



# Agriculture in the News

10-16 July 2012

## Issues Affecting Caribbean Agriculture

PSC#: HQ/008/12

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1	Ginger
2	Citrus Greening
4	Mango
5	Livestock
7	Agro-Energy
8	Biotechnology
9	Food Security
11	Agricultural Development
12	Agri-Business Development
13	Upcoming Events

**50M facing hunger across Latin America and the Caribbean** by Quesi Isles, Demerara Waves, 12 July 2012-07-16

<http://www.demerarawaves.com/index.php/201207124181/Latest/50m-facing-hunger-across-latin-america-an-the-caribbean.html>

Regional experts are meeting in Georgetown to hash out plans to reverse malnutrition and starvation said to be affecting more than 50 million people across Latin America and the Caribbean.

The three-day Sixth Meeting of the Working Group of the "Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative" opened on Thursday under the auspices of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The initiative is a commitment made by the countries and organisations of the region, with support from the FAO, to create the conditions to permanently eradicate hunger by 2025.

**For more information see Page10**

*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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## About CARDI

### *Our Vision*

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

### *Our Mission*

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

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## Ginger

**Overwhelming response by farmers to Ginger project** by Douglas McIntosh, Jamaica Information Service, 13 July 2012 <http://www.jis.gov.jm/news/list/31219>

### Full Article

Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Roger Clarke, says there has been an overwhelming response by farmers to the Ministry's multi-million ginger project, currently being implemented across the island.

Speaking at the Jamaica Agricultural Society's (JAS) 117<sup>th</sup> annual general meeting, at the Denbigh showground in May Pen, Clarendon, on July 11, Mr. Clarke disclosed that the 150 acres of land, initially targeted for the planting of new ginger at a cost of over \$15 million, has been exceeded.

"So far, we have gone 221 acres, and everybody wants (to get involved), because the market is there. Farmers are bombarding the (Ministry's) Export Division, which is implementing the project, for planting materials. This is a good sign," the Minister said, while citing inputs from private sector interests, such as Salada Foods, that are assisting with the expansion.

The ginger project is half of a \$42 million Ministry initiative, also involving turmeric, which is aimed at enhancing outputs through the cultivation of upwards of 500 acres of the spices. Some 350 acres have been earmarked for the cultivation of turmeric at a cost of some \$38 million.

Meanwhile, Mr. Clarke disclosed that the Ministry is currently in discussion with brewery giants, Red Stripe, regarding the company's interest in procuring the equivalent of 1,500 acres of cassava. He informed that the modalities are being worked out by both sides, details of which are expected to be announced shortly.

The Minister also announced that consequent on discussions with local rice growers, they have committed to cultivating some 1,000 acres of the cereal, beginning in August. This is being done as part of efforts to reduce the quantities imported.

## Citrus Greening

**Opinion: How parasitoids can fight HLB-spreading insects** by Dr. Mark Hoddle, Fresh Fruit Portal 13 July 2012  
<http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2012/07/13/opinion-how-parasitoids-can-fight-hlb-spreading-insects/>

### Full Article

Asian citrus psyllid (ACP), is a small four millimeter long juice-sucking insect native to central and southeast Asia. ACP will feed and breed on most types of citrus such as lemons, limes, Navels, Valencias, grapefruit, and citrus relatives like sweet orange jasmine or mock orange (*Murraya paniculata*) and Indian curry (*Bergera koenigii*).

ACP has gained notoriety because of its ability to acquire and spread a non-culturable bacterium, *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus*, that is lethal to citrus; some infected varieties of citrus can die in about five to eight years after infection. The disease caused by this bacterium is known as Huanglongbing (HLB) which is Chinese for yellow dragon disease and refers to symptoms of irregular yellow mottling of leaves of infested tree or citrus greening because fruit don't ripen properly.

ACP and HLB, or a similar disease caused by a related bacterium, are now global pests of citrus with infestations occurring throughout Asia, parts of the Middle East, for example the Arabian Peninsula, Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America, Mexico, the southeast and southwestern U.S., Australia, and the smaller New Zealand citrus market, appears to be one of the last citrus growing regions to be free of this vector-disease combination.

