

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

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

www.cardi.org

Banana

Weak Demand, Banana crop hold back Dominica's economic recovery by Caribbean Journal, 7 September 2012
<http://www.caribjournal.com/2012/09/07/imf-weak-demand-banana-crop-hold-back-dominicas-economic-recovery/>

Full Article

While Dominica's authorities' public investment has helped the country withstand a challenging economic environment, weak demand and the outbreak of the Black Sigatoka banana disease will "continue to hold back" a recovery, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The IMF recently concluded a mission to Dominica led by Aliona Cebotari for the 2012 Article IV consultation on economic developments and macroeconomic policies in the country.

The fund said growth would remain "subdued" this year, gradually increasing to around 2 percent over the medium term.

"Against this background, the discussion between the authorities and the IMF staff focused on policies needed to maintain fiscal sustainability without derailing the economic recovery and on ways to safeguard the stability of the financial system," Cebotari said.

Dominica has little room to maneuver on the fiscal front, however, with low growth putting "increasing strains" on the fiscal position, with "limited policy space to support activity."

"Without monetary or fiscal policy room to support the recovery, the main policy focus should turn to engaging the private sector through structural reforms that would boost competitiveness and productivity, and improve the country's long-term growth prospects," she said. "These reforms could entail measures that will minimize the costs of doing business, increase access to finance by setting up a credit information bureau and facilitating collateral recovery, and improve the quality of public expenditure."

The banana disease mentioned is Black Sigatoka, which has been a growing threat to the Caribbean's banana crop.

Dominica is one of several countries working to develop a regional plan to fight the disease, which is a fungus that targets banana leaves.

It can cut banana crop production by 50 percent for a given tree.

Black Sigatoka

The Caribbean's challenge to control Black Sigatoka by Freshfruitportal.com, 10 September 2012

<http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2012/09/10/opinion-the-caribbeans-challenge-to-control-black-sigatoka/>

Full Article

By Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (Trinidad and Tobago office) technological innovation specialist Humberto Gómez

The importance of bananas and plantains is based on two main factors: firstly, they are a primordial food source and secondly, they are an export product from developing countries to meet the demand of developed countries (Europe 39%, U.S. 26%, Japan 7%, Russia 5%, Canada 3%). They are also consumer goods that generate employment and critical incomes for the social stability of producing countries. The tropical nations of South America supply themselves and countries with temperate weather in the region, such as Chile or Argentina.

Some countries in the Caribbean, the Pacific and Africa (recent former European colonies) mainly direct their exports to Europe, where they enjoy favorable access conditions. American countries (Mexico, Central America, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) and Asia (above all the Philippines) supply the United States, Europe, China, Japan, Russia, the Middle East and the former Soviet republics, according to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) statistics.

Although the Caribbean represents just 2% of global trade, the income generated from exports is significant, reaching 22% in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 19.7% in Saint Lucia, 18.1% in Dominica and 6.8% in the Dominican Republic. The sudden export losses caused by Black Sigatoka could become disastrous for these countries.

For all these reasons, the situation unleashed on this area of the world by the disease Black Sigatoka that just affects these crops is an emergency, and as such a challenge with many aspects to address. This is where IICA, the FAO and other cooperating international organizations are acting decisively to find solutions.

Black Sigatoka is caused by a fungus that attacks the majority of banana and plantain varieties. The disease destroys the photosynthetic capacity of the leaves, advancing quickly and preventing the accumulation of reserves, devastating new leaves as they are formed. The weight of bunches can be reduced by up to 57% and it spoils the fruit through premature ripening.

In the Antilles, bananas and plantains are grown on small plots. Because of insularity, agricultural inputs and salaries are more costly compared to other regions. This combination of factors makes Black Sigatoka a more complex challenge. Yield losses lead to an unfortunate reaction in the chain: job losses that are difficult to replace due to the size of the countries, a fall in fiscal revenues, and eventually a shortage for the popular diet that has to be replaced by imports that were unnecessary before. This in addition to the fact the food import cost per capita in the Caribbean is one of the highest in the world.

