



Agriculture in the News

August 2011

Issues Affecting Caribbean Agriculture

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New fund for livestock biodiversity management at FAO will offer grants to developing countries

FAO Media Centre, Rome, 21 July 2011

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/82260/icode/>

Full article:

Germany, Norway and Switzerland have contributed a first donation of \$1,000,000 to a new, FAO-managed fund designed to help developing countries conserve and sustainably use their livestock breeds.

The fund will provide financing for individual projects submitted by countries in support of the internationally-agreed *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*. The plan, adopted by all FAO member countries in 2007, has become a key instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of animal genetic resources at global, regional and national level

Innovative selection process

Any developing country may put forward projects for financing by the fund, which is due to become operational in September. "

See Livestock, page 6

Agriculture in the News is a monthly newsletter which provides a compilation of selected news articles on issues affecting agriculture in the Caribbean region. Articles from Newspapers, Online News Service Agencies, Newsletters and Press Releases are featured.

For copies of documents cited, visit the web address or source of the information provided.



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About CARDI

Our Vision

To be the centre of excellence in the Caribbean for the provision and application of research and development in agriculture and rural enhancement.

Our Mission

To contribute to the sustainable economic well being of Caribbean people by the generation and transfer of appropriate technology through research and development within the agricultural value chain.

www.cardi.org

Sweet Potato:

Minister Bharath: KFC selling local sweet potato fries: T&T needs to produce more of what we eat - Bharath

Dickson, D

Trinidad and Tobago Guardian - 21 Jul 2011:

<http://www2.guardian.co.tt/business/2011/07/21/minister-bharath-kfc-selling-local-sweet-potato-fries>

Full article:

Consumers can now enjoy a local menu of sweet potato fries from the popular fast food restaurant KFC.

In addition to the normal potato fries, KFC will now be serving sweet potato fries in four of its outlets from today, but the locally grown sweet potato would be accessible in other outlets on a phased basis.

The announcement was made yesterday by Vasant Bharath, Food Production and Land Marine Affairs Minister, during the launch of a national campaign to promote food security in T&T, at the Diplomatic Centre, St Ann's.

Bharath said the campaign which cost just under \$1 million initially includes production work, media advertisements, print and electronic promotions and billboards. The initiative to serve sweet potato fries at KFC, Bharath said, is part of the Government's mandate to first encourage citizens to eat local, which would lead to an increase in local food production, and, by extension, to start the process of reducing the \$4 billion food import bill.

Bharath said sweet potato fries was just the beginning of the initiative and was hoping to have other local products, like cassava fries, served in restaurants, hotels and to have the tourism sector on board.

The **12-month national campaign, titled, Put T&T on the Table**, which began yesterday, would include two major advertisements. The first would be to encourage consumers to eat local and healthy, and, the second would be an endorsement by Crime Watch host Ian Alleyne discouraging praedial larceny, strong marketing and promotional activities and a video on home gardening.

Bharath said the ministry has identified 3,000 acres of land for agriculture, predominantly in the Caroni area, south and north, and Orange Grove in the east. He said with developed countries beginning to hoard food due to harsh climactic conditions, resulting in food shortages and inflation, it was important for T&T to focus "more on food security by producing more of what we eat." Bharath said the ministry would be providing support mechanisms to encourage the farmers to get involved in other areas of the food value chain

Fruits & Vegetables: Banana

Ministry of Agriculture introduces new management strategy to combat the spread of the Black Sigatoka disease

Matthew, M and Joseph, E.H.

Government Information Services, Dominica. 13 July 2011

<http://www.gis.dominica.gov.dm/news/july2011/moainstctotsbsd.php>

Full article:

The Ministry of Agriculture has teamed up with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation (IICA) on Agriculture and the National Fair Trade Organisation to develop a plan of action to manage the spread of the Black Sigatoka disease.

Although the disease has not been detected in Dominica, many islands in the region have reported sightings of the disease including Martinique, St Lucia, Jamaica, Trinidad, Grenada and St Vincent.

“We have to prepare and put systems in place to prevent it and when it comes to manage it. That is part of the whole management strategy to bring in varieties that will be accepted by farmers and housewives and the general public. This will allow us to get some resistance to the disease.”

Plant Protection Officer at the Ministry of Agriculture, Ryan Anselm, explained to GIS news on Monday the new methods being developed by the Division.

“What we have done is that we have collaborated with CIRAD, a French research institution in Guadeloupe and Martinique and through a project funded by the Government of France called the INTERREC Project. We have collaborated with CIRAD in Guadeloupe and Martinique to try four (4) types of resistant varieties. These varieties are 9-18, 9-16, 9-20 and 9-24. They are resistant to Sigatoka, both Yellow and Black Sigatoka. These varieties will be planted in different agro ecological zones all over Dominica but we are targeting the agricultural stations at Grand Bay, La Plaine and Woodfordhill in the meantime.”

The plants are expected to be tolerant and resistant to the Black Sigatoka and validation is expected to be carried out in farms across the country.

“We are hoping that the farmers and the housewives and the general public will accept the variety. It is a hybrid variety. It has not been grown in Dominica before and the Ministry has been bringing in this variety as part of trials in terms of its whole management strategy for the Black Sigatoka. We are, therefore, asking the farmers and the general public to help the Ministry validate this variety.”

Anselm stressed the fact that these are new varieties and will have to be tested before being marketed on a regional level.

“One of the things that we are going to do is we are going to try it in the major supermarkets in Dominica and we are going to target the commercial entities along with the regional markets in Trinidad and in Antigua. As a result, we will be looking for feedback from those countries so it is not commercial. It cannot reach the UK market but it is something that we are looking at that it be accepted by everybody. By then we can get some good feedback, good ratings on it that we can get to multiply it and reproduce it that farmers can use it. However, they are not commercial varieties to be exported to the UK market.”

The Black Sigatoka disease (*Mycosphaerella fijiensis*) is a deadly leaf spot disease affecting banana plants including plantains. It is caused by the ascomycete fungus. Plantains are resistant to the Yellow Sigatoka. The fungus can be spread by wind and rain, moving of contaminated plants and parts of plants, packaging materials (especially banana leaves) and tools.

The damage to the leaves makes them non-functional, extends time between bunching and harvesting, decreases in yield and fruit quality, renders fruit unmarketable, decline in production and export potential (can decrease yield by up to fifty percent (50%)) and premature ripening in the field and after harvest.

The disease can be controlled by the removal of diseased leaves, good plant nutrition through proper and timely fertilizer application, decreasing humidity within fields by good drainage, weed control and correct plant density and maintaining a strict schedule of fungicide application and effective fungicide rotation.

Dominica, which still depends on bananas to a very large extent as one of its main foreign exchange earners cannot afford at this time to contract the disease. Agricultural officials are hoping that it does not reach the shores of Dominica. Ministry Officials are asking the general public that if they suspect the Black Sigatoka disease to contact the Plant Protection Department of the Division of Agriculture at the Botanic Gardens or the nearest agricultural station.

Closure of citrus nurseries to help control deadly disease, says ministry

Wilson, N

Jamaica Observer Thursday, 7 July 2011

http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Closure-of-citrus-nurseries-to-help-control-deadly-disease--says-ministry_9148576#ixzz1RndrXZFu

Full article:

CHIEF of plant quarantine and produce inspector at the Ministry of Agriculture, Shelia Harvey says the closure of all local citrus nurseries will allow the relevant authorities to assess where the deadly citrus huanglongbin or citrus greening disease is mostly concentrated.

The ministry gave the order on Tuesday in order to curtail the spread of the deadly disease, which if left unchecked could topple Jamaica's \$3.7 billion citrus industry.

The disease, which was first detected in St Catherine in 2009, has since spread to all parishes, further eroding the ministry's efforts to control the *Diaphorina citri* (Asian citrus psyllid) vector which causes it. In addition to closing all nurseries, the ministry has also put a stop on the sale of all citrus plants.

Harvey said the operators of citrus nurseries were told of the decision, which took effect on June 30, and had been making the necessary preparations.

"It will not have an effect right now on the nursery (operators) as they were told from last year that the nurseries would be closed so persons would have had the planting material they need to continue planting the nurseries," she said.

There are about 23 citrus nurseries in Jamaica, but only seven of them are active.

"We are presently conducting a survey to determine the level of where the disease is spreading and how much of it. They are doing the survey to say how widespread it is," she said.

The citrus greening disease has devastated citrus production in China, Florida and Brazil. The agriculture ministry feels failure to control the *Diaphorina citri* vector could lead to a shortage of orchards for general consumption and a reduction in earnings from citrus exports.

The citrus greening disease is also called the "yellow dragon disease" due to the asymmetric blotchy mottle of the leaves. It affects orchards under seven years old, stifling their prospects of producing much fruits.

