

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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Roots and Tubers

Rooting for Nigeria by International Potato Center, September 2012 <http://cipotato.org/press-room/blogs/rooting-for-nigeria>

Full Article

The Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB) has graciously played host to the international conference on "The roots (and tubers) of development and climate change," a theme that proves to be fitting for the country in which it takes place. Nigeria is the world's leading producer of yam and cassava and sweetpotato looks set for take off there also.

It's the rainy season here in Nigeria and the water is falling loud and clear in Abeokuta, Ogun state, hometown of famous Nigerians including Nobel prize winner Wole Soyinka. Nonetheless, the participants of the 16th international symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops (ISTRC) will leave their verdant surroundings with more fond memories than any tropical rain could wash out.

Awards!

With several thousands participants, the conference was a great opportunity for CIP scientists to meet with partners and present the results of their research. They definitely got more than they could have expected: not only did they engage in discussions with many of their peers - CIP presented on five topics at breakout sessions - but they also received a great deal of recognition: Dr. Jan Low from CIP office in Nairobi was honored with a special award for her work on orange-fleshed sweetpotato, and Dr. Dina Gutierrez from CIP-Lima received a poster award for her work with Dr. Martine Zakandjanou-Tachin from the University of Benin, and other contributors, on "Determining the Pan-African sweetpotato virome: understanding virus diversity, distribution and evolution and their impacts on sweetpotato production in Africa". Well done, ladies!

Showcasing RTB

ISTRC was also the opportunity for CGIAR's Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas to present its work and strategy, a process that included a priority-setting exercise conducted via crop surveys distributed to the participants. An RTB informational booth showcased the different crops and disseminated promotional materials to English- and French-speaking visitors.

The taste of cassava

Cassava sells well and quickly in Nigeria, where 'gari' and 'fufu' are very popular staples. An excursion to Thai Farm allowed the participants to visit a new plant with state-of-the-art machinery for the production of cassava flour. Their challenge? Get the farmers to provide enough of the highly-demanded cassava to the factory before quality deteriorates just 48 hours after harvest. A visit was also organized to IITA Headquarters at Ibadan, in the neighboring Oyo state, which included a tour of the genebank, the yam breeding plots and the tasting of products made from... cassava flour, of course!

The conference dinner even included a lively show with musicians and dancers who presented pieces about the importance of roots and tubers in everyday life. Enough to leave the country with colorful and tasty memories. *Odabo, Nigeria!*

Full Article

Roots, tubers and bananas (RTB) have the potential to improve livelihoods for 200 million poor farmers who rely on these nutritious, resilient, and versatile crops, according to scientists gathered today at the International Society for Tropical Root Crops (ISTRC) summit.

“The potential for these untapped crops is vast,” said Graham Thiele, head of the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas. “These underappreciated, yet nutritious, crops are ideal for developing countries, since they are grown cheaply and locally, which means they are also relatively insulated from global price fluctuations.”

The triennial ISTRC symposium in Abeokuta offers a unique platform for interaction among scientists from different backgrounds across the world who are working on tropical root and tuber crops --such as sweet potatoes, cassava, potatoes, Andean roots and tubers, yams and aroids-- to share experiences, foster collaboration and develop strategies to contribute to sustainable development.

Today, the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas is embarking upon a priority-setting process that involves multi-stakeholder participation to ensure that its research is grounded in the realities of the end-users --i.e. 200 million poor farmers.

“Two-way communication is fundamental. There is always a risk that researchers aren’t aware of the circumstances and needs of the end-users. The end result is detached research. Therefore, good communication means having a single, transparent system and making sure that research is moving in the right direction,” added Thiele.

Roots, tubers and bananas are among the 10 most consumed food crops in the world. They provide cheap sources of energy and key nutrients and contribute up to 60 percent of daily calorie intakes. RTBs offer a great potential for higher yields and increased system productivity, inasmuch as these diverse crops can grow in marginal areas, in rotation, or as inter-cropped with grains or other crops. This means more food, more efficient systems, and more diversity, in order to reduce risks of food shortages and nutritional shortfalls.

Important scientific commonalities link these crops. They are genetically complex and clonally propagated (or grown from plant cuttings). They also share many similarities --and challenges-- in crop management, seed systems, and breeding strategies. The Research Program is currently gathering inputs across three continents to ensure the delivery of relevant research in order to produce positive impacts.

“At present, roots, tubers, and bananas are not well-positioned among decision-makers, who do not have a full appreciation of their true importance,” notes Thiele. “But as the word gets out, I am sure these crops will undoubtedly gain ground.”

RTB, the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas, is a joint initiative among four of its Centers to address RTB challenges globally and efficiently. It is led by the International Potato Center (CIP) in collaboration with Bioversity International, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). To enhance its research, reach, and impacts, the program also works directly with extensive networks of partners and stakeholders.

Key program areas:

- Conservation/access to genetic resources

- Breeding more robust, high-yielding varieties
- Managing pests and diseases
- Making low-cost, high-quality planting material available to farmers
- Developing tools for more productive, ecologically robust cropping systems
- Improving post-harvest technologies, value chains, and market opportunities
- Partnerships for better impacts

Cassava

Research on Cassava for the production of animal feed by Douglas McIntosh, Jamaica Information Service, 29 September 2012 <http://www.jis.gov.jm/news/list/31887>

Full Article

Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Roger Clarke, says the Ministry is currently conducting research on cassava, aimed at using the tuber as a partial substitute in the production of animal feeds.

