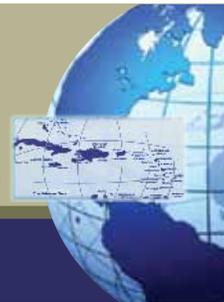




IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

HQ/001/11

Agriculture *in the* News



Issues Affecting Caribbean Agriculture

IN THIS ISSUE - MARCH 2011

- | | |
|-----|---------------------------|
| 1. | Crops: Germplasm/Breeding |
| 2. | Roots and Tubers: Yam |
| 3. | Livestock |
| 4. | Small Ruminants |
| 5. | Biotechnology |
| 6. | Agro-energy |
| 7. | Climate Change |
| 9. | Agricultural Development |
| 13. | Women |
| 15. | Trade |
| 17. | Agricultural Institutions |
| 17. | Upcoming Events |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Jamaica looks at castor oil as a biofuel

Jamaica Information Service (JIS), 14 February 2011:
<http://www.jis.gov.jm/news/111-energy-mining/26779-jamaica-looks-at-castor-oil-as-a-biofuel>

A \$10.3 million research partnership agreement for a small scale biodiesel pilot project, using Jamaican oilseed bearing plants to produce fuel, was signed Friday February 11 between the Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica's Centre of Excellence for Renewable Energy (PCJ's CERE) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI).

The project seeks to assess the viability of producing biodiesel for the automotive industry from locally grown jatropha and castor. Six acres of the plants are to be cultivated at CARDI's Sam Motta Demonstration Farm, Manchester, to supply the seeds. The agreement was signed at the PCJ's Resource Centre, New Kingston.

See Agro-energy: 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.



IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

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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

Ministers commit to review the world crop gene pool: Bali meeting sees climate benefits of genetic diversity in edible plants

FAO, Bali, Indonesia, 11 March 2011: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/52635/icode/>

Full article:

Agriculture ministers and senior officials from more than 100 countries have committed to review the global crop gene pool of the **International Treaty on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture** and urged those countries who have not signed the farming biodiversity treaty to do so as soon as possible.

The ministers paved the way forward on the eve of a meeting of the Treaty's Governing Body in Bali, Indonesia on March 14-18, adopting a lengthy declaration designed to steer the Treaty's future course to face food insecurity and climate change.

The Treaty, which came into force in 2004, creates a multilateral system through which member countries share the genetic material of 64 of the most important crops for food security - crops that account for over 80 percent of our plant-sourced food.

127 countries have already signed the Treaty with more signatures in the pipeline.

More tomatoes and more benefits?

Whilst wheat, rice and potatoes are included in the Treaty's gene pool, tomatoes were excluded ten years ago during the negotiations that lead to its adoption.

"The more efficiently crops are protected under the Treaty, the better humankind will be able to conserve and share crop genetic resources to meet the enormous food security challenges of the present and future generations," said Shakeel Bhatti, Secretary of the Treaty.

"Indonesia is a mega-biodiverse country and has always played a lead role in the Treaty and today it did so again showing that agriculture and environment can and must go along together," said Bhatti.

Today, the Multilateral System forms a gene pool of over 1.3 million unique crop samples. The Treaty has also has a benefit sharing fund by which farmers are supported in the conservation and use of genetic diversity on their own farms.

Climate dangers

Spain, Italy and Norway and Australia are the major donors to the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF) set up by the Treaty to support poor farmers in developing countries in adapting their traditional crops to the changing environment.

In their declaration, ministers and senior officials also recognized that climate change poses a serious risk plant genetic resources that are essential" as a raw material for crop genetic improvement -whether by means of farmer selection, classical plant breeding or modern biotechnologies-" and also "in the development of new market opportunities, and in adapting to unpredictable environmental changes."

It is expected that in the course of this meeting countries would announce new investments to extend the number of activities and conservation projects supported worldwide as well as the number of people that benefit from it.

CARDI introduces yam farmers to new trellising techniques

Green, T

Dominica Government Information Service, 4 March 2011:

<http://www.gis.dominica.gov.dm/news/mar2011/cardiiftntt.php>

Full article:

Yam farmers in the central agricultural district are now being introduced to new techniques in trellising yams. On Wednesday the **Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI)** hosted a demonstration workshop for these farmers on the farm of Earl Grant in an area called Crown in Layou valley.

The Division of Agriculture, in collaboration with CARDI, has established demonstration plots and satellite farms in the crop hub areas for yam, where training sessions will be conducted over an extended period. Extension Officer, working with The Ministry of Agriculture, Kian Stephenson, gave some background into the training programme.

“Today would be one of the first of such events of the satellite plot which is bring farmers throughout the agriculture regions to one central area where they could see practises being done and management under the recommended techniques. Training to day will be a method demonstration on the trellising of yams. This method will incorporate the use of less poles and wire.

We have the issue of deforestation to consider as farmers go into the forest to collect posts or sticks and it is increasingly becoming a problem in terms of cost, availability and labour to actually go out and get those things and transport them to the farm.

On the issue of the trellising demonstration, the method of trellising we will show today it will have several advantages including increased yield per acre as we will be showing using the ridge formation instead of individual mounds. It will have the advantage of less materials being used in terms of wood for posts. Farmers will have the opportunity to learn the right technique as some of them do practise it but has a stage or two wrongly done.”

The workshop for yam farmers on Wednesday highlighted the common fund for commodities (CFC) and European Union (EU)-funded regional project of which Dominica is a recipient of over US\$200,000 to be utilized in the promotion of sweet potato, yam and cassava.

