
Ten farmers from four parishes across the island have benefited from contracts valued at $3.4 million to supply hot peppers to Grace Agro Processors. They hail from the parishes of Clarendon, St. Mary, St. Elizabeth and St. Catherine and form the most recent batch of farmers to profit from the ongoing initiative by GraceKennedy for the supply of the commodity for its Hounslow Pepper Mash facility.

For more information see page 3

AGRICULTURE IN THE NEWS is a monthly 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.
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
Crops – Pests and Diseases


Full Article

Farmers showed up at the Ministry of Agriculture's Plant Clinic, The Glebe, St. George, today with their ‘sick’, diseased and pest-ridden crops hoping for "miracles". It was the second clinic held by the Ministry's National Agricultural Health and Food Control Agency this week. The first took place yesterday at the South Eastern Farmer's Co-op, Six Roads, St. Philip. Both clinics ran from 9:00 a.m. until noon.

Plant Health Specialist with the agency, Bret Taylor, said the clinic at Six Roads was a success even though it got off to a slow start.

"...But, then the farmers started to come out. We had farmers who said they had problems with their sweet potatoes, [and] problems with their squash. Householders came with problems afflicting their ornamentals. Right now in Barbados ornamentals such as Desert Roses are big business and householders don't like to know that something is wrong. So, we had people coming in with their ornamental plants. The response was quite good.

"Up to the time we left - just after [noon] - we still had people attending the clinic. Some of the common problems were mostly [those] associated with this dry period of the year when we had lots of scale insects and from those we had Sooty Mould or what Bajans commonly refer to as ‘blight' on the plants. So, those were some of the issues we were dealing with yesterday," Mr. Taylor disclosed.

He said the trainee plant doctors at the clinic at The Glebe, which was set up in the St. George Parish Church's car park, also saw some of the same problems from farmers.

Most of them were associated with hot pepper and citrus plants. Mr. Taylor noted that the dry weather Barbados had been experiencing in recent times contributed to the problem.

"We are seeing problems from white flies. These are usually pests that are a lot more prevalent, a lot more prolific during dry periods," he explained.

The Plant Health Specialist added that the clinics were designed to help farmers and householders by providing on-the-spot diagnoses of their plants' problems, in addition to making recommendations including how to use environmentally safe chemicals to control pests. Any suspicious or peculiar specimens found during the examinations are sent to the lab for investigation, he explained.

Mr. Taylor pointed out that farmers attending the clinics were required to fill out a data sheet with their contact information, as well as information on their crops and the problem(s). This, he noted, would help the Agency in compiling a database of pests and diseases affecting local crops as well as to identify when new pests came into the island.

Farmer Desmond Bostic, said he was grateful for the information gained from attending the clinic at The Glebe.
"When I heard about this, I said I must take the opportunity to come and bring along these leaves and show them to the doctors. It may not only help me, but it might help other farmers too," he said.

The purpose of the National Agricultural Health and Food Control Agency is to co-ordinate all of the agricultural health and food safety issues in Barbados, including plant and animal health.

The next plant clinics will take place at Agrofest 2013 on Saturday, February 23 and Sunday, February 24, in Queen’s Park, The City.


Full Article

The plant quarantine unit of the Ministry of Agriculture is making a strong appeal to the general public to adhere to the strict requirements for the importation of agricultural produce and products into the island as a means of keeping exotic pests away.

Over the last decade, Dominica as most of the Caribbean region has seen the rapid introduction of exotic pests and diseases including the Black Sigatoka, which has impacted negatively on the agricultural sector.

Ryan Anselm, head of the plant quarantine unit is calling on all those involved to cooperate with the laws as it relates to importation of agricultural produce, as non-compliance can result in significant economic losses for Dominica.

"We are urging and appealing to all to refrain from bringing any planting material, any agricultural produce, without the import permit given by the Plant quarantine department of the Ministry of Agriculture. These diseases sometimes come without natural control, these pests come without natural enemies and can cause serious economic problems to Dominica’s agriculture sector” Anselm said.

The general public has been asked to contact the plant quarantine unit at telephone number 266-3803 before any planting material is imported into the country.

“One can get the application for import permit on the Government website. Please work with us as our sole purpose is for us to maintain our agricultural sector, prevent pest and disease from entering. We need to ensure that farmers can be productive on our fields which will allow Dominica to maintain food security and to export for economic earnings.”

Meanwhile the Ministry of Agriculture over the past several months has spent significant resources in the management of the Black Sigatoka disease and the Citrus Greening Disease, which caused havoc in the country’s Agriculture Industry.
Anselm says farmers need to continue to take measures to keep the dreaded disease from spreading.