### Mexican situation

ACP and HLB are widespread in Mexico with infestations reported from around 17 of Mexico's 23 citrus producing states (74%), and the disease is widespread in the state of Veracruz, the largest citrus producing state with 450,00 acres of citrus (about 48% of Mexican production). In the state of Colima, some estimates suggest that 40% of orchards are infected and growers are being advised to transition to alternative crops. This problem is only expected to worsen as producer, federal, and state government resources are limited in Mexico to combat ACP and HLB.

Even large growers who can afford pesticides and apply them regularly face an uphill battle with ACP dispersing from urban areas, small untreated groves, or abandoned properties into commercial areas. Research from Florida has demonstrated that abandoned citrus groves are significant sources of ACP and HLB that threaten surrounding commercial production areas and well coordinated area-wide management programs are needed if ACP and HLB are to be effectively managed.

### Californian situation

ACP has been present in California since 2008. There are two infestation zones, a small contained one near the California-Mexico border, for example, parts of San Diego and Imperial Counties, and a much larger and uncontrollable urban infestation whose epicenter is Los Angeles County from which ACP has spread into urban citrus in the neighboring San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. The leading edges of this large urban invasion in Los Angeles are being aggressively treated with pesticides by the California Department of Food and Agriculture in an attempt to stop ACP spreading into the highly important commercial production areas of the Ventura County, and the Central and Coachella Valleys.

This ACP control program has taken on an even greater sense of urgency following the first discovery of HLB in Los Angeles County in April 2012. One infected tree was found, and it has been uprooted and destroyed. All citrus within an 800 meter radius have been treated with pesticides (1,442 properties were surveyed for citrus and 878 were treated with pesticides, a 99.9% treatment success), and additional ACP and plant material has been collected and analyzed for HLB. So far no additional HLB infestations have been detected as a result of these surveys.

However, it is expected that another HLB detection will occur and it is only a matter of time now before this happens in California.

### **Biocontrol efforts**

An alternative approach to controlling ACP in urban areas of Los Angeles that are no longer under the spray program has been to employ natural enemies of ACP, in particular, host-specific parasitoids from the Punjab of Pakistan that attack the nymphs of ACP. Parasitoids attacking ACP have been collected from this region on five different occasions by the author and tested for safety in quarantine at the University of California, Riverside. Releases of more than 6,000 parasitoids have recently occurred at almost 40 different release sites in Los Angeles and it appears that from these initial efforts the parasitoid *Tamarixia radiata* may have established in about 20% of the release sites and in one instance, it may have already move about 100 meters on its own to nearby ACP infestations. While not a silver bullet solution, biocontrol may be the best tool available to California to reduce ACP populations in heavily infested urban areas which in turn has the potential to reduce migration pressure towards commercial production areas.

California is not the only region pursuing biocontrol of ACP with parasitoids that attack the nymphs. Some of the first biocontrol programs against ACP using *T. radiata* were started in Reunion Island, Taiwan and China.

Similarly, programs have been running in Florida since the 1990s. Interest in parasitoids, especially *T. radiata*, has risen in Mexico which, in the absence of large-scale pesticide application programs, has invested in mass production and releases of natural enemies to help small farmers combat this pest. Proactive biocontrol efforts are also underway in parts of Central America such as Costa Rica and South America, for example Brazil.

### **Future biosecurity risks**

It is unlikely that commercial citrus will go extinct because of ACP and HLB – many countries with endemic populations of these pests still have commercial citrus industries for example, Pakistan, India, and China. As the ACP-HLB problem continues to spread citrus industries around the world will adapt with the development of new management programs, which will use novel combinations of natural enemies, pesticides, nutritional programs, and new citrus varieties that are either tolerant or resistant to ACP and/or HLB. One thing to keep in mind is that invasive species are an ever present menace.