The main objective of the project is to contribute to the improvement of livelihoods along the root and tuber crop commodity chain.

Local CARDI representative, Sharon Jones, said that the project addresses marketing and production technologies and looks at systems across the value chain.

“This is a project that is implemented throughout the islands inclusive of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent, Dominica, Barbados and Haiti. What you are experiencing is a collaboration of the whole CARDI family working and assisting in Dominica. Information that comes out of the islands is shared so you are not only benefitting from the knowledge in Dominica, but the entire region. It is an interesting concept of ‘each one, teach one’.

The training program is expected to impart valuable information to farmers on how to be successful in yam production. Other training programmes organised include one on mini setting – how to prepare your planting material for yam cultivation and one on cassava plant material preparation.

Another important component of the project will be the introduction of new varieties of cassava and sweet potato into Dominica using tissue culture material.

Gov't Breed Enhancement Programme significantly boosted - with inking of \$65.5M contracts

GINA, Georgetown, 9 March 2011:

<http://agriculture.gov.gy/Bulletins/March%202011/Govt%20Breed%20Enhancement%20Programme%20significantly%20boosted.html>

Full article:

Agriculture Minister Robert Persaud said that it has been traditional for the Government to make public, contracts that are being executed, with the aim of beneficiaries being aware of the deliverables in order to receive value for money.

The Minister made the statement during the inking of four contracts for several projects including the construction of a breeding station at Mon Repos, which will allow the country to capitalize on regional and international market opportunities.

The contracts which will cover works for the supply of equipment and construction of pens as part of the Ministry's Breed Enhancement Programme, amount to \$65.5M.

A contract for over \$20M has been awarded to General Equipment Guyana Limited for the supply, delivery, installation and testing of field equipment for breed enhancement programme; \$11.9M awarded to AS Woodworking Establishment for supply, delivery and installation of executive desks, conference tables among other while contracts valued \$6.5M and \$26.7M were awarded to International Pharmaceutical Agency and Alvin Chowramootoo Construction service respectively for the supply, delivery and installation of metal storage cabinets, lab stools and rehabilitation and construction of pens for the Guyana Livestock Breeding Station.

Minister Persaud added that the initiative is also part of a wider culture within the Agriculture Diversification Project, which for the first time has benefited from substantial resources towards further developing the livestock sector.

Under the ADP project, US\$6M will be invested this year, with the aim of not only supporting small and large scale farmers, but also providing the necessary facilities to position Guyana to become a producer and a major exporter of food.

"The project here that we are about to sign for the building is the civil works of the project, but there are other elements that you will certainly be aware of....We need the building and other equipment such as the necessary implements to develop the requisite pastures," he said.

The Minister pointed out that the breeding station will not only target cattle, but will cater for small ruminants and other livestock, noting that it will pave the way for the development of the sector on an incremental basis.

"This project will allow us to move very swiftly and within the next week we will finalize another project for another element of the breed enhancement project within this context. In Guyana we are self sufficient in terms of our livestock needs as many of us would be aware for the fourth consecutive year we didn't need to import poultry meat," the Minister said.

The Government has also being in talks with the Trinidadian and Surinamese authorities to establish market linkages. Thus far, the Suriname Government has indicated its willingness to source poultry and cattle from Guyana.

Efforts are also being made to export not only rice to the Venezuelan Government, but livestock as well.

“We are in the midst of a global food crisis that is taking its toll not only on the region but across the globe and certainly in Guyana we are positioning ourselves to capitalize on the opportunities,” Minister Persaud added.

With respect to the population trend, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), has estimated that livestock output will have to be doubled to meet the required level of food demand by 2030.

To ensure that the livestock sector in Guyana remains viable to supply growing demand, Government has been investing huge sums over the years. This has also seen farmers benefiting from the animal distribution programme in keeping with its ‘Grow More Food Campaign’.

Small Ruminants:

Changing the meat market

Jankie, A

Trinidad and Tobago Express - Business Express, 2 March 2011, pp. 3:

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/business-magazine/Changing_the_meat_market-117222208.html

Full article:

Chefs can now walk into Cash and Carry Supermarket at Endeavour, Chaguanas, choose the exact cuts of meat they want and get them freshly cut on the spot.

The service could spread to other supermarkets as people get training from master butcher Paul Grant.

The supermarket display of fresh local meat offers a range of cuts for all types of dishes.

Grant, who arrived in Trinidad and Tobago from Ireland to work at the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), said that local butchers used electrical machines and meat purchased off the shelves was wrapped and sold in packages.

"The customer did not have the chance to choose the cuts they desired," he said.

He said that he used knives and a hand saw and was able to provide the consumer with the desired cut of meat.

Benefitting from the increase in the sale of locally produced meat, sheep and goat farmers continue to expand production and have secured a good price for animals produced at their farms. A sum of \$15 a pound for live animals has been guaranteed by the supermarkets and farmers were hopeful that soon the hotels and restaurants would avail themselves of the locally produced meat.

John Borely, president of the Sheep and Goat Association, said that farmers can now move from supplying the traditional market at festival times to a year round sale of animals.

The industry registered a 400 per cent increase in goat milk production with sheep and goat stocks expanding slowly across the country.

Grant, 44, said that a November Food Fair at UWI, St Augustine stirred interest in local meat and gave him a contract with the Cash and Carry Supermarkets to provide super quality meats.

"The meat sections in a supermarket should be designed to allow customers to select the meat and order the piece required," he said.

He said that the agricultural sector was lagging behind in technology and the time had come to expand local meat production.

