



Agriculture in the News

17-23 July 2012

Issues Affecting Caribbean Agriculture

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Aggressive measures by Government to manage Black Sigatoka Disease by Dominica Government Information Service, 17 July 2012

<http://news.gov.dm/index.php/news/4-headline-news/255-aggressive-measures-by-government-to-manage-black-sigatoka-disease>

Full Article

Dominica's government is waging war on the Black Sigatoka disease since it could have a crippling impact on the socio-economic development of the island.

The presence of Black Sigatoka was officially confirmed on the island last week when a sample of a suspected plant was sent for lab testing in Martinique.

Black Sigatoka is a leaf spot disease of banana that can cut a tree's fruit production in half. The fungal disease causes dark leaf spots that eventually enlarge and combine, causing much of the leaf area to turn yellow and brown.

For more information see page 6

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

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



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Hot Peppers

Good-bye banana, hello pepper by Ingrid Brown, Jamaica Observer, 23 July 2012
http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Good-bye-banana--hello-pepper_11970534

Full Article

FARMERS who suffered from the decline of the once thriving banana industry in St Mary and St Thomas are now poised to reap a livelihood from other crops, thanks to a partnership between Food For The Poor and the European Union Banana Support Programme.

The Economic Diversification Programme For Banana Producing Parishes, which is financed by the European Union (EU) and implemented by Food for the Poor, has provided 40 small farmers who traditionally cultivated bananas in Esher, St Mary and Somerset, St Thomas with plant materials, training and technical support to farm Scotch Bonnet peppers and rear bees and goats.

One of them is Delroy Robinson of Esher. He said he has been provided with Scotch Bonnet pepper seedlings, a water tank, fertiliser, pesticide, a spray can and a water pump -- all the necessary ingredients for a successful crop.

"It is very expensive to buy the fertilisers and seedlings, which is sold for \$900 per hundred," he told the Jamaica Observer North East as he guided the team on a tour of his one-acre pepper farm on the Esher mainroad.

Already, he has set up a home-made irrigation system to feed water from the tank to the field instead of having to engage in the back-breaking task of manually watering the plants every day.

Robinson said there is a ready market for the peppers which is sought after by export processing factories, restaurants and householders, particularly during the winter season. The pepper, which takes about three months to be ready for harvesting, requires a lot of care as it must be frequently sprayed, fertilised, watered and weeded.

But the task provides employment for others, as Robinson said he needs additional help at certain stages of the process.

"When I am picking the peppers I use three persons along with myself and I use mainly women because they can manage the bending down better," he explained.

This, as special care must be taken to ensure there is no damage to the trees which bear throughout the 18-month lifespan.

A farmer of more than 15 years, Robinson said he was forced out of banana production after his fields took constant battering from hurricanes.

"Banana used to create a lot of employment around here and the shops used to sell, but after that things just slow down so we glad for this opportunity to branch off into other things," he said, adding that pepper is an ideal replacement because of market demand.

Fellow beneficiary John O'Connor said although he has always grown hot pepper to supply Walkers Wood and Tastee, he was never able to produce enough to meet the demands because of the lack of resources. Food for the Poor's intervention has changed that.

It's a treacherous trek to his plot of leased land deep in the St Mary lowlands, but O'Connor is bent on expanding production to capitalise on the ready market.

"I do majority of the work myself so far, but I have to employ persons to prepare the land and for harvesting," said the Esher resident as he showed the team around his farm.

Like Robinson, O'Connor has plans to set a drip irrigation system so he won't have to cart bucketsful of water down the treacherous path.

Another ex-banana farmer, Franklyn Russell, and his common-law wife Carmel Graham said the diversification programme is one of the best things which could happen to small farmers.

"In St Mary, we never see nothing like this come about and so this is much welcomed help for us," said Graham, adding that they will ensure it is a success so that other farmers can be helped in the future.

A farmer of seven years, Russell said after the banana fall out he had turned to pineapples, but experienced limitations in how much he could produce as a result of the unavailability of lands. The couple explained that it is difficult to get land to lease even though many plots sit idle throughout the parish.

The only piece they could get their hands on is a wooded area miles from their home, but the couple is optimistic that the venture into pepper farming will be successful.

"I wish some government agency would come in and take the land and give it to those who want to work it," Graham said.

Were they to have access to more land, they said, they would expand the pepper business market because of the demand, and would later foray into fever grass, an ingredient in many fragrances.

"Food For The Poor has given us a good push because although there is a lot of interest in farming, there is a lack of resources and so even if you cut down the land and cannot afford to put in the things it make no sense," Graham said.

Unable to afford to employ a lot of persons now, Russell has Graham's full support and that of his brother, Girvan Henry who helped him clear the land and plant some 2,000 seedlings in the last two months. Help also came from other participants in the programme who have engaged in 'day for day' which sees them taking turns to help each other.

Speaking at the recent launch of the programme chairman of Food For The Poor Andrew Mahfood said his charity started the project with the aim of assisting small banana farmers who are suffering from a downturn in the volume of production and exports of bananas, due mainly to falling prices on the world market, the non-competitiveness of Jamaica's banana exports on the European market and the negative effects of natural disasters.

"Through the imparting of knowledge and skills by our agriculturalists and the RADA (Rural Agricultural Development Agency) Extension officers, this programme is creating a springboard for small farmers to benefit from new income-generating opportunities and increased profitability and this is consistent with FFP's philosophy of encouraging sustainable development projects," he said.

