Biosecurity issues in NIP and Manaus

- In **New Ireland**, the Cocoa Pod Borer (CPB) has greatly affected cocoa plantations of rural farmers across the Province. The pod borer still remains a major threat to cocoa production in the Province.
- The New Ireland Department of Primary Industries has been rehabilitating cocoa plantations in the Province, by providing farmers with CPB tolerant clones. This project is currently on-going.
- As a result of CPB, some cocoa farmers have switched to food crop production as their plantations have been infected.
- The Black Pod Disease is also another issue prevalent in the Province.
- The New Ireland Department of Primary Industries has carried out African swine fever awareness to piggery farmers and stakeholders in the Province.
- The Fall Armyworm is now a major threat to New Ireland as there has been a suspected incursion in East New Britain Province which neighbors New Ireland to the South West.



Figure 6. Fall armyworm (in larval stage)

- There are no major biosecurity threats reported from **Manus Province**. NAQIA has carried out African swine fever awareness in the province.
- There is currently a ban on pork products imported from Asian countries from entering Manus, and this is monitored by NAQIA.
- FAW armyworm has now been found in the 4 regions in PNG; Islands, Highlands, Momase and Highlands region.

Impacts on food supply in Kiunga

- There were significant impacts of on the food supply and livelihoods of the people in Kiunga and surrounding communities.
- During the lockdown and State of Emergency in **Kiunga** the shops/supermarkets had their trading hours reduced from 9am to 2pm, and there was a total ban on all food markets, including roadside markets. The **Kiunga market** (main market) was closed on 24 March and opened in early September. The closure of the markets and limited trading hours of shops greatly affected the supply of food into **Kiunga town**, and the access and supply of food to households in Kiunga.
- It was reported that diets in households changed as a result of the measures imposed on markets and shops, causing households to consume more store goods and less fresh garden food.
- As access to food was difficult for households, there were reports of thieving of food from backyard gardens of some households.
- Domestic flights and cargo shipments were suspended during the lockdown. All shipments into Kiunga via river access were stopped from since the lockdown up till September 2020.

- The restriction on shipments mostly affected the supply of rice in shops, among other imported food goods, causing a great decrease, hence, this affected the procurement and intake of rice by households.
- The main supply of vegetables and fruits into **Kiunga** come from the Telefomin District of Sandaun (West Sepik) Province via air transport, mostly from the Oksapmin Rural LLG of the district. The suspension of flights during the lockdown and SOE periods, and the market closure, caused a halt on vegetable supply to **Kiunga** from Telefomin and greatly decreased the amount of vegetable supply in Kiunga Town.

Impacts on food demand and trade, social support and cash crops

- The market vendors, mostly women, at the **Kiunga market** were greatly affected during the market closure from late March to early September (over five months closures), as most experienced severe and total income loss as it was very difficult to sell their goods outside the market.
- Wholesale suppliers of vegetables and fruits from Telefomin, who transport their goods via air freight at K3.50 per Kilo and sell to resellers at K7 per Kilo, also experienced great income losses.
- Due to the market closure and restriction on food markets, vendors were forced to sell their good within their residential areas.
- The price of vegetables and fish increased as a result of the measures. Sweet potato was sold for K5 per heap which is usually sold for K3 per heap.
- It was also reported that in some instances, the quantity of vegetables sold decreased while the price remained the same. For example, bundled greens such as aibika, had its price remain at K2 but the quantity decreased.



Figure 7: Caterpillar ready to feed on edible greens, aibika leaves



- The price of tilapia also increased during the market closure from K5 to K15 and K25 per fish.
- In relation to livestock, smallholder poultry farmers were greatly affected as they could not sell their live chicken at the main market and could not order day-old chicks and stock feed due to flight suspension and shipment restriction. This resulted in significant income loss to the farmers. This also affected poultry supply in **Kiunga** to the public and also to business houses.
- The lockdown, SOE and local measures imposed in Kiunga had a greatly decreased the supply of food into Kiunga Town, especially vegetables and rice, hence, increased the demand of food by households.
- There were no reports of food supply assistance provided to vulnerable populations or communities in Kiunga.
- In relation to cash crops, vanilla and rubber exports were mostly impacted, as there was a restriction on the export of these crops. The restriction was lifted in mid-October.
- Following the opening of the reopening of the Kiunga Market in early September, the food prices, variety and quantity of food sold have returned back to normal.

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