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HARVEST AT BAMAGA FARM IMPROVES ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, FRESH AND HEALTHY FOODS

Residents on the Northern Peninsula Area are benefiting from a wide range of healthy fruit and vegetables, thanks to a recent harvest at the Bamaga Farm.

The farm, operated by the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC), has produced 20 crops suited to the climate and soil of the Torres Strait, including squash, taro, chilli, pumpkin, cassava, zucchini, cucumber, melons, tomatoes, corn, banana and passionfruit.

“A wide range of popular, staple fruit and vegetables has been harvested and is now available for sale from the farm, providing access to fresh, affordable and healthy locally grown produce,” NPARC Mayor, Bernard Charlie said.

“Local residents are looking to the farm for healthier and more affordable food options, such as the hugely popular cassava, to replace previously popular dietary items such as rice.”

The Torres Strait Regional Authority’s (TSRA) Healthy Communities and Economic Development Programmes provided the seed funding to establish the farm.

The TSRA Chairperson, Mr Joseph Elu, said that the production of fresh farm produce aligns well with the TSRA’s programme objectives to support healthy communities.

“The TSRA, in collaboration with local councils and organisations, is actively working to improve access to affordable fresh and healthy foods, across the region,” Mr Elu said.

“Since 2012 the TSRA has provided more than \$250,000 towards the establishment and operation of the farm, including irrigation systems and the employment of a local, full-time farm supervisor.

“The farm supervisor has been responsible for the management of the farm; and supervising and training workers engaged through the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP).”

Mr Elu said the TSRA looks forward to seeing Bamaga Farm work with RJCP provider, MyPathway, to secure ongoing support for its on-going operations and expansion.

“Bamaga farm is a sound initiative and we look forward to seeing it move forward with the support of My Pathway to create ongoing employment and training opportunities,” Mr Elu said.

“The TSRA is pleased to have provided the seed funding to establish the farm which is now providing many varieties of affordable fresh food to remote communities in the NPA.”

Mr Charlie said that in addition to having fresh produce delivered through the Bamaga farm project, the council also strives to promote community ownership and participation.

“Collaboration with local schools and community members is encouraged, and there is a strong focus on educating visitors about the importance of growing and eating with fresh and healthy local produce,” Mayor Charlie said.

“Community members can also purchase seedlings from the farm for planting at home and some, including the NPA Secondary School have reciprocated by gifting seedlings and loaning equipment from their own gardens.”



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