Fruits

Tropical fruit tree growers respond to climate change by Jeremy Cherfas. CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) blog , 20 July 2012 <http://ccaafs.cgiar.org/blog/tropical-fruit-tree-growers-respond-climate-change>

Full Article

When it comes to climate change and agriculture, almost all you hear about is the impact on short-lived crops, arable and horticultural. What about perennial tree crops? A [newly published literature review](#) shows that farmers are already feeling – and responding to – the effects of climate change on tropical trees.

What do you do when your mango trees – which took 15 years to start bearing fruit, and which have a good 50 years ahead of them – give up on you? Bioversity researchers decided to ask farmers. Progressive farmers, they found, are cutting out branches that aren't bearing fruit and grafting new varieties onto their trees.

“These are anecdotal observations,” said Bhuwon Sthapit, coordinator of the project. “We heard from many farmers that they see changes in the pattern of flowering, and the flowers no longer set fruits. They assume that climate change is the reason.”

The impact of climate change on tropical fruits has been somewhat neglected – after all, they are already adapted to hot weather and a humid environment. The literature and surveys show, however, that there are impacts, most notably on tree phenology, especially flowering and fruiting.

The farmers' response -- to graft different varieties -- is part practical solution, part experiment. They don't know that the new varieties will be better, although they obviously feel it has to be worth trying if the old branches are no longer fruiting reliably. For researchers, this is an opportunity both to study the impact of climate change on flowering and fruit set and to help farmers by finding them varieties more likely to flower and fruit properly under predicted climate conditions.

“Another question that needs further research is what will happen to the geographical range of tropical fruits,” Sthapit explained. Again, there is anecdotal evidence. The upper limit for mangoes used to be around 900 metres above sea level; people now report having seen mangoes fruiting at 1700 metres.

Scientists, and farmers, would like to know what the best indicators might be to predict where specific tropical fruits will grow. “Things like night-time temperatures, temperature during pollination; that information is not in the textbooks, so we wanted to document the state of knowledge.”

The current state of knowledge on mangoes and much else besides is now contained in a book *Tropical Fruit Tree Species and Climate Change*, whose publication was funded by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). The book will be launched at the global steering committee meeting of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)/Global Environment Facility Coordination (GEF) Project, “Conservation and Sustainable Use of Cultivated and Wild Tropical Fruit Tree Diversity: Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods, Food Security, and Ecosystem Services,” which will take place in Kirby, Thailand on 18 July.

It is clear that there is great scope for further research on the impact of climate change on perennial crops, and that tropical areas are likely to see considerable changes in the behaviour of fruit trees.

“There could be many benefits for farmers,” said Sthapit. Many tropical fruits are highly nutritious and can also contribute to increased incomes for farmers, helping them adapt to climate change. And trees sequester carbon too, so there is a role for tropical fruit trees in mitigation as well as in adaptation.

[Click here to read more about the publication *Tropical Fruit Tree Species and Climate Change* and to download it.](#)

Australia: CostaExchange adopts new quality performance management tool. Fresh Fruit Portal 19 July 2012 <http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2012/07/19/australia-costaexchange-adopts-new-quality-performance-management-tool/>

Full Article

Australian horticultural company CostaExchange has adopted a new program to better measure and manage quality performance across its fresh produce supply base.

The company has chosen Muddy Boots' mobile technology software Greenlight Quality Control, which allows businesses to identify problem areas and collaborate with suppliers to deliver consistent improvements.

CostaExchange group technical and alliance manager Brett Heather said the company expected significant benefits to come from the move.

“With improved quality management, through the utilisation of Greenlight QC, Costas see significant benefits flowing, with improved efficiencies, reduced rejections, enhanced reputation and a stronger bottom line performance,” he said.

Muddy Boots Software general manager Jason Considine, said his business was “delighted” to work with CostaExchange.

“Quality is a key element to their business strategy and the adoption of IT has underpinned the quality and consistency of their product offer, whilst also demonstrating a good return on their investment.”

Fruit Flies

Efforts are being made locally to manage the presence of Fruit Flies on the Island by Dominica Government Information Service, 17 July 2012 <http://news.gov.dm/index.php/news/4-headline-news/253-efforts-are-being-made-locally-to-manage-the-presence-of-fruit-flies-on-the-island>

Full Article

Plant Protection Officer, Ryan Anselm told GIS news on Monday that Dominican farmers have been affected by Fruit Flies for over thirty years.

He also said that the pests have caused decreases in exportable fruit.

“Farmers have been experiencing significant decreases in fruit production so the strategy is to maintain the fruit sector for both the local and the export market. Fruit Flies and Mango Seed Weevils have negatively impacted our ability to export fruits. [Our] strategy is to maintain the levels of fruit export by managing the Fruit Fly population.”

Alies Van Saeurs–Muller is Head of the Carambola Fruit Fly Programme in Suriname.

She is part of a two-member delegation that will be visiting farms, meeting with Extension Officers and the Plant Protection and Quarantine Unit this week.

“The message we’re bringing has to do with recognising Fruit Flies and [educating persons on] what they could do to manage the Fruit Fly problem. There are quite a number of methods that persons could apply in the field, not

only the destruction of Fruit Flies by destroying affected fruit but also biological control, trapping, bait spraying etc.”

She explained to GIS news that the management of Fruit Flies is not a difficult undertaking.

She said, “Everybody can do it...Everybody who has fruit trees in their own homes and finds larvae in the fruit can destroy them. If the larvae are left on the ground, they will penetrate the soils and re-emerge as flies and would infest fruits in your garden again or somebody else’s garden. If you destroy those fruits that are infested, you are already doing a lot in the management of Fruit Flies.”

Other Caribbean islands have shared similar challenges with Fruit Flies.

Paul Graham is Pest Management Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture in Grenada.