Honduras was the first American country to detect Sigatoka, in 1972, and from there it expanded to all growing areas. In the Antilles, it was reported in Cuba and Jamaica in the 90s, and in the rest of the Caribbean from the start of 2003. Currently, the disease covers almost all of the Caribbean, and in the American hemisphere from Mexico to the southern Brazilian coast on the frontier with northern Argentina.

Thanks to the efforts of breeding, varieties have been developed with good tolerance, providing food security for growing countries. However, these varieties don't meet the demands of export markets.

Initially, the control of Sigatoka with fungicides yielded positive results, but the pathogen developed resistance, obliging new fungicides to be drawn upon, which also lost efficacy. This demanded the development of control strategies based on a logic of coexistence with the disease as eradication was not possible.

These new measures are more efficient and consist of controlling soil humidity well (irrigation and drainage), providing optimal nutrition to plantations, pruning injured leaves, applying fungicides in accordance with climatic conditions, and utilizing different types of fungicides in rotation. In the case of Costa Rica, under conditions favorable for the disease (high humidity and temperature all year), it is estimated the control of Sigatoka costs US\$210 per hectare each year.

The Caribbean requires these types of controls, but before that it is necessary to raise the capacity of growers to be able to apply them, and that implies additional cost and time.

The FAO ordered the inspection of several countries, an analysis of their conditions and recommendations based on the findings. For its part, IICA was in charge of virtual seminars for countries in the Americas where experts from EARTH University, FAO and IICA instructed growers about control methods and the current state of Black Sigatoka.

The goal to reach is optimizing the capacity response of these countries, attend to food security, increase training for integrated disease management, in addition to other ongoing initiatives where countries have committed their efforts. All of this is in order not to give up the battle that they are not willing to lose.

The following challenge in the fight with Black Sigatoka is in locating the timely necessary economic assistance to introduce tolerant germplasm to growers, and to be able to transfer and validate technology for the integrated control of the disease. In this way, the production of bananas and plantains will continue, generating food, employment and incomes that are essential for social and economic stability in the Caribbean.

Climate Change

CARICOM countries agree to join forces in renewable energy push by The Jamaica Gleaner, 9 September 2012
<http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20120909/news/news5.html>

Full Article

CARICOM-member countries have agreed to work together to ensure adequate support for the region's renewable energy push.

The commitment came out of a meeting held last Friday at the conclusion of a two-day renewable energy summit in the Republic of Malta, organised by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

State minister in the ministry of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining, Julian Robinson, who was Jamaica's representative at the summit, called the early-morning meeting of CARICOM member states in attendance, to examine how the region could interact with entities like IRENA to source assistance, grants, and other financial instruments, "to facilitate joined-up projects rather than compete head on for instruments from the same global financial pie".

Robinson pointed out, many of the smaller countries lose out to the larger and better resourced ones when trying to source financial assistance.

According to Robinson, arising from the meeting, the eight CARICOM countries represented agreed in principle to work together to complete a renewable energy assessment within the region.

He said the members also pledged to "examine the possibilities of harmonising regulations and legislative framework for renewables, which will allow all investors to invest within the region in complement, not competition".

They have also agreed to carry out work with regulators on renewable energy initiatives.

The group also resolved to increase the CARICOM presence in the IRENA. Only two countries, Antigua and Barbuda, and Grenada, are currently members.

The eight CARICOM countries represented at the Malta summit were Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Barbados, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Dominica.

ICTs and Agriculture

Government turns to Facebook to promote agriculture week by Theresa Gordon, Observer Media Group, 6 September 2012 <http://www.antiguaobserver.com/?p=80563>

Full Article

St. John's Antigua- Government is utilising social media to attract public interest as it prepares to host Caribbean Agriculture Week (CWA) for the first time.