No country has been successful so far in eradicating the disease and programme manager at the Jamaica Citrus Protection Agency (JCPA), Alfred Barrett believes Jamaica will not be exception to this.

"We are not going to be able to eliminate the problem... what we are trying to do is to manage the disease as best as possible and so this is one of the strategies in terms of management," he said.

The use of greenhouses could help with controlling the spread of the disease, but Barrett believes this venture could prove to be very expensive for small citrus growers.

"It cost upwards of a \$1 million dollars to put up a structure, I don't know how many of them (operators of citrus nurseries) will be able to put up one," he said.

"I know that the citrus growers themselves, some of them have actually started managing the problem and they are doing it in a number of different ways," he further noted.

Barrett was not able to say when the citrus nurseries will be re-opened or when the sale of citrus plants will be allowed.

Meanwhile, he is reminding all nursery operators to have their facilities registered with the JCPA in compliance with the Plant (Quarantine) Act 1993 and the Citrus Plant (Certification) Regulations of 1999.

Fruits & Vegetables: Melon

Honduras expects melon export growth

FreshFruitPortal.com- August 1st, 2011

<http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2011/08/01/honduras-expects-melon-export-growth/>

Full article:

Honduran melon exporters are forecasting shipment growth to Europe and the U.S. after successful negotiations at the International Melon and Watermelon Congress and Exhibition XIX, website *Laprensa.hn* reported.

The event was held in the city of San Pedro Sula last week, addressing the key issues and opportunities facing an industry that exported 10,749 containers of the fruit last year.

Honduran Agroexporters Federation president Medardo Galindo said the impacts of the event's business rounds would likely be visible in the short term.

"We believe we reached around 50 rounds of negotiations, but that could increase as participants are asking for four or five meetings, so the goal could be met easily," he was quoted as saying.

"We believe the effects will be seen for this season with people looking for the product and selling it, and the results will be in the short term. We believe that the increase to the European market will be from 5% to 10%, but to the American (market) we should be conservative, so we estimate it could grow up to 5%."

Excosur representative Marlon Fajardo told the website his company currently exports three million cartons annually with 95% of shipments bound for the U.S., but the new objective this season would be to gain European share.

Exporters at the event emphasized the lack of efficient transport available to ship produce to Europe, which needed to be improved as melons only have a useful shelf life of 18 days, the story reported.

For this reason Purfresh Transport is offering exporters to use ozone-based technology to preserve fruit for a longer periods.

"The technology helps food safety and security. We are making the most of ozone properties to eliminate pathogenic organisms and have a treatment that eliminates fungus and bacteria that take over fruit during transport," the company's director for Central America and Mexico Miguel Ángel Gómez was quoted as saying.

Photo: El Heraldo

www.freshfruitportal.com

PINING for the flavour

Marketwise Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and RADA Newsletter, 31 July, 2011. 2p

http://www.moa.gov.jm/news/RADA%20Newsletter/2010/marketwise_pineapple.pdf

EXCERPT

Pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) is an economically important fruit in Jamaica. The fruit is utilized extensively in the agro processing sector as well as the export and fresh food market. In 2009, total production was 21, 367.6 mt while import and export of processed pineapple were 1,233.1 mt and 77.5 mt respectively.

Sections: Varieties; MD2 variety; Market demand; Market potential; Uses & benefits

Farmers in Dominica urged to diversify into pineapple production

Government Information Services, Dominica, 24 June 2011

<http://www.gis.dominica.gov.dm/news/june2011/fidutdipp.php>

Full article:

The Nature Island Pineapple Producers Ltd (NIPPA), in collaboration with the Division of Agriculture hosted a training exercise on Wednesday in sustainable pineapple production for domestic and export markets.

Dr. Vivian Moise is the Vice President of NIPPA.

He explained that the workshop was specifically organised for new pineapple growers in Dominica.

“This programme is funded by the FAO and we have been working with them over the past two (2) years to develop the pineapple value chain in Dominica. One of the critical elements of the value chain was to expand the production base of pineapples. The people you are seeing with us today are people who have voiced an interest in becoming pineapple farmers and they are undergoing the necessary training.”

Dr. Moise wants to see more farmers get involved in pineapple production.

“It is a profitable business to be involved: the commercial production of pineapples. It is probably one of the easier crops to grow. It has proved to be a worthwhile venture for those people who are involved in it. There is scope for many more farmers to be involved and those people who are hearing from me by this medium, I would encourage them to come and speak to us and we will give them the necessary information. We are looking for more people to grow pineapples in Dominica.”

Acting Director of Agriculture, Ricky Brumant has called on farmers to work collectively rather than as individuals.

“We believe that farmers have to start seeing not individual actions; yes, individual decision making on the farm but collective energy and collective actions is important, not only important for the value chain concept but important for efficient use of resources. If we were to work with farm organisations all the time, we would not have to sometimes run flat and thin. It means that we can use what we have and at one point use it for the benefit of many. We are sending that message out there that farmers in the country have to start looking at the idea of working together.”

Livestock:

New fund for livestock biodiversity management at FAO will offer grants to developing countries

FAO Media Centre, Rome, 21 July 2011

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/82260/icode/>

Full article:

Germany, Norway and Switzerland have contributed a first donation of \$1,000,000 to a new, FAO-managed fund designed to help developing countries conserve and sustainably use their livestock breeds.

The fund will provide financing for individual projects submitted by countries in support of the internationally-agreed *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*. The plan, adopted by all FAO member countries in 2007, has become a key instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of animal genetic resources at global, regional and national level

Innovative selection process

Any developing country may put forward projects for financing by the fund, which is due to become operational in September. "The money will be disbursed on the basis of letters of agreement between applicant countries and FAO, following an innovative, transparent and impartial selection process led by FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture," says Linda Collette, the Secretary of the Commission.

Some 21 percent of the world's more than 8000 livestock breeds are classified as at risk of extinction. But since the Global Plan of Action went into force, countries' reporting on breeds' population status is improving and points to a slowing of the reported rate of extinction.

Major achievement

"The adoption of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*, the first internationally agreed framework for the management of livestock diversity, was a major achievement - a milestone for the livestock sector and for the management of agricultural biodiversity," says Irene Hoffmann, Chief of FAO's Animal Genetic Resources Branch. "Since 2007, it has become a key instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of animal genetic resources at global, regional and national levels and created important momentum in many countries."

Countries demonstrated their interest in the *Global Plan of Action* by translating it into 9 languages serving around 20 countries - and it is currently being translated into another 12 languages. This will increase awareness of sustainable management of animal genetic resources among stakeholders.

Countries are taking important steps in its implementation, although at different speeds and with different priorities. While developing countries aim to strengthen linkages between genetic diversity, livelihoods and food security, several developed countries highlight the links between genetic diversity and landscapes, and focus their activities on development, labelling and marketing of high-value products.

Livestock policies

Several countries are currently revising their livestock or breeding policies and strategies. 16 countries have so far endorsed national strategies for improved animal genetic resources management, and according to informal surveys, 22 more national strategies are in process of development and 15 more are planned. Regional organizations, for example AU-IBAR in Africa, have included use and conservation of genetic resources in their newly developed strategic plans. Such concerted efforts are bearing results already.

A wide portfolio of animal genetic resources is crucial to adapting and developing agricultural production systems to meet the challenges of climate change and growing world population. Other contributions to the fund will be needed from different sources, including from the private sector.

Gov't launches \$20M national breed enhancement programme - to further revitalize cattle industry potential

GINA, Georgetown, 1 July 2011

<http://www.agriculture.gov.gy/Bulletins/July%202011/Govt%20launches%2020M%20national%20breed%20enhancement%20programme.html>

Full article:

The administration's commitment to modernize and transform the agriculture sector has over the years been moving closer to reality as more resources are being invested in making it possible.

This commitment was today furthered, with the launching of the national breed enhancement programme as part of the continued effort to improve livestock breeds to aid the industry's growth and the diversification thrust

Minister of Agriculture Robert Persaud at the official launch of the project at the Guyana School of Agriculture, Mon Repos while highlighting the advantages of the new breeds urged farmers to utilise the opportunities that exist in the cattle industry.

"When we developed the Guyana Livestock Development Authority, we did that for a very strategic reason, because the previous state or the past dispensation could not have moved the livestock industry from the point whereby further growth and development were not possible," Minister Persaud informed the many farmers gathered at the ceremony.

Livestock industry development

Minister Persaud while expressing optimism about the development of the livestock industry noted that there is a large demand for meat and "the decision to launch this programme was not just to ensure that we have enough pork, beef or mutton in local market but afford farmers the opportunity to realize their full business potential and being able to tap into the world market".

The development of the GLDA, he said was to enable all stakeholders, particularly farmers the opportunity to realize the full potential of the industry with the required technical and professional assistance.

Minister Persaud added that the short-term vision of the enhanced breeding programme is to have Guyana exporting in excess of US \$2.5M worth of beef by 2014 while the long-term goal is to export meat in excess of US \$25M by 2020.