“From 1985, Grenada was declared free of fruit flies- that is fruit flies of quarantine significance- but in 2002 we had the introduction of the West Indian Fruit Fly- which you have here. The difference is that we have it in plums and sometimes guavas but here you have it on mangoes. It’s the same fruit fly but with different behaviour,” he said.

Graham told GIS news Monday that his Government has made progress in its attempts to manage the presence of Fruit Flies.

Based on his experience, he intends to make recommendations to Dominica’s farmers and agricultural officials on methods of managing the Fruit Fly population.

“We would want Dominica to use a more integrated approach especially because farmers are complaining of the affected fruit more often.”

Graham also said that farmers can play a major role in lessening the number of Fruit Fly infestations.

“We also want to send a message that there is a lot that farmers could do including cultural practices like picking and bagging affected fruit and destroying them. [Even] bagging the fruit for a few days is sufficient to break the life cycle. The cycle begins with the adult females laying eggs in fruits, then the fruit drops to the ground, the larvae penetrates the soil and then emerge as flies. If farmers destroy the affected fruit then that would mean fewer Fruit Flies in the next season and fewer flies mean fewer infestations.”

Black Sigatoka

Aggressive measures by Government to manage Black Sigatoka Disease by Dominica Government Information Service, 17 July 2012 <http://news.gov.dm/index.php/news/4-headline-news/255-aggressive-measures-by-government-to-manage-black-sigatoka-disease>

Full Article

Dominica's government is waging war on the Black Sigatoka disease since it could have a crippling impact on the socio-economic development of the island.

The presence of Black Sigatoka was officially confirmed on the island last week when a sample of a suspected plant was sent for lab testing in Martinique.

Black Sigatoka is a leaf spot disease of banana that can cut a tree's fruit production in half. The fungal disease causes dark leaf spots that eventually enlarge and combine, causing much of the leaf area to turn yellow and brown.

According to Plant Protection Officer, Ryan Anselm, who was speaking at a press conference earlier this week, the disease can be managed and confirmed if farmers adhere to the strict instructions issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Anselm said that the disease has been intercepted between Scott's Head in the south, Castle Bruce in the east and Belles in the central region.

He also said that the strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture is containment and management.

Hon. Matthew Walter said that his ministry is assertively tackling the disease.

He said, "Black Sigatoka must be viewed as a very dangerous disease and Government is not going to drag its feet in implementing the relevant measures to ultimately achieve the objective of the complete eradication of Black Sigatoka. We cannot afford to be playing around with the disease. Food security and our export market are too important. This is why, in relation to our quick response measures, that we have brought onboard Carol Severin-Abraham who is a Pathologist and has worked in the Ministry of Agriculture for some time. She is qualified in this field and is competent enough to coordinate this very important Black Sigatoka Management Programme."

Not only is Government taking action against the disease, says Hon. Walter, but proactive steps were also taken beforehand including a \$300,000 allocation.

"Well before the confirmation of the disease, we activated an emergency action plan for the management and control of Black Sigatoka. Fundamental actions taken today include the activation of an emergency task force, the establishment of regional field coordination committees in each agricultural region and the development of a management strategy for the disease. I must note that even before the laboratory official confirmation of the disease, Cabinet had already released \$300,000 to initiate control and management strategies."

The Coordinator of the Black Sigatoka Management Programme, Carol Severin-Abraham noted that Dominica's government is well ahead in terms of taking immediate preventative and management action.

She said, "There's a lot of activity that the Ministry of Agriculture is doing very quickly that you have not seen in other states. The other countries are not going as fast as Dominica is and I want to [say] that this is happening very quickly and Dominica is reacting quickly as well. Behind the scenes, money is already being allocated. When we go to regional meetings, we hear of what Dominica is doing and it is quite startling that we are moving so quickly and taking this so seriously. I think that the regional organisations are very pleased with how quickly the Ministry of Agriculture is acting on this."

Additionally, Dominica's government is looking into introducing resistant varieties of plantains and bananas on the island.

Seeds and Seedling Banks

RADA Hanover steps up production of plant seedlings by Bryan Miller, Jamaica Information Service, 22 July 2012 <http://www.jis.gov.jm/news/list/31333>

Full Article

The Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) Hanover office has stepped up its production of plant seedlings to meet the needs of the approximately 6,000 registered farmers in the parish.

According to Western Zonal Director with RADA, Bernard Goffe, the aim is to maintain the consistent increase in domestic crop output recorded since 2006. Farmers produced 4,590 tons of food last year, representing a 32.1 per cent increase over the 3,474 tons produced in 2010.

Mr. Goffe said indications are that the growth will continue this year, and the two plant nurseries located on the RADA compound stand ready to provide the planting material.

"At present, we have scotch bonnet pepper, tomato, sweet pepper, hot red pepper, and cabbage. We also have some turmeric seedlings here and also some mini-set yams ready for the market," he told JIS News.

He said the seedlings are being sold at a discounted rate for prices ranging from \$10 to \$15.

The 50 feet by 30 feet plant nurseries each have capacity to hold some 60,000 plant seedlings at any one time, and Mr. Goffe said the amount of space available allows for the production of a wide variety of plant and vegetable seedlings.

The first nursery was established in 2005 through financial assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), while the second nursery, along with a preparation area, was established in 2009 with assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

Mr. Goffe said the USAID has also given assistance towards establishing a solar powered irrigation system, which services both nurseries.

According to the RADA Director, the facilities have helped to increase crop production in the parish.

"In 2005, when this nursery was conceptualised, it was because we realised that the production in the parish was very low; and so we decided to start a small nursery in the back (of the premises). When the plants were available to the farmers, we realised that in 2006, the production started to increase by approximately ten percent," he told JIS News.