Since the official launch of the 11th annual event a few weeks ago, the Ministry of Agriculture has hit the ground running to ensure that the twin island state makes the best of this year's hosting.

Ministry spokeswoman Wendy Tittle said officials hoped to secure the involvement of a wide cross section of people in and out of the field of agriculture.

They have launched the CWA's Facebook page which will be used, along with its website, to promote the prestigious event.

"Caribbean Week of Agriculture is not just for farmers, it's for everybody and we are trying to make sure that (all) Antiguan and Barbudans are a part of it and, to ensure that, we have to get into all the different media to communicate at each level," Tittle told OBSERVER Media.

She said, since the launch of the page, the site has been inundated with responses and requests from eager citizens. "Within 10 to 20 minutes there were well over 30 friends added to the page. So far, the link is being sent out and we are anticipating more response," Tittle said.

Between October 14 and 20, stakeholders in agriculture will converge at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium. The gathering will bring together experts who will be analysing the region's most pressing issues affecting the sector. They include climate change, mitigation of crop loss under drought conditions or excessive rain, pest control, pesticide use and myriad others.

Participants will get the opportunity to network with people across the region.

Tittle continued, "I must say each committee is working really hard. We have different committees that are dealing with various aspects of the Caribbean Week of Agriculture."

Her committee is also in the process of conducting registration for those wishing to participate in the Caribbean Week of Agriculture 2012 Trade Show and Exhibition.

Sub-committee chair for the show Dalma Hill said the cut-off period was set for September 15 to facilitate the needs of the exhibitors.

"When you are doing this type of trade show you have to be mindful that you are dealing with about four or five types of business that are different and would have to be placed in different areas," Hill said.

The registration fee is US \$100 and forms can be collected at the Ministry of Agriculture's headquarters on Independence Drive or the Central Marketing Corporation at West Bus Station. All fees must be paid at the accounts department in the ministry headquarters.

Caribbean Week of Agriculture will be held under the theme, "*Celebrating youth and gender in Caribbean agriculture: each endeavouring all achieving.*"

Biodiversity

Bringing conservation and agriculture together by Bioversity International, 10 September 2012

<http://www.bioversityinternational.org/index.php?id=6650>

Full Article

Emile Frison, Director General, Bioversity International, is currently attending the [IUCN World Conservation Congress](#) in Korea where he took part in: ['From Competition to Collaboration between Agriculture and Conservation'](#). Here he shares his thoughts about why it is so important for agriculture and conservation agendas to come together:

"For some time, agriculture and conservation have operated in separate worlds with separate agendas. Agriculture has been seeking ways to increase production to feed a growing population, while conservation has been in a race to save more land for preservation purposes.

At the same time, our world is reaching a tipping point – with an expected 9 billion people in the world by 2050 and climate change already having effects with major droughts and floods. We need to collaborate and find ways to prevent catastrophe and also insure our futures and those of generations to come.

What does this collaboration look like? For farmers in some of the world's poorest areas, it includes adding more diversity on farms to diversify production and improve the resilience of food production systems, while at the same time increase pollination and maintain healthy soils. It means policymakers need to advocate for an ecological approach to farming and protecting smallholder farmers. It means farms are seen as parts of diverse mosaic landscapes including corridors that link natural ecosystems and allow wildlife to prosper at the same time as agriculture. It means approaching agriculture not for the short term, but for a sustainable future.

Bioversity International is working with partners to conduct more research and provide critical decisionmaking information in this area. This research will result in decisionmaking tools for policymakers, land managers, conservationists, and farmers – giving them more options in a world running out of time to meet production and conservation goals. Examples include [EcoAgriculture Partners' Landscapes for People, Food and Nature](#) initiative, the [Natural Capital Project](#), CGIAR's [Water, Land and Ecosystems research program](#), and of course this week's workshops at IUCN.