"CARICOM imports all its meats as far as from New Zealand and Central America and if we are able to develop our livestock industry as speedily as we did with other sectors, we too, can become a major exporter for meat supplies," Minister Persaud said.

In relation to this, Minister Persaud said that Government will be investing in excess of \$400M on animal health issues that will see in the coming months the construction of a modern abattoir costing in excess in \$200M and a state-of-the-art laboratory.

Creating Legislative framework

"We need to get our act together and from the Government stand point, we have put in the legislative frameworkwe passed the Animal health bill, we have passed the legislation that allows the creation of GLDA and we are even looking at other legislations including the veterinarian act," Minister Persaud said.

He urged farmers to change the way they rear cattle and sheep, since the industry today requires a new and modern approach.

Minister Persaud said that over the last three years, Government has invested in the training of veterinarians, and to date every region in Guyana has a stationed veterinarian providing free services.

New genetics

Taking into account the current cattle population, Minister Persaud said it cannot sustain the local or the export markets "so we have to within the next two years be able to increase our cattle population by at least 25 to 35 percent".

“...it cannot be the task of the Government alone, we require all stakeholders, farmers to engage and actively support the thrust of improving our local genetics, and to increase the cattle population,” Minister Persaud.

He urged farmers and veterinarians to work together in reducing the mortality rate and improving husbandry practices.

“We are not only working with cattle, but as you know we also had a national pig and sheep breeding programme which has done exceedingly well,” Minister Persaud said.

He indicated that the programme will be providing 10,000 doses of semen, for Artificial Insemination to farmers throughout the country, especially in Regions 5 and 6 which have the largest number of cattle.

The semen breeds includes the Brahman Zebu, Beefmaster, Brangus, Angus (Black), Angus (Red), Simmental (Red,) Simmental (Black) and Charolais.

He informed farmers that Government will be also be importing in excess of 1000 embryos that will come on stream this year to also promote development in the livestock sector.

“ We are doing all this because we want our farmers to have access to the best animals out there...that can give the type of meat that the export market wantsso if we are going to bring about this change with the livestock sector we need the right breeds of animals,” Minister Persaud said.

Government, he said is cognizant of the many challenges facing the cattle industry in Guyana and has plans to address these, by working collaboratively with all stakeholders to revitalize the industry’s full potentials,” Minister Persaud said.

“We spent on this programme close to \$20M and another \$30M will be spent on embryo transfer...we will also be importing a set of live animals that will cost us in excess of \$26M,” Minister Persaud said.

In addition, Minister Persaud said Government will also be investing in the construction of state-of-the-art breeding station in Mon Repos.

Minister Persaud said that many developed and developing countries are being faced with challenges as a result of changing weather patterns and rising sea levels.

“I want you the farmers to recognize that we need to make changes because the agriculture of today has to change if we are going to surviveWe hear about the issue of climate change, if we do not adjust and adapt we can be left behind and that is why you hear us talking about having a climate approach,” Minister said.

He said that the livestock sector in Guyana has been very vulnerable to the effects of climate change and “that government will be working with farmers to upgrade, fix infrastructure and develop systems to reduce the vulnerability”.

Chief Executive officer of GLDA, Dr. Dindyal Permaul, Manager of Livestock cluster Nigel Cumberbatch and Head of Annual Production Unit Dr. Dwight Waldron who were also part of the ceremony, expressed optimism about the local cattle industry.

Cumberbatch said that cattle industry has great potential for local and international markets

After the ceremony, Minister Persaud and the gathering witnessed the Artificial Insemination of a cow.

Dow AgroSciences and CIAT enter into an agreement to study and distribute grass hybrids

International Center for Tropical Agriculture [CIAT]

<http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/Newsroom/Lists/News/DispForm.aspx?ID=77>

EXCERPT

In the face of rapidly rising global demand for livestock products, which has fueled food price inflation and volatility, new hybrids of *Brachiaria* tropical grasses will make it possible to double the number of animals raised per hectare in South America and other regions.

The new *Brachiaria* hybrids developed by the Tropical Forages Program of the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) will be commercialized starting this year by Dow Agrosciences LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Dow Chemical Company, under a new global agreement between both organizations.

Under the terms of the agreement, Dow AgroSciences received rights to commercialize new CIAT *Brachiaria* hybrids and cultivars globally, except in Colombia. The company's rights in Africa do not exclude the possibility of other entities disseminating seed of the hybrids in this region. *Brachiaria* grasses are the leading pasture species in the tropics, occupying several hundred thousand hectares in Latin America alone. *Brachiaria* hybrids could potentially spread to a much larger part of Latin America's approximately 70 to 80 million hectares of pasture land as well as in other regions. In addition to boosting livestock production, with important benefits for consumers and producers, this could significantly increase carbon sequestration and reduce methane emissions in tropical livestock production, thus helping to mitigate global climate change.

"The *Brachiaria* grass hybrids resulting from CIAT's research on tropical forages are already having an impact on livestock production in the tropics," said Kay Kuenker, vice president of New Business, Dow AgroSciences. "The improved germplasm, methodologies, and knowledge that CIAT is developing will benefit the livestock industry, while aligning perfectly with the desire of Dow AgroSciences to build upon 50 years of experience in the range and pasture marketplace. The new relationship with CIAT offers Dow AgroSciences an opportunity to continue providing differentiated solutions and added value to livestock producers globally. This agreement is another example of how Dow AgroSciences is delivering on its growth strategy through technological innovation and collaboration."

"Our agreement with Dow AgroSciences, which focuses major commercial and technical resources on livestock productivity, represents an important step toward ensuring that productive new grass hybrids can spread as quickly and widely as possible to bolster global food security," said Joe Tohme, research director for CIAT's Agrobiodiversity Research Area. "CIAT and Dow AgroSciences have a particular interest in taking the new hybrids to Africa," he added, "where the grass species originated, and will devote special efforts to disseminating *Brachiaria* in this region."

Brachiaria breeding at CIAT commenced in 1988, when the first hybrids were formed. The hybrids developed by CIAT combine the best traits of several *Brachiaria* species into single cultivars. The hybrids resulting from breeding activities starting in 2011 will be sold by Dow AgroSciences' experienced sales team.

Dow AgroSciences is a leading provider of chemical solutions for the range and pasture market, and strives to provide comprehensive solutions for livestock producers. Dow AgroSciences entered into the tropical grass seed business when it introduced CONVERTTM HD364, a *Brachiaria* hybrid originating from CIAT research, during the 2010 planting season.

"Dow AgroSciences is working to ensure ranchers across the tropics have access to the most productive genetics as part of their total range and pasture program," added Kuenker. "These hybrids have superior forage quality, yield and adaptation which translate into improved productivity and profitability for the milk and meat producer."

\$200 million project to help diversify the sugar industry

Reid, A

Barbados Government Information Service, 28 June 2011

http://www.gisbarbados.gov.bb/index.php?categoryid=13&p2_articleid=6121

Full article:

Government plans to embark on a \$200 million project to diversify the sugar industry with bagasse, ethanol, special sugars and molasses.

This was revealed by Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Senator Darcy Boyce, who was speaking at the St. George Parish Independence Committee's Panel Discussion entitled "High volatile price of oil, high electricity bills, linking Bagasse Energy with sugar production ... Are there opportunities in diversifying the Sugar Industry." It was held yesterday at the Valley Resource Centre, the Valley St. George.

Senator Boyce stated that when the project was first conceptualised it was expected that it would have cost some \$400 million, pointing out: "We got the project down to a size which allows it to be viable with the existing acreage of land for sugar production and which costs half as much money at \$200 million. I feel that the time spent has been well worth it to reduce that bill from \$400 million to \$200 million," he underscored.

He added that Government was also looking at producing bagasse outside of the sugar industry.

"We recognise also that bagasse from sugar cane will not by itself be able to give us the kind of return that we want...We have actually commissioned workers to look at the economics of growing other biomass, river tamarind and other things we know grow in Barbados, but we actually have to get some hard data. What is the tonnage per acre, how much of it actually produces electricity?...so we can actually do numbers so we know how much energy can be produced...That work has been commissioned and is going on," he said.

Senator Boyce noted that people involved in the sugar cane industry needed to raise their level of productivity by making better use of technology to raise the number of tonnes of cane per acre.

He indicated that it did not make any sense to continue "pouring" money heavily into an industry without improving its technology.

"If we do not improve the technology, we will build up for a while and then we will have to come back in 10 years' time and have to do it all over again.

"... So we have actually begun discussions with some of the major private landowners to look at ways how private landowners and Government could come together to figure out a way of managing these lands to ensure that we put more technology into use, raise the productivity of those lands and we can reduce the cost of tonnes per acre," he added.