Speaking at the Jamaica Pig Farmers Association (JPFA) annual general meeting at the Golf View Hotel in Mandeville, on September 27, Mr. Clarke informed that scientists at the Ministry's Bodles Research Station in St. Catherine have been experimenting with cassava, by using it to substitute for approximately 30 per cent of imported corn that is incorporated in animal feed production.

He indicated that the endeavour has yielded positive results in trials conducted so far, pointing out that the animals' development, when given the experimental feed, is "no different" compared to the composition comprising straight corn. In fact, he stressed that "the animals even perform a little better." He also pointed to other animal feed inputs being pursued.

"We are moving also into the cultivation of sorghum (plant used for grain or fodder). We have to crank our research capabilities to deal with what we have in Jamaica, because if we can produce some of the feeds, we can cut down on the cost," the Minister said.

Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Roger Clarke (right), presents a commemorative plaque to Jamaica Pig Farmers Association (JPFA) First Vice President for the 2012/13 administrative year, Delroy Manya, for 10 years of dedicated service to the organisation, during its annual general meeting at the Golf View Hotel, Mandeville, Manchester, on September 27. Mr. Clarke was the guest speaker.

Mr. Clarke said the Ministry is cognizant of the challenges facing Jamaica's livestock industry, particularly the pig sub-sector, and is committed to doing all it can to ensure its sustainability, particularly in the face of competition from imports. He cited the need for significant investments in the sub-sector, in order to position it competitively, particularly on the global market.

Noting that some stakeholders have committed to investing as much as \$100 million on infrastructure development and other inputs, Mr. Clarke underscored that "if we want to really get into the export market, we must have investments in state-of-the-art facilities."

"The fact of the matter is that if we are to deal (effectively) with Jamaica's food security, then we have to

do some unusual things. We are all in this thing together, and the Government has a commitment and the Ministry of Agriculture has a commitment to make sure that the industry survives," the Minister emphasised.

Value Added

Jamaica co-hosts meeting of Processed Fruits and Vegetables Industry by Judith Hunter, Jamaica Information Service, 28 September 2012 <http://www.jis.gov.jm/news/list/31875>

Full Article

Stakeholders in the international processed food industry will converge in Jamaica next month for the 26th session of the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV).

The meeting, scheduled for the Hilton Rose Hall Hotel, Montego Bay, from October 15-19, is being co-hosted by the United States of America (USA). This is the first time that a small developing country like Jamaica has successfully negotiated with the US to engage in such a partnership.

"The opportunity to co-host this meeting with the USA will facilitate increased participation by local officials and other interest groups in the food standards development process," said Facilitator of the National Codex Committee (NCC), Kadian Atkinson.

The CCPFV is a sub-committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), which was created in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop food standards, guidelines and related texts, such as codes of practice, under a joint FAO/ (World Health Organization (WHO) Food Standards Programme.

Miss Atkinson told JIS News that Codex standards are recognised by the World Trade Organization (WTO) "as the international reference point for food-related matters".

She said that the meeting will also sensitise stakeholders, to include those at the political level, on the importance of the CAC and Jamaica's participation in the body. Currently, the CAC comprises 184 member countries, one member organisation – the European Union, and 208 observers. Jamaica's contact point for the CAC is the Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ).

The NCC was established in 2004 to act as a consultative body to the Government of Jamaica on Codex-related issues and to facilitate national responses to Codex draft standards and proposals that may affect the country.

"The effectiveness of the NCC is heavily dependent on the participation of all the stakeholders of the food industry in Jamaica," Miss Atkinson said.

In 2010, the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality endorsed Jamaica's initiative to coordinate Codex matters on behalf of Caribbean member states.

The NCC, which includes representatives from the public and private sectors, consumer groups, academia and other relevant independent persons, operates under the auspices of the Ministries of Health; Agriculture and Fisheries; and Industry, Investment and Commerce.

The chairmanship of the committee is alternated among these ministries every two years, with the Ministry of

Industry, now at the chair.

Among matters to be discussed at the CCPFV meeting is the proposed draft Codex Standards for certain canned fruits and certain quick frozen vegetables. Also to be examined are: sampling plans, including metrological provisions for controlling minimum drained weight of canned fruits and vegetables; and food additive provisions for processed fruits and vegetables.

Water

Rainwater harvesting in Trinidad by Global Water Partnership, 24 September 2012 <http://www.gwp.org/en/gwp-in-action/Caribbean/News-and-Activities-GWP-Caribbean/Rainwater-Harvesting-in-Trinidad/>

Full Article

GWP Caribbean together with its partner the Water Resources Agency (WRA) has established a Rainwater Harvesting (RWH) system within the Fondes Amandes community in St. Ann's Trinidad. The RWH system is patterned after a system based on best practices. The installation of the system is part of GWP Caribbean's contribution to the project *Water for Life: The Trinidad and Tobago Initiative*.