“We are also urging the farmers to continue the fight against the Black Sigatoka and I want everyone in Dominica to take the necessary management strategy very serious to manage Black Sigatoka because if we don’t do these things right and we do it on time Black Sigatoka will wipe out the banana and plantain sub sector.

Anselm appealed to farmers and hucksters to desist from moving trash and leafing materials from one area to another as this is a risky undertaking.

The Plant quarantine unit is currently reviewing the Plant Protection Act of 1986 to include invasive species which are not current part of the legislation.

Hot Pepper

Pepper farmers benefit from contracts to supply Grace Kennedy plant by Chris Patterson. Jamaica Information Service, 2 February 2013.

Full Article

Ten farmers from four parishes across the island have benefited from contracts valued at $3.4 million to supply hot peppers to Grace Agro Processors.

They hail from the parishes of Clarendon, St. Mary, St. Elizabeth and St. Catherine and form the most recent batch of farmers to profit from the ongoing initiative by GraceKennedy for the supply of the commodity for its Hounslow Pepper Mash facility.

Addressing Thursday’s (January 31) official signing ceremony held at GraceKennedy’s head offices in downtown Kingston, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Roger Clarke, hailed the initiative, stating that “these are the things we need to do to enable us to produce on a sustained basis”.

He encouraged the farmers to maintain their stock, so that they can live up to their contractual agreement.

“This marriage between Grace and yourselves must be something that you honour and respect. Other farmers will be looking on with jealousy and wanting to replace you if you fall down, so therefore you make sure that you keep the processes flowing,” he said.

General Manager, Grace Agro Processors, Orville Palmer, who spoke to JIS News following the signing ceremony, said the farmers are expected to plant 20 acres of pepper. The funds will assist them with seedlings, fertilizer and chemicals.
“They are expected to deliver different quantities based on each individual farmer’s contract to us. All our contracts are for two years and they end at a specific time,” he said.

“It is designed to have the crops in during the dry period when the farmers would be less vulnerable to the effects of rainfall, which have a detrimental effect on hot peppers,” he told JIS News.

Mr. Palmer said the contracts with the farmers will ensure a stable supply of raw material for the pepper mash facility and that farmers have a steady market for their produce.

Minister Clarke (left) and GraceKennedy Foods CEO, Michael Ranglin (2nd left), look on as General Manager, Grace Agro Processors, Orville Palmer (2nd right), shows farmer, Barrington Williams, where to sign the contract for the supply of hot pepper to the Hounslow Pepper Mash facility.

He said the farmers are expected “to deliver to us, cherry ripe peppers, packed in what is commonly called onion bags and we are examining the possibility of assisting with transportation for those farmers who (may experience transportation difficulties).”

In 2010, GraceKennedy began operating the $49 million Hounslow Packaging House, which was constructed under the Improving Jamaica’s Agricultural Productivity Project.

The project is a collaborative effort between the Government and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Under the 15-year, $2.1 million per annum lease, GraceKennedy will equip and manage the facility and contract farmers to produce raw material.

Grace Agro Processors is the agro processing arm of the GK Foods Division. One of its central processes is the production of red pepper mash for local and overseas processors of sauces and condiments.

Roots and Tubers


Full Article

Get involved by filling out the crop survey that best matches your expertise
RTB, the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas, is conducting a Strategic Assessment of Research Priorities to identify which research options are expected to yield the highest impacts on welfare, poverty, food security, human nutrition and health, gender equity and environmental sustainability. This strategy involves a dynamic, systematic approach of continual revision and updating of research priorities. The objective is to engage scientists and stakeholders from
the RTB community in a dialogue to increase the relevance and enhance the impacts of RTB research. A six-stage research process (http://cipotato.org/publications/pdf/rtb_six_steps.pdf) ensures that the strategic definition of RTB priorities incorporates the views of the stakeholders in the global research community.

Key elements of the RTB priority-setting strategy are the expert surveys on priorities and needs for research in our mandate crops. Get involved by filling out the crop survey that best matches your expertise:

**Sweetpotato/Camote** (English | Español)

- **Potato/Papa** (English | Español)
- **Yam/Igname** (English | Français)
- **Cassava/Manioc** (English | Español | Français | Português)
- **Banana (Musa)** (English | Español | Français)

Filling out the survey should not take you more than 25 minutes and can be interrupted at any time.