Climate adaptation of rice: symbiogenics - a new strategy for reducing climate impacts on plants

U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, Seattle, 13 July 2011

http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=2852&from=rss_home

Full article:

Rice – which provides nearly half the daily calories for the world’s population – could become adapted to climate change and some catastrophic events by colonizing its seeds or plants with the spores of tiny naturally occurring fungi, just-published U.S. Geological Survey-led research shows.

In an effort to explore ways to increase the adaptability of rice to climatic scourges such as tsunamis and tidal surges that have already led to rice shortages, USGS researchers and their colleagues colonized two commercial varieties of rice with the spores of fungi that exist naturally within native coastal (salt-tolerant) and geothermal (heat-tolerant) plants.

The experiments were "quite successful," said author and Seattle-based USGS researcher Rusty Rodriguez, Ph.D. The rice plants thrived, achieving notable increased tolerance to cold, salt and drought, even though the rice varieties they tested were not naturally adapted to these stressors. Conferring heat tolerance to rice is the next step for the research team since rice production decreases by 10 percent for every temperature increase of 1-degree centigrade during the rice-growing season.

"This is an exciting breakthrough," Rodriguez said. "The ability of these fungi to colonize and confer stress tolerance, as well as increased seed yields and root systems in rice – a genetically unrelated plant species from the native plants from which the fungi were isolated -- suggests that the fungi may be useful in adapting plants to drought, salt and temperature stressors predicted to worsen in future years due to climate change."

In fact, said Rodriguez, using these tiny fungi – called endophytes – is one of the only real strategies available for mitigating the effects of climate change on plants in natural and agricultural ecosystems. "We have named this emerging area of research "symbiogenics" for symbiosis-altered gene expression. The DNA of the rice plant itself, however, is not changed," Rodriguez added. "Instead, we are re-creating what normally happens in nature. And with rice yields projected to decrease by 15 percent in developing countries by 2050, such strategies are needed."

The way it works is this. All plants seem to have symbiotic endophytes - microscopic fungi or bacteria - living in them that do not cause disease in the plant. The kind of endophytes that Rodriguez and his colleagues examined are all mutualistic, meaning the plant and the fungi have a close and positive relationship that bestows benefits on both partners: stress tolerance for the plant, nutrients and a lack of competition for the fungus.

The scientists took fungal endophytes from dunegrass, a species exposed to seawater and therefore salt-tolerant, and colonized the rice plants and seeds with its fungal spores, which germinated and infiltrated the plant’s tissue. The results, said Rodriguez, were dramatic: the endophytes reduced water consumption of the plant by up to one half, and increased its growth, the number of seeds it produced, and how much it weighed by as much as 50 percent.

"Conventional thinking was that the dunegrass is salt tolerant because of genetic adaptations that occurred over time (the process of Darwinian evolution), but we found that when we removed the fungus from dunegrass, the plants were no longer salt tolerant," Rodriguez said. "This means that plants in natural habitats may not be adapting themselves genetically to the stress, but instead are establishing a beneficial partnership with a fungus that makes them more salt tolerant."

During the last 40 years of climate change, the authors pointed out, the minimum air temperature in rice-growing season has increased in China and the Philippines, resulting in a substantial decrease in rice yields there, decreases predicted to continue. "Collectively, these events, along with an increasing world population, have contributed to shortages and increased prices of rice, exacerbating hunger and famine issues globally."

The authors emphasized that even though it may be possible to compensate for some of the effects of climate change by incorporating, say, earlier-producing varieties of rice into agricultural practices, the adaptive capabilities of rice will be what ultimately determines how severely climate change affects the annual yield of rice.

The research, Increased Fitness of Rice Plants to Abiotic Stress via Habitat Adapted Symbiosis: A Strategy for Mitigating Impacts of Climate Change, was published in PLoS One, and is available [online](http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0014823).
<http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0014823>

Climate Change

Dominica well on its way to developing a strategic programme for climate change resilience

Green, T

Government Information Service, Dominica, 22 July 2011

<http://www.gis.dominica.gov.dm/news/july2011/dwoiwtdaspfcr.php>

Full article:

With Dominica having been identified as one of the most vulnerable countries in the world as it relates to climate change, the world bank has come on board to assist the island in putting together a Pilot Strategic Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR).

On Wednesday, July 20th, 2011, environmental stakeholders met at the Fort Young Hotel with officials from the World Bank to map out such a strategy.

The activity was spearheaded by the Environmental Coordinating Unit of which Lloyd Pascal is the Director.

“Because of our vulnerability, our weakness in terms of environmental issues, natural disasters, because of our weaknesses in economics, size of population and so on, we are considered among the vulnerable countries of the world. But that does not keep us back. We try our best to develop ourselves and our people and in that effort of development, the World Bank and the World Bank team have decided to include Dominica as one of the pilot countries. In the Caribbean pilot, we have six (6) countries which are Jamaica, Haiti, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada.”

The session provided an opportunity for the World Bank officials to present an overview of the Pilot Program for Climate Change Resilience.

Two point six million dollars (US\$2 600 000.00) have been allocated by the World Bank for the overall program in the Caribbean.

That money will be split between the pilot countries for the preparation of the strategic programmes.

“The Caribbean regional plan has two tracks. This includes the country based strategic plans and investments of the six countries that I mentioned earlier, that is, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We also have another track, the regional track for region-wide activities to focus on climate monitoring, institutional strengthening, capacity building and knowledge sharing.

Two types of investments can be supported under the PPCR. There are first, funding for technical assistance to enable developing countries build upon existing national work to integrate climate resilience into national and sectorial development plans.

On the other hand, there is also funding for public and private sector investments identified in these plans and strategies. One of the key aspects of the PPCR that we have to keep in mind is that the programmes and projects implemented under the PPCR are country-led and build upon relevant country size and strategies complimenting on-going activities with the emphasis on country-led programmes.”

Dominica's phase one proposal was approved in April this year. Funding approved totalled three hundred and seven thousand dollars (\$307 000.00) which will be used to finance phase one activities.

The key tasks under phase one include joint missions, planning, capacity building, consultations with stakeholders, review of policies and strategies for climate resilience.

These phase one (1) activities will all lead to the formulation of a strategic program for climate resilience and a related investment plan.

Once phase one is completed and a strategic program is submitted to the subcommittee of the pilot program for climate change for endorsement, Dominica will then move into the implementation of the program.

In the meantime, Dominica's Hon. Minister for Fisheries and Environment, Dr. Kenneth Darroux says climate change has become one of the most important global challenges facing humankind today.

"In fact, the projected warming of 1.1 to 6.4°C by the year 2100 coupled with related changes in rainfall patterns, rising sea level and increased frequency of extreme events such as droughts, hurricanes and storms are likely to threaten food security, fresh water supply, lead to a decline in biodiversity, increase occurrence of vector-borne diseases and cause flooding of coastal settlements among others."

The Minister is concerned that if immediate action is not taken by vulnerable countries like Dominica climate change can result in devastating effects.

"I really do not want to sound like a prophet of doom, but climate change is no myth and our country, Dominica, is no exception to the potential threat it poses. It is susceptible to extremely damaging natural disasters as a result of both its location within the hurricane belt and its geophysical make up. These natural disasters have serious potential, negative impacts and lower lying areas, slopes and the socio-economic livelihood of population within them including our rich unique biodiversity. And additional stress that climate change places on ecological and socio-economic systems is not to be underestimated."

The Minister is encouraged by the fact that the World Bank is here to assist the island in developing strategies for climate change resilience.

"PPCR is intended to be multi-sectorial by nature and will cover both adaptation and mitigation activities and consider both synergies and trade-offs between development and climate change. The PPCR will incorporate the priorities of all stakeholders including organisations and individuals outside the Government and should not be perceived as strategies that create rules and constraints to development. But rather, as approaches that will continue to persist social and economic objectives through more innovative means. Thus, it will seek to strengthen development of partnership and coordination structures at the national level in pursuit of a strong foundation for creating national ownership of a strong foundation for creating national ownership, capacity and consensus about long term sustainable development objectives and results. It is, therefore, a key pre-requisite for effective action to combat climate change."

Dominica has undertaken a significant amount of work as it relates to climate change. The island approved its climate change adaptation policy in 2002. The policy was adopted to foster the development of appropriate economic incentives to encourage public and private sector adaptation measures among other things.

Senator Benn: we cannot ignore impact of climate change

Skeete, A

Barbados Government Information Service, 4 July 2011

http://www.gisbarbados.gov.bb/index.php?categoryid=13&p2_articleid=6174

Full article:

The Caribbean must seek to develop effective mitigation and adaptation strategies to address the issues of climate change and food security and sustainability, if not, the consequences could be dire.

This warning has come from Acting Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management, Senator Haynesley Benn, who stressed that the region, because of its small size, was particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change.

Speaking at the opening of the 47th annual Caribbean Food Crops Society (CFCS) Meeting at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre today, he pointed out that if the region remained reactive, its losses could be in the region of 14 per cent of Gross Domestic Product by 2025.