Biodiversity is a significant factor in all of these examples, because it is in an excellent position to contribute to both agriculture and conservation. Farming systems have to transform, while conservation efforts need to ramp up to halt the everyday loss of biodiversity, including in agricultural landscapes and not just in protected areas.

Genebanks make up an important part of the efforts to conserve plant genetic diversity, but the world's farms have to play a critical role in this effort through a dynamic form of conservation. Smallholder farmers in particular –

many of whom are women – are the custodians and users of biodiversity. The choices they make in the varieties they plant, grow, harvest and sell directly also affect the diversity in our diets, our supermarkets and on our tables.

This approach is already under way, but needs more support. Research to provide healthy, resilient, sustainable ecosystem services is needed now. These services involve the entire interplay of social, cultural, ecological and financial dimensions. Interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation is vital. Become our partner in this effort.

Food Security

Joint statement from FAO, IFAD and WFP on international food prices by José Graziano da Silva, Kanayo F. Nwanze and Ertharin Cousin, FAO/IFAD/WFP, 4 September 2012

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/155472/icode/>

Full Article

Following is a joint statement on international food prices from the three Rome-based UN Agencies, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP):

Tackling the root causes of high food prices and hunger

The current situation in world food markets, characterized by sharp increases in maize, wheat and soybean prices, has raised fears of a repeat of the 2007-2008 world food crisis. But swift, coordinated international action can stop that from happening. We need to act urgently to make sure that these price shocks do not turn into a catastrophe hurting tens of millions over the coming months.

Two interconnected problems must be tackled: the immediate issue of some high food prices, which can impact heavily on food import-dependent countries and on the poorest people; and the long-term issue of how we produce, trade and consume food in an age of increasing population, demand and climate change.

In responding to those challenges, we are better placed today than five years ago. We have developed new policies and new instruments, like the United Nations High-Level Task Force on Global Food Security and AMIS, the G20's Agricultural Markets Information System, which improves transparency in global markets. We also have the AMIS-related Rapid Response Forum, set up to facilitate coordinated policy responses by the major world producers and traders of key cereals and soybeans in the event of market upheavals.

We have learned that not all are affected in the same way - the urban and rural poor and people in food import-dependent countries are most vulnerable to international commodity price increases, when these are transmitted to local markets, because they spend the largest proportions of their incomes on food.

We have also learned that smallholder farmers, many of whom are also poor and food insecure, can be enabled to benefit from higher food prices and become part of the solution by reducing price spikes and improving overall food security.

We have thus adopted a twin-track approach which supports long-term investments in agriculture, notably smallholder agriculture, while ensuring that safety-nets are in place to help poor food consumers and producers avoid hunger, asset losses and poverty traps in the short run.

Many countries have social protection systems including safety nets - such as assistance for smallholder farmers, nutritional support to mothers and children, and school meals - to ensure that their poorest citizens have enough to

eat; yet, these need to be expanded significantly in poorer countries. Safety nets that are affordable, predictable and transparent are an absolute must if we are to safeguard against recurring price shocks and crises.

Small-scale food producers also need to be better equipped to raise their productivity, increase their access to markets and reduce their exposure to risk. And, of course, people need decent jobs and incomes so that they can afford the food they need and escape from poverty.

In responding to high food prices, the things we must avoid doing are just as important as the things we should do. In particular, countries must avoid panic buying and refrain from imposing export restrictions which, while temporarily helping some consumers at home, are generally inefficient and make life difficult for everyone else.

Above all, however, we must understand that high food prices are a symptom, and not the disease. So while the international community must take early action to prevent excessive price increases, it should also move to act on the root causes behind such surges.

There have been three international food price spikes in the last five years. Weather has been among the drivers of each. Droughts in some part of the world have impaired global grain production virtually every other year since 2007. Elsewhere, major floods have also caused severe damage to crops. Increased diversion of food stock for non-food purposes and increased financial speculation are among the various drivers of increased price levels and volatility.