There are many pests and diseases of citrus that we know about, but there are also the unknowns, the wildcards, organisms that we don't know much about until they invade and cause problems. Invasive species issues are increasing at unprecedented rates and greater preparedness and proactive work, that meet identifiable problems head on before they arrive should be encouraged.

## Mango

**Dominican Republic finding a lucrative mango niche** by Freshfruitportal.com, 10 July 2012,  
<http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2012/07/10/dominican-republic-finding-a-lucrative-mango-niche/>

### Full Article

*With a harvest that coincides with Mexico, the Dominican Republic's mango industry decided early on that it wouldn't aim to be a market leader, however with a focus on differentiation it could get ahead. Since 2004 its exports have grown from US\$1 million to US\$7 million annually, shipping ethnic, gourmet (ready-to-eat air freight) and organic mangoes. At [www.freshfruitportal.com](http://www.freshfruitportal.com) we catch up with the country's Mango Cluster executive director Gisela Taveras, who is bullish growth can continue but recognizes more work needs to be done.*

Taveras has just returned from the Bayahibe Mango Festival, which took place last week on the Dominican Republic's southeast coast, where the industry coordinated with five hotels to offer degustations to tourists; with 132 different ethnic varieties, the campaign managers certainly weren't strapped for choice.

"It was a beautiful activity because people got to know our mangoes, and the idea is that in this sector we can develop locally, and then when the tourists go back to their respective countries they will demand our mangoes – they will know the taste, quality, and coloring," she says.

For Taveras the goal of furthering the country's mango industry, which shipped 7,000MT last year, requires a multi-faceted approach if it is to reach the 15% growth rate that is hoped for in the coming years.

"From Jun. 14-17 we had the recent ExpoMango fair, with more international visitors than in all the other years, and next year we expect many more because it will coincide with the fact the country was selected to undertake the 10th International Mango Symposium.

"Every time we get the opportunity we attend international fairs – a product that isn't promoted is not sold."

She says Europe accounts for 70% of the country's mango exports with the U.K. as its largest market for the ethnic product, while Canada and the U.S. are significant destinations too.

"We are also exporting to Japan and have been doing so since 2009 – the amount is not very significant as it's an export you can only do as air freight.

"By ship it takes 30 days to get to Japan and that's not possible for fresh fruit, so we send by air and that limits volumes. But we are working so that this amount increases and to find ships that can cut this route and therefore cut the distance, so we can send in larger quantities."

She adds the country was prohibited from exporting to Japan prior to 2009 due to "misinformation", which was resolved when Japanese officials were invited to the country and determined there were no phytosanitary problems.

"The same thing happened with the United States with prohibited exports to that market because we didn't have a hydrothermal treatment plant.

"So one of the tasks of the cluster was to install a hydrothermal treatment plant, and from the start of 2005 this market was open."

### Varieties

She says the country's mangoes are often yellow varieties, and while they are similar to Indian mangoes, the country's climate and the development of the fruit over time have meant that the product is different.

“The characteristics of our ethnic mangoes are that they reach a certain brix level (16 degrees brix at ripening), which is the percentage of sweetness the mango has, that is higher than the competition.

The Dominican Republic has around 4,000ha dedicated to a wide variety of mangoes, including native mangoes such as Banilejo, Yamaguí, Puntita, Pechito and Amarillo, as well as introduced varieties like Keitt, Kent, Palmer, Tommy Atkins, Madame Frances and Haden; the latter five mostly fall under the ready to eat air freight, or “gourmet”, category.

The cluster is pushing for greater practices of organic farming as well to capitalize on global demand and the fact it is healthy. Taveras says 10% of the country’s crop is dedicated to organic production.

### **A value-added future**

She says the cluster is also moving in the direction of more value-adding activities that will better harness the total crop each year.

“The industry today is working on industrialization, as there are mangoes that don’t qualify for export, nor for the local market, and we don’t want to waste these mangoes.

“That’s why we’re working on a program with the European Union to produce mango chips, dried mangoes, and also mango juices.

“We are also working on mango pulp which can be exported to be many countries, including in Europe, the U.S. and Japan; we want to develop this part of the market, to make the most of all the mangoes that are not consumed fresh.”