"In our agricultural sectors, the effects of climate change are such that they can worsen our food security and nutrition situation. This is all the more worrying when one considers the growing demand for food due to population growth, rising incomes and the use of grains to produce bio-energy. Drastic measures must, therefore, be taken if we are to manage the expected fallout from climate change on our food production sectors. The best way to achieve this is by taking a regional approach," he said.

One of the solutions Senator Benn proffered was the development of regional food production and distribution systems to ensure stable food availability and access.

Such a system, he suggested, would need to take advantage of the strengths of individual member states and would require a uniform legal and regulatory environment which guaranteed food safety, health nutrition standards and institutional arrangements for implementation.

Citing unfavourable global weather conditions, including droughts and wildfires in Russia, and floods in Australia, China and Pakistan, Senator Benn stressed, "the reality is that the climate has changed and this will require that we change too."

The Acting Agriculture Minister said for the Caribbean it could not be business as usual, with food and nutrition security becoming a multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral issue.

"...there is no way that one nation or one institution can tackle this issue alone. Practical solutions to this problem can only be secured through the creation of synergies, including inter-agency collaboration, south-south as well as north-south cooperation, and the forging of other strategic partnerships."

Locally, he said Barbados had a number of projects in the pipeline which would seek to mitigate the challenges of climate change, food security and sustainability.

These include the drafting of a National Food and Nutrition Security Policy and the establishment of a Climate Secretariat, which will deliver "an early warning and response system with timely information on [the] likely incidence of climate sensitive health risks." This project is being undertaken by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization.

The theme of the week long CFCS meeting is **Assuring Caribbean Food and Nutrition Security in the context of Climate Change**, with the subtheme **Productive Agrosystems and Resources Conservation in an island Environment: An Ecological Challenge for Caribbean Sustainable Development**.

Some 150 delegates from Barbados, the Caribbean, Latin America, the United States of America and Europe are attending the meeting which is being coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management.

askeete@barbados.gov.bb

CARDI: Grow our own

The Barbados Advocate 15 July 2011

<http://www.barbadosadvocate.com/newsitem.asp?more=local&NewsID=18703>

Full article:

The conditions which led to the 2008 food crisis are expected to return.

According to the Executive Director of the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), Dr. Arlington Chesney, the food crisis in 2008 has been linked to high food prices and, in some cases, the unavailability or inaccessibility of food.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) review, planning and coordination meeting held at Almond Beach Village, earlier this week, Dr. Chesney stressed that most importantly, projections indicate that there will be a food shortage globally.

“The last food crisis dipped into the global food resource. Therefore we do not have the totality of the food resources that we had in 2007 and 2008. This means that it is very critical for us in the region to start producing our own food if we are going to have a significant level of food security,” he advised.

“We also see high prices and this is a result of speculations to a larger extent, as food is now a commodity traded more than before. We have a situation where never before food is now as important as gold, as really it should. We must not expect low food prices again, what we have to expect is equitable food prices, equitable in terms of the producer, and equitable in terms of the consumer.”

Dr. Chesney further acknowledged that projects being undertaken by CARDI entitled “Increased Production of Root and Tuber Crops in the Caribbean through the Introduction of improved Production and Marketing Techniques,” and “Increased Production of Vegetables and Herbs through the use of Protected Agriculture in the Caribbean” are relatively unique in the region, as the approach is holistic.

“These are not research projects, but are development projects. We are talking about all aspects integrated to allow for a variable industry, and variable enterprises; whether it be farming or processing enterprises.” (TL)

CARDI to get CDB support for agricultural research

Caribbean Development Bank News Release No. 17/11, 23 May 2011

<http://www.caribank.org/titanweb/cdb/webcms.nsf/AIIDoc/99550714491B57EE0425789A003597CD?OpenDocument>

Full article:

The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) has approved a grant up to the equivalent of USD 285,000 to the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI). The grant is to support CARDI in conducting research into the problems that limit the production of vegetables under protected agriculture systems in the Caribbean. The term ‘protected agriculture systems’ has replaced ‘greenhouse’, since most of the systems currently in use in the Caribbean do not conform to the classical definition of greenhouses.

This research will be undertaken in two countries – Trinidad and Tobago and St. Lucia. These countries have been selected because they provide the range of agro-ecological zones in which protected agriculture systems are used in the Caribbean.

There will be five components to the project:

- Component one: monitoring of biotic and abiotic factors, production practices and yield in commonly used protected structures.
- Component two: identification and evaluation of 'best practice' for the management of crops under protected structures.
- Component three: development of technical packages for the management of vegetables under protected structures
- Component four: the conduct of two 'training of trainers' workshops, and
- Component five: dissemination of information.

CARDI will execute the project, and it will be implemented by a multi-disciplinary team drawn from the staff of CARDI and the University of the West Indies.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

'Eat local to combat inflation'

Brathwaite, A

Trinidad Express, 20 July 2011

<http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/ Eat local to combat inflation -125929828.html>

Full article:

Food Production Minister, Vasant Bharath, believes initiatives taken by his ministry have contributed to the reduction in the inflation rate.

Bharath was speaking at the launch of the national campaign to promote food security yesterday at the Diplomatic Centre, St Ann's when he made the comments.

"Only about two weeks ago the Governor of the Central Bank announced inflation had dropped to 3.9 per cent ... as a result of food prices, inflation having slowed considerably, because we now have more food in the system and because the cost of food has decreased," he said.

According to Bharath, the campaign is a culmination of the work that has been done in the sector over the last 12 months. He cited the construction of retention ponds and access roads as some of the major accomplishments.

Under-19 national cricketer Steven Katwaroo and TV6 CrimeWatch host Ian Alleyne are among the personalities who will be used in advertisements tailored to encourage people to buy local goods.

Bharath used the opportunity to announce the introduction of sweet potato fries at a fast food restaurant.

"We have with us the internationally renowned franchise of Kentucky Fried Chicken ... we have been working with them for quite some time. They will be launching today sweet potato chips in several of their major franchises across Trinidad and Tobago," he said.

He said soon the more than 150,000 meals produced by the National School Feeding Programme will be required to use a significant percentage of local content. He also urged his fellow Government colleagues to insist that the same was done at their functions.

The Ministry has already begun working with the hotel and restaurant industry toward bridging the gap between them and local producers.

"It's only the start for us as a Ministry allowing our farmers to know that there are significant opportunities, we have approached the restaurants and the hoteliers. We believe that locally grown foods are healthier we know where it's grown and how it's grown we are helping build our own economy when we buy locally grown," he said.

Vice president of the Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association Barry Bidaisee yesterday welcomed the initiative and was looking forward for further collaboration.

Government breathes new life into mega farms

Baboolal, Y

Trinidad and Tobago Guardian 13 July 2011

<http://www2.guardian.co.tt/news/2011/07/13/government-breathes-new-life-mega-farms>

Full article:

The private and commercial large farms project, criticised by the UNC when it was initiated by the previous PNM regime, was kickstarted by the People's Partnership Government yesterday. Food Production Minister, Vasant Bharath, delivering the feature address at the launch of the 115-acre Edinburgh Farms in Chaguanas, said the PNM's mega farm project was criticised because \$100 million was spent and no value was gained for the money spent. He said licences were given out when the project started two years ago but it came to a sudden halt. "We've rescued the programme," Bharath said. He said licences were given out to 15 farms to people who had applied for them.

He said everything was above board with the applications but noted his ministry had to negotiate with applicants to ensure the crops they planned to produce did not conflict with small farmers. Edinburgh Farms, the first large farm to be launched in the resuscitation attempt, is a subsidiary of Caribbean Chemicals and Agencies Ltd which is owned and operated by Joe Pires and family members. Caribbean Chemicals received a provisional licence to operate a large farm on former Caroni Ltd land in January 2009 under the last regime. Technology Farms Ltd, which also received a licence, is operated by ADM Distributors, owned by Balliram Maharaj, and the T&T Agri-Business Association (TTABA).

Caribbean Chemicals is in a joint venture arrangement with TTABA and ADM Distributors for food production and Pires said it would be one of the largest in the Caribbean. The Two Brothers Corporation, of Guyana, and Supermix Feeds also were granted provisional large farms licences in 2009. Tucker Valley Farms, in Chaguaramas, was already launched and is still in operation. Bharath said the remaining 13 farms were to be launched, two of them next month. He said producing local food had been placed on the top list of priorities of the PP Government in light of the international food crisis.

He said T&T had been importing over \$4 billion in food over the last three years but exporting countries were now hoarding their produce for their own populations. The launch of the mega farm project was part of the Government's bid to avert an impending calamity, he said. Managing director Joe Pires, at yesterday's launch, said Caribbean Chemicals already managed a 90-acre private farm in Wallerfield and the company was hoping to get another 250-300 acres for agricultural production.