What's distinctive about the system is that it has a strong focus on water quality and sanitation as it includes a first-flush diverter. The first-flush diverter is part of the downpipe configured to remove the initial wash off the roof so it does not enter the water tank.

The Fondes Amandes Community Re-Forestation Project (FACRP), a partner organisation of the GWP Caribbean located in the St. Ann's area is the chosen site for RWH system. The FACRP is a community based agro-forestry project which was started in 1982 by a group of farmers living in the Fondes Amandes Watershed who set out to halt the degradation of the watershed by practicing agro-forestry activities.

The building process to establish the RWH system got fully underway within the first half of the year, and some members of the Fondes Amandes community were included in the installation process. They were exposed to all the necessary material needed to build the system; how to determine a suitable location for installation; as well as how to install the tank and water level indicator; among other areas.

The *Water for Life: The Trinidad and Tobago Initiative* was launched in Trinidad in 2009 with the aim to deliver safe drinking water systems to school children and rural communities. The overall project is funded by a three-year renewable grant for USD \$300,000 from the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) Blue Water Project.

Youth and Agriculture

Agriculture ... not just for farmers by the Official Website for the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 28 September 2012 http://www.ab.gov.ag/article_details.php?id=3511&category=38

Full Article

In light of the upcoming Caribbean Week of Agriculture being held in October, Communications Coordinator within the Ministry of Agriculture Ms. Wendy Tittle is encouraging more involvement in the essential sector.

Tittle says the commonly held view that agriculture referred to farmers wielding their pitchforks no longer hold true for what agriculture is today in the twenty first century.

The theme for this year's C.W.A. is "Celebrating Youth and Gender in Caribbean Agriculture- Each Endeavoring all Achieving" and it further highlights the fact that certain traditional views of farming/agriculture should shift as many women also play a vibrant part in the agricultural industry.

The Ministry of Agriculture's Communication Coordinator says the primary goal for Antigua and Barbuda is to achieve food security. According to Tittle, the vision of the Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Hilson Baptiste is to have the country attain food sustainability and security.

Caribbean Week of Agriculture is being hosted in Antigua and Barbuda for the first time and runs from October 12th to 20th, 2012 at the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium.

Onions

Upgrade for onions in hopes for increased production by The Barbados Advocate, 25 September 2012
<http://www.barbadosadvocate.com/newsitem.asp?more=local&NewsID=27020>

Full Article

A NEW prototype will be brought to the onion industry in the near future that could help to double onion production in this country.

According to James Paul, Chief Executive Officer of the Barbados Agricultural Society, the onion drying prototype to be put to use next year has the potential to significantly improve onion production.

"We have developed an onion drying plant prototype which we want to put into the field for use next year during the upcoming onion harvest. So what we would like to hope is that ...we will have increased amount of onions – more than what we had last year; and what we would like to see is the use of onion drying in order to increase the number of onions which are harvested on an annual basis," Paul stated.

He explained that currently, only one hundred acres of onions are harvested per year, which accounts for 10 per cent of the onions consumed in Barbados annually. Paul said that he would like to see the acreage doubled, but maintained that that can be a reality only if the sector has good post-harvest handling techniques, hence the upcoming implementation of the onion dryer.

"Our immediate aim is to double production to 20 per cent, and I think that is modest. So take into consideration that the normal acreage is around a hundred acres, we are looking for at least two hundred acres of onions being planted.... The point is that we [have to] maximise production during the time of the year when the environment favours it," Paul said.

The CEO further suggested that the Ministry of Agriculture, through agronomists, work with the farmers to facilitate the increase in production, which will in turn reduce foreign exchange spending and create employment.

Food Security

Agriculture Ministry targets key crops to counter rising world prices by Douglas McIntosh, Jamaica Information Service, 26 September 2012 <http://www.jis.gov.jm/news/list/31845>

Full Article

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is moving to further enhance production in nine key crops and sectors, as part of short term efforts to counter the challenges associated with rising global food prices that could have serious implications for Jamaica.

Portfolio Minister, Hon. **Roger Clarke**, says the crops and sectors identified include: Irish potato, onion, yam, honey, small ruminants, hot pepper, ginger, turmeric, pineapple, and aquaculture.

Speaking at a Food and Nutrition Security Policy Validation Workshop, jointly staged by the Ministry and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), at the Terra Nova Hotel, on September 26, Mr. Clarke said growth and development of these crops and sectors will be underpinned by the Ministry's US\$8 million investment to establish eight agro-parks across the island.

These will be established in St. Thomas, St. Catherine, Clarendon, Manchester, St. Elizabeth, and Trelawny. They will be outfitted with the requisite infrastructure to ensure sustainable production, and enhanced post-harvest handling activities incorporating drainage, storage and packing house facilities.

Noting that Jamaica recorded a US\$936 million **food import bill** in 2011, Mr. Clarke said the administration remains "concerned" about the nation's food security, "having regard to our high dependence on imports."

"We (government) are even more concerned, given the sharp increases in the price of corn resulting from the drought affecting the United States Midwest. This has renewed calls for countries, such as ours, to move apace with our own food security strategies," the Minister emphasised.