**Peru scientists to boost sweet potato produce** by Deabrata Mohapatra. TNN, 18 January 2013. Times of India

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/Peru-scientists-to-boost-sweet-potato-produce/articleshow/18073628.cms

**Full Article**

BHUBANESWAR: The state government has joined hands with Peru-based Centro Internacional de la Papa (CIP), a root crop research centre, to promote cultivation of sweet potatoes in Odisha.

The CIP has developed an orange-fleshed variety of sweet potatoes, which can be cultivated in Koraput, Ganjam and Dhenkanal districts.

CIP, with the help of the agriculture department, is scheduled to launch a project that comes under the initiative of 'Odisha GAINS (generating advances in income and nutrition through sweet potato)' here on Friday.

"We will simultaneously launch the orange-coloured sweet potato, which is naturally rich in pro-vitamin A," said Dr Sreekanth Attaluri, an expert of CIP (Bhubaneswar region). "The project aims to enhance sweet potato contribution to food, income and nutrition security, primarily among poor producers and consumers in Odisha," Attaluri said.

CIP has sought the state government's support for the next four years for sustainable production and utilization of sweet potatoes under the Odisha GAINS initiative.

Attaluri said the Udyan Fresh outlets, set up by the state government in Bhubaneswar, to sell fresh vegetables and fruits, have evinced interest to procure the sweet potatoes. He said the state government is also interested to include the nutritious root crop as a major food relief for people, affected by natural calamities. "Sweet potatoes can be used to prepare ice-creams, salad and jam," he said.
Recently, Odisha was included in international programme for roots and tuber crops (RTC) initiated by CIP. Chief secretary B K Patnaik had laid stress on achieving food security on sustained basis through scientific research on potato, sweet potato and other root crops. Patnaik had also advised the authorities to put in place adequate extension machinery for convincing farmers about the utility of tuber crops and providing them support for its cultivation and marketing.

Significantly, the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) under Indian Council of Agriculture Research here has been promoting commercial cultivation of tropical tuber crops in tribal pockets for the socio-economic development of the poor people.

CTCRI provides seeds and planting materials of tuber crops to horticulture departments and Krishi Vigyan Kendras in the districts.

Banana

Best bets for banana research by International Society for Horticultural Science, 1 February 2013

Full Article

Which problems should scientists solve first and which solutions are more likely to have a positive impact on food security and livelihoods?

Agricultural scientists often assign priorities to the many possible research options they can pursue. They also sometimes meet with scientists from other institutions to identify global productivity constraints and discuss approaches to address them. While these exercises help build consensus around important issues, they stop short of exploring the relative impact of research projects or the trade-offs from investing in some kinds of research versus others. These kinds of insight usually come from the type of formal priority setting exercise on which the CGIAR research program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) has embarked for each of its mandate crops, including bananas.

"Investing into research is a bit like placing a bet or selecting a stock for investment", says the RTB Director Graham Thiele. "We need to make sure we follow the best – and this means well-informed – bets when setting our priorities and investing funds. This is exactly what this study will help us with."

For the exercise on bananas, scientists and economists from Bioversity International, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) have teamed up to assess the impact of the research options that will be identified as part of the process. They are also looking beyond yields to estimate the impact on poverty, health, gender equity and environmental sustainability.

The approach rests on the participation of a broad range of stakeholders and takes advantage of the electronic communication channels and tools that have been set up or will soon be accessible from the various banana network websites, including a trilingual Priority setting section on the ProMusa website.
The methodology draws heavily on the one developed by Fuglie and collaborators for the International Potato Center, with some modifications to better incorporate impacts on health, gender and the environment. It starts with a participatory mapping exercise to identify target areas (intervention hotspots), that is areas where banana research has the greatest potential to alleviate poverty and increase food security. The top constraints in these target areas will then be matched with research options. The impact, over the next 20 years, of these research options will be assessed using different methods, depending on the indicator, and the findings will be used to guide research investment decisions.

In addition to better respond to the needs of poor farmers and other vulnerable groups, the exercise is meant to raise the efficiency of research to achieve desired goals and to increase the relevance and adoption of technologies developed by the RTB research program. Donors, for one, are looking forward to the results. "I am very excited about these studies. In order to better allocate research funding, we really need demand-driven approaches like this", says Lawrence Kent, Senior Program Officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

National and regional stakeholders are also expected to benefit, not only from the findings, but also from access to the methodology and tools, which they will be able to use to prioritize their own research agenda on bananas.


Full Article

Approximately 1,000 plantain and banana farmers are set to benefit from the provision of fertilizer and insecticide, under the European Union Banana Support Programme (EUBSP), valued at $13.5 million.

The official handing over ceremony for the funds was held on January 30 at the Banana Boxing Plant, in Trinity, St. Mary.