She concludes the industry can keep growing at 15%, and to support this the cluster will continue to strive to raise awareness of its product overseas.

“And that’s being conservative as we have more work to do on mangoes that are of quality and exportable.”

## **Livestock**

**Scientific assessments needed by a global livestock sector facing increasingly hard trade-offs** by Paul Karaimu, ILRI News 12 July 2012, International Livestock Research Institute <http://www.ilri.org/ilrinews/index.php/archives/9187>

### **Full Article**

*New technologies and innovation systems need to take into account, and allow poor people to manage effectively, the many and increasingly hard tradeoffs resulting from increasing global demand for livestock products (photo credit: ILRI/Stevie Mann).*

Scientists from the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and elsewhere say increases in income and urbanization in developing countries are increasing demand for nutrient-rich foods, particularly food from livestock. This demand is projected to more than double meat and milk consumption in sub-Saharan Africa and South and Southeast Asia from the turn of the century to 2050.

In a presentation made at a Farm Animal Integrated Research Conference in Washington DC in March 2012, Nancy Johnson, an ILRI agricultural economist with expertise in assessing the impacts of

agricultural interventions, warned that the growth opportunities for the world's poor livestock keepers offered by this rising demand for livestock products also pose 'threats that will require context-specific decisions' for effectively managing the livestock sector. 'Institutional and technological innovations will play critical roles in the sustainable growth of the sector and in successfully addressing some major challenges,' said Johnson.

Among those challenges, Johnson named the following:

- Better managing the risks from the many diseases livestock and livestock products transmit to people
- Better managing livestock so that they help conserve rather than harm land, water, biodiversity resources, and global climate
- Ensuring that livestock development empowers women
- Helping pastoral herders and other livestock keepers transition to non-agricultural livelihoods
- Stemming overconsumption of fatty red meat and other livestock foods in richer communities and countries, while increasing consumption among undernourished people.

Meeting these challenges, Johnson said, will require much more integrated cross-sectoral attention and work. More efficient livestock value chains and markets, for example, and greater access by the poor to those chains and markets, will be crucial in coming years to develop of smallholder livestock enterprises. But markets alone will not be sufficient to balance the tradeoffs. Smart policies support by efforts to raise knowledge and awareness will also be needed. Together, improvements in livestock livelihoods can provide pathways to better lives for hundreds of millions of livestock keepers now living in severe poverty and chronic hunger. With the appropriate interventions and support, the ILRI scientist said, we can also significantly improve the resilience of pastoral communities now living in the world's great drylands and facing greater climate threats due to climate change.

What will be key to the success or failure of livestock development projects, Johnson said, is whether we can come up with innovations and technologies that take into account—and allow poor people to manage effectively—the many and increasingly hard tradeoffs faced by the poor but with consequences for society and the planet. Should farmers use their crop residues for mulch on their croplands or for feed for their farm animals? Should households intensify livestock production to earn more income, even though health risks may increase in the short term? Should communities deforest an area for cattle grazing or attempt to improve common degraded pastureland? Should landowners put fences to keep out wild animals or keep their lands unfenced to protect diminishing wildlife populations? Should countries formalize marketing systems to increase production and gain access to new markets at risk of marginalizing poor women producers and sellers?

These are hard choices, Johnson emphasizes, without quick and easy answers. We're going to need new technologies, new innovation systems and new incentive structures, she says, to help developing countries and their many livestock keepers make the best decisions—decisions that wherever possible

serve several ‘goods’, from poverty reduction to better nutrition to environmental protection. What that will demand, Johnson concludes, is the very best scientific knowledge available.

Download the presentation, ‘[The production and consumption of livestock products in developing countries: Issues facing the world’s poor](#)’, by Nancy Johnson, Jimmy Smith, Mario Herrero, Shirley Tarawali, Susan MacMillan and Delia Grace.