He said it planned to produce crops like sweet corn, onions and hot peppers which could be exported and also sold to large local fast food outlets. The hot peppers will be used to produce pepper mash which is usually imported by companies like Matouk's. Pires said the Subway franchise had expressed interest in buying fresh locally-produced onions. Edinburgh Farms also plans to grow edible soya beans to supply the influx of Chinese restaurants in T&T. The company plans to employ some 20 people from the Edinburgh district permanently and another 20 on contract.

National Budgets – Agriculture

DOMINICA

Budget address for fiscal year 2011/2012 presented by Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance. Pursuing the path to growth - being responsive yet responsible. 29 June 2011

http://www.dominica.gov.dm/cms/files/budget_address_2011_june_29.pdf

EXCERPTS

Dominica's Economic Performance in 2010 and Outlook for 2011

Sectoral Contributions 2010 and outlook for 2011. Agriculture

pp.9 Agricultural production accounted for 10.96 percent of total GDP, and overall the sector is estimated to have declined by 10.6 percent in 2010 on the heels of a 1.5 percent growth rate for 2009. The performance of the crops sub-sector was severely affected by the extended drought in 2010.

In 2011, the sector is expected to rebound with an overall projected growth rate of 4 percent. A complete turnaround of the sector is anticipated as things normalize following the drought supported by government's policies to sustain the sector. The banana subsector is expected to grow by roughly 10 percent and other crops by 4.0 percent, the former, mostly as a result of the \$1.0 million investment made by Government in the industry.

Strategic Priorities. Agriculture

pp.21-23 Madam Speaker, Government's strategic plan for the agricultural sector is one that seeks to build a diversified sector informed by market demands and which provides a satisfactory level of food security.

We will pay close attention to the realities of Climate Change and so create a sector that is climate smart given our experiences with hurricanes and drought, both of which affected output in 2009/2010.

Additionally, managing agriculture today requires that we not only pay attention to the challenges at the production level, but also address the issues across the value chain. The investments made in the pack houses at Fond Cole, Marigot and Portsmouth and the National Centre for Testing Excellence (NCTE) are geared at achieving this objective. The pack houses in Roseau and Portsmouth will allow agricultural commodities leaving Dominica to be properly selected, graded, packed, labeled and certified prior to shipment. The National Centre for Testing Excellence will also facilitate the processing of agricultural products within the agro-processing sub-sector.

Through these two facilities we will better manage the fresh food trade as well as value added processed foods. This strategy will ensure food and nutrition security, food safety and the overall competitiveness of the agro-business sector.

Another of the challenges being faced by the world is that of high and rising food prices. I reiterate what I have said on a previous occasion; that is, the most sustainable way to address the matter of high cost of food is to increase agricultural production and productivity here in Dominica in order to make more fresh foods available at affordable prices underscoring our policy of "eating what we grow and growing what we eat". It is on that basis, that the Government expects to focus its effort in agriculture on increasing the output of crops, livestock and fisheries.

It is proposed that under the Support to Horticulture Programme that farmers will continue to be assisted with inputs, planting materials and technical support. The crops being supported include yam, dasheen, tannia, passionfruit, hot pepper, pineapple, ginger and plantain. Madam Speaker, currently this Support to Horticulture programme targets well over 1200 farmers throughout Dominica and we have seen tremendous benefits in terms of larger quantities of dasheen and yam being produced.

Through this programme Dominica has overcome seasonality in yams. In addition, most of these crops have shown stronger resilience to weather variability resulting from Climate Change.

Additional resources will be provided by European Union (EU) to assist the banana industry. These discussions are ongoing, and the result will inform the level of additional resources that the Government of Dominica will make to the industry.

The recent commissioning of the Portsmouth Fisheries complex is a clear and unequivocal signal of Government's commitment to developing the fishing industry. Government at this point has addressed three important components for developing the fishing subsector:

1. Fisherfolk have been provided with equipment and financial support;
2. Training has been provided to fisherfolk;
3. Improvements to facilities which will ensure the good quality of the fish sold on the market.

Attention is now being focused on increasing the value added of fish by introducing a level of processing. This is being piloted with assistance from the Japanese Government. We thank the Government of Japan for its assistance in that regard and for their continued support to this important sector of our economy.

The livestock sub-sector has realized continued investment support from this government. The development of the Central Livestock Farm (CLF) has increased the capacity for feed and nutrition research, breed selection and improvement, establishment of improved forage species, and continued development of farm infrastructure.

The work of the Central Livestock Farm is complemented by that of the Agricultural Investment Unit (AIU) which has facilitated the financing of farmers in the sector. The planned construction of an Abattoir later this year will address issues of quality of production, marketing and storage. The aim is to produce high quality meats that will not only have a positive impact on the health of residents and visitors, but will serve to reduce our food import bill, leading to a greater degree of self sufficiency.

Budget for 2011-2012

Recurrent Expenditure

pp.38 The total recurrent expenditure budget of \$357.4 million compares with projected amount for 2010/2011 of \$333.1 million. *Table 4* shows the distribution of expenditure by Ministries and Departments.

Table 4

Ministry/ Department	Amount (000)	%
President's Office	0.9	0.2%
Integrity in Public Office Commission	0.7	0.2%
Legislature	1.1	0.3%
Audit Department	1.1	0.3%
Ministry of National Security, Labour and Immigration	38.0	10.6%
Elections	0.7	0.2%
Ministry of Employment Trade, Industry and Diaspora Affairs	4.6	1.3%
Prime Minister's Office	5.1	1.4%
Ministry of Finance	93.1	26.0%
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	9.1	2.5%
Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development	60.5	16.9%
Ministry of Lands, Housing, Settlements and Water Resource Management	3.6	1.0%
Ministry of Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs	16.7	4.7%
Ministry of Health	49.4	13.8%
Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, Physical Planning and Fisheries	2.7	0.8%
Ministry of Tourism and Legal Affairs	10.9	3.1%
Ministry of Information, Telecommunications and Constituency Empowerment	2.0	0.6%
Ministry of Carib Affairs	0.4	0.1%
Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports	5.2	1.5%
Establishment, Personnel and Training Department	10.8	3.0%
Ministry of Public Works, Energy and Ports	29.7	8.3%
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	11.3	3.2%

Public Sector Investment Programme

pp. 48-49 The Ministry of Agriculture will receive \$12.7m or 10% of the PSIP allocation to continue implementing programmes that would increase the output of agricultural commodities. Special mention is made of the Support to Horticulture programme, which is responsible for the increase that is being recorded in the non-banana crop sub-sector. It is hoped that significant increases in local production can result in some of these products being exported and the income of farmers increased as a result.

A critical area for improvement is the strengthening of the Plant and Quarantine Services to enable improved, safer and more effective pest control options, which will result in safer food and reduced risk to human and environmental health. These programmes will ensure also, that the investments being made in the crop sector, particularly bananas, plantains and citrus, are protected.

A project intended to increase livestock production is the Pork and Poultry Project. Funded with resources from the Government of Venezuela, this project will see the construction of a modern abattoir. These facilities, we expect, will encourage increased production of local meats.

Madam Speaker, DEXIA has been given the responsibility for the operations of the Packing Houses. No doubt, the Packing Houses will boost the quality of the produce that is placed on the market, will serve to regulate supplies and will be an avenue for measuring more accurately agricultural output.

SAINT LUCIA

Government of Saint Lucia 2011 budget address: financial year 2011/2012 delivered by Honourable Stephenson King, Prime Minister & Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and National Development Thursday April 14, 2011

<http://www.stlucia.gov.lc/primeminister/budgetaddresses/2011-2012%20Budget%20Address.pdf>

EXCERPTS

Chap 4 Saint Lucia's Economic Performance in 2010 and Outlook for 2011

4.3 Agriculture

pp. 7 On the other hand our Agriculture sector did not fare as well. The severe drought and the Hurricane resulted in lower output of bananas and other agricultural commodities, negatively impacted the livestock sub sector and caused farmers to lose confidence. Banana production fell by around 31 percent to approximately 26,000 tonnes, resulting in a reduction in export earnings by 27.2 percent, to \$41.0 million. Hurricane Tomas also caused heavy siltation of land used for cultivation. The result was that sales of locally grown fruit and vegetables to supermarkets and hotels were down by 16.0 and 2.3 percent respectively, although chicken and pork production increased as the number of producers grew and the availability of financing to farmers improved.

6.0 Reposition Sectors for Growth

6.4 Agriculture Sector

pp.20 -22 Madam Speaker, the Agricultural Sector is of tremendous importance to the development of the country as it contributes significantly to the country's socioeconomic development through revenue generation, provision of employment and food production.

In order to revitalize the Agricultural Sector and return producers affected by Hurricane Tomas to a sustainable livelihood, the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Forestry and Fisheries embarked on a number of initiatives, namely:

1. Assistance to Banana and Plantain Farmers;
2. Assistance to Vegetable Farmers;
3. Reinstatement of farm roads
4. Clearing of main and lateral drains and the setting up of drainage systems and
5. Repairs to Agricultural Building Infrastructure.

