

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

Fruits

Opinion: nanofilm holds key to extending South Asia's fruit shelf life by Tamil Nadu Agricultural University's head of Nano Science and Technology Professor K. S. Subramanian Fresh Fruit Portal, August 17th, 2012
<http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2012/08/17/opinion-nanofilm-holds-key-to-extending-south-asias-fruit-shelf-life/>

Full Article

India is blessed with a wide array of agro-climatic conditions producing a vast spectrum of tropical and subtropical fruits. We are the second largest producer of fruits in the world next to China.

Despite the fact that we produce plenty of fruits in the country, the per capita availability of fruits is far from meeting the requirement. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) suggests that an Indian should eat 150 grams of fruits daily but the availability is only 82 grams. Such a wide gap between demand and availability is primarily attributed to the poor storage facilities and huge postharvest losses which constitute 30-35%.

Reducing these losses can not only improve farmers' incomes but could also encourage more consumption of this highly nutritious fruit in a region where per capita consumption is only half of the recommended level. The post harvest losses of perishables (fruits and vegetables) account for a loss of INR40 billion (US\$719 billion) annually.

In order to reduce the postharvest losses, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the International Development Research Center (IDRC) have jointed support a research program on 'Enhanced Preservation of Fruits in South Asia' under the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFSRF). The total budget outlay is CAD\$2.5 million (US\$2.52 million). The institutes involved are the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in India, the University of Guelph in Canada, the Industrial Technology Institute (ITI), Sri Lanka and MYRADA (a non-governmental organization for undertaking social research.)

Nanotechnology based products are increasingly moving from industry to agriculture, where the average farmer can easily use them. In this project, scientists are developing a new packaging system that extends the shelf life of fruits. The University of Guelph in Canada has invented a patented technology using a safe, plant-derived chemical compound (hexanal) that reduces post-harvest losses.

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in India has developed a nano-film to extend the shelf life of fruits and vegetables. Similarly, the Industrial Technology Institute in Sri Lanka has a bio-wax formulation that helps to reduce postharvest damage. The project integrates these discoveries using nanotechnology to develop a simple and low-cost hexanal delivery system that prolongs freshness and improves the quality of highly perishable fruits.

The nanoparticles in this project are developed from agricultural waste products, namely the natural fibers extracted from coconut husks and banana plants, creating new income opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurs, particularly women.

The project is also building links with the private sector for biodegradable packaging materials. Researchers expect to adapt the technologies developed in this project to other economically important horticultural crops, including fruits, flowers, and vegetables. Benefits for the soft fruit industry, such as berries, can also be extended to Canada.

In India, the use of biodegradable packaging material is to an extent of 10-15% and majority of them are non-biodegradable. The biodegradable sheets are very fragile and capable of absorbing moisture from the produce or from the atmosphere. As a result, these sheets rarely used for a long-term storage or as carry bags. They are also expensive and add costs to the customer. However, many cosmopolitan cities such as New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkotta are imposing rules to use only biodegradable packaging.

The new nanofilm packaging material we intend to develop under the IDRC with funding under the CIFSRF is made of indigeneous fibers (coconut and banana) and are biodegradable and the extent of degradability is yet to be investigated.

In the IDRC Project, we involve private packaging industries to ensure that the product gets commercialized after the development of the “nanofilm”. Our target fruit is mangoes and the fruits are harvested at two-thirds maturity. Our interest is to extend the shelf life of mangoes during the transport and storage for a period of three to four weeks without refrigeration. In order to address the issue at the small and marginal farmers, we involve NGOs (Myrada) in our project.

The research team leaders involved in the project include Dr. Jayasankar Subramanian from the University of Guelph, Canada and Dr. Shanthi Wilson Wijeratnam from the Industrial Technology Institute, Sri Lanka.

Maize

Tropicalized Maize haploid inducer lines by CIMMYT

<http://www.cimmyt.org/en/about-us/media-resources/recent-news/1399-now-available-tropicalized-maize-haploid-inducer-lines>

Full Article

The doubled haploid (DH) technology enables rapid development of completely homozygous maize lines and offers significant opportunities for fast-track development and release of elite cultivars. Besides simplified logistics and reduced costs, use of DH lines in conjunction with molecular markers significantly improves genetic gains and breeding efficiency. DH lines also are valuable tools in marker-trait association studies, molecular marker-assisted or genomic selection-based breeding, and functional genomics.