## Agro-Energy

**Tongaat Hulett highlights income gains from electricity co-generation** by CTA Agritrade Website, 16 July 2012  
<http://agritrade.cta.int/en/Agriculture/Commodities/Sugar/Tonga-at-Hulett-CEO-highlights-income-gains-from-electricity-co-generation>

### Full Article

In a recent interview, Peter Staude, Chief Executive Officer of Tongaat Hulett, highlighted the potential revenue benefits for sugar cane growers of investing in electricity co-generation. He pointed out how in Zimbabwe cane farmers were being paid US\$65/tonne, compared to US\$45/tonne paid to South African cane farmers. In response to questioning, Mr Staude attributed the difference to the use of the sugar cane fibre in co-generation, saying that ‘once you get the proper value for the fibre in the cane ..., and you put in high-pressure boilers and turbo alternators, a typical sugar mill ... will take the same fibre and generate four times as much electricity as we do at the moment ..., and that gives everybody the possibility to pay more ... for the cane.’

The sale of co-generated electricity by Tongaat Hulett reflects a wider regional trend, with both Swaziland and Malawi now supplying electricity to their national grids. South Africa, however, is held to be lagging behind because of the absence of an appropriate regulatory framework for electricity co-generation. According to a press report, Mr Staude took the view that ‘the slow pace of consolidating the policy framework for electricity co-generation as well as the biofuels sector was frustrating the industry’ and was ‘stunting a potentially huge new market that could see farmers, both commercial and emerging ones, planting more crops for the production of biofuels’.

## Biotechnology

**British GM crop scientists win \$10 grant from Gates** by BBC News, 15 July 2012

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-18845282>

### Full Article

It is one of the largest single investments into GM in the UK and will be used to cultivate corn, wheat and rice that need little or no fertiliser.

It comes at a time when bio-tech researchers are trying to allay public fears over genetic modification.

The work at the John Innes Centre in Norwich is hoped to benefit African farmers who cannot afford fertiliser. Agricultural fertiliser is important for crop production across the globe.

But the many of the poorest farmers cannot afford fertiliser - and it is responsible for large greenhouse gas emissions.

The John Innes Centre is trying to engineer cereal crops that could get nitrogen from the air - as peas and beans do - rather than needing chemical ammonia spread on fields.

If successful, it is hoped the project could revolutionise agriculture and, in particular, help struggling maize farmers in sub-Saharan Africa - something the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is keen to do.

### 'Major problems'

Professor Giles Oldroyd from the John Innes Centre, who is leading the team, said the project was vital for poorer producers and could have a "huge impact" on global agriculture.

"We believe if we can get nitrogen fixing cereals we can deliver much higher yields to farmers in Africa and allow them to grow enough food for themselves."

However, opponents of GM crops say results will not be achieved for decades at best, and global food shortages could be addressed now through improving distribution and cutting waste.

Pete Riley, campaign director of the group GM Freeze, said there was a realisation by many farmers across the world that "GM is failing to deliver".

"If you look in America, yields haven't increased by any significant amount and often go down," he said.

He added: "Now we're seeing real, major problems for farmers in terms of weeds that are resistant to the herbicides which GM crops have been modified to tolerate."

## Food Security

**Founding of German initiative for Agribusiness and Food Security in Emerging and Developing Countries** by Rural 21: international journal for rural development, July 2012 <http://www.rural21.com/english/from-our-partners/detail/article/founding-of-german-initiative-for-agribusiness-and-food-security-in-emerging-and-developing-countries/>

### Full Article

German private sector and Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) launch joint initiative against hunger and poverty in rural regions.

Early in June 2012, representatives of the private sector, politics and Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) met at Germany's Federal Development Ministry (BMZ) to sign the founding document for the German Initiative for Agribusiness and Food Security in Emerging and Developing Countries (GIAF). With the aim of making a sustainable contribution to food security and supporting economic development in emerging and developing countries, German enterprises and federations from the agribusiness and food sector have joined forces with public partners under the patronage of Federal Minister Dirk Niebel. The Initiative focuses on long-term, cross-company projects. It gives the members the opportunity to coordinate activities via the network, introduce their respective expertise and make a sustainable contribution to food security and the development of the local agricultural and food sector.