Understandably, Government's main priority continues to be the revitalization of the Sector. This has to be achieved within a structured framework and with a shared vision for the Sector.

That vision, Madam Speaker, is for:

1. An agricultural system that provides adequate supplies of safe, high quality, nutritious food and non-food products and services, at stable and affordable prices;
2. Financial security to producers and
3. Sustainable development in rural areas.

In pursuance of the stated vision, Madam Speaker, for the financial year 2011/2012, the Ministry of Agriculture will engage in a number of initiatives aimed at achieving Government's strategic objectives. These include:

1. Continued implementation of the Praedial Larceny Project;
2. Implementation of the youth agri-entrepreneurial project, which will be an incubator programme geared at involving young persons in agriculture;
3. Implementing a project aimed at institutionalizing a National Standards and Certification System. This project is expected to enhance the country's ability to take advantage of export market opportunities thereby increasing foreign exchange earnings; and
4. Some other projects include Farm Access Road Improvement and the Rehabilitation of Drains. These projects along with implementation of Early Warning Systems and a Forest Restoration & Rehabilitation project will seek to build resilience and mitigate the impact of external shocks such as natural disasters on the agricultural sector.

A total of fifteen million three hundred and fifty three thousand and forty seven dollars (EC\$15, 353, 047.00) is budgeted for those projects.

In addition, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture is implementing the following three (3) initiatives which are geared towards Agricultural Diversification:

1. Promotion of Domestic Agricultural Products;
2. Development of Agro-Enterprise and
3. Technology Adaptation.

I have not spoken at length on the banana industry in this address, because it will be addressed in detail by the Minister responsible for agriculture. Nonetheless Madam Speaker, this Government continues to support and improve productivity in the banana sector, given the significant contribution it makes to our economy. I wish to reaffirm, that despite the significant losses suffered as a result of the drought and Hurricane Tomas in 2010, and notwithstanding our efforts towards economic diversification, the Government remains committed to taking the necessary steps to ensure the sustainability and economic viability of the banana industry. A further demonstration of this commitment is Government's recent decision to acquire certain assets of the Saint Lucia Banana Corporation, now in liquidation.

9.8 Climate Change, Sustainable Development and the Environment

pp. 48-49 In this regard, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report on a number of environmental initiatives which include:

1. Commissioning of the National Environmental Commission (NEC).
2. A Special Programme on Adaptation to Climate Change (SPACC).
3. A Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience (PPCR). This aims to develop a Strategic Programme for Climate Resilience which will result in a project totaling US\$5 million.
4. The establishment of an inter-sectoral Castries Sewerage Management Committee to guide the approach to the management of sewerage with Castries.
5. The establishment of National Recreational Water Quality Standards.

Through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects are expected to be implemented totaling approximately US\$5 million.

10.2.1 Allocation of Expenditure

pp.60 The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is earmarked to receive an allocation of \$36.1 million. Of that sum, \$5.3 million is for the implementation of the Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurial Project funded by the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF) and \$4.3 million is to undertake post-TOMAS rehabilitation works on farm access roads and drains.

Guyana taking advantage of EPA accord

CTA Brussels Newsletter 283, 29 July 2011:

http://brussels.cta.int/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=5822:guyana-taking-advantage-of-epa-accord

Full article:

Guyana has said despite its earlier reservations, it is among the first country within the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) to put in place the necessary legislation to take advantage of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) regional countries signed with the European Union in 2008.

“The Government of Guyana takes very seriously, international agreements we sign and the EPA is no different. Notwithstanding our reservations we signed and it was no surprise therefore, that Guyana was among the first group of countries to put in place all the necessary legislative arrangements for the implementation of the agreement,” Foreign Affairs Minister Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett told a two-day consultation on the CARIFORUM-EU accord.

A government statement said that the consultation placed focus on trade services, with reference on cross border supply of services, temporary presence of natural persons for business purposes and sectoral rules. It said that the consultation will pave the way, not only for enhanced public awareness, but the political and technical input of civil society.

Source: Antigua Observer

International Relations:

The EC and the IDB team up on development in the Caribbean

CTA Brussels Newsletter 283, 29 July 2011:

http://brussels.cta.int/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=5823:the-ec-and-the-idb-team-up-on-economic-and-social-development-in-the-caribbean

Full article:

The European Commission (EC) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) signed a Framework Agreement to expand cooperation between the two institutions on economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean. This is the first ever Framework Agreement to be signed by the Commission and a Regional Development Bank. The President of the IDB, Luis Alberto Moreno, and the Director-General of DG Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid, Fokion Fotiadis, signed the document, which will help to strengthen collaboration in areas such as climate change, energy efficiency, education and housing.

This new Framework Agreement is signed within the context of the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) that was signed between President Moreno and European Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, on November 19, 2007. The Memorandum identified several areas of shared priority: social cohesion and poverty reduction; regional integration and trade development; renewable energy and energy efficiency; climate change; and collaboration on statistical information. The new agreement will establish the guidelines under which resources from the European Commission would be administered by the IDB.

At the signing ceremony, President Moreno indicated: “The IDB is pleased to extend the collaboration between the European Commission and the Bank, as key partners for development in Latin America and the Caribbean. We hope that the approval of the Framework Agreement will increase the flow of resources from the European Commission to the IDB and will complement other efforts in resource mobilization, benefiting the people of Latin America and the Caribbean.”

Director-General Fotiadis said: "This Agreement is the fruitful outcome of our ever-improving cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean and means that the European Commission and the Inter-American Development Bank will be able to do even more to help reduce poverty in developing countries in the future. We have already worked together successfully on several projects. I hope that this Agreement will lead to even closer collaboration going forward."
Source: IDB

Information and Communications

Local media provided with toolkit to assist them in reporting on biodiversity and conservation issues

Matthew, K

Government Information Services, Dominica. 14 July 2011

<http://www.gis.dominica.gov.dm/news/july2011/Impwtoatirobaci.php>

Full article:

Recognizing the critical role that media plays in public awareness, and cognizant of the limited resources available to the media in the region, the OECS Secretariat has produced a toolkit for the media on biodiversity conservation.

The kit is designed to assist the media with high quality coverage on the issues of protected areas, biodiversity conservation and environmental management.

Moreover, the OECS Media Toolkit takes into account the small sizes of media houses in the region and the resultant obstacles which may hinder their abilities for in-depth research, and for provision of technical training and support for issues such as biodiversity conservation.

President of the Media Workers Association of Dominica and General Secretary of the Association of Caribbean Media Workers, Thalia Remy, believes that the OECS Toolkit is one of a number of such ventures in the Caribbean aimed at helping the media to understand and present issues that are crucial not only to our development but to our very survival as a people.

"Throughout the region under the umbrella of the ACM, media associations have been somewhat sceptical of attempts by NGO's and some international agencies to encourage the media to adopt their agendas. What this toolkit aims to do is not that. It is practical and it provides the information and the assistance that will prove useful to working practitioners on a day to day basis."

Communications Specialist at the OECS Secretariat, Tecla Fontenard, said that this media toolkit which is named 'Keeping Biodiversity in the News,' is part of the OPAAL Media Awareness Initiative which was launch in January 2011 and completed in April.

The initiative included three main elements; among them is a series of media sensitization workshop across the six independent states of the OECS.

She is happy to report that as a result of these media sensitization seminars they were able to receive a tremendous amount of media coverage on the subject of protected areas, biodiversity conservation and environmental management in general.

"In fact, the period January to April, 2011, saw the largest percentage of news coverage ever seen, read or heard on protected areas and biodiversity conservation in the last six (6) years at least in the OECS. An estimated sixty (60) news stories were published across the region on radio, television, newspapers and the internet representing the highest concentration of stories ever produced on the OECS Environment Programme in any given period in the last ten (10) years."

President of the Association of Caribbean Media Workers, Peter Richards, said that the association is indeed pleased to be associated with this project.

He said that this sense of satisfaction comes from the fact that their association is of the view that biodiversity

“The leadership displayed by the OECS in this regard is not only exemplary from an institutional standpoint, but indicative of the urgency with which the policy and broader social intervention need to be addressed. As we have indicated at the workshops, the biodiversity challenge brings with it all the main ingredients of a good story. It touches the entire range of journalists’ concerns and spans a vast social, economic and political spectrum. It is as much a political as it is an economic story and journalists following power, poverty, money and even intrigue can find angles for biodiversity stories there as well.”

Director of Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division at Ministry of Agriculture, Minchinton Burton, said that while the temptation to give greater coverage to those issues might not seem as attractive as other seemingly more appealing topics such as crime, violence, and politics, increased media involvement and partnership will be of critical importance if these important issues are to be adequately and effectively disseminated to the wider public.