Until we find the way to shock-proof and climate-proof our food system, the danger will remain. In the short term, this has costs, not only for those directly impacted, but also for the international community at large. For instance, the World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that every 10 per cent increase in the price of its food basket means it has to find an extra \$200 million a year for food assistance.

We are vulnerable because even in a good year, global grain production is barely sufficient to meet growing demands for food, feed and fuel - this, in a world where there are 80 million extra mouths to be fed every year. We are at risk because only a handful of nations are large producers of staple food commodities, and when they are affected, so is everyone else.

The challenge - and the opportunity - is both to reduce and to spread that risk. And the most obvious way is to promote sustainable food production in poor, food-importing countries, where there is often huge potential to improve production. That would make more food available in local markets and provide jobs and income, especially in rural areas where 70 per cent of the world's poor live. We should also address the fact that, globally, one third of food produced is wasted or lost to spoilage, damage and other causes.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme are helping poor people to eat today while building their resilience and capacity to feed themselves tomorrow. But more needs to be done.

We need to invest much more in agriculture and social protection, including programmes that help poor people to access food that has become unaffordable in their local markets.

Lastly, we also need to review and adjust where applicable policies currently in place that encourage alternative uses of grains. For example, adjusting biofuel mandates when global markets come under pressure and food supplies are endangered has been recommended by a group of international organizations including FAO, IFAD, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the UN Conference on Trade and Development, WFP, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. That recommendation, made to the 2011 G20 summit in Paris, still stands today.

In moving to prevent a possible deterioration of the situation, we need to remain vigilant and prepare for the worst in the short run, while working on sustainable solutions for the long haul. Not to do so would inevitably mean that the world's poorest and most vulnerable pay the highest price. Getting this right will help us respond to the "Zero Hunger" challenge set by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of eradicating hunger from the globe.

**The authors are respectively the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme.*

Water

Caribbean voices at the 2012 GWP consulting partners meeting by GWP-Caribbean, 5 September 2012
<http://www.gwp.org/en/GWP-Caribbean/GWP-C-IN-ACTION/News-and-Activities/Practitioners-in-the-Agriculture-Sector-in-Barbados-to-be-Trained-in-Water-Use-Efficiency/Caribbean-Voices-at-the-2012-GWP-Consulting-Partners-Meeting--/>

Full Article

Each year, the Global Water Partnership (GWP) holds its Consulting Partners (CP) Meeting, where it brings together all its Regional Water Partnerships (RWPs) and partners from more than 160 countries. The Meeting offers a consultative approach in which Partners recommend actions to be taken that are fundamental to the operation of the GWP network.

The 2012 CP Meeting was held in Stockholm, Sweden on August 26th, 2012 under the theme “*Water Security as a Catalyst for Climate-Resilient Development.*” Throughout the 2012 Meeting, short interviews were conducted with partner representatives from across the globe, who were asked about major water related issues affecting their country and/or region.

For more information see links to interviews done on two members of the Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ9h7IEaYp4&list=PLABC80D3CCEF49029&index=1&feature=plpp_video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xIV0jyzTcM&list=PLABC80D3CCEF49029&index=4&feature=plpp_video

Upcoming Events

Third Caribbean Sustainable Energy Forum (CSEF) to be held in Saint Kitts and Nevis during 13-14 September 2012.
<http://www.csef3.org/>

Theme: Advancing Energy Integration and Energy Access through Renewable Energy (RE) and Energy Efficiency (EE) in CARICOM

Programme includes session: Bio-energy Integration in CARICOM

September 2012

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

Date: 23 – 28 September 2012,

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

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

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

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September 2012

XI International Conference on Goats

Date: 24-27 September 2012

Venue: Canary Islands

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

October 2012

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)

Date: 29 October – 1 November 2012

Venue: Punta del Este, Uruguay

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