In his opening address, State Secretary Hans-Jürgen Beerfeltz stressed the importance of cooperating with the private sector. "Growth in agriculture is two to three times as effective in combating poverty as growth in other sectors.

Actually, it is incomprehensible that this has been ignored for decades. Therefore, we need entrepreneurial engagement in the agricultural sector."

The Initiative presently has around 35 members. They include businesses, business foundations, federations and development banks, such as Bayer CropScience, BASF, Syngenta, Mars, METRO, K+S, the Sugar Associations, GlobalGAP, Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft (DEG), Verband Deutscher Maschinen und Anlagenbau (VDMA – German Engineering Association), the Confederation of German Industry (BDI) as well as GIZ. In order to improve the implementation of the Initiative's activities and goals, the GIAF has been provided with a coordinating office that is located at GIZ and funded by the BMZ. Activities comprise promoting political and subject-related dialogue, identifying intersections of topical issues among the various partners, organising and coordinating joint events and communicating private sector experience and best practice in developing countries as well as organising joint surveys.

Editor's Note: For more information see

**German Initiative for Agribusiness and Food Security in Emerging and Developing Economies (GIAF) Factsheet**

<http://www.giz.de/Themen/de/SID-79E97333-0D9D6A8D/dokumente/giz2012-en-factsheet-GIAF.pdf>

**GIZ** <http://www.giz.de/Themen/de/36058.htm>

### **Full Article**

Regional experts are meeting in Georgetown to hash out plans to reverse malnutrition and starvation said to be affecting more than 50 million people across Latin America and the Caribbean.

The three-day Sixth Meeting of the Working Group of the “Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative opened on Thursday under the auspices of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

The initiative is a commitment made by the countries and organisations of the region, with support from the FAO, to create the conditions to permanently eradicate hunger by 2025.

“The truth is that while the world has made remarkable progress in reducing poverty and starvation pockets of poverty and starvation still exist around the world. In our own region there are about 52.5 million people who face serious food security problems,” Guyana's Agriculture Minister and chairman of the proceedings Dr. Leslie Ramsammy stated.

He added that Latin America and the Caribbean possessed the capacity to eliminate poverty and starvation but there were various drivers contributing to the perpetuation of food insecurity. Growing populations, changing consumption patterns, growing demand for meats and increasing water and land scarcity he listed as some of those factors.

The now ever-present boogieman climate change also made the minister’s list as well as inequitable trade regimes and the lack of funding to drive agriculture research. According to him, the meeting must reaffirm the commitment to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, commit to eliminate the pockets of poverty and hunger by 2025 and ensure that with a global population reaching nine billion by 2050, the region could produce food for its people and meet global demand.

“We will have to do so with the utilisation of crop production methods that must sustain the environment, preserve natural resources, avoid crisis-like food price jumps similar to those experienced in 2008, while maintaining good financial returns for farmers.

Sustainable agriculture intensification will not be achieved unless we have a considerable increase of publicly funded agriculture research through a cross-disciplinary science in food security,” Dr. Ramsammy posited.

He added that unless investment in agriculture is maintained at a reasonable level they will not achieve the goals they have for the sector.

Delivering the feature address Guyana’s President Donald Ramotar, who has lead responsibility for agriculture within the CARICOM bloc, said food security must become a regional imperative.

“I urge the continued dismantling of obstacles, especially the non-tariff barriers to the trade in agricultural produce so that we can devote more of our resources towards feeding our people and in the process reducing our exposure to external shocks in food prices,” Ramotar said.

However, the Guyanese leader noted that there could be no one model for all the countries and they would each have to fashion the poverty reduction strategies suited to their realities.

The meeting will examine the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy and Action Plan for the Caribbean; identify new challenges to the Initiative, member country strategies and break up into sub-groups to consider new approaches towards achieving the goal of ending hunger in the hemisphere.