“It is extremely important that we recognise and appreciate the fact that notwithstanding our God given natural blessings, these assets do represent fragile and irreplaceable ecosystems that can be easily destroyed if extra care is not taken to manage our natural assets in a sustainable manner. In fact, as we speak, we have a plethora of issues and activities impacting our natural environment; a number of which has dire consequences for the survival of species, habitats and entire ecosystems.”

The kit addresses gaps and challenges that the media face and packages sources of information that will facilitate timely, efficient and effective delivery of information on biodiversity conservation.

The content for the draft media kit was generated primarily by a communications consultant working in close collaboration with OECS Secretariat Personnel and Country Level OPAAL partners.

The compilation of the kit also drew on the expertise and experience of regional media organizations such as Caribbean Institute of Media Communication (CARIMAC), PANOS and the Association of Caribbean Media Workers (ACM).

CIAT takes the lead with peer-reviewed video first

International Center for Tropical Agriculture [CIAT] Blog, 22 June 2011.

<http://ciatnews.cgiar.org/en/index.php/2011/06/ciat-takes-the-lead-with-peer-reviewed-video-first/>

Full article:

A team of entomologists at CIAT is the first in the CGIAR to publish in the world’s only peer-reviewed video journal.

Dr. Soroush Parsa and his team produced a [10-minute video](#) demonstrating the procedures for assessing spittlebug resistance in brachiaria grasses for the online publisher [JoVE, the Journal of Visualized Experiments](#).

Established in 2006, JoVE has published over 1,200 peer-reviewed science videos, attracting around 120,000 visitors to its website each month. Click the screens below to watch the video, and for a behind the scenes glimpse of how they did it.

Spittlebugs are a major pest of brachiaria – the highly-nutritious deep-rooted forage grass also famed for its ability to improve soil fertility and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of farming systems. It is one of the most widely planted forages in Latin America, but spittlebugs are a major problem, with nymphs attacking brachiaria roots, and adults feeding on the leaves. Both sap nutrients from the plant, resulting in stunted growth, and in severe cases, killing plants altogether.

CIAT’s Tropical Forages Program has long focused on breeding brachiaria varieties that can withstand spittlebug attacks. The protocol documented in the video shows how new varieties can be efficiently screened to identify resistant specimens.

“The protocol reflects decades of refinement, making it a great model for other breeding efforts,” said Parsa.

“We wanted to share it formally – but very intuitively – with a diverse international audience interested in crop improvement.”

While Parsa believes there will always be a place for written scientific publications, he sees JoVE as a great example of the ever-growing power of video – not just for documenting science, but also as a highly accessible medium for teaching scientists new techniques.

“In my team there are a lot of people who will be retiring soon, so I really wanted a way of documenting their knowledge so that it can be transferred to the next generation of scientists. I think the use of video is the perfect teaching tool for scientists both here at CIAT, and through JoVE, scientists around the world.”

JoVE Deputy Editor Dr. Beth Hovey agreed: “Publishing in a video format enables scientists to reach a much wider audience than using the written word alone,” she said. “Using this multimedia approach to publishing, the authors enable the field to advance through improved transparency and standardization of techniques.”

IICA/CARDI Media Awards for Excellence in Agricultural Journalism 2010-2011

Guardian excels in agricultural journalism

Rambally, R

Trinidad and Tobago Guardian 12 July 2011

<http://www2.guardian.co.tt/news/2011/07/12/guardian-excels-agricultural-journalism>

Full article:

Guardian Media Limited (GML) has received the award for Overall Excellence in Agricultural Journalism from the Inter-American Institute for Co-operation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI). The award was given to GML for consistently addressing the issue of agriculture and food security during the IICA/CARDI media awards function held at the Centre of Excellence in Macoya yesterday. Two GML journalists—Sunday Guardian’s Shaliza Hassanali and Business Guardian’s Dixie-Ann Dickson—were awarded in the print categories for Best Human Interest and Best Business Feature respectively, while photographer Dilip Singh was awarded for Best News Photograph.

The competition, now in its second year, focuses on fostering greater understanding of food security and related issues among media in the country. The theme was “Agriculture—Rooting for Sustainable Development.” Food Production Minister Vasant Bharath said this newspaper had been comprehensively covering the agriculture sector. He said Hassanali was “a staple” at the ministry’s public events and could even be mistaken for a member of its staff “because she is around so often.”

He said Dickson often wrote about the involvement of young people in the sector, which the ministry was very keen on promoting. The winners captured prize money from US\$800 to US\$1,200. She said: “Through this initiative and several others, they have shown the importance of partnering with the media, so that we can work together to raise awareness and promote interest in agriculture development and the many issues that confront a sector that has always been a vital part of the history and social and economic development of the Caribbean.”

Best News Story (Print)—Aabida Allaham

Best News Story (Television)—Nadine Hackett

Best Feature Documentary (Television)—Karma Ballah Boyke

Best Feature Photograph—Krishna Maharaj

IICA/CARDI Special Award—Prof John Spence

IICA/CARDI Media Awards for Excellence in Agricultural Journalism 2010-2011. Press Release

Full article:

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) are pleased with the overwhelming response from journalists to the second annual Media Awards for Excellence in Agricultural Journalism 2010-2011.

Judging for the IICA/CARDI Media Awards has been completed and the winners of the different categories which attract prizes between US\$800-US\$1200 have been contacted. An awards function will be held in May to distribute prizes to winners.

The theme of the 2010-2011 Media Awards is 'Agriculture – Rooting for Sustainable Development' which the sponsors believe reflect the central role of the media in highlighting the issues of agriculture which can contribute to the country's GDP, increase employment, reduce poverty, slash the high import food bill and revitalise communities particularly in rural areas.

Representative of IICA Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Gregg Rawlins and Executive Director of CARDI, Dr. Arlington Chesney expressed satisfaction over the high quality of entries that came from the print and electronic media and from digital and internet blogs.

"I am extremely pleased with the level of response this year which has turned out to be well in excess of what we received last year, the first year of the competition. The fact that there were approximately seventy entries across all categories demonstrates that the competition is growing and we are encouraged by this," said Mr. Rawlins.

"From this experience since the inception of the competition in 2010 we have seen a higher success rate of participation from the media which only encourages the Institutions to expand future competitions to a regional level," added Dr. Chesney.

Both Mr. Rawlins and Dr. Chesney hope the awards competition can develop into an annual event through which recognition can be paid to journalists who produce stories and features and use various media to provide information on developments in the agricultural sector and issues relating to food production and food security.

"Through the competition, we in IICA and CARDI want to promote more informed reporting on agriculture and food security matters since these are important national issues which the general population must be kept abreast of. I wish to congratulate all the winners in this year's competition and thank all those journalists and persons in the media for participating and thus making this competition a success," said Mr. Rawlins.

The winners of the 2010-2011 Awards for Excellence in Agricultural Journalism are:

PRINT

- Best news story - **Ms. Aabida Allaham – Express Newspaper**
- Best business feature - **Ms. Dixie-Ann Dickson – Trinidad Guardian**
- Best human interest story - **Ms. Shaliza Hassanali – Trinidad Guardian**

TELEVISION

- Best news story - **Ms. Nadine Hackett - CNMG**
- Best feature/documentary - **Ms. Karma Ballah-Boyke - GIS**

PHOTOGRAPHY

- Best News Photograph - **Mr. Dilip Singh – Trinidad Guardian**
- Best Feature photograph- **Mr. Krishna Maharaj – Express newspaper**

NEW MEDIA

- Web-based and digital media - **Mr. Paolo Kernahan**

Overall Excellence in Agricultural Journalism Winner awarded to the media house that consistently addresses the issue of agriculture and food security on a continuous basis – **Trinidad Guardian**

IICA/CARDI Special Award to a columnist who regularly writes on agriculture and food security issues – **Professor John Spence, a columnist in the Express Newspaper**

Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER 2011

2nd Annual Caribbean Fine Cocoa Conference and Chocolate Expo

Date: September 14th – September 16th, 2011

Venue: Montego Bay Jamaica

Deadlines: Registration 7 September 2011

For further details

Email: cfcf@utt.edu.tt

Website: www.caribbeanfinecocoaforum.org

Phone: 868-223-4888. Extensions: 21111, 21145, 21174

NOVEMBER 2011

International Conference on Extension titled, 'Innovations in Extension and Advisory Services: Linking knowledge to policy and action for food and livelihoods'

Date: 15-18 November

Venue: Nairobi, Kenya

For further details

<http://extensionconference2011.cta.int/>

The International Conference is being hosted by CTA in collaboration with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), the New Partnership for Africa's Development Planning and Coordinating Agency (NEPAD Agency), The International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA), the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and several national, regional and international partners including the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE), the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), the Ministry of Agriculture – Kenya, the European Initiative on Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD), the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of the South Pacific (USP).