"In three to five years the world would not be able to supply us and if not self sufficient, we should be able to supply 25 to 30 per cent of the market demand," he said.

He said that he grew up in the shadow of a father who was the manager of a poultry plant.

"On weekends, I learnt how to make burgers," he said.

Later, he went to work at an abattoir and during school vacation earned an income at a pork factory. He studied to become a master butcher at Smithfield College, London and has worked in Singapore, Ireland, Germany before taking up residence in Trinidad, where he has three daughters.

He said that the supermarket chain was planning to supply the entire Caribbean market with fresh meat and he had been contacted by the Ministry of Tertiary Education to train young butchers to work in the hotel and restaurant industry.

"When we import meat, we do not know when the animals were killed. We are just a dumping ground," he said, adding that he looked forward to working with youths to pass on skills he had acquired.

Biotechnology

Groundbreaking study analyzes impact of transgenics on Latin America: research will determine whether genetically modified organisms harm the environment

Bulletin IICAConnection. Edition 2 Year 9, March 2011:

<http://www.iica.int/Eng/prensa/IICAConexion/IICAConexion/2011/N02/secundaria03.aspx>

Full article:

One of the questions that a **new study on biotechnology and biosafety** will endeavor to answer is whether transgenic seeds blown from one place to another or pollinated by birds retain their own traits in the new environment or cross-pollinate wild species.

Studies of this kind have already been carried out in other regions of the world, such as the United States and Europe, but this will be the first one to **analyze the situation of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Latin America.**

The project "Multi-country capacity building in compliance with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety" **will be implemented in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru**, with specific crops being studied in each country.

The project for Costa Rica was presented on Thursday, February 24 at the Headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). A number of environmental organizations took part in the activity.

"**Biotechnology is still a developing issue** in Latin America. Countries like Brazil have consolidated industries but others are only just beginning to conduct field experiments. That is why many there are so many **doubts and myths, which the study will help clarify,**" said Bryan Muñoz, an IICA specialist in Biotechnology and Biosafety.

Cassava will be studied in Brazil, potatoes in Peru, cotton and rice in Costa Rica, and corn, cotton and rice in Colombia. The project, which will not plant GMOs but focus on the observation of those that already exist, will take until July 2012 to complete.

“In Costa Rica, we want to find out whether the traits of rice migrate to surrounding areas, whether birds disperse the seeds, whether there is dormancy – in other words, whether seeds are left in the fields when cultivation stops and germinate with their own traits,” said Federico Albertazzi, a specialist from the Center for Research on Cellular and Molecular Biology (CIBCM) of the University of Costa Rica, the entity in charge of implementing the project in his country.

“In general terms, we want to **determine whether GMOs have an impact on the environment** and, if so, what the exact nature and significance of that impact is, so that action can be taken on biosafety with hard data from the region itself and not from other areas, as has been the case hitherto,” Albertazzi went on.

The **study will also analyze the socioeconomic impact of transgenic products** – the cost/benefit of the technology for producers – **and includes a component for training** in the assessment, monitoring, management and communication of risk for decision-making entities and the technical and research community.

IICA will assist with the organization of forums to present the progress made by the project, and with training talks.

The funds for the project are being provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and administered by the World Bank.

The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) will supervise the project at the regional level, while each country will have executing agencies: EMBRAPA’s Environmental Research Center and the State University of Campinas in Brazil, the Colombian Agricultural Research Corporation (CORPOICA) in Colombia, the CIBCM in Costa Rica and the National Council for the Environment (CONAM), La Molina National Agrarian University and the International Potato Center (CIP) in Peru.

For more information, contact
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Agro-energy

Jamaica looks at castor oil as a biofuel

Jamaica Information Service (JIS), 14 February 2011:

<http://www.jis.gov.jm/news/111-energy-mining/26779-jamaica-looks-at-castor-oil-as-a-biofuel>

Full article:

A \$10.3 million research partnership agreement for a small scale biodiesel pilot project, using Jamaican oilseed bearing plants to produce fuel, was signed Friday February 11 between the Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica’s Centre of Excellence for Renewable Energy (PCJ’s CERE) and the **Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI)**.

The project seeks to assess the viability of producing biodiesel for the automotive industry from locally grown jatropha and castor. Six acres of the plants are to be cultivated at CARDI’s Sam Motta Demonstration Farm, Manchester, to supply the seeds. The agreement was signed at the PCJ’s Resource Centre, New Kingston

Jatropha is an oilseed-bearing tree that grows on marginal lands in tropical and sub-tropical regions. When the seeds are crushed, the oil derived from it can be processed to produce a high-quality biodiesel fuel used in standard cars. Castor is an oilseed plant, also used as a laxative by Jamaicans, which can produce biodiesel from the castor oil.

Acting Group Managing Director at the PCJ, Nigel Logan, said he hoped the partnership will help Jamaica to forge ahead with its development of biofuels and, by extension, its energy diversification.

He said that due to the country's dependence on oil, it must remain committed to diversifying "the energy mix", using natural resources which are feasible and economical.

"This is the direction in which the PCJ is moving with this Research Partnership Agreement," he explained.

The research and development phase of the project will involve the cultivation and harvesting of six varieties of the oil nuts, to determine their oil content, harvesting potential and relative productivity. The oil nuts will be cultivated on mined-out bauxite lands between April, 2011 and March, 2014.

Mr. Logan noted that if the feedstock varieties are productive, a biodiesel blend becomes a serious possibility and, with the continued support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and a framework of a (draft) biofuels policy, Jamaica should be able to introduce biodiesel to the transport sector.