Generating DH lines involves four major steps: (1) *In vivo* haploid induction; (2) haploid seed identification using morphological markers; (3) chromosome doubling of putative haploids; and (4) generating D1 (DH) seed from D0 seedlings. *In vivo* haploid induction is achieved by crossing a specially developed maize genetic stock called an “inducer” (as male) with a source population (as female) from which homozygous DH lines are developed.

What are tropicalized haploid inducers?

Adoption of DH technology by public maize breeding programs and small- and medium-scale enterprise (SME) seed companies, especially in developing countries, is limited by the lack of inducers adapted to the tropical/subtropical conditions. The CIMMYT Global Maize Program, in collaboration with the Institute of Plant Breeding, Seed Science and Population Genetics of the University of Hohenheim (UHo) now has tropical haploid inducers for sharing with the interested institutions under the terms outlined below.

The tropically adapted inducer lines (TAILs) developed by CIMMYT and UHo showed high haploid induction capacity (~8-10%) and better agronomic performance than temperate inducers, in trials at two CIMMYT experiment stations in Mexico. A haploid inducer hybrid developed using these TAILs revealed heterosis for plant vigor and pollen production under tropical conditions, while maintaining similar haploid induction rates (~8-10%). CIMMYT and UHo decided to share the seed and grant authorization for use of one of the tropicalized haploid inducer lines (one of the parents of a hybrid inducer) and the hybrid inducer to interested applicants, after signing of the relevant material transfer agreement (MTA) and with restrictions to protect the intellectual property rights of both institutions for the inducer lines.

Process of indenting for the tropicalized haploid inducers

Interested applicants should send a letter of intent or an expression of interest in the tropicalized haploid inducers. CIMMYT may seek more information, if required, and will share the relevant MTA template for signing by applicants. The general guidelines to obtain inducers for research use and commercial use are as follows.

For research use by publicly-funded national agricultural research systems

Publicly-funded institutions interested in access to the haploid inducers for specific purposes (e.g., to develop DH lines for breeding programs) may send a letter of intent or expression of interest to CIMMYT. For eligible institutions, the haploid inducers will be provided free-of-charge by CIMMYT and UHo, after signing of a *Research Use MTA*. Commercial use of the inducers by institutions or others should be in accordance with a separate license agreement for commercial use (as given below).

For commercial use

Applicants may access the inducers for commercial use pursuant to signing of a *Material Transfer and License Agreement* with CIMMYT and UHo. Applicants shall pay UHo a one-time licence fee of USD 25,000 for provision of seed of two haploid inducers; these include one of the parents of a tropicalized haploid inducer hybrid and the haploid inducer hybrid itself. If applicants wish to access the other parent of the haploid inducer hybrid, an additional one-time licence fee of \$10,000 will be payable to UHo.

An exemption to the above fees shall apply if the applicant institution

1. Is headquartered in a low or lower middle income country World Bank classification:

(<http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/countryand-lending-groups>); and

2. Receives income from an annual production volume of less than 5,000 tons of maize seed produced in low and lower middle income countries, or receives less than USD 250,000 in annual licensing fees; and
3. Provides information confirming that the above criteria have been met to the satisfaction of the donors of the haploid inducers (CIMMYT and UHo). Seed of the above-mentioned haploid inducers will be provided by CIMMYT to the applicant within three weeks after signing of the Material Transfer Agreement (for research use) or Material Transfer and License Agreement (for commercial use) and receipt of the one-time license fee, as relevant.

Black Sigatoka

Mexican Black Sigatoka control project hits financial roadblock by Freshfruitportal.com, 16 August 2012

<http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2012/08/16/mexican-black-sigatoka-control-project-hits-financial-roadblock/>

Full Article

Researchers from Mexico's Colima University have worked for 12 years to identify and test native microorganisms that can control banana disease Black Sigatoka. Dr Gilberto Manzo Sánchez heads up the project which at the lab level has shown success, but he tells www.freshfruitportal.com how a lack of resources has put extensive field tests on hold.

Manzo Sánchez says the control of Black Sigatoka with fungicides accounts for around 60% of banana growers' costs in Mexico, with the chemicals mostly applied by aerial spraying.

