Reinstating Callaloo to the USDA APHIS Preclearance List in Jamaica

A vegetable amaranth (callaloo) is a non-traditional export crop grown in Jamaica. The USA is a major market. In 1995, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) Jamaica voluntarily removed the vegetable amaranth from the preclearance list due to an average of 38% pest interceptions which exceeded the acceptable 20% limit. The MOA did this to avoid the imposition of mandatory fumigation requirement by USDA or jeopardizing the preclearance program. This action was a major setback for callaloo farmers who depended on this crop as their main source of income.

USAID provided funds through IPM CRSP to the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) which in collaboration with US and local institutions successfully developed and implemented programs geared towards research and the training of farmers. A number of on farm trials were conducted utilizing IPM techniques. Training included pest identification, the proper use of pesticides and field sanitation practices. By incorporating various IPM strategies, callaloo farmers were able to reduce their dependence on insecticides and economic losses due to pests. By 2005 pest interceptions on callaloo for export were reduced to 2.5%. Annual number of shipments of fresh callaloo to the USA is on average 150, with a value of approximately US $375,000.

This IPM CRSP project provided the foundation for farmers to shift to rational pesticide use and other IPM tactics in the production of callaloo and other crops. These learned IPM strategies have influenced normal farm practices resulting in the improved quality of callaloo produced.

The collaborative on farm research demonstration and training conducted under the IPM CRSP was credited with this notable improvement in product quality. Consequently, USDA APHIS invited CARDI/IPM CRSP to play a key role in training exercises as part of the initiative to reinstate the commodity on the preclearance list. Specific areas of focus in the training sessions include Preclearance requirements, Standards, Vegetable IPM and Post harvest handling.

The first in the series of planned training sessions was held in March 2006. Approximately 40 participants were present comprising the extension and quarantine officers who will be involved in farmer certification exercises in the east and central sections of the island. The remaining three training sessions will target officers for the west of the island, farmers and exporters, respectively. These training activities will be supported in the main by funds allocated for technology transfer, under Phase III of the IPM CRSP.

The reinstatement of this export commodity to the preclearance list will encourage increased quantities exported to the USA; reduce losses at port entry and save US $11,000.00 annually in preclearance fees.

[ Jamaica: CARDI, 2006 ]