He said since the intervention of the USAID, "the domestic food crop production has been increasing every year," with the highest production increase recorded in 2011.

Protected Agriculture

Farmers need to consider use of Greenhouses by Janelle Riley-Thornhill, The Barbados Advocate, 22 July 2012
<http://www.barbadosadvocate.com/newsitem.asp?more=local&NewsID=26007>

Full Article

Greenhouses are not an option, but a necessity in this country.

That is the view of Mark Hill of Biogen-Biomass Energy Barbados, the company which is marketing Agrotech Inc. Greenhouse Solutions.

In a recent interview with the Barbados Advocate, Hill maintained that Barbadian farmers need to move in this direction as a matter of urgency, as there are economic and food security implications if they do not.

“Greenhouse technology is also the best direction that Barbados can go in terms of sustainable living and food security, and that does not necessarily mean being able to supply 100 per cent of your needs, but at least 60 per cent of your needs. So that if that remaining 40 per cent is not accessible to you, your base load...would be in your immediate environment,” he said.

Hill continued, “We have to push to the point where we can run as a nation, without the dependencies on foreign support. Some people may argue that that is not realistic because we live in a global environment, and I am saying that is exactly what the United States does. It is only in us following the international policies and recommendations, that our small island economies end up being shoe string type economies because we are following policies that don’t have our best interest at heart.”

Hill’s comments came as he lamented the fact that greenhouse technology, though introduced in this country, has not been widely used. He noted that this lack adoption was due in part to a lack of local expertise in the area, which resulted in the costs to farmers being extraordinarily high; as much as \$100 000. However, he said the potential is there to provide a 2000 square foot greenhouse for farmers at a cost of \$30 000, and he noted that through one of Government’s incentives, farmers can access a 40 per cent rebate. Moreover, he added that farmers have the potential to make between \$60 000 and \$100 000 per year depending on the crop they grow, and by utilising renewable energy they can engage in rain harvesting and provide drip irrigation to the plants.

“In essence, you had market access, but not market interest, so in other words persons did not realise the potential. But farmers are suffering – they make profits in the dry season and lose it in the wet season because of the unpredictability of the weather – and greenhouses can reduce those risks. Greenhouses provide protection from the weather, protection from pests, wind damage and you can grow crops that cannot be grown otherwise in Barbados because you now have a controlled environment,” he explained.

He further stated that through the protection provided by greenhouses, there is absolutely no reason why premium priced crops, such as red and yellow sweet peppers, cannot be grown in Barbados. He pointed out that at present there is difficulty in growing those varieties because it requires that the crop is left on the plant to mature, but to do that with the traditional means of farming the crop would be susceptible to birds.

“But, you triple your value just by being able to protect them from birds. Also, plants grow much faster and yield more in a protected environment. In the greenhouse, if I have a plant and I mature that plant and pick that crop for 12 months, I would have eliminated the interruptions that exist when planting in the field. And in a one year period, per square foot, even if the yield wasn’t more, just because it is uninterrupted I would have tripled or quadrupled my yield and the plant is protected from pests, the wind, the rain and extra sunlight which would dry it out and challenge it to produce,” he explained.

The entrepreneur contended that not only does it have the potential to give the local agricultural sector a much needed boost, but he said that there are a number of spin-off effects that can be capitalised on as well.

“We have over \$200 million that can be tapped into by putting people to work building greenhouses, working inside the greenhouses, delivering the produce and selling it – the possibilities are endless. We are not talking about pushing out anybody, we are not talking about glutting anything or disrupting anybody’s lives, we are talking about neatly fitting into a market that right now, we keep American, Canadian, Chilean, Mexican and other farmers in business through,” he said.

Climate Change

Jamaica secures financing for climate change project by Petre Williams-Raynor, Jamaica Observer, 18 July 2012
http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Jamaica-secures-financing-for-climate-change-project_11966400

Full Article

JAMAICA is shortly to be provided with almost US\$10 million from the Adaptation Fund after its proposal for a programme to help Trelawny and six other parishes deal with the impact of climate change won international approval.

The island's proposal was among 14 others and three concepts from countries across the developing world to go before the 32-member Adaptation Fund Board (AFB) at their meeting in Bonn, Germany last month.

Hopeton Peterson, manager for sustainable development and regional planning at the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), which has responsibility for the programme, said the approval was a welcome one following a rigorous application process.

To get to this stage, the PIOJ first had to be accredited by the AFB as a national implementing entity (NIE), which it achieved in 2010. With that designation, it was given leave to develop the programme concept, which it submitted to the board in June last year for endorsement. It earned the endorsement and, as a result, was provided with US\$30,000 to develop the full proposal for final consideration by the board.

"We were the third institution to receive accreditation [from the AFB] as a NIE and the first in the Caribbean. From that viewpoint, we are excited," Peterson told the Jamaica Observer. "Also, we think we have a very good programme and are trying to address a problem [climate change] that is really urgent and we want to press ahead."

Climate change threatens, among other things, rising sea levels, warmer global temperatures as well as more frequent and/or intense hurricanes and droughts. The Adaptation Fund was set up to finance efforts to help the developing world prepare for these impacts.

The Jamaican initiative — titled "Enhancing the Resilience of the Agriculture Sector and Coastal Areas to Protect Livelihoods and Improve Food Security — has as its objectives:

- * increasing the climate resilience of the Negril coastline;
- * enhancing the climate resilience of the agriculture sector by improving water and land management in select communities; and
- * improving institutional and local level capacity for sustainable management of the natural resources and disaster risk reduction in the targeted vulnerable areas.