"We know that the challenges are structural, and as such, cannot be solved through short term measures. Instead, solutions must be created through policy shifts, legislations and long term programmes, geared at putting more lands into production, and improving agricultural production and productivity," he contended.

Pivotal to this effort, Mr. Clarke said, is the Food and Nutrition Security Policy, which will be the government's "roadmap" that will address, "once and for all," most of the challenges associated with food security.

"The policy will provide the overarching framework for all government interventions in this regard (and will focus on) the four pillars of food security, namely food availability, access to food, food utilisation, and stability of food supply," he noted.

Development of the policy was a collaborative undertaking involving the Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries; Health; Industry, Investment and Commerce; Education; and Labour and Social Security; and the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ).

The workshop brought together these and other key interests, for final deliberations ahead of next month's launch of the document by Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller.

"For Jamaica, food security goes beyond the immediate demands of nutrition. It is a strategic position that we are required to take in order to secure the livelihood of our people and a position in the marketplace," Mr. Clarke underscored.

In this regard, the Minister urged stakeholders to collaborate in ensuring wide-scale adaptation of, and support for the policy, while reaffirming the Government's commitment to provide the requisite support that will position Jamaica to become self-sufficient.

No cheap food anytime soon by Wesley Gibbings, The Trinidad and Tobago Guardian. Business Guardian 4 October 2012, pp. BG5 <http://www.guardian.co.tt/business-guardian/2012-10-04/no-cheap-food-anytime-soon>

Full Article

Food price inflation might have slowed in August following a protracted period of troublesome spikes, but close followers of domestic and international market conditions are not placing any bets on witnessing a "cheap food" scenario in T&T in the near future, despite the budget announcement of a partial valued added tax (VAT) reprieve. Some experts point to critical external factors, such as the ability to maintain reasonably-priced supplies and the claim that in the absence of advanced production intensive technologies, the country simply does not possess sufficient land space per capita to feed the population on its own. The budget's temporary withdrawal of VAT will ease the impact of rising prices, but does not address the issues of increased production and enhanced food security.

Led in part by relatively stable weather conditions in food-basket areas, increases in food prices, monitored monthly by the Central Statistical Office (CSO), declined to 15.4 per cent (year-on-year) in August following an average growth rate of 20 per cent in the preceding six months. This, however, has inspired no heavy cheering in the food and sector. In the view of respected University of the West Indies (UWI) agricultural scientist, Antonio De Gannes, "Food prices can and will increase ... no two ways about it." Food Production Minister Devant Maharaj is himself hesitant to bring out the whistles and confetti. He argues that dramatic changes are needed to bring greater balance to domestic food production, which brings with it higher prices and imports, which tend to generate access to cheaper supplies. "The situation we face here is a real dichotomy where, for various reasons, importing (food) is cheaper," he told the Business Guardian.

Even so, some significant areas of domestic production require substantial non-indigenous feedstock and other inputs. For example, prices for imported corn and grain inputs have risen dramatically over recent months, even as this country's corn imports as registered by the United States Department of Agriculture, grew by almost 21 per cent in 2011. The ensuing impact on livestock production costs and prices for products making use of corn and grain as a feedstock remains one of the most serious threats to food price stability over coming months. This has led to an aggressive project by the Food Production Ministry to place at least another 1,000 acres of land under corn production. A similar effort is to be made to begin cultivation of high-protein duckweed as a livestock feed substitute. In some countries, the crop, which is produced in wetland areas, is used to feed both poultry and pigs. "We can't insulate ourselves completely," said Maharaj, "but we can create a buffer against what is happening on the world market."

The global outlook is not itself entirely promising. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Food Price Index, which monitors price changes for a basket of foods including cereals, oilseeds, dairy, meat and sugar, averaged 213 points in July, up six per cent from 201 points in June. It signalled the highest food price rating since the international food price crisis of 2007/2008. The increase was largely attributed to surges in the prices for grain and sugar. The Index remained the same in August. A close eye is all the while being kept on what is recognised as a major culprit; the growing impact of climate change and accompanying extreme weather

conditions. For example, the world's biggest producer of corn, the United States, remains in the throes of one of the most widespread droughts in half a century. Uneven weather patterns in T&T over recent years have also led to wild fluctuations in domestic food price inflation which, in turn, has been a major contributor to overall headline inflation. In August, core inflation, which excludes food statistics, stood at 2.7 per cent while headline inflation was registered at 7.9 per cent; when measured year-on-year.

De Gannes said the trend will continue. "Prices will increase, without a doubt," he said. "There is very little we can do except to try to leverage against new technologies and new crop varieties." He also cited an FAO study which showed that except for Guyana, Belize and St Kitts & Nevis, no other English-speaking Caribbean territory had sufficient land space to feed its population. In some countries experience sea level rise as a result of climate change, saline-resistant varieties are being developed to counter the onset of saltwater intrusion into aquifers. The advent of new challenges posed by pests, is also a situation in which De Gannes believes the development of new plant varieties will be required to ensure the viability of the sector. Executive director of the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), Dr Arlington Chesney, himself prefers use of the term "affordable food" rather than what he describes as the politically-fashionable use of "cheap food." "In the future, we are talking more and more about making affordable food available to Caribbean populations," he told the Business Guardian.