He stated that Jamaica has made huge strides, in recent years, in the biofuels industry, with the successful introduction of ethanol into the fuel mix, and with E10 87 and E10 90 octane gasolines being sold at service stations.

He pointed out that biodiesel is a cleaner-burning diesel replacement fuel made from natural, renewable, agricultural resources and, like petroleum diesel, can operate in combustion-ignited engines, including cars, trucks, heavy equipment and boats. It can also be used in oil-based home heating systems.

Acting Manager at CERE, Denise Tulloch, noted that the biodiesel pilot project is in its second year of implementation. She said that the PCJ will invest 60 per cent of the funding, while CARDI will provide the remaining 40 per cent in "kind" support. PCJ has already procured plant seeds from Brazil, India, China as well as Jamaica.

CARDI's Entomologist, Dionne Clarke Harris, explained that the entity would be providing the six acres of land needed for the project, as well as provide technical assistance. The project is expected to run from February 2011 to January 2014.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has also provided funding support of US\$50,000.

PCJ's CERE was established on November 15, 2006 to support the implementation ideas and methods in renewable energy, in recognition of Jamaica's abundant supply of natural resources. CARDI was established in 1975, through the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), to serve the agricultural and development needs of member states.

CONTACT: ALECIA SMITH

Climate Change

The Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) reaffirms its commitment to addressing climate change in the Region

Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre [CCCCC] Press Release, 14th March, 2011:

<http://caribbeanclimate.bz/news-feed/cccc-press-release-14th-march-2011.html>

Full article:

The Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) reaffirms its commitment to addressing climate change in the Region

Last month, at the Twenty-Second Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), leaders reinforced the urgent need to address climate change in

the Region. The Communiqué issued after the conference sets out key climate change priorities for CARICOM countries.

The Heads of Government welcomed a report from the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia on the outcome of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP 16) which was held last December in Cancun, Mexico.

The outcomes at Cancun represented progress for many countries and is clearly a stepping stone for future actions and agreements. However, the road ahead is still a bumpy one for the Caribbean, being among the most vulnerable groups affected by climate change. The region has already suffered greatly from the effects of a changing climate and will inevitably suffer severe consequences if strong measures are not taken at this stage.

The Caribbean shares these challenges with wider groups including the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS) and the Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC), and has over the years, worked with them to secure stronger global efforts to address climate change.

Based on these links, the Heads of Government agreed that CARICOM Member States would make efforts to ensure that there is adequate and balanced representation by competent CARICOM experts, through GRULAC and AOSIS, on the newly formed governance bodies of the UNFCCC.

They also agreed that Member States would collectively sponsor and lobby for the CCCCC to be designated an International Centre on Adaptation. The CCCCC will also support Member States in identifying and preparing appropriate projects, in order to make use of available and emerging resources for climate change adaptation.

The CCCCC welcomes the opportunity to work with Member States and is firmly committed to this endeavour. Throughout the years we have worked within the Region to support and facilitate projects, programmes and initiatives that build capacity to address climate change especially as it relates to adaption.

We recognise the immense challenge ahead as the Region is already being affected by the effects of a changing climate change. However, it is important that we also recognise the possibilities for strong responses that exist at this stage.

The CARICOM as a collective group has worked effectively throughout the years to negotiate on climate change issues and can continue to play a significant role in crafting an effective global framework for addressing climate change.

The CCCCC has had the privilege of working with Member States to develop their capacity to address challenges posed by climate change and gained their collective agreement on a Regional Climate Change Strategic Plan in 2009.

Heads of Government requested the CARICOM Secretariat to convene a Joint COHSOD-COTED Meeting to agree on an action plan to address the way forward for the Region to follow-up on the outcome of COP-16, preparation for COP 17 and for the implementation of the Regional Climate Change Strategic Plan, among other issues.

There is clearly much work to be done this year as the Caribbean and other groups work towards achieving an effective climate change framework.

In his statement during the High Level Segment at COP 16, CCCCC Executive Director, Dr. Kenrick Leslie, emphasized that: “CARICOM is seeking the highest level of ambition from the negotiations. An agreement, which will result in the peaking of global concentrations of greenhouse gases by 2015 and a decline to 350 parts per million to give the atmosphere an even chance to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels”.

CARICOM holds the position that emission reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol are woefully inadequate. Much more must be done and we all have to do our share.

Dr. Leslie also reminded Parties that, “The challenge is not easy. It will require concerted global action to achieve the objectives required. This will require leadership, responsibility, and accountability”.

Climate Change is no longer seen as a future threat but as a reality that affects us all today, and while many argue about the causes and the nature of it, it is important to recognize that the world is experiencing dramatic changes which need to be addressed urgently.

For developing countries, every fraction of a degree of further global warming will multiply the massive problems which are already undermining their national development efforts and threatening their physical survival.

The CCCCC wishes to reaffirm its commitment to supporting and strengthening the Caribbean’s efforts to address climate change.

Agricultural Development

GUYANA

2010 Report for the Guyana economy: Agricultural sector

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana website

<http://agriculture.gov.gy/2010%20Report%20for%20the%20Guyana%20Economy%20-%20Agriculture.pdf>

Contents

Rice

Sugar

Drainage & Irrigation

Hydrometeorology

Economy projected to continue growing by 4.6 percent in 2011

- Table: Real Growth Rates for Agriculture

EXCERPTS

pp.1

Agriculture sector to be significantly transformed in 2011 with emphasis placed on sub-sectors diversification.