“Some growers or big companies apply fungicides every eight days, and during the rain season the applications are more frequent – fungicides are chemical products that contaminate the environment, can affect health and they are raising the cost of production,” he says.

The scientist's goal is not to eliminate fungicide use, but to develop a natural product that builds plant resistance in combination with chemical sprays.

“The idea is that with these microorganism antibiotics we can at least reduce fungicide costs by 50%; other methods don't exist for controlling Black Sigatoka, although there are methods such as good fertilizing, good drainage too which aids soil humidity, and eliminating diseased plants.”

He says the project began in 2000 working on alternative to control the disease, which is caused by the fungus *Mycosphaerella fijiensis*.

“We have worked on finding the response the pathogen has in infecting the plant, which scientifically is called the levels of aggressiveness. We used different Black Sigatoka pathogen fungi from different producing zones in the states of Colima, Jalisco and Michoacán, and saw that the reactions were different.

“You have to consider that the pathogen just attacks the leaves of the banana plant; the first symptoms are some spots that are present in the first days of infection, and these spots start to grow.

“If you have a strong infection of the pathogen it will dry the plant's leaves, and if the plant doesn't have healthy leaves it's difficult to produce quality fruit.”

The scientists used the bacteria *Pseudomonas* and *Bacillus*, as well as the fungus *Trichoderma*, to try and build plant resistance to the disease.

“Afterwards in labs we evaluated their antagonistic capacity against the pathogens, and the antagonism had the affect of killing the Black Sigatoka pathogen, in a way producing antibiotics are able to inhibit the growth of the pathogen.

“We are now at the stage where we need to do field testing of these microorganisms that have been positive pathogenically.”

Low level field tests have begun in the three states with in-vitro tissue bananas that have been micro-propagated.

“The other important point is that antagonistic microorganisms have the capacity to infect the plant without causing any damage, and when they are within the plant, they induce it to produce some antibiotics and some growth regulators, that promote vegetative growth.

“We place these in the fields so that they have the capacity to produce certain compounds, and the plant will grow with a kind of vaccine against Black Sigatoka. That's what we're investigating.”

However, larger scale testing has been put to a halt for economic reasons.

“The project depends on state and federal funds, and also funds from growers, and for the last year we haven't had the resources, so this stage has been stopped.”

The group has also conducted DNA testing of different Black Sigatoka pathogens in Mexico, comparing those from the Pacific area with those from the Gulf of Mexico, such as Chiapas and Oaxaca.

“We could determine precisely that the pathogens in Oaxaca and Chiapas showed similarities, while another group was formed with those in Jalisco, Michoacan and Colima, and this shows the pathogen is influenced in a certain way by its environmental conditions.”

He said this showed that native microorganisms likely needed to be specifically developed for different banana-growing areas.

“There are other big groups doing similar things to what we’re doing. An important point to make is that these products are based on the microorganisms, but unfortunately they were obtained under different isolated environmental conditions and other types of soil.

“It would be ideal to explore how different native microorganisms act in different areas; they could work for other diseases, other crops, this is something we don’t know.

“But right now the biggest problem for producing bananas is Black Sigatoka. If we don’t control Black Sigatoka, we simply cannot produce good quality bananas.”

Caribbean urges interagency effort to respond to Black Sigatoka by Inter-American Institute for Co-operation on Agriculture Trinidad and Tobago Press Release ,10 August 2012

<http://www.iica.int/Eng/prensa/pages/comunicadoprensav1.aspx?cp=727>

Full Article

The Caribbean faces an emergency following the spread of black sigatoka disease, which is likely to affect the economic stability of countries in the region. The governments have responded by requesting support from IICA, FAO, and CARDI to tackle the situation immediately.

Black sigatoka attacks the leaves of banana and plantain plants, affecting the process of photosynthesis and reducing yields. Although it has already appeared in other parts of the world, such as Central and South America, its arrival in the Caribbean and its rapid spread took the industry by surprise, explained Humberto Gómez, Specialist in Technological Innovation for the Caribbean Region with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

In response, countries such as Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have requested urgent assistance from IICA, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and the Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI).

One of the first actions to be undertaken by the Institute is to seek a joint response to the emergency. Through a virtual forum to be held on August 16, information will be provided to stakeholders about the disease and its impact, and how it can be controlled. Luis Ernesto Pocasangre, a professor with the EARTH University, and IICA Specialist Kervin Stephenson, will be providing support for the activity.