For the moment, the outlook is for higher prices requiring new, more aggressive interventions. Finance Minister Larry Howai announced in the 2013 fiscal package that the National Agriculture and Marketing Development Corporation (Namdevco) is establishing a Commodity Stabilisation Fund to help "stabilise both the supply and the price of identified produce on the market while, at the same time, strengthening the agro-processing sector." The Ministry of Food Production is also distributing standard leases for small and large farms occupying 4,111 acres on Caroni lands and 100 acres each on state lands at Tucker Valley at Chaguaramas, while agricultural leases for two-acre plots are being accelerated to ensure that more than 5,000 farmers are in possession of lands for cultivation within the next two years. The Government has also revived a longstanding offer of land from Guyana, via a "Food Security Facility," to make up for what is an acknowledged shortfall in the landmass needed to meet this country's food production needs.

Maize

WEMA prepares for commercial release of new varieties. posted by Barbora Nemcova CIMMYT blog, 02 Oct 2012 <http://blog.cimmyt.org/>

Twenty-nine drought-tolerant, early maturing, disease-resistant hybrids developed by the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) project are getting ready to be released, a huge success for WEMA and all its stakeholders. "The 29 hybrids advanced to national performance trials is a record release by an entity in Africa in all times. These high performing hybrids yield 20–35 % more grain under moderate drought compared to 2008 commercially available hybrids," said Stephen Mugo, CIMMYT principal scientist and co-chair of the WEMA Product Development Team. "Let us seize the technological opportunities that are there to boost productivity and people's welfare," he added. The white hybrids resistant to stem borers, maize weevils, and large grain borer, and to diseases such as grey leaf spot, northern leaf blight, and maize streak virus will complement other drought tolerant hybrids developed and released by the Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa (DTMA) initiative. These first WEMA hybrids were developed from CIMMYT's drought tolerant germplasm accelerated using the doubled haploid technology from the Monsanto platform.

Moderate drought is a major production constraint for small-scale farmers in Africa who rely on rainfed agriculture, and this rapid progress is thus great news for African farmers. WEMA stakeholders from Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania, and South Africa met in Nairobi, Kenya, during 10-13 September 2012 for the

WEMA Project Second Regional Stakeholders and Seed Company Meetings organized by CIMMYT, Monsanto, and the African Agriculture Technology Foundation (AATF) to discuss the project. Denis Kyetere, AATF executive director and executive advisory board member, explained that WEMA is a public-private partnership with the goal of developing and deploying royalty-free African drought-tolerant and insect-pest resistant climate change ready maize. Wilson Songa, Kenya's Agriculture Secretary and the chief guest at the meetings, noted that Africa's agriculture must be competitive and must ensure that productivity is meeting the continent's needs. This can be achieved by advancing the cause of science and technology in the midst of climate change, an approach taken by WEMA and appreciated by Ephraim Mukisira, WEMA executive advisory board member and the director of Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI). "We in the agricultural sector must strive to cut the hunger and improve the welfare of thousands who rely on agriculture. We would like to see the expansion of maize production area but, more importantly, maize productivity. We must embrace science and technology to achieve these goals," said Mukisira.

According to Sylvester Oikeh, WEMA project manager, the first conventionally bred hybrid seeds will be available in 2014 to farmers in Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa, and in 2015 to farmers in Mozambique and Tanzania. Reiterating Monsanto's excitement and commitment to WEMA, Kinyua MMBijjewe, Monsanto's Africa Corporate Affairs manager, warned that Africa cannot afford to rely on maize imports: "Africa should strive to be self-reliant in maize production. Those areas suitable for maize production should be made more robust through the adoption of appropriate technologies."

The stakeholders later visited WEMA trials at KARIKiboko. They were impressed by the performance of the varieties on display in the demonstration plots, as many have outperformed some of the best local hybrid checks on the market. After seeing the trial fields, seed companies from Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa expressed their readiness to take up the promising varieties for commercialization, noting that it is a great business opportunity. According to Norah Olemba, Africa Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum executive director, rapid release of the varieties to the farmers is also critical for improving productivity, food security, and livelihoods, considering that 75 % of agricultural land in sub-Saharan Africa is drought prone.

Honorable Casimiro Pedro Sacadura Huate, Mozambican Member of Parliament and deputy chairman of the Commission on Agriculture, Rural Development, Economic Architecture and Services, assured the project implementers of the government's support. His counterpart from Uganda, Honorable Binta Lukumu, member of the Parliamentary Standards Committee on Agriculture, promised to promote the project in Uganda and urged the project implementers to bring on board other members of parliament in WEMA countries to help them understand and champion the course of the project and argue for favorable decisions in their respective countries.

Government moves to increase local Corn Production by Latonya Linton, Jamaica Information Service, 19 September 2012 <http://www.jis.gov.jm/news/list/31786>

Full Article

The Government of Jamaica, in response to rising corn prices, is collaborating with a number of local private sector entities, notably Jamaica Broilers Limited, to expand corn production.

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Roger Clarke, made the disclosure on September 18 in the House of Representatives.

He informed that, already, the company has established 100 acres of corn, and plans to expand to 300 acres shortly.