In addition to Trelawny, the programme is to benefit Clarendon, St Ann, St Mary, St Thomas, Manchester, and Westmoreland through a focus on industries, such as tourism as well as agriculture and fisheries.

Now that the programme has the AFB's approval, Peterson said they would have to put certain internal mechanisms in place at the PIOJ for implementation.

"For example, we need to establish a programme management unit, equipped with a manager and an administrative assistant, and then we need to establish a programme steering committee," he said.

Thereafter the programme is to be officially launched, "somewhere between September and October and continues up to December 2015 when the programme is scheduled to end".

"After that we have our final evaluation somewhere around March 2016," he said.

It was not immediately clear whether residents of the communities slated to benefit would be employed under the programme.

"There is the possibility, but there are no specifics; those will become clearer as the programme is rolled out," Peterson said.

However, he noted that if the programme is to be successful, residents would have to be involved. "Participation is key. We have built the whole programme on community participation and without that, the programme will fall dead," Peterson said.

Further, he said communities outside of the programme would also reap rewards. "Some of the interventions, although they are site-specific, the lessons from them will impact positively interventions in other areas. For example, land management practices, rainwater harvesting and other water solutions; those will have positive implications for other parishes in Jamaica," Peterson said.

In addition to the PIOJ, other entities involved in the implementation of the programme are the Rural Agriculture Development Authority, National Works Agency and the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment.

Trade

EP calls for more time in EPA negotiations by Agritrade, 22 July 2012

<http://agritrade.cta.int/en/Agriculture/Topics/EPAs/EP-calls-for-more-time-in-EPA-negotiations>

Full Article

On 21 June 2012, the Trade Committee of the European Parliament (EP) called on the EC to allow a further 2 years for the completion of the EPA negotiations, shifting the proposed deadline for completion to 1 January 2016 and enabling ACP states 'to ratify their EPAs before losing the right to duty-and-quota-free access to the EU'. The Committee noted that the EC proposal would involve switching 8 of the 36 countries that benefited from the 2007 market access regulation to other less advantageous preference schemes. The eight affected countries are Botswana, Namibia, Cameroon, Fiji, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Swaziland. MEPs maintained that 'these countries are still grappling with development needs and poverty and would be hit by sharply reduced access to EU markets and therefore need until 2016 to prepare for the EPAs.' The rapporteur of the Committee argued that '2014 is simply not a fair or realistic deadline', but equally noted that 'unlimited preferences was not a sustainable option either'.

The draft legislative resolution was passed by 25 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions.

EPA's were also discussed at the 95th session of the ACP Council of Ministers in June 2012. The resolution adopted highlighted the range of contentious issues outstanding, including 'the definition of substantially all trade and time frames for liberalisation, rules of origin, MFN clause, export taxes, trade distorting domestic and export subsidies, additionality of resources, quantitative restrictions, relations with countries that are in a customs union with the European Union (including Turkey, St Martin and Andorra), development of benchmarks, indicators and targets for monitoring the implementation of the agreements non-execution clause'.

The resolution also expressed concern at the EC's introduction of new issues and the continued commitment of the EC to the full adoption of its proposal of September 2011 to amend Market Access Regulation (MAR) 1528/2007.

The ACP stressed the importance of resolving contentious issues and called on the EC 'to lower its ambitions and consider seriously the level of economic development of its ACP negotiating partners with a view to concluding an inclusive EPA that will attract joining by all States within a given region'. The resolution also stressed the importance of the EC 'urgently and positively' responding to the Pacific ACP states' EPA proposals.

The ACP rejected the basis for the September 2011 EC proposals to amend MAR 1528/2007, observing that no WTO Member had complained about the current transitional arrangements, given that negotiations were in progress.

Food Security

Greater Agricultural Research necessary for regional food security – Ramsammy by National Communications Network, 17 July 2012 <http://ncnguyana.com/ncngy/index.php/local/local-news/social-issues/3937-greater-agriculture-research-necessary-for-regional-food-security-ramsammy>

Full Article

Agriculture Minister Dr. Leslie Ramsammy has called on Caribbean and Latin American countries to place emphasis on agricultural research in achieving food security.

The Minister was at the time speaking at the conclusion of the Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean meeting of the working group which was held at the Guyana International Conference centre on Friday.

Ramsammy noted that the scope for serious research in Caribbean countries is terribly limited since most of the countries spend less than 0.1 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) in this regard.

The potential for enormous impact through research beacons as an opportunity Caribbean countries ignore at their own peril, Dr Ramsammy cautioned.

He advocated that countries carefully and aggressively pursue the potential of genomics to improve crops, introduce new crops, and generate better soil management practices.

He also highlighted the need to pursue carefully and aggressively the potential of genomics to improve crops, introduce new crops, and generate better soil management practices.

Dr Ramsammy pointed out too, the severe under-funding of agriculture extension services by all of the Caribbean countries.

He urged regional governments to reaffirm the commitment to the science of crop management and agriculture practices.

The Guyanese Agriculture Minister Reminded of the imperative that must succeed in: a Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean by 2025, noting that the initiative must not fail.

He boasted that Guyana stands out as a country where agriculture has always played an important role in its development, adding that it is a food-secured country and agricultural commodities represent more than 40% of its export portfolio.

The meeting sought to review the progress in the region in the fight against hunger and challenges of the hunger free Latin America and the Caribbean initiative 2025, which seeks to eradicate malnutrition in the region.

