

"AGRICULTURE HUMMING AGAIN AT COM-FSM KOSRAE CAMPUS" according to Agriculture Instructor, Lyle Baconguis, who contributed the story and photos for this release. Thank you Lyle and congratulation students.

The vocational agriculture program is humming again at COM-FSM Kosrae Campus. During the Fall Semester, five (AG 084 - Basic Crop Production) students started to make the garden area productive again. The students started by expanding the existing 30' x 20' field; clearing tall grasses and vines that had invaded the previously cultivated plots. The garden area gradually expanded and within the same Semester it was increased to a 60' x 60' area. It is now filled with productive plots of Chinese cabbage, string beans, eggplant, cucumber, sweet potato, chili pepper and tomato. Watermelon has also been planted in the rocky areas surrounding the garden. With the 'humming' it is planned to further expand garden to twice its current size.



*Students and Instructor with first harvest*



*Student collects harvest for weighting.*

The students successfully completed one cycle for one of the crops and have gained positive experience from their hard work and dedication. In just 35 days after transplanting they harvested more than 110 lbs of a Chinese Cabbage variety "Summer Swallow" from a 300 square feet area. Average weight per plant for this harvest was 2.04

lbs. If the harvest is sold at \$1.00

per pound they could have earned \$110 from an area of 10 feet by 30 feet. Convert that to an acre, one could earn, before expenses, about \$15,000 at \$0.50 per pound. And that is good business, if you ask me and with the cost of fuel nowadays I am considering planting Chinese Cabbage! It was a good learning for the students and it is hoped after completing the course they will be motivated enough to set up their own or help their families start gardens in their villages with the ultimate objective of having a



*Weighing with improvised scale*



supply of fresh nutritious vegetables readily available for both the home consumption and for the market.

The course is currently being handled by Lyle Baconguis, who joined the faculty this Fall following a management career in the agrochemical industry in southeast Asia that spanned more than a decade. Agriculture Extension Agent Jackson Albert assisted in the field.

The garden site will become the centerpiece of crop production demonstration that teaches students and the general public basic crop production techniques with emphasis in sustainable and environmentally-sound practices. This early, students are learning to incorporate agroecological principles in the garden: using manure from the College piggery as a fertilizer source; using dried grasses as mulch to prevent moisture loss as well as a means of weed control. Except for a relatively less toxic 2% metaldehyde powder formulation which was applied in a strip around the garden area to prevent the entry Giant African snails and slugs, no chemical pesticides are being used. To control bean flies, a spray mixture of soap and water was found to be effective in suppressing the pest population to a manageable level.

Sloping Agricultural Land Techniques (SALT) to control soil erosion is being integrated into the course and the demonstration garden. Excess water from the garden is diverted to a taro patch which traps the sediment before it goes into a nearby stream and eventually pollutes the mangrove and the ocean.



*Pointers on direct seedling of Cucumber provided by Agriculture Extension Agent Jackson Albert*



*Students preparing trellis for string beans*



*Assistant Campus Director Kenye Killin almost hidden by two very large cabbages*