“There are no magic solutions, such as the simple use of fungicides. Black sigatoka is aggressive and has a great capacity to mutate, so it can develop resistance to fungicides if these are not properly applied. This calls for a comprehensive solution on farms, in the countries, and in the region” Gómez pointed out.

During the seminar, producers, extension workers, the senior technical officers of the ministries of agriculture and other decision-makers will learn about the importance of adopting an integrated approach to banana plantation management. Also discussed will be the regional vulnerabilities that are an obstacle to the control of sigatoka.

Finally, another aspect addressed in the seminar will be the need to work together. Failure to take appropriate action in one area may affect others; thus, a coordinated effort would also help to lower control costs.

“The mood in the region is pessimistic, as if the industry no longer has a future. Therefore, in the seminar we want to emphasize that we are still on time to take action, and that this challenge could be an opportunity to control the disease and, at the same time, raise yields and improve quality,” Gómez remarked.

An FAO consultant will be visiting the Caribbean countries most vulnerable to sigatoka, to determine the state of the emergency and proposing joint activities designed to control or reverse the damage.

IICA, FAO, and CARDI will use his report to draft a proposal for technical cooperation to combat the disease.

Multiple consequences

According to Gomez, black sigatoka has arrived at an unfortunate time for the industry. Indirectly, the declining profitability of banana cultivation could have had a negative effect on plantation management, which would have allowed the disease to spread more easily.

The situation is even worse when one considers that the banana industry generates foreign exchange and is the main source of income of many rural populations in the Caribbean. According to the IICA specialist, any negative impact would not only affect the industry, but also have repercussions on employment, the economy, and food security in the Caribbean.

Bananas form part of the diet of people in the Caribbean. The inability to meet local needs and the rising global prices of important carbohydrate foods such as cereals, would pose an additional threat to food security in the region.

“We are concerned with the socioeconomic consequences of this emergency, which go beyond the agricultural sector. But action is being taken in time. Intra-regional coordination and producers’ readiness to improve the management of their plantations are key elements in the process,” Gómez concluded.

Livestock

Trinidad and Tobago a cut above the rest by Andy Taitt, Spore special issue July 2012: Making the connection, rise of agricultural value chains <http://spore.cta.int/hs/index.php/article/voir/2012/en/42>

Full Article

In Trinidad and Tobago, a sheep farmers’ association is breaking the cycle of insecure markets and erratic prices. Its winning strategy lies in helping livestock farmers to market better cuts of meat.

The Trinidad and Tobago Goat and Sheep Society (TTGSS) has good reason to be proud. After a few false starts, the livestock producers’ association has succeeded in setting up a highly efficient value chain, linking sheep farmers to suppliers of products and services, and a profitable market for meat.

The path to success has not always been smooth. The association’s first attempt to build a value chain involved dairy goat farmers. That was in 2009 and the idea was to pasteurise, bottle and brand milk. “But each farmer was producing only a small amount so, although the project received critical acclaim, it required too much support to run around collecting milk and was halted until later,” said TTGSS President John Borely.

A master butcher

The focus switched to supporting lamb and mutton producers. A member of the association, a master butcher, had the idea of turning lamb carcasses into higher-grade cuts of meat. “Now, the problem was too much success,” said Borely. “We couldn’t supply all the buyers who came on board.” The problem was solved when the Super Quality Supermarket in Endeavour agreed to take all the meat, contracting the master butcher to do the processing.

The next link needed was an abattoir. The Sugar Feeds Centre owned the only modern abattoir that was regularly inspected by the public health authorities. But here too, there were hitches. Farmers who took their animals for slaughter paid an up-front fee and were responsible for getting the product to the outlet. Payment would follow some

time later, causing cash-flow difficulties for many. TTGSS's response was to set up a float fund, facilitated by the Trinidad and Tobago Agribusiness Association, to ensure prompt payment to farmers.

Quality selection

Help in meeting quality standards has proved key. TTGSS representatives visit producers to inspect flocks and advise on feeding. Working at both ends of the chain, the association has donated carcasses to top hotels in an attempt to get customer feedback. "The response, that the meat tended to be too lean, was taken back to farmers and used to help them upgrade feeding programmes to match the quality of imported meats," said Borely.