The Government, in partnership with Jamaica Broilers, will also be cultivating some 200 acres of corn at Amity Hall, St. Catherine, while another entity in Prospect, Hanover, will be putting in 400 acres.

"As soon as the technology of growing the corn, using best practices, is perfected, the Government will move to mobilise farmers to grow corn to be purchased by (Jamaica Broilers). The Government will be providing technical support as well as support with land clearing and preparation in the first instance," Minister Clarke stated.

He appealed to farmers to "step up their game" and for more private entities to join the Government in corn production, as the food crisis provides an opportunity to create wealth.

"The Government is committed to providing all the support necessary in the drive to increase our food self sufficiency," the Agriculture Minister said.

Since 2009, the food price index has increased from 157 to 213, an increase of 36 per cent. This increase was more significant for cereals on which the country is heavily dependent, both as a primary food and as raw material for manufacturing animal feeds, which moved from 174 to 260, an increase of almost 50 per cent.

Agricultural Development

Ministry of Food Production hosts food courses by Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 4 October 2012

<http://www.news.gov.tt/index.php?news=11787>

Full Article

The Ministry of Food Production will host several free food courses across the country during this month.

At the Centeno Farmers Training Centre there will be courses on cocoa production, composting making, wine making, how to make pepper sauce, sweet potato production and marketing of fresh fruits and vegetables on the local market.

The courses will run from October 1 to November 1 and persons interested in attending can call the facility to register for any or all of the courses and receive more information. There is also information on the Ministry's website.

At the Ministry's Point Fortin location there will only be one course for October, tomato, pepper and melongene production on October 11 and 12. From October 9 to 12 a course on banana and plantain production will be available at the Princes Town Food Production office and one course on ornamental production at the Ministry's Caroni office in Chase Village.

There will also be two courses offered at the Ministry's Penal office, one on pineapple production on October 18 and 19 as well as one on papaya production on October 25 and 26.

The Ministry's limit for each course is 30 persons and interested persons can register up until 8:30 am on the day of the course at the venue but after 8:45 am registered participants are not guaranteed a place in the course.

UWI lecturers launch book on Sustainable Food Production by Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 4 October 2012 <http://www.news.gov.tt/index.php?news=11784>

Full Article

The University of the West Indies (UWI) St. Augustine Campus, hosted a book launch for Sustainable Food Production Practices in the Caribbean, edited by Dr. Wayne G. Ganpat and Dr. Wendy-Ann P. Isaac, on Tuesday 2nd October, 2012, at the Campus Principal's Office.

Chaired by Professor Dyer Narinesingh, former Dean of the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, this event aimed to give an overview of the book and highlight its relevance to food security in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean region.

Dr. Carlisle Pemberton, Dean of the Faculty of Food and Agriculture, gave the opening remarks. Professor Clement Sankat, UWI St. Augustine Campus Principal, followed with the welcome remarks where he pointed out the timeliness of the launch since it coincides with the introduction of the Campus' new Faculty of Food and Agriculture and the newly renamed Ministry of Food Production. He also emphasised the relevance and scope of the book as it speaks to issues faced by all Caribbean countries and is written in language that can be easily read and understood by everyone involved in Food Production, from academics, to students of the field, to the farmers themselves.

Following the feature address by Senator the Honourable Devant Maharaj, Minister at the Ministry of Food Production, Dr. Wayne Ganpat, Lecturer in Agricultural Extension at the Faculty of Food and Agriculture, stepped up to tell the audience about the book which focuses on the practicalities of sustainable agriculture.

Also speaking at the event were Mr. Terrence Haywood, President, National Foodcrop Farmers Association (NFFA) and Dr. Wendy-Ann P. Isaac, Lecturer in Crop Science at the Faculty of Food and Agriculture, who delivered the closing remarks.

Trinidad and Tobago

Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Review of the Economy 2012: Stimulating Growth, Generating Prosperity <http://www.finance.gov.tt/content/Review-of-the-Economy-2012.pdf>

Excerpt Agriculture pp.21-26

pp. 21-22 Overview

The agricultural sector is expected to contract by 4.9% in calendar 2012, a further weakening from its relatively flat performance of -0.1% in calendar 2011. Accounting for the contraction in 2012 is a decline of 13.0% in the Distilleries sub-sector, which follows a smaller decline of 5.0% one year earlier. A contraction of 19.6% is also projected in export agriculture, following its 13.3% growth in 2011. In contrast, the domestic agriculture sub-sector, which represents almost two-thirds of all agricultural output, is projected to remain somewhat flat with 0.3% growth in 2012, down from 3.5% in 2011. This flat performance is insufficient to offset the drop in output from Distilleries in 2012. The agricultural sector's share of real GDP is projected to remain stable for the third consecutive year at 0.7% in 2012. During the period October 2011 to March 2012 the domestic agriculture sector experienced mixed fortunes. Greater efficiencies in some areas of the sector led to an increase in production of eddoes, yams, dasheen, patchoi, melongene, cabbage, pumpkin, lettuce, grapefruit, dairy, beef, live goats sold, live sheep, and paddy.