Presented under the theme, “Together Building Tomorrow’s Guyana Today” the 2011 Budget of \$161.4B will see a further boost to the agriculture sector which has been earmarked as the vehicle for providing food security. To further develop its non-traditional sub-sectors, the Government of Guyana will continue to place significant focus on the expansion of the agriculture diversification programme this year; since it is regarded as one of the principles in expanding the national economy.

In 2011, efforts will be made to expand new and emerging sectors of the economy to complement the traditional sectors, rice and sugar. As such, \$1.5B has been allocated in this regard compared to \$1.3B for 2010. This will be further complemented with the implementation of the strategic plans for the three cluster groups, fruits and vegetables, livestock and aquaculture.

In this regard, measures have already been taken and investments made to provide institutional strengthening, capacity building, credit facilities, improved physical infrastructure and the upgrading and enactment of rules, regulations and legislations for the efficient operations of the plant, animal and food safety agencies.

Guyana has increased its exports of non-traditional crops to international markets including Barbados, and other Caribbean countries, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, which has continued over the years, with specific emphasis on the quality of produce being traded to enhance product quality to boost demand and satisfaction. The National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) and the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDU), were also established.

JAMAICA

Agricultural sector records highest levels of production in over a decade

Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries, Jamaica, 1 February 2011:

http://www.moa.gov.jm/news/2011-02-01_sector-records-highest-production-levels.php

Full article:

Despite several challenges last year, the Agricultural sector continues to show signs of increases. Food production increased to 500,305 t, the highest output in more than a decade. The increase represents a 2.2 percent increase over 2009 level of production (489,671 t), and eclipsed the 491, 473 t achieved in 2003. A preliminary assessment of the figures, indicate that the overall sector grew marginally by 1 percent.

The disclosure was made by Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Dr. Christopher Tufton, at a press conference to review the performance of the fourth quarter of 2010 as well as the year 2010, at the Ministry's Head Office, Hope Gardens, Kingston this morning.

While commending the nation's farmers for their resilience, Dr. Tufton noted that the weather played a crucial part in crop production throughout 2010. "In the first half of the year we had to contend with a major drought – the worse in some 20 years...that spell was eventually broken in May with rain, but in September we were struck by Tropical Storm Nicole which impacted our fourth quarter."

For the Fourth Quarter, the production of domestic crops recorded a decrease of 6.7 percent, while for the overall year there was a decrease of 5 percent. The Agriculture Minister said the impact of Tropical Storm Nicole severely restricted land preparation and crop establishment, as the flooding took time to subside. He said the country did well up to the third quarter which recorded 140,463 t, compared with 123,777 t for the corresponding period in 2009.

On a crop by crop basis, there were declines in yam -2.8; fruits -26 percent and vegetables -12 percent, while there were increases in tubers 23 percent; plantain 9 percent and cereal 9 percent. And despite the fact that all the main producing Central parishes all recorded declines in production for the quarter, not all parishes had declines. Of note were St. Mary 22.6 percent; St. James 16 percent and Portland 11 percent, while there were major declines in St. Elizabeth --19 percent; Manchester -16 percent and Trewlany -7 percent.

Meanwhile, Dr. Tufton noted that our dependence on imports needs to be curtailed. He said initiatives such as the Production and Productivity Programme will have to help drive up our productivity levels to achieve greater efficiencies in the sector.

The Agriculture Minister noted that, despite the challenges, confidence in the sector remains high and the Ministry intends to build on the gains realized, through an aggressive import substitution strategy, accompanied by greater push for regional and international exports of not only primary products, but with greater emphases on the creation and export of value-added products.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Agriculture faces declining production, high food prices

Dickson, D

Trinidad and Tobago Guardian - Business Guardian, 17 March 2011, pp.4-5:

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/business-guardian/2011/03/17/agriculture-faces-declining-production-high-food-prices>

Full article:

T&T's path to self-sufficient agricultural production is riddled with pot-holes.

Despite the Government's ambitious endeavour in Budget 2011, the flagging sector is still at the mercy of natural disasters, inflation and bureaucracy.

Global events—Japan's catastrophic earthquake and tsunami, Russia's drought—impact negatively on the industry and more so, on food prices.

Food prices are trending upwards, reflected in the country's 12.5 per cent inflation rate.

With these challenges, have farmers managed to increase their food production?

Through the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (Namdevco), the Government has set up a system to help manage registered farmers, food production and monitor food prices.

Thus, using a snapshot of Namdevco's statistics, it showed that food production from the northern wholesale market experienced the most decline in food production from 2009 to 2010.

From 2007 to 2008, farmers managed to increase their production in most crops, especially the root crops like carrots, cassava and yam but condiments and spices like hot peppers, chadon beni and medium pimentos; the volumes decreased.

From 2008 to 2009, however, the volumes for most of the food crops increased, but the volumes fell from 2009 to 2010.

The volume of the production for some crops were as follows:

- Carrots decreased from 2,005,479 kg to 1,583,200
- Cassava also fell from 804,310 kg to 618,734 kg
- Dasheen decreased from 421,419 kg to 152,656 kg
- Local sweet potatoes volume declined from 1,692,049 kg to 1,137,130 kg
- Imported sweet potato dropped from 500,667 to 181,956.

Similarly, looking at the prices of some of these goods, it showed there was a consistent increase in prices from 2006 to 2010.

Some of the food include roots crops like local and imported yam, local and imported sweet potato, leafy vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower and other vegetables: sweet peppers and tomatoes and fruits.

While there was a slight fluctuation in prices from 2006 to 2007, the prices on most items went up in 2008.