TTGSS has helped to ensure that farmers get higher prices year-round. Now it is planning to rebuild the value chain for goat's milk and launch a separate one for breed-stock certification.

Value Chains

More value for traditional products by Ravena Gildharie, Spore, special issue July 2012: Making the connection, rise of agricultural value chains

<http://spore.cta.int/hs/index.php/article/voir/2012/en/49>

Full Article

Two ventures in rural Guyana are enabling indigenous people to add value to local products. But though the enterprises are profitable, they now face stiff competition from cheaper suppliers.

Some 600 rural dwellers, mainly women in remote settlements of Guyana, are working for the private Guyanese company Amazon Caribbean Ltd. (AMCAR), which harvests, processes and exports canned organic pineapples and heart-of-palm (*Euterpe oleracea*). The products, increasingly popular with European consumers, are shipped to supermarket giants Carrefour and Auchan in France and other EU countries.

Entirely self-sufficient, the venture has introduced communities to the idea of adding value to traditional products. Local farmers supply the fresh produce and women are trained to process and package them for export. Others transport and label the products, integrating a chain of players from communities across Guyana.

Women processors

Pineapple farmer Yvonne Pearson has been involved since 2003. Her village of Mainstay has more than 40 pineapple farmers, while 30 more local people, mainly women, do processing and packaging. Joel Fredericks manages the processing plant. "I see a bright future with this pineapple project for the people in Mainstay," he said. As he talks, the factory is buzzing with women who wash the fresh produce, peel and slice it into chunks and extract juices from the peel to preserve the canned fruit.

The heart-of-palm venture started back in 1987, with one factory at Drum Hill, way up river in Guyana's far-flung North West region. "We built the factory there because that's where the forests are and that's where the manicole palms come from," explains AMCAR's Chief Executive Officer Jean-François Gerin. This opened opportunities for 300 indigenous harvesters, who supply the factory daily, and an additional 30 processing workers, mostly women, who peel, wash, cut and preserve the produce before putting it in cans and glass jars. More than 30 communities are involved in the heart-of-palm chain.

Strong competition

The two businesses are not without challenges. Logistics and market competition are both major constraints. Since the factories are located in remote areas, transporting the produce to the city for labelling and export is expensive.

At export level, both products now face stiff competition from Costa Rica and Sri Lanka. Last year, the main buyer demanded that the company lower its price for pineapples or face losing the market. “We couldn’t come to an agreement for a long time. We were back and forth with discussions until finally we came to a settlement,” Gerin recalls. “We are big in one sense but small in terms of business operation, and it’s hard for us to compete with cheaper supplies.”

Biodiversity

Diets must become sustainable says FAO and Bioversity: immediate action needed to improve health of humans and planet by FAO, 8 August 2012 <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/153694/icode/>

Full Article

Immediate action to promote sustainable diets and food biodiversity so as to improve the health of humans and of the planet is urged in a book just published by FAO and Bioversity International.

“Regardless of the many successes of agriculture in the last three decades, it is clear that food systems, and diets, are not sustainable,” says Barbara Burlingame, Principal Officer of FAO’s Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division, in a preface to the book, *Sustainable Diets and Biodiversity*.

“While over 900 million people in the world suffer from hunger, even more – about 1.5 billion – are overweight or obese, and an estimated two billion suffer from micronutrient malnutrition including vitamin A, iron, or iodine deficiency,” Burlingame notes.

The problem of feeding the world’s growing population has so far been seen largely in terms of providing sufficient quantities of food, the book points out. But the pace of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, coupled with emerging health issues related to diet, make it urgent to address the quality of agriculture and food systems. Poor diets are linked to marked increases in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases across the world.

Heavy footprints

High-input industrial agriculture and long-distance transport have made refined carbohydrates and fats affordable and available across the globe, leading to an overall simplification of diets and reliance on a limited number of energy-rich foods. But such foods lack nutrient quality and have heavy carbon and water footprints. Cheap, energy-dense foods have also come at the cost of flavour, diversity and cultural connection.

Currently just three major staples crops – corn, wheat and rice – provide 60 percent of the dietary energy from plant origin at global level, while, with rising incomes in developing economies, huge numbers of people are abandoning traditional plant-based foods in favour of diets rich in meat, dairy products, fats and sugar.

