Ministers’ Brief

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Assessing the productivity of Irish Potatoes in Dominica

The cultivation of Irish Potato has been on the rise in Dominica. The Government of Dominica continues to support the production of the crop as a means of boosting food security and as part of the country’s resilience strategy. Presently, the crop is mainly cultivated by small farmers across several agro-ecological zones with minimal use of agro-chemicals.

For the 2020/2021 growing season (November 2020 - March 2021), CARDI assessed the production and productivity of the Desiree variety across the country. This variety is resistant to drought and potato virus, bulks early and gives good yields.

For the cropping cycle, 57,099 lbs of seed tubers were planted by 126 farmers at an estimated rate of 17,153 tubers per acre. Yield data from four farms across agro-ecological zones showed that the average number of tubers per plant was 8 with an average weight of 0.2 lbs per tuber. Estimated average yield per acre was 27,444 lbs and national production was 526,941 lbs with 458,439 lbs being marketable.

The estimated yield per acre for the 2020/2021 crop cycle showed a dramatic increase of 240% when compared with the national average on record for the 2013/2014 cropping season.

Cost of production data collected showed an average gross profit of approximately 44%. According to Dorian Etienne, CARDI Country Representative, factors such as suitable variety, favorable climatic conditions and low disease incidence and severity could account for what can be described as a bumper crop. Potato is easy to grow making it particularly attractive to women farmers. Like in previous years, the Dominica Export Import Agency (DEXIA) will bulk-purchase a large volume of the white potatoes produced by the farmers and in turn sell it to local retailers.

CARDI bids farewell to Executive Director, Barton Clarke

After 6 years of service, the Institute bids farewell to Mr Barton Clarke. On May 12th 2015, Mr Clarke assumed duties as Executive Director. He was responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the Institute’s programme of work, inclusive of donor-funded projects. He also led several missions to advocate for resources to improve research and the Region’s agricultural sector.

Mr Clarke brought to the position a wealth of professional experience in agricultural development and a deep understanding and knowledge of the Region’s political and socio-economic systems. Among his achievements as Executive Director were the implementation of the Institute’s Global OJT programme - a programme dedicated to mentoring youths in agriculture. He also designated December 5, as CARDI Day, a day set aside to commemorate the establishment and achievements of the Institute. To improve the Institute’s financial status, Clarke was also successful in establishing its subsidiary, the Caribbean Agricultural Commercial Services Hub Limited (CACSH) and the CARDI Foundation and Endowment Fund.

This was Clarke’s second stint at CARDI. During the period 1984 – 2001, he held various positions at the Institute including, Country Representative for Barbados, St Lucia and Dominica, Deputy Director, Technical Programmes for the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and Project Manager for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded projects.

The staff of CARDI offers sincerest thanks to Mr Clarke for his service to the Institute. We convey to him warm wishes for continued life, good health, and all the best in his future endeavours.
In Barbados, the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the International Trade Centre (ITC), The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus and the National Conservation Commission (NCC) are partnering to transform coconut husks and shells into biogas, using bioreactor technology. The biogas will be used as a source of fuel while the digestate will be used as an input in agricultural operations. The digestate is high in nutrients and organic matter and can be used as a valuable potting media, fertilizer and mulch.

Coconut produces a tremendous amount of waste which is often improperly disposed of, leading to environmental and health risks. Waste management is a strategic area of focus for the “Alliances for the Coconut Industry Development Expansion and Enhanced Support for the Caribbean” project. The project is seeking to develop creative ways of transforming coconut waste into economically and environmentally sustainable products. According to CARDI’s Representative, Ansari Hosein, “coconut has tremendous economic potential and Barbadians are scratching the surface when it came to developing products from it.”

The project partners have begun construction of the biogas digester on the NCC’s compound. Additionally, the NCC has procured a heavy duty shredder to efficiently shred the raw material. Once the trial is successful, the operations will be scaled up across the project countries. This holds enormous benefits for the economy, society and the environment.

This project is funded by the European Union (EU) in accordance with the Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme (CRIP) managed by the CARIFORUM Secretariat. The project is being implemented by CARDI and the ITC and other alliance partners in 12 countries.

Photo courtesy: Shanice King

Protecting livestock from floods

The Caribbean Climate Outlooks prepared by the Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF) is forecasting an increase in the number of wet days, wet spells, heatwaves and tropical cyclone activity from August – October 2021, for the Caribbean. This is the peak period for the wet/hurricane season and frequent disruptions to outdoor activities and rising water levels in soils, rivers and reservoirs are very likely.

With flash flooding and long term flooding predicted, livestock farmers are encouraged to undertake preparatory work to minimize loss. Among the first activities should be to clear and maintain the drains around the animals’ housing and pastures and properly tag animals for easy identification. Safely store your animals’ records in a waterproof container. A better alternative would be to maintain digital copies.

Always keep abreast of weather updates, especially if the area you are operating in is flood prone. If flooding is imminent animals should be moved to higher grounds. Many times this will not always be possible, so it is advisable to leave animals to roam rather than keep them tethered. If the animals are being housed, then ensure proper ventilation is provided. Always secure feeds, medications and equipment at higher elevations.

Immediately after the floods, rescue, observe and treat animals for injuries and provide them with an adequate supply of clean feed and water. If mortality has been recorded, dead animals should be properly disposed. Do not feed animals forages and feeds contaminated by flood water. Observe for molds as these can cause the animals to get sick and also contaminate their meat and milk making it unsafe for human consumption. Survey the damage and take pictures and videos as these will be needed for claims submission. Always monitor the media for Government’s relief packages, as the window to apply for these are often very short.
It's on! The Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) will be held from 4-8 October 2021 under the theme “Transforming our food systems.” This is the first time the event will be hosted virtually.

Grenada

CARDI was a proud sponsor of the Flavours of Grenada “Farm to Table” Culinary Camp. The 5-week interactive session focused on introducing basic culinary arts skills to young budding chefs on the island.

Dominica

Coming soon! Technical Manual on Small Scale Cassava Production in Dominica produced by CARDI under the FAO/CDB Cassava Industry Development- Market Assessment and Technology Validation and Dissemination project.