- Local dasheen went up from \$6.21 a kg to \$8.97 while the imported dasheen climbed from \$5.82 to \$10.33.
- Local cauliflower moved from \$14.47 to \$17.90.
- Local sweet pepper went from \$9.72 to \$14.72 while the imported brand went down from \$25.75 to \$16.67.
- Local tomatoes increased from \$1.25 to \$15.21.

Surprisingly, all citrus prices went down except limes.

From 2008 to 2009 root crops prices, cabbage, cauliflower, sweet peppers, tomatoes, sweet potatoes all went down while mainly all fruits and citrus—oranges, grapefruit and limes—increased significantly. And from 2009 to 2010, mostly all items went right back up again.

Govt initiatives:

In an effort to reduce food import bill the Govt will focus on:

- Growing root crops like cassava, corn and developing the dairy sector—sheep and goat
- Greenhouse farming
- Mega farms to start producing by September 2011: sweet corn tomatoes and rice
- 300 ponds by the end of May and other infrastructure like access roads
- Loans and incentives to farmers
- Pilot project consist of utilising Caroni farm lands
- Educational drive for farmers

Includes Yearly wholesale Food Prices table: (years 2006-2010) for carrots, yam, imported yam, dasheen, import-dasheen, callaloo, import-cabbage, cabbage, 40 hot peppers, limes small

Prospects for agriculture 2011

T&T Chamber of Industry & Commerce

Trinidad and Tobago Guardian - Business Guardian, 10 March 2011, pp.18:

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/business-guardian/2011/03/10/prospects-agriculture-2011>

Full article:

The Government has signaled its intention to place greater emphasis on food production and security as it seeks to diversify the economy in 2011. Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Resources Vasant Bharath said Government is seeking to increase agriculture's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) from less than 0.6 per cent to 3.0 per cent in five years. In this regard, the Agricultural Society of T&T (ASTT) in collaboration with Point Coco Agricultural Corporation has launched a project in August 2010 to grow tilapia in an effort to develop aquaculture projects, which they believe will help to ensure a food-stable nation. The project was actually started in April 2010 when members of the ASTT began rearing the Silver Nile tilapia in raised concrete tanks, and within four months of its conception, 2,400 tilapia had been reared, weighing an average of one pound each. The tilapias were fed a high protein diet to ensure healthy growth and flavourful meat. Tilapia was chosen, since according to the ASTT the country has spent an average of \$12 million annually on fish imports, the majority of which was tilapia. The ASTT has also developed other projects for the expansion of local agriculture including some related to sheep and goat rearing and shearing, and the construction of an agricultural access road at Mahabalsingh Branch Road No 2 in Rio Claro.

Meanwhile, cash crop farmers and farm workers at Aranguez have argued against the institution of a minimum wage offer the agricultural sector. Their concern stems from a suggestion by Minister of Labour Errol McLeod that the Minimum Wages Board will consider a minimum wage for the sector. They contend that the already high cost of labour is the main factor responsible for the high cost of locally produced food items on the market. Thus, while the issue of wages is important, they say the requirements for labour in the sector should be tackled first, since these differ, depending on whether the farmer is engaged in poultry, livestock, or crop and vegetable production. Farmers also say land tenure remains an issue, as many of them do not have legitimate access to the lands they cultivate. Obtaining loans for machinery to mechanise farm operations is difficult, and land remains under-developed with inadequate infrastructure, including access roads, drainage and irrigation. "This type of policy neglect is responsible for the poor state of agriculture in T&T," says one farmer. "These issues must be addressed immediately if agriculture is to have any positive influence on the economy in 2011."

For its part, the Farmers Co-ordinating Council, comprising members of the Beekeepers Association, the Cocoa Farmers Association (South), Livestock Farmers Association, National Foodcrop Farmers Association, the Rice Growers Association and the Sheep and Goat Association, says the council would like to see the Government pay more attention to praedial larceny. "Praedial larceny is just as critical a crime as any other and should be treated as such," says Sheraz Khan, Co-ordinator for the council. "It is a

serious problem that affects the livelihood of the farmer and his ability to bring a reasonably priced crop to the market.” Khan also says farmers want security of tenure for their lands in 2011, which has not been resolved even after more than 20 years of discussion.

Meanwhile, Dillon Orwin, president of the Tobago Agricultural Society, noted that there are still some challenges to overcome in order to ready agriculture for the task of feeding Tobago and earning foreign exchange in 2011. The Tobago House of Assembly (THA) says \$3 million will be allocated for farmers’ subsidies. State lands are to be developed for increased food production at Richmond, a centralised composting faculty is to be established at Goldsborough and further assistance is to be provided to the Assembly’s Tobago Cassava Products Ltd as part of an effort to increase production and use of cassava both in Tobago and for export. Orwin says while he agrees with the push to increase cassava production, small farmers may not be able to contribute, since they do not have enough land or enough cassava plants to take on large-scale production. For this initiative to succeed, he suggests, the THA should distribute its estate lands to small farmers to grow cassava. In addition, he sees the need for greater ties between the School Feeding Programme initiative and Tobago agriculture. Creating this closer link will be a benefit to farmers as well as the School Feeding Programme. It will take tremendous effort and unwavering discipline to achieve the Government’s plan over the next five years to increase agricultural contribution to GDP to 3.0 per cent. Whatever course of action we decide upon as a nation, we must act NOW. We must make our opportunities count within this competitive global environment and contribute to this region in becoming its own food basket.