However, weather, pests and disease negatively affected crop production, and competition from imports, labour shortages and rising costs of inputs continued to constrain the sector. These adverse conditions affected the production of cassava, sweet potatoes, sorrel, cucumbers, cauliflower, tomatoes, dasheen bush, sweet pepper, hot pepper, water melon, bodi, ochro, oranges, copra, poultry, pork, live pigs, goat meat, mutton and honey. The performance of the export agriculture subsector was also mixed as increased cocoa production was achieved in the face of weaker export markets.

pp. 22 Domestic Agriculture: Root Crops

During the period October 2011 to March 2012 cassava and sweet potato suffered from excessive rainfall. Cassava production decreased by 36.1% to 1,154,400 kgs, from 1,807,200 kgs in the October 2010 to March 2011 period. In addition, sweet potato production declined by 10.9%, from 491,500 kgs to 437,900 kgs. The production of eddoes soared by 155.6%, from 656,700 kgs in the 2010/2011 period to 1,678,600 kgs in the current period. Yam production rose by 66.3% to 66,700 kgs in 2012, from 40,100 kgs in 2011, while dasheen production expanded by 52.6% from 1,305,600 kgs in 2011 to 1,992,200 kgs in 2012.

pp. 22 Vegetable Production

Heavy rains and flooding in the first quarter of fiscal 2012 lead to lower yields for some vegetables during that period. An unusually high level of precipitation during the second quarter dry season however favoured some commodities and reduced prices in that quarter. Crops registering overall increases in production during the full six-month period included: patchoi (222.2%), melongene (135.3%), cabbage (21.7%), pumpkin (44.8%) and lettuce (46.2%). In contrast, there were overall declines in the production of sorrel (89.0%), cucumber (42.2%), cauliflower (38.4%), tomatoes (50.0%), dasheen bush (35.1%), sweet pepper (33.8%), hot peppers (8.4%), water melon (7.1%), bodi (7.0%), and ochro (10.0%).

pp. 23 Livestock and Dairy Product: Small Ruminants

Goat meat production decreased by 23.1%, from 27,205 kgs in 2011 to 20,909 kgs in 2012. A switch to sheep and cow rearing for meat and milk production, as well as the limited availability of a quality breeding stock of goats caused the slide in production. The number of goats sold however increased by 3.1% from 1,339 heads in 2011 to 1,380 heads in 2012.

Mutton production declined by 13.4%, from 150,032 kgs in 2011 to 129,860 kgs in 2012. The decrease in mutton production in 2012 is due to increased input costs and praedial larceny. During 2012, the number of sheep sold locally increased by 97.7% from 4,737 heads to 9,363 heads.

Agriculture touted as a viable youth employer by SKNvibes, 2 October, 2012

<http://www.sknvibes.com/news/newsdetails.cfm/64080>

Full Article

Mrs. Florita Kentish, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Sub-Regional Coordinator for the Caribbean is promoting agriculture as a profession in which young people can make a profitable living.

This was revealed during a St. Kitts and Nevis Information Service exclusive, while Mrs. Kentish was in the Federation chiefly to present 2011 World Food Day Essay Competition Awards to three Washington Archibald High School Students. She emphasized that demonstrating to young people the possibilities in agriculture is critical.

“I think the organization needs to ensure that young people in all walks of life in the region recognize that agriculture is indeed important, valuable,” Mrs. Kentish emphasized. “They can work in every sphere of it, either directly in production, value-added careers in agriculture. They can work in all facets of agriculture and make very decent livelihoods.”

The FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator explained that she is based in Bridgetown, Barbados and her Sub-Regional Office comprises Technical Officers, programme staff and administrative staff. She further outlined the other country offices that she oversees.

“The Sub-Regional Office, also has as part of its strength, supporting FAO offices in the Caribbean,” Mrs. Kentish explained. “For instance, we have some other six countries that have their own FAO representatives, one in Guyana, one in Trinidad and Tobago – which services Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname, one in Jamaica – which services Jamaica, Bahamas and Belize, one in Cuba which services Cuba and one in the Dominican Republic and one in Haiti.”

A preview was also given of upcoming activities.

“It is planned that, between September and December of this year, the Food and Agriculture Organisation will again partner with the government using sectoral linkages because you must use health, education, agriculture, trade and others to now look at developing really concrete food and nutrition security policies and action plans,” the FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator revealed.

Mrs. Kentish who is of Kittitian heritage, candidly explained that it was gratifying to see women such as herself in leadership positions in the region. She stressed that the objective was not to take the place of males but to be regarded on equal footing. The full interview will be aired on an upcoming SKNIS programme.

National Budgets – Agriculture: Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago

Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Budget Statement 2013: Stimulating Growth, Generating Prosperity Presented by Minister of Finance and the Economy, Larry Howai, October 1, 2012

<http://www.finance.gov.tt/content/Budget-Statement-2013.pdf>

Excerpts

pp.18 Agriculture

Mr Speaker, the seventh area of focus is agriculture. We propose to reduce our food import bill by 50.0 per cent or just over \$2.0 billion per year by 2015. Achieving food security is our top priority. We all recall the global food price shocks in the period 2006–2010 when domestic inflation reached an annual average level of 9.1 per cent compared with an annual average of 4.8 per cent in the period 2001–2005. The increased levels of inflation stemming from our increasingly imported food requirements have had a harmful impact on our citizens, particularly our most vulnerable, as they sought to manage the business of their everyday lives. Consequently it is proposed on a temporary basis that Value Added Tax would be removed from all food items except luxury items and alcoholic beverages.