The book argues that modern diets and food production methods play a significant role in shrinking plant and animal genetic diversity, with 17,291 species out of 47,677 assessed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature described as threatened with extinction.

Urgent need

“There is an urgent need to change the paradigm of agricultural production in order to integrate the dimension of nutritional quality in our decisions as to what to produce and where,” writes Emile Frison, Director General of Rome-based Bioversity International.

“This requires us to move beyond the major staples and to look at the many hundreds and thousands of Neglected and Underutilized plant and animal species that mean the difference between an unsustainable and a sustainable diet.”

In Kenya, for instance, Bioversity have successfully helped reinstate a number of leafy green vegetables until recently considered as poor people’s food into local diets and markets. Promotion of the traditional plants,

including African night shade, cowpea and pumpkin leaves, spider plant and vine spinach, has increased demand both within households and in the market. Smallholder farmers are also benefiting.

In India, healthy cereals such as foxtail and finger millet have been reintroduced in areas where they had been abandoned due to government policies promoting cassava production for starch. Efforts are also underway to promote native Andean cereals such as quinoa and amaranth at the international level. The United Nations has declared 2013 to be the International Year of Quinoa.

Major effort

“The transition of diets based on energy-dense foods high in fat and sugar is not inevitable,” writes Frison. “We must make a major effort to ensure that all people in the world will not only have adequate food but adequate nutrition to meet their needs”.

Our food systems need to undergo ‘radical transformations’ towards a more efficient use of resources and more efficiency and equity in the consumption of food and towards sustainable diets, Burlingame says.

“Sustainable diets can address the consumption of foods with lower water and carbon footprints, promote the use of food biodiversity, including traditional and local foods, with their many nutritionally rich species and varieties,” she adds. “They can also contribute to the transition to nutrition-sensitive and climate-smart agriculture and nutrition-driven food systems.”

Agricultural Development

Jamaica ready for Agri-Investment by The Jamaica Gleaner, 13 August 2012

<http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20120813/news/news5.html>

Full Article

The minister was speaking Friday at a trade and investment series hosted by JAMPRO at Jamaica House 2012 in London.

Clarke said there are opportunities in Jamaica for substantial investment in agriculture.

"We want to set the right framework so we can encourage public-private sector participation in moving the agricultural sector forward," he said.

The minister said agriculture played a critical role in the country, contributing more than six per cent to the economy and employing some 18 per cent of the workforce. The agriculture minister said the sector could still do much better.

Clarke spoke of the prospects for investment in the 50 per cent of the country's arable land that was currently idle.

"We have the lands, we have the research, and we will put the necessary trade agreements in place to make sure the sector can grow," he said.

Targeting crops

He emphasised that the Government was working to boost local production in a range of traditional crops such as sugar, cocoa, and coffee, while at the same time targeting crops such as ginger, turmeric and pineapple, which have the potential to give Jamaica a distinctive niche market.

The minister also said the Government was in the process of divesting its assets in the coffee and cocoa industry.

At the same time, Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce, Anthony Hylton, said investing in Jamaica has the potential of reaching much larger markets in region.

"The truth is, if you invest in Jamaica, you are not just investing or exporting to the three million Jamaicans who live in Jamaica, but you have access to a tremendous near-shore market. You have access to really an 800-million market in North and South America, and this is by virtue of the many trade agreements that we have negotiated over time," Hylton said.

Pointing to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) as an example, Hylton said the agreement represented an exciting new area that would allow investors access to the markets of the European Union.

"The EPA has been negotiated and signed sometime in 2008. The Cabinet has recently taken the decision that notwithstanding some of the challenges posed by that agreement, we will go ahead and begin the

implementation," the minister said.

He added: "One of the things that the trade agreement provides is a degree of certainty with regard to market access to all of Europe not just the United Kingdom, but the member states of Europe."

Farmers to benefit from CAN \$20 million project by CIDA by Douglas McIntosh, Jamaica Information Service 16 August 2012

<http://www.jis.gov.jm/news/list/31552>

Full Article

Productivity levels among the Caribbean's farmers are expected to be significantly boosted with the implementation of a \$20 million Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)-funded project, dubbed the: 'Promotion of Regional Opportunities for Produce through Enterprises and Linkages' (PROPEL).

Benefits which are expected to accrue to beneficiary stakeholders include: the building of a more integrated regional economy; fostering economic growth; and increased incomes to farmers.

