Officers Trained to identify Deadly Beetle hence Safeguarding Coffee Industry

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The Coffee Industry Corporation (CIC) of Papua New Guinea completed a week long training on Coffee Berry Borer (CBB) identification procedures in Aiyura, Eastern Highlands, last week.

The training was attended by CIC's research staff and participants from the Binatang Research Institute in Madang.

Being committed to keeping PNG free of the CBB, which causes $500 million USD annually in damages across the world, CIC opened a high-tech laboratory for identifying the CBB using DNA methods early this month.

CIC Chief Executive Officer, Charles Dambui, said that the training was timely for the operations of the new lab and important for officers involved.

"We are proud that the facility can now cater for rapid identification of any CBB suspects and providing safeguard for the industry from this deadly beetle."

The new facility established at the CIC research station in Aiyura has been fully equipped with the latest technology installed with assistance by partners from the University of Florida in USA and funding support from the national government.

explained that CBB is a tiny little beetle that infests coffee berries all around the world.

"The great thing is that it is still not yet in PNG so we are trying to keep it out," said Bateman.

He added that, since the CBB is unable to be identified with naked human eyes, the DNA lab is needed to look at extremely informative sections of the insect to help them identify it.

Participants were taken through the procedures of DNA analysis and how to take high resolution photos of bark beetles sent in by farmers or extension officers.

Fellow researcher at Florida University, Andrew Johnson, emphasised that the training was an introductory one and they would need another two more weeks to fully cover all the procedures in the DNA lab.

He added that the critical process in the DNA identification process would be the analysis part as it would need the longest time possible in making sure enough background information is collected on a particular beetle to avoid incorrect results as CBB.

Sentiko Ilbali, a participant from the Binatang Research Institute said that the training is vital and he is grateful to be part of it as most of his work centred on DNA. He added that the lab would be very useful in the long run.

The new lab comes with equipment such as microscopes for general pest identification, a dedicated camera scope high resolution images of tiny beetles of less than 2mm long, freezers for storage of chemicals, and an autoclave for sterilizing lab items among others.

In the meantime, a follow on training is being arranged by CIC and partners from the University of Florida in the coming months.

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