Women

Closing the gender gap in agriculture: FAO report makes strong business case for investing in women

FAO

FAO, Rome, 7 March 2011: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/52011/icode/>

Full article:

If women in rural areas had the same access to land, technology, financial services, education and markets as men, agricultural production could be increased and the number of hungry people reduced by 100-150 million, FAO said today in its 2010-11 edition of *The State of Food and Agriculture report*.

Yields on plots managed by women are lower than those managed by men, the report said. But this is not because women are worse farmers than men. They simply do not have the same access to inputs. If they did, their yields would go up, they would produce more and overall agricultural production would increase, the report said.

"The report makes a powerful business case for promoting gender equality in agriculture," said FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf.

"Gender equality is not just a lofty ideal, it is also crucial for agricultural development and food security. We must promote gender equality and empower women in agriculture to win, sustainably, the fight against hunger and extreme poverty," he added.

Closing yield gaps reaps gains for all

Just giving women the same access as men to agricultural resources could increase production on women's farms in developing countries by 20 to 30 percent. This could raise total agricultural production in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent, or 100 to 150 million people. An estimated 925 million people in the world were undernourished in 2010, of which 906 million live in developing countries.

"We must eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, ensure that access to resources is more equal and that agricultural policies and programmes are gender-aware, and make women's voices heard in decision-making at all levels. Women must be seen as equal partners in sustainable development," Diouf said.

Women's work

Women make up on average 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, ranging from 20% in Latin America to almost 50% in East and Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The share is higher in some countries and varies greatly within countries.

Where rural women are employed, they tend to be segregated into lower paid occupations and are more likely to be in less secure forms of employment, such as seasonal, part-time or low-wage jobs.

New jobs in high-value export-oriented agro-industries offer better opportunities for women than traditional agriculture, the report says.

Mind the gap

The report documents gender gaps in the access to a wide range of agricultural resources, including land, livestock, farm labour, education, extension services, credit, fertilizers and mechanical equipment.

Women in all regions generally have less access to land than men. For those developing countries for which data are available, between 3 and 20 percent of all landholders are women. The share of women in the agricultural labour force is much higher and ranges from 20 to 50 percent in developing country regions.

"Women farmers typically achieve lower yields than men, not because they are less skilled, but because they operate smaller farms and use fewer inputs like fertilizers, improved seeds and tools," said Terri Raney, editor of the SOFA report.

Leveling the ploughing field

"Evidence from many countries shows that policies can promote gender equality and empower women in agriculture and rural employment. The first priority is to eliminate discrimination under the law," Raney said. "In many countries women do not have the same rights as men to buy, sell or inherit land, to open a savings account or borrow money, to sign a contract or sell their produce. Where legal rights exist on paper, they often are not honored in practice."

Government officials must be held accountable for upholding the law and women must be aware of their rights and empowered to claim them.

Women face multiple constraints in agriculture arising from the complex nature of agricultural production and from competing demands on their time. To be effective, interventions must be "bundled" so they treat these constraints together, the report says.

Policies and institutions often have different impacts on men and women - even when no explicit discrimination is intended. "Men and women have different roles in society and face different opportunities and constraints," said Raney. "We can't make good agricultural policy unless we consider gender differences."

Building human capital

In addition to increasing overall agricultural production, closing the gender gap in agriculture would also put more income in the hands of women - a proven strategy for improving health, nutrition and education outcomes for children.

"One of the best investments we can make is in building the human capital of women and girls - basic education, market information and agricultural extension services are essential building blocks for agricultural productivity and economic growth," Raney said.

ECLAC, FAO and IICA analyze food price volatility in Latin America and the Caribbean: document reviews the causes and the effects of this phenomenon, and puts forward public policy proposals to help the region's countries improve the way they tackle instability

IICA Press Release, 2 March 2011:

<http://www.iica.int/eng/prensa/pages/comunicadoprensav1.aspx?cp=406>

Full article:

Food price volatility has increased in recent months and will remain high for the time being, according to a joint bulletin launched today by ECLAC, FAO and IICA.

The document entitled “**Price volatility in agricultural markets (2000-2010): implications for Latin America and policy options**” describes the current scenario: frequent, unpredictable and dramatic changes in the prices of agricultural raw materials, with the impact on countries varying in accordance with national conditions.

For countries specialized in exports of food raw materials, for instance, a price rise offers significant opportunities to improve their terms of trade, while for other countries this may represent a risk to food security (especially for net food importers).

According to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Alicia Bárcena, “Major price fluctuation is here to stay, and the region must prepare itself. The study we are presenting today may help countries to implement and combine the best policy instruments that take account of national realities.”

In the second half of 2010 and the first few months of 2011, international food prices have climbed again, and are now even higher than the levels seen during the crisis in 2008.

In the words of Alan Bojanic, FAO Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, “Ongoing food price volatility will remain a major source of uncertainty for agricultural producers, and it is thus vital to create tools to regulate this and promote agricultural development in the region.”

Víctor Villalobos, Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), said that “instability is a constant in the global scenario, and it is therefore important to generate information that enables our countries to plan and make the right decisions. This is what we three agencies are trying to achieve jointly. To tackle this situation, it is crucial to innovate and invest more in agriculture.”

Possible consequences of price volatility include economic efficiency losses, reduced food security and rising undernutrition, as well as negative effects on the trade balance, according to this document from ECLAC, FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization) and IICA.

Instability also involves high risk for producers, especially small-scale farmers, as there is increased uncertainty over their expected income. Nor should we rule out the possibility that volatility may lead to social unrest, as was the case during the 2007-2008 food crisis.