Implementation of PROPEL is being spearheaded by the non-government organisation, Canadian Hunger Foundation (CHF), which has provided a contribution of \$1 million. The CHF, which has been operating in the Caribbean for over 18 years, has successfully demonstrated its ability to develop the capacity of producer groups and institutions through a range of projects.

A typical day in a local market where agricultural products are traded.

Development Officer for CIDA, Sekeywi Carruthers, tells JIS News that the project, the office for which will be based in Barbados, will be rolled out on a phased basis within the eight countries targeted for initial implementation over the next two to three years. In addition to Jamaica, there will be Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The rationale for implementing the project arose out of what is deemed a “serious disconnect” between local farmers and large purchasers regarding the provision of adequate supplies of agricultural products of the highest quality, and food safety standards, which is not currently being met by the farmers.

Industry data indicate that the market for fresh fruits and vegetables within the Caribbean currently ranges between \$50 and \$100 million per annum. However, based on the data, this is not currently being adequately met by the farmers, which has forced purchasers to import as much as 90 per cent of these supplies from outside of the Caribbean. Information emerging from across the Caribbean suggests that regional purchasers have expressed a preference for procuring products from local farmers, once quality, quantity, and food safety requirements can be met.

This, according to CIDA, is based on the view that local procurement guarantees freshness and usage of flavours indigenous to the Caribbean, and would also be cost-effective. Further, that those buyers will be supporting the project by providing advice from the buyers’ perspective and by purchasing fresh produce from farmers’ groups supported by the project.

Parallel to this, small producers, including members of the Caribbean Farmers Network (CaFAN), one of the project’s local partner organisations, will be supported to supply larger quantities of products, and ensure that higher quality and food safety standards are met. This is intended to create a win-win situation, with farmers receiving more for their products, while lowering transaction costs for the buyers.

Pivotal to this is the establishment of a Caribbean Produce Marketing Corporation (CPMC), which will serve as a broker between the farmers and buyers, facilitating contractual arrangements for orders. The offices of the CPMC will be based in Barbados, and it is anticipated that over the ensuing years of the project’s implementation, the capacity of farmers groups from other Caribbean countries will be strengthened, enabling their integration into the supply chain, based on market needs and competitive advantage.

It is intended that PROPEL’s implementation will increase the engagement of male and female small farmers and young people in the Caribbean in high value fresh produce market activities; and increase co-ordination and alignment of farmers and buyers in high value fresh produce markets of the Caribbean.

Further, that the number of persons employed in the agricultural sector across the region will increase by approximately 70,000, and reach approximately 400,000 indirect beneficiaries; the revenues of farmers will increase, consequent on an annual average increase of an estimated 25 per cent in the total value of fresh produce; increase in food safety; and a reduction in youth unemployment, which currently stands at 23 per cent, by supporting young entrepreneurs in starting their own farms and agri-business.

Design and development of the project are currently being finalised, and it is anticipated that it will be implemented later this year. It is also expected that at the end of the project's five-year implementation period, linkages between farmers and purchasers would have been established and strengthened, thereby facilitating the accrual of significant benefits to all stakeholders.

The PROPEL project has been welcomed by Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS) President, Senator Norman Grant, who endorsed it while addressing the recent Denbigh Agricultural, Industrial and Food Show in Clarendon.

Noting that there is currently, not enough inter-regional trade being conducted, particularly among CARICOM countries, Senator Grant pointed to the need for stakeholders to move to address this anomaly in order that, "the revenues that are generated are shared by (the) farmers within CARICOM," while stressing that "we need to find a way to make that (project) work."

Upcoming Events

September 2012

The 16th International Symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops (ISTRC)

Date: 23 – 28 September 2012,

Venue: University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB), Ogun State, Nigeria

Website: <http://www.istrc.org/>

Theme: *The Roots and Tubers of Development and Climate Change* - Tropical roots and tuber crops are essential to meeting global food security needs, improving staple foods of world's poor and creating new opportunities in global food supply.

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September 2012

XI International Conference on Goats

Date: 24-27 September 2012

Venue: Canary Islands

Website: <http://www.icg2012.org/>

October 2012

Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development 2012: Second Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD II)

Date: 29 October – 1 November 2012.

Venue: Punta del Este, Uruguay

Website: <http://www.egfar.org/gcard-2012>