Editor's Note

**Sixth Meeting of the Working Group of the “Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative**

<http://www.rlc.fao.org/en/initiative/sixth-meeting-of-the-2025-working-group/>

**Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative website:** <http://www.rlc.fao.org/en/initiative/home/>

## Agricultural Development

**WINFRESH the way forward** by Rosemarie Harris, Government of St. Lucia Website, 13 July 2012  
<http://www.stlucia.gov.lc/press-release/winfresh-way-forward>

### Full Article

Thursday, July 12, 2012 – A meeting to examine the current situation with WINFRESH and the involvement of the company in the diversification of the agricultural sector and agricultural processing and marketing, brought together Prime Ministers and Ministers for Agriculture of the OECS shareholder Governments of WINFRESH.

The meeting discussed, among other things, agriculture in the Member States, highlighting the sustainability of the banana industry, acceleration of the agricultural diversification, agro-processing and marketing and distribution of agricultural products.

The shareholder Governments underscored the importance of WINFRESH's direct role in supporting agriculture diversification and agro-processing initiatives in shareholding countries, and as far as practicable, in other OECS Member States. They agreed that WINFRESH's focus would be broadened away from commodity trading, to one that was more proactive in farm level production support as well as agro-products and markets development and expansion.

WINFRESH emphasized that there was still a strong market for Windward Islands bananas but that the bananas had to meet the quality and volume requirements consistently.

The company expressed concerns that unless the problems that continue to prevent the banana industry from meeting those requirements were addressed urgently, the industry ran the risk of permanent displacement from the market.

The fundamental problems were – low productivity, poor and inconsistent quality, and erratic volumes, as well as the impact of diseases such as the Black Sigatoka infestation that had been experienced. All of these factors needed to be addressed vigorously. It was agreed that WINFRESH had a very vital part to play in this process.

In light of the direction now pointed for WINFRESH, it was agreed that the company would, in the next six weeks, submit to the governments its detailed business plans for its future development and operations, and that of its country based subsidiaries that are involved in agro-processing, outlining areas where government support might be needed either directly or in the mobilisation of resources from development partners and financial institutions.

The meeting agreed that the Ministries of Agriculture and WINFRESH would establish a framework that will allow them to work closely together to plan and implement programmes covering all aspects of agricultural development in the sub-region.

## Agri-Business Development

See **agriculture as a business** by the Barbados Advocate, 16 July 2012

<http://www.barbadosadvocate.com/newsitem.asp?more=local&NewsID=25907>

### Full Article

The participants of the recently launched IICA Youth Farm Programme, were told to by Deputy Chief Agricultural Officer, Charleston Lucas to “see agriculture as a business”.

The programme, which is an initiative of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), was made possible by the collaborative efforts of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture and the three participating schools, St. Lucy Secondary, St. George Secondary and the Grantley Adams Secondary School.

As noted by Carol Thomas, acting IICA Representative, “The main objectives of the programme are to build the capacity in agriculture among the youth by teaching them and exposing them to various aspects of farming and to encourage entrepreneurship and agro-business ventures among the youth.”

The programme was also lauded by Charleston Lucas, Deputy Chief Agricultural Officer, due to the in-depth training objectives. He explained that he was “indeed happy” that the programme has surpassed other normal training programmes by including certification as well agro-business management.

“The programme, I’m told, seeks to provide practical training in agriculture and in the process help to demonstrate the many opportunities that lie within the sector. The other aspect that I think is very important is agro-business. Management is a very core part of the training programme, because we want you, the youth, to see agriculture as a business,” he remarked.

Henderson Wiltshire, Educational Officer, Technical and Vocational Education in the Ministry of Education, speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Education, also commended the new programme and the young participants, explaining that farming and agriculture were still very viable options in Barbados, especially with the island’s high food import bill.

“Now farming is still a viable, important aspect in Barbados. It is even more critical at this juncture with our high import bill, so it is important that it is seen by all, not just the students, but all of us as important in helping our country overcome these harsh economical times and through this project and by extension, technical and vocational training education, we can over-ride or come out of this economic situation successfully,” he stated.  
(AC)

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