

Business Intelligence: Bauka Blue: PNG's newest coffee

Malum Nalu

One of the newest coffee brands in Papua New Guinea is Bauka Blue Kofi. It is produced entirely by a dedicated group of women from Aiyura Valley in the Eastern Highlands province.

It may not yet be in the same league as that of Chimbu's Kongo Coffee, Goroka Coffee from Eastern Highlands or Sigri Coffee from Western Highlands, but it is steadily developing a loyal fan base among missionaries at neighbouring Summer Institute of Linguistics, Kainantu, Bintangor Supermarket in Goroka, as well as SVS Stores.

Bauka Blue Kofi comes from the green rolling hills of Aiyura Valley, backed by beautiful blue mountains 1,200-1,800 metres above sea level in the Obura-Wonenara district of Eastern Highlands province.

The surrounding mountains are covered with tropical rainforest and beautiful morning fog, home to more than 114 species of birds identified so far out of the 852 different types of birds found in PNG.

Of the 42 species of birds of paradise in PNG, four have been identified on the ridges around Aiyura. Up to 50 different birds frequent the coffee gardens and secondary forest along the waterways. Perfect environment for a perfect, environmentally-friendly Bauka Blue Kofi.

Marey Yogiyo, wife of coffee personality Jon Yogiyo, took part in the recent NARI Agricultural Innovations Show in Lae.

"We started it in 2000 as a women's coffee project, involving ladies around the area where we live at Aiyura," she says.

"We realised that ladies spend a lot of time making and producing quality coffee, however, when everything was done, the men take the coffee to the markets and get all the money.

"We decided to do it ourselves. We help ladies. We pay school fees; attend to health problems. The ladies are happy to work together."

After picking, processing and drying, women of the Bauka group take their coffee to Arabicas in Goroka for roasting.

"I want to show farmers that we can make and drink our own coffee," Yogiyo says.

"Why should we work so hard and give it to somebody else?"

Bauka coffee is unique because it is a single origin. Single origin means it comes straight from the block, from Aiyura."

Bauka itself means "black" in the local Tairora dialect of the Aiyura Valley.

Coffee production is the backbone of the rural economy in the Highlands; across the nation, approximately 2-2.5 million of PNG's 6 million people depend on coffee production for cash needs.

Almost all coffee produced in PNG is arabica, and exporters see a sustained demand for PNG coffee with markets able to absorb a doubling of high-quality premium smallholder product.