Although the bulletin states that there are no universal solutions to tackling this situation, it does highlight the benefits of increasing food production in countries, mainly by supporting small-scale producers.

According to the three agencies, small-scale producers have great potential for increasing their food production, and this may help to improve food security not only at the level of households but also at the local and national levels.

In their responses to such high volatility, the region's countries have placed relatively more emphasis on inflation and consumers, rather than on producers and the agricultural production structure (according to the bulletin).

Generally speaking, policy measures have also focused mainly on the short term, despite the fact that seeking solutions to the structural problems could significantly reduce the vulnerability of countries in this regard.

The report also points to the role that conditional transfer programs can play in supporting the most vulnerable in society, and such programs can also trigger productive activities in extremely poor areas.

ECLAC, FAO and IICA consider it vital to invest in the institutional development of the agricultural sector, as well as allocating larger budgets to agriculture. In the long term, it is essential to develop national and territorial markets by reducing transaction costs for small-scale producers and creating efficient marketing channels for fresh foods, so that production is more directly linked to local demand.

The bulletin that was published today is the first in a series relating to the publication “**The Outlook for Agriculture and Rural Development in Latin America and the Caribbean**” which is a joint study that the three agencies have been working on since 2009.

For more information, contact ;dpisantiago@cepal.org; lucas.tavares@fao.org; patricia.leon@iica.int

CARDI Editor's Note: Copy of “**Price volatility in agricultural markets (2000-2010): implications for Latin America and policy options**” [Spanish] is available at <http://www.rlc.fao.org/es/politicas/pdf/boletines/bol01.pdf>

Dominica Agricultural Producers and Exporters Limited sends its first air cargo shipment to Barbados

Fontaine, P

Dominica Government Information Service, 23 February 2011:

<http://www.gis.dominica.gov.dm/news/feb2011/dapexsfacstb.php>

Full article:

On Tuesday the Dominica agricultural producers and exporters limited (DAPEX) sent its first ever air shipment of cargo to Barbados. In the past two years DAPEX has been focusing its efforts on Barbados and the regional market.

In recent times, LIAT officials confirmed that air cargo services being provided for Dominica was not being fully utilized.

Errol Emmanuel, general manager of DAPEX says he is pleased DAPEX was able to export cargo occupying the full capacity of the plane and for the first time ginger was part of the export portfolio.

“The capacity of the plane is about seven thousand pounds (7 000 lbs.) and we exported the full capacity of the aircraft, that is, 7 000 lbs. with three (3) different products: bananas, plantains and ginger.”

DAPEX is also seeking to export goods other than bananas. Errol Emmanuel is urging all farmers to participate in the economic growth of the country.

“...And we do want to encourage other farmers. There are a number of other crops that we are seeking to export: spices, nutmegs, papayas and a range of other crops. Therefore, we just want to find out exactly what the production level is and to also seek to have collaboration with the Government so that we can get the required production to supply those very important markets. The region holds promise in agriculture and we should continue to do all we can to secure these very valuable regional markets for Dominica and agriculture in Dominica.”

According to general manager, Errol Emmanuel, DAPEX is seeking to become the leading agricultural exporter of fresh produce here.

“We have had the experience of fresh produce exports to the United Kingdom. We now want to bring that experience to bear on the other crops that are grown in Dominica with the similar type of production,

scheduling and planning that is required to inform the market of what volumes/quantities that you have and the question of quality packaging. We have that experience and so DAPEX is positioning itself to becoming the major fresh produce exporter for Dominica and thereby giving the farmers the confidence that they can grow other crops on a commercial level.

Agricultural Institutions

All ACP Agricultural Commodities Programme (AAACP)

Video: AAACP support to Caribbean farmers

All ACP Agricultural Commodities Programme (AAACP)

<http://www.euacpcommodities.eu/en/videos/video-aaacp-support-caribbean-farmers>

Upcoming Events

JULY 2011

Caribbean Food Crops Society (CFCS) 47th Meeting

3-9 July 2011

Barbados

47th Meeting of the Caribbean Food Crops Society (CFCS) and the Government of Barbados, within the framework of the Year of Climate Change, are pleased to invite you to participate in this meeting which will take place from the July 3 to 9, 2011 at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Conference Centre, Two Mile Hill, St. Michael, Barbados.

The main objective will be to share information on the topic “Assuring Caribbean Food and Nutrition Security in the context of Climate Change”.

The meeting will also be an opportunity for interested persons to present videos, exhibit posters and deliver papers. The criteria for submission of videos, posters and papers may be obtained from:

- Cfcs2011Barbados.org; and
- telephone 246-434-5031 or 246-434-5020.

The Scientific Committee will decide eligibility for these submissions upon review of the abstract or summary (maximum 350 words). The criteria for abstracts/summaries are available at the website.

The deadline for receipt of abstracts/summaries is January 31, 2011.

Please send to: chair47cfcssc@minagriculture.gov.bb.

For further details please visit the website <http://www.cfcs2011barbados.org/>

29th West Indies Agricultural Economics Conference

17-21 July 2011

St. Vincent & the Grenadines

CALL FOR PAPERS

29th West Indies Agricultural Economics Conference, 17-21 July 2011, St. Vincent & the Grenadines

Conference Theme: “Agribusiness as the Path to Sustainable Agricultural Development in the Caribbean”

Abstract Submission: February 15th 2011

Author notification of paper acceptance/rejection: March 15th 2011

Deadline for Final Papers: May 31st 2011

Further details: <http://www.caestt.com/documents/CallforPapers-Stvincent2011.pdf>

<http://www.caestt.com/>