Water

Water Harvesting Technologies increase productivity in Jamaica by Dr Leslie Simpson, Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute and Stanley Rampair (Senior Irrigation Consultant), New Agriculturist, July 2012 <http://www.new-ag.info/en/research/innovationItem.php?a=2706>

Full Article

Flagaman district, in Southern St Elizabeth lies in the rain shadow area of Jamaica. The Northeast Trade Winds deposit their moisture in the mountainous interior, so are dry when they reach the south of the island. Planting traditionally coincides with the rainy seasons of May or October, but once crops germinate, a struggle normally ensues to keep them watered. Often this means sharing domestic water supplies with the plants, and in periods of severe drought, crops frequently fail. The Ebanks family has been farming in Flagaman for over 50 years and, with help from the Jamaican government and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), has gradually developed a reliable water-efficient method of food crop production.

Mernel Ebanks, now 80 years old, recalls that in her early days of farming, water was drawn from the house tank, transported to the field to fill a 200 litre drum, and then placed at the root of every plant in the field using a watering can. This was time consuming and laborious. After a number of crop failures in the 1970s, the Ebanks discovered that if they used cut guinea grass (*Panicum maximum*) to cover the soil before planting, there was less evaporation from the soil, drastically reducing the water required. Guinea grass is still used as mulch throughout Southern St Elizabeth, with the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) promoting this system as a way to enhance crop production in other dry areas of the Caribbean.

Sourcing economic water supplies

The laborious process of applying water to each plant with a watering can was still being practised until the Jamaican government introduced gravity drip irrigation across the country in 2003. This allowed for cultivation of larger areas, but still required the purchase of water, to supplement harvested rainfall. Costing about US\$100 for 4,000 gallons, this could not be sustained.

The solution to the high water cost was the construction of a water harvesting and storage system in 2007. The capital cost of about US\$3,000 was high but, by not having to pay for water to be trucked to the farm, the Ebanks say that the system paid for itself in three years. And help to meet the initial costs is available to farmers through the Jamaica Social Investment Fund on the submission of a business plan. The Ebank's system consisted of a 243m³ concrete water tank which was filled from the house roof and a 405 m² concrete catchment area. Filled twice a year during the rainy seasons, the system is able to support two crops on 1.2 hectares.

Initially, water from the tank was pumped to the field using a diesel pump, but with increasing fuel prices, this became a serious constraint. In 2009, the FAO Small Scale Irrigation and Rainwater Harvesting Project chose the Ebanks family to demonstrate how solar pumps could work alongside the gravity drip irrigation system, to improve water management and water use efficiency on farm. FAO rehabilitated the water collection and irrigation systems, and provided the solar pump, all at a cost of about US\$8,000. "The system is effective for subsistence agriculture," one FAO official states. "It adds significant income to the household."

Many benefits

The new solar pumping system provides energy to move water from the concrete storage tank to two elevated 4.5 m³ plastic tanks to which a drip irrigation system is connected and which serves the entire farm. The pumps require little maintenance, but staff from the National Irrigation Commission have been trained to service them. So far 53 farmers, or about five per cent of the farming community, have taken up various components of the system, including solar pumps.

Mernel Ebanks estimates that with successive improvements in irrigation and water management her yields have increased fourfold in the last 50 years, and there is less risk of crop failure. For example, a cantaloupe plot, which yielded about 12,000kg per hectare less than ten years ago, now produces 38,000kg. "With the increased yields obtained over the last two years I have been able to renovate my house and I now have my kitchen and bathroom facilities inside the house," she reveals.

These innovations have resulted in a more reliable and sustainable crop production system, higher yields, more efficient use of water and energy, and a better standard of living for the Ebanks family. As a result, the Jamaican government is promoting water saving technologies across the island, while CARDI is advocating the system in the rest of the Caribbean.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition project News letter launched by Biodiversity International, 20 July 2012

http://www.biodiversityinternational.org/announcements/biodiversity_for_food_and_nutrition_project_newsletter_launched.html

Full Article

The first issue of Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition Project newsletter is out now. You can read and subscribe to it [here](#). This multidisciplinary, multi-partner project aims to provide evidence of the nutritional value of agricultural biodiversity and its role in promoting healthy diets and strengthening livelihoods in the project's leading countries: Brazil, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

The project is supported by [The Global Environment Facility](#), the world's largest public funder of international environmental projects, and coordinated by Biodiversity International, with implementation support from the [United Nations Environment Programme](#) and the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#). 'Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition' also brings together a significant platform of international partners to support project activities including: the [World Food Programme](#); the [Earth Institute](#); [Crops for the Future](#); the [World Agroforestry Centre](#) and the [World Vegetable Centre](#).

For more information see:

<http://us5.campaign-archive1.com/?u=31c8e5e6e2de465f40c74b5cf&id=9c272b3009&e=1d14013d19>

Agricultural Development

Nevis Agriculture stakeholders get better understanding of budgeting by SKNVibes, 18 July 2012
<http://www.sknvibes.com/news/newsdetails.cfm/60755>

Full Article

Stakeholders throughout the agriculture industry on Nevis, now have a better understanding of how to prepare and execute a budget. The opportunity came at a two day workshop from July 12-13th, 2012 conducted by the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture in the Nevis Island Administration (NIA).

The workshop was held at the Department's conference room at Prospect with facilitator Chicago based Doctor of Economics Peter Van Blokland, also a former professor at the University of Florida.

CARDI's Country Team Leader Ms. Pathleen Titus in brief remarks explained that agri-business was very important and good for those involved in agriculture whether part or full time should look at farming as a business and know how to manage it.

"The importance of budgeting will come out in this workshop hopefully and one thing we always talk about is the cost of food everywhere and we always accuse the farmer, more times rightfully so, of overpricing and the farmer would go to the supermarket and look at the prices and maybe price accordingly.

So we are hoping with some assistance you would be able to give the correct price for your product, how much it cost you to produce it, what is your mark up, what you should charge and hopefully we will have a reduction in the cost of food, hopefully. So then you would have an accurate price for meat, fish vegetables [or] whatever," she said.

