

**Choose two challenges related to agriculture or rural development in your community or country and describe how you think they should be addressed.**

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## **Introduction**

Agriculture is a very interesting, and important phenomenon in every walks of life. Without agriculture living is meaningless. In fact our well being depends on agriculture, just like, without the soil there is no agriculture and without agriculture there will be no human beings, because, the fundamental existence of human beings comes from the soil. Agriculture, however, is fore most the source of growth in developing countries. Unfortunately not all developing countries experience the same pattern of growth in terms of economic development performance. Ironically, the problem experiences in some least developing countries are due mainly to the lack of financial support, infrastructures, human resources and institutional capabilities. Ultimately, agriculture contributes substantially to poverty reduction.

The success of some developing countries in agricultural production in general may attribute to improve in technology (or infrastructures), finance, and institutional capabilities worldwide. Domestically, right policy and mechanism are crucial for channeling agricultural development priorities for economic development and growth.

## **Two main challenges of agriculture or development in Solomon Islands (SI)**

### ***1 .Poor or Lack of infrastructures and transportation (shipping etc)***

Poor or lack of infrastructures like wharves, roads, proper market buildings, ports, airports, and inadequate (or poor) shipping services (transportation) in the scattered archipelago (Solomon Islands), is one of the major development setbacks in the isles. Known for its large land area (second largest PICs after PNG) and rich natural resources. But still behind in terms of basic infrastructure development and services like roads, wharves, shipping and communication services etc.

From Anuta in the east to Shortland in the West, and from Renbel in the South to Ontong Java atolls in the North. Farmers in these rural remote areas always stranded for months with their agricultural produces for transportation to transport their produces to the markets in Honiara (e.g. current shipping arrangement to Ontong Java is quarterly).In some cases, by the time the ship arrives the farmers' produces already rot. To make it worse, for most of the outer islands there are no wharves, and the transportation cost is very dear and communication is very poor.

Within the bigger islands like Malaita, Makira to name a few, rural farmers including youths are facing similar problems of lack accessibility to markets, roads etc. It is even very sad to know that even those farmers in Guadalcanal whom we may thought are more closer to the main markets in Honiara are still complaining about inadequate roads and unattended collapsed bridges. ✓

## **2. Lack of financial support**

Why young farmers and the rural small holders in the Solomon Islands are struggling to venture into the world of agricultural farming? There might be many constraints that you might think of, however, one of the major causes of their struggling is, lack of finance. ✓

Despite its large land areas and fertile soil, the agricultural sector in Solomon Islands operates below its full potential. Reasonably because rural agricultural entrepreneurs lack the finance to fully utilize the potential in their agricultural land. Youths however, are finding hard to start up their own agricultural enterprise because of lack of financial capital to start with. As a result development progress in agricultural sector is very slow, perhaps stagnant, thus negatively impact the rural economy. Despite policy statement written and read all over again and again by government after government. Still the people and farmers in rural areas are re-echoing their sentiment louder and even louder today, yet their problems still unsolved.

From the media you heard or read about lucrative projects on agriculture and good policy stated by parliamentarians concerning rural economy development, especially in agricultural related projects through large scale or small scale farming etc. Yet still less or perhaps nothing at all has been done compared to what has been said or preached about. For so long the RCDF (Rural Development Fund) has been around and then came the microfinance project fund, still little has been done to alleviate the financial problems faced by most rural farmers. I have much to say on concerning this, but space does not permit me to continue.

## **Conclusion Remarks/Recommendations**

To address the challenges discussed above and help to realize the potential of the agricultural sector or development in the country (Solomon Islands), the following are recommended

(i) Provide viable markets and infrastructures like roads and wharves etc. Improve communication services so that the chain of markets information flow can reach farmers around the country (ii) Improve land transportation services, more especially the shipping services must be improve, given the scattered and isolated geographical nature of islands in the country.

(ii) Provide support towards the agricultural development by providing subsidizes for farmers or provide small credit loans to rural farmers.(iii) Proper mechanisms should be in place (perhaps right people) to channel agricultural development funds towards their intended purpose (i.e. to rural famers or agricultural projects).

(iii) The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Provincial Governments and Village Chiefs must work together in assisting rural farmers (youth farmers especially) in communities to develop agricultural programmes to improve the village economy. Thus, help sustain the level and quality of food production in villages. (iv) Improve human resources and expertise through training and education; organize training schemes and workshops for rural farmers, in order to improve their skills and knowledge in agricultural production.

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