Mr Speaker, another global price shock is on the horizon as drought conditions are devastating commodity crops, in particular corn and maize, in the United States. These higher global prices are already generating price increases in Trinidad and Tobago in particular in the poultry industry. We shall be proactive. The Ministry of Food Production will take the following steps to address the situation:

1. the National Agriculture and Marketing Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) is establishing a Commodity Stabilisation Fund which will initiate measures to stabilise both the supply and the price of identified produce on the market while at the same time strengthening the agro-processing sector;
2. the Ministry of Food Production through a competitive process, is now actively distributing to the national farming community, standard leases for small and large farms. These farms will occupy 4,111 acres on Caroni lands and 100 acres each on state lands at Tucker Valley. A condition of the leases will be agreed cultivation as quickly as possible;
3. the Ministry of Food Production is continuing to distribute standard agricultural leases for two acre-sized plots to the former employees of Caroni. We have decided to expedite the lease issuance exercise by utilising private attorneys to assist in the preparation of the leases. We expect that within the next two years more than 5,000 such leases will be distributed; and
4. the Ministry of Food Production, with agricultural land becoming less and less available in Trinidad and Tobago, is moving to establish a Food Security Facility with the Government of Guyana. The Facility would commit both Governments to expanding agricultural production in Guyana through the establishment of commercial relationships for funding the establishment of several large agricultural estates in Guyana.

Mr Speaker, I wish to emphasise that the agricultural sector enjoys a range of incentives under the existing legislation. I would urge all farmers and other stakeholders to take advantage of these incentives.

pp.31 Budget: Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure

The allocations to the various Ministries would achieve this objective.

- Education and Training - \$9,149.1 million;
- Health - \$5,108.7 million;
- National Security - \$5,503.7 million;
- Public Utilities - \$3,783.1 million;
- Housing - \$3,503.7 million;
- Works and Infrastructure - \$2,412.9 million;
- Transport - \$1,682.8 million;
- And Agriculture - \$1,338.3 million.

Devant sees cut in food import bill. Trinidad and Tobago Guardian, 2 Oct 2012

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/budget-2013/2012-10-02/devant-sees-cut-food-import-bill>

Food Production Minister Devant Maharaj is satisfied with the Government's fiscal allocation to his ministry because he believes it will go a long way to help reduce the food import bill. Maharaj, in an e-mail, said he was confident the resources provided in the budget would help boost the agriculture sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). "Food security remains a top priority of the Ministry of Food Production as well as the People's Partnership Government. We are committed to reducing the food import bill by 50 per cent as well as increasing agriculture's contribution to GDP by 2015," he said. He also said Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar had mandated an inter-ministerial and inter-agency committee to look into defining which commodities the VAT removal policy would cover. "There remain a tremendous number of items that can be made zero-rated," he noted, "and there also exist situations of inclusion of a few items within categories but the exclusion of many, example the juice category (orange juice and grapefruit juice to the exclusion of scores of other juice flavours). This also exists with breakfast cereals, sausages, hams, bacon and canned foods."

He urged farmers to take advantage of opportunities given to them. He added: "This will all be further complemented by a food security facility with Guyana as we establish commercial relationships and agricultural estates with a Caricom partner which possesses an abundance of physical land space. "All registered farmers once again are urged to take full advantage of the Agricultural Incentives Programme." When the T&T Guardian

contacted Maharaj via telephone about the cost of the VAT removal project he said he had to review his files before he could answer. He said he would reveal the cost by tomorrow. Maharaj, however, said consumers could expect to benefit from a 15 per cent price reduction until the final list of VAT-removed items was prepared. These are: Cereals (only cornflakes are zero-rated), pancake mixes, pancake syrups, jams, tea, creamers, flavoured milk drinks, drink mixes, juices (only citrus juices are zero-rated), snacks, cakes, custard powder, canned vegetables, pasta sauces, soups/soup mixes, corned mutton, luncheon meats, canned salmon, vienna sausages, batter/breadcrumbs, pholourie mix, flavoured rice, cake mixes/frosting, essences, canned fruits, fruit cocktail, soya chunks/mixed, soya drinks, instant oatmeal, sweeteners, mayonnaise, barbecue sauce, pepper sauce, seasonings, coconut milk powder, massala, salad dressing, olives/capers, relish/dill/pickles, hot chow, french fries, frozen potato, burger patties, sausages/bacon, processed meats, hams/sliced, smoked chicken, smoked turkey, hot dogs, bologna, frozen foods, ice cream, yogurts and desserts.

Upcoming Events

Caribbean Week of Agriculture

Date: 14- 20 October 2012

Venue: Antigua and Barbuda

Website: <http://www.caribbeanweekofagriculture.ag/>

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

Agriculture in the News 10-25 September 2012, compiled by CARDI 17

Date: 29 October – 1 November 2012

Venue: Punta del Este, Uruguay

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