Ms. Titus, CARDI also noted that CARDI always supported the Department of Agriculture in the execution of its work programme and that the organisation had a Memorandum of Understanding with the Florida Association for Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas (FAVACA), who had provided the facilitator.

"I don't know how many of you would remember but this is the 4th FAVACA person coming to the Federation to execute courses. We had something with IPM on cabbage; we had sweet potato weevil control and we also had green house management. So FAVACA is always willing to send someone to assist us in training," she said.

According to Ms. Titus, a similar workshop was held for stakeholders in St. Kitts and the participants were pleased with the knowledge they had gained with the hope of implementing it in their businesses.

She also noted that the Extension Officers from the Department of Agriculture who were present at the workshop would act as trainers to assist with passing on the knowledge in the future since it was important for farmers to have the correct pricing which would ultimately benefit the consumers.

Meantime, in an extremely brief overview of the workshop Dr. Van Blokland who was trained at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus then named the Imperial School of Tropical Agriculture said he had developed a template on budgeting which he planned to pass on to the participants.

"Years ago I developed a template to show what each contribution is and by doing this I dropped a couple enterprises and added another one. If this was advertised as budgeting it wouldn't sound too sexy would it? No one cares about budgeting but in polite words it is really what we are going to do," he said.

Dr. Van Blokland had farmed in Africa and Europe and according to Agriculture officials had vast experience with several crops.

Government to provide financial support to DAPPEX by Dominica Government Information Service, 18 July 2012 <http://news.gov.dm/index.php/news/4-headline-news/256-government-to-provide-financial-support-to-dapex>

Full Article

The Government of Dominica has agreed to provide the Dominica Agriculture Producers and Exporters Company (DAPEX) with funds to assist the company in carrying out its mandate.

DAPEX is seeking to become the leading agricultural exporter of fresh produce on the island.

Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit in his 2012/13 budget announced that Government will make interest-free loans available to the company which will allow it to purchase produce from local farmers.

The Prime Minister said that at a meeting held by Government and members of the board and management of DAPEX it was revealed that the company was experiencing cash flow challenges. He said these cash flow challenges adversely affected the company's capacity to purchase commodities from farmers thus constraining its capacity to take advantage of export opportunities.

The Prime Minister said this warranted a proactive response from Government.

“In response to this, Government and DAPEX have entered into an agreement under which Government will provide interest-free loans to DAPEX in order to allow the company to purchase produce from the farming community.”

The Prime Minister added that these loans will allow DAPEX to make payments to farmers in a timely manner thereby ensuring that farmers and their families have a regular income.

Government is hopeful that this will give farmers the confidence to increase production to the levels required by the markets. Prime Minister Skerrit stated that this agreement is expected to stay in effect for one year and will be revisited at the end of that period.

Currently there are 150 farmers who have marketing arrangements with DAPEX.

The Prime Minister is also hopeful that with this programme the number of farmers who sell their produce to DAPEX will increase to at least 250 and provide the basis for an expanded market base.

Currently Government provides a subsidy to DAPEX on fertilizer imported by the company for sale to farmers.

Government address issue of sea transportation for agricultural produce by Dominica Government Information Service, 17 July 2012 <http://news.gov.dm/index.php/news/4-headline-news/257-government-address-issue-of-sea-transportation-for-agricultural-produce>

Full Article

Government is putting the necessary mechanisms in place to ensure that more agricultural produce can be transported by sea to neighboring countries.

Prime Minister Skerrit announced that Government will make five hundred thousand dollars E.C (\$500, 000.00) dollars available to members of the private sector wishing to upgrade their cargo vessels or procure new ones.

The Prime Minister made the announcement during the presentation of the 2012-2013 National Budget to Parliament on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Skerrit says this decision came on the heels of a recent study on sea transportation conducted by Windward Island countries.

The Prime Minister indicated that the study noted that the small cargo vessels constitute the informal traffic offering niche services for the huckster trade. Additionally he noted that the study revealed that small cargo vessels would also provide niche services for imports of regionally manufactured goods from the region, small food and other export industries.

He said the cargo vessels would also be beneficial to the private sector trade, and in particular the transport of personal effects.

Hon. Skerrit added that the report concluded that these services are particularly suited to small consignments and are provided at a reasonable cost. He said however that these services were frequently criticized on the grounds of reliability, regularity, scheduling, cargo handling and public awareness of the services offered hence Government's decision to make such money available.

"Faced with this reality, Cabinet has approved an initial amount of \$500,000 to be made available to the private sector to upgrade their vessels and in exceptional circumstances to procure new vessels."

The Prime Minister said Government will consider replenishing the fund if the full amount allocated is taken up before the end of the fiscal year.

The Prime Minister disclosed that resources from the Economic Citizenship program have been earmarked for this activity.

Agricultural Research

NCU supports agriculture mandate by Northern Caribbean University, 19 July 2012
http://news.ncu.edu.jm/news_item.aspx?NewsID=3462

Full Article

In the words of Agricultural Minister Roger Clarke: "Eat, what we grow and grow what we eat;" Northern Caribbean University (NCU) has been doing just that. The Office of Special Projects provides the University and the High school family as well as surrounding communities with freshly grown produce. Special Projects is a major farming initiative that has been launched to revive commercial agriculture on the NCU properties. These efforts, clearly not confined to NCU, have been extended to the wider community in Central Jamaica, through

funding secured from the Government of Japan for The Project for Sustainable Food Production on Mined-Out Bauxite Lands.

