

**Welfare Reform project unearths budding farmers
Photo opportunity Tuesday 6 July
Visit by specialists in the food retail industry**

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FARMING enterprises have blossomed from seeds sown under Cape York's innovative Welfare Reform Agenda.

Five Hope Vale families have taken up the challenge to return fertile old farming blocks to productivity.

The Hope Vale horticultural project started mid 2009 and after nine months of planning, community consultation, and statutory approvals the first fields have been ploughed and crops planted.

With its rich soil and tropical climate Hope Vale has been strategically selected to complement the Atherton Tableland crop harvests.

Hope Vale growers will be linked with established growers and suppliers such as Skybury.

The family farm blueprint has been modelled on Hope Vale producer and businessman Eddie Woibo who developed his land 25 years ago, more recently establishing a passionfruit plantation, the fruits of which he sells into the Sydney market.

Despite having no legal title after waiting 25 years he forged on ploughing money and mountains of determination and physical labour into his property.

The head of the project's lead agency Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation, Gerhardt Pearson, said Eddie Woibo is indeed the inspiration for these new farmers.

The progressive approach of the Cape York Welfare Reform Agenda has attracted invaluable support from corporate enterprise in particular the Westpac Group, which sponsors this Hope Vale farming project through provision of personnel.

Westpac Fellow Sean Gillen, a financial planner with a background in agricultural science and economics developed the concept during secondment over the past year and has been assigned for another year.

"Westpac management, understands the long term, intergenerational nature of the changes seeking to achieve as part of the Welfare Reform Agenda," Mr Gillen said.

"This is a practical example of an aboriginal community, government and corporate Australia working together towards participation in the real economy."

The five Hope Vale families with horticultural enterprises underway include: Irene and Jerry Hammet, Mrs Coates, Neville Bowen, Porky Woibo, and Lloyd Barnby.

Irene and Jerry Hammet's block has been earmarked for a bushfood orchard complementing and supplementing their current business 'Maramake Tours' a bush tucker tour.

Mrs Coates will be growing paw paw. Neville Bowen's property has been selected for passionfruit with 500 vines going in this year building to 1500 vines over three years.

Porky Woibo's block has also been chosen for 500 passionfruit vines and Lloyd Barnby will grow Bushfoods

The passionfruit farmers have an estimated combined injection of \$360,000 per year into the Hope Vale community based on a box price of \$30- the lowest end of the season cycle.

Once the first plantings are complete a greater emphasis will be placed on building capacity, self-reliance, agri-business skills, financial management, marketing and sales Sean said.

Photo opportunity:

On Tuesday the 6th of July senior representatives of Robins' Food, a producer of Australian Native Foods, Coles, Australian National University, and Outback Spirit Foundation will visit Hopevale to meet with the farmers to discuss potential joint ventures.



Juleigh Robins, an Australian cook and her partner Ian Robins are directors of Robins Foods – a producer, manufacturer and marketer of Australian native food products. Since 1986 Juleigh has pioneered the incorporation of native foods into Australian cuisine and published two books, *Wild Classics* and *Wild Lime*.

Juleigh will be accompanied by:

- Mr Chris Mara, Gov't Advisor, Coles Group and manager of Indigenous Employment for Coles and Chair of the Coles Indigenous Food Fund
- Dr Luigi Palombi from Centre for governance of Knowledge and Development, Australian National University and his colleague Professor Peter Drahos



Media Release

- Bob Lester, CEO of the Outback Spirit Foundation - a philanthropic Foundation

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