It seeks to establish a sustainable agricultural programme by working with over 500 community members on mined-out bauxite lands in Manchester and was launched in April 2011. This on-going project was sponsored initially to the tune of US\$103,407, and involves the establishment of greenhouses in strategic communities in Manchester, which serve as pilot projects to demonstrate the effectiveness of the use of greenhouse technology in increasing efficiency and productivity. Technical oversight for this project is provided by the College of Natural and Applied Sciences at NCU.

It is noteworthy that the College of Natural and Applied Sciences has been carrying on a breadfruit project in Portland, aimed at shoring up the consistent production of high quality breadfruits. Additionally, work is being carried on in exploring ways of making mined out bauxite lands more conducive to farming, and technologies such as the use of solar yam stick have been developed to engender more success for our farmers.

On Thursday March 08, 2012, Northern Caribbean University in partnership with the Scotia Bank Jamaica Foundation cut the ribbon on the door to its Agricultural Research Laboratories located on its Main (East) Campus. This research Centre aims to provide services are in testing for pesticides & herbicides, water and air quality, caloric value of food, and moisture content measurements. The Labs will also facilitate scientific research to assist local farmers in making high quality crop yield decisions, and improve their production potential

Northern Caribbean University believes in a sustainable environment. The University longs to see a Jamaica that will be able to not only feed itself, but be able to compete globally with other countries in the exportation of high quality food products.

Agriculture and Innovation

Increasing the impact of agricultural innovation on social development by James French. IICA Connection July 2012, no.15 <http://www.iica.int/Eng/prensa/IICAConexion/IICAConexion2/2012/N15/secundaria3.aspx>

Full Article

IICA is exploring ways to get involved in the effort undertaken by the Global Forum on Agricultural Research to transform innovation systems, with a view to ensuring that they directly benefit the populations in the countries of the Americas.

The importance of coordinating studies intended to transform agriculture at the regional level, as well as of reporting periodically on actions taken, is one of the principal messages IICA will take to the Second Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD2), to be held in October of this year in Punta del Este, Uruguay.

At that meeting, researchers from around the Globe will discuss ways to ensure that innovation in agriculture contributes to the effective development of communities and countries. The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) will attend the meeting and will explain, based on the Institute's 70 years of experience in collaborating with the ministers of agriculture of the hemisphere, that it is possible to achieve that objective.

At the Conference, organized by the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), public-sector officials, businessmen, representatives of national innovation systems and authorities from technical assistance organizations will meet to define global priorities for innovation in agriculture, based on the true developmental needs of countries.

As preparation for the Conference, the Director General of IICA, Victor M. Villalobos, met with regional coordinators and technical personnel from the Institute to determine what role IICA will play in the Conference. They concluded that there were considerable similarities between the lines of research that will be analyzed in the GCARD2 and the actions IICA takes in support of its member countries.

Such support is provided in the areas of technological innovation, agribusiness and commercialization, agricultural health and food safety, management of rural territories, food security, natural resource management and adaptation of agriculture to climate change.

“The strategic elements required for agricultural research to have a greater impact on development are consistent with IICA’s programs. Our task is no longer to point out what has to be done, but rather to transform agriculture, making it more productive and sustainable,” said Villalobos.

In the meeting with the Director General, the promotion of South-South collaboration, the territorial approach to rural development, the use of the Performance, Vision and Strategy instrument in making decisions related to agricultural health, direct support to the ministries of agriculture, and the coordination of regional cooperative agricultural research programs (PROCI), as well as and the Technical Secretariat of the Forum for the Americas on Technological Research and Development (FORAGRO), were identified as strengths of the Institute and clear examples of how innovation in technology and institutions can improve agriculture.

According to Villalobos, the experience of the accountability seminars that IICA conducts annually in its member countries are another contribution that can be taken to the GCARD2 since, in his judgment, the commitments that the participants in the upcoming global conference might undertake with respect to agricultural research will have to be measured.

Real impacts

Why talk about commitments? James French, Director of Technical Cooperation at IICA, explained that, at the GCARD2, the focus will be on promoting the transformation of agricultural research systems so that they can contribute better to attaining the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, specifically those related to reducing poverty and hunger, increasing the incomes of populations and working toward environmental sustainability.

To achieve that impact, six strategic objectives have been selected and defined as a road map:

1. To define priorities and actions driven by development needs
2. To promote equitable partnerships and shared responsibilities
3. To increase investment in human, institutional and financial resources
4. To develop much-needed human and institutional capacities
5. To coordinate the link between innovation and development programs and policies
6. To demonstrate value and gain recognition from society.

The IICA specialists also pointed to weaknesses that should be addressed in the GCARD2 and in future conferences of this kind, including how to incorporate innovation into production chains, how to attract investment from the private sector, what coordination mechanism will be created, how water management will be addressed and whether or not the real needs of the producers are addressed in the research being conducted.

Upcoming Events

July 2012

2012 Green Growth Investment Forum

Date: 25-26 July 2012

Venue: Bay Gardens Hotel, Saint Lucia

Major deliverables: (i) proposal for a Green Award for enterprises which produce based on sustainable and environment-friendly criteria; (ii) a study on the development of a technical and regulatory (legislative) framework to allow for more effective implementation of a green economy in the Eastern Caribbean; (iii) a joint energy policy formulation in the OECS, with regulated exchange of information and technology with neighboring territories such as the French and Dutch Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) and Outermost Regions (ORs) in the Caribbean.

For more information about the GGIF'12

Contact:

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Read: CTA Brussels Newsletter, no.330, 6 July 2012

http://brussels.cta.int/index.php?option=com_k2&id=6910:santa-lucia-to-host-2012-green-growth-investment-forum-&view=item&Itemid=54

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>