Addressing the function, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Roger Clarke, pointed out that the damage to banana farms as a result of Hurricane Sandy on October 24, 2012 in the parishes of St. Mary, Portland and St. Thomas amounted to 93 per cent, 96 per cent and 100 per cent, respectively.

“The level of damage is estimated to cost about $1.1 billion to rehabilitate the farms, community farm roads and drainage networks were all impacted,” Mr. Clarke said.

As part of the support package, approximately 2,500 bags of fertilizer and 3,750 sachets of insecticide will be available to 1,000 legitimate registered banana and plantain farmers in the parishes of St. Thomas, Portland and St. Mary who are registered with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) and the Banana Board.

Beneficiaries should also be verified active farmers and suffered damage to approximately two hectares and upwards. They are selected based on damage assessment carried out by the Banana Board.
“It is anticipated that distribution of the materials will commence on January 31 and will be managed by the RADA parish offices in the affected banana producing belt,” Mr. Clarke said.

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Roger Clarke (left) along with Head of Delegation of the European Union (EU) in Jamaica, Ambassador Paola Amadei, examine insecticide in the All Island Banana Growers Association store in Trinity, St. Mary. The items will be distributed to banana farmers in St. Mary, Portland and St. Thomas.

“In order to collect input supplies, farmers must present documentation to verify registration with RADA as well as a notification letter issued by the Banana Board, stating their eligibility and the quantities of input supplies to be received,” he added.

Head of Delegation of the European Union (EU) in Jamaica, Ambassador Paola Amadei, said the European Union had long recognised the importance of agriculture to the wellbeing of the Jamaican people.

She added that the banana industry has been a pillar of Jamaican agriculture and economy, noting that the EU has been funding the sector since 1996.

“The objective of this intervention is to provide support to these communities to get back to pre-hurricane Sandy production level, while decreasing the time of recovery. We know that this support will be far from sufficient to facilitate an easy recovery from the hurricane, but it has to be kept in mind that this will come in addition to the existing Banana Catastrophe Fund that was also established with the support of the EU,” Ambassador Amadei said.

**Citrus**


**Full Article**

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Roger Clarke, has lauded Jamaica Beverages Limited (JBL) for the purchase of the Jamaica Citrus Growers Limited’s Bog Walk plant, noting that this acquisition will undoubtedly prove beneficial to the island’s citrus industry.

“This acquisition was done in the interest of all concerned...this is a new relationship that is going to exist between the citrus growers and this new company. I am confident that we will reap success in this new venture;” he stated.

He was speaking at the official announcement of the acquisition on Wednesday, February 6, at the Terra Nova Hotel in St. Andrew.
Getting Back to Top Production

Highlighting the many challenges the citrus industry has faced over the years, Mr. Clarke said a collaborative approach by stakeholders has been critical in ensuring the survival of the industry.

“The citrus tristeza virus did cause some serious problems and then, beginning in 2007/08, we had the citrus greening (disease). However, with the help of the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), we are at this point in time trying to find a way to deal with that problem,” he said.

He noted that getting back to top production is vital, informing that output has declined from four million boxes in 1999/2000 to less than three million boxes, currently.

“To get back into production, we need seedlings and therefore, it is opportune that Jamaica Beverages Limited is contributing US$100,000 towards the establishment of (a) nursery. We want them to work in close collaboration with our research facilities at Bodles but time is of the essence and I am going to try my best to ensure that it doesn’t languish,” he pledged.

In addition to the nursery, a greenhouse will be constructed to grow citrus seedlings, which will be sold to members of the Citrus Growers’ Association at a subsidized rate.

Bog Walk to Benefit

For his part, Acting General Manager at JBL, Paul Shoucair, explained that under the acquisition, the company will pay royalty to Jamaica Citrus Growers Limited for use of the Juciful brand, which it still owns.

“We are even more excited about the fact that our investment in the Bog Walk plant will positively impact the livelihood of 7,000 citrus farmers directly and thousands more indirectly, and that our acquisition of the plant saved the 2012 citrus crop, which would have otherwise seen tonnes of oranges and grapefruits rotting in the fields,” he explained.

He said the JBL took over the management of operations of the Bog Walk plant in May last year, while due diligence was still taking place, as a show of commitment to the investment plan.

“The final arrangement was completed in December 2012 with a total investment of $1 billion over the first year, inclusive of the purchase of property, as well as the cost of upgrading equipment at the plant and overall renovation of the facilities,” he said.

Mr. Shoucair said since the acquisition, JBL has rebuilt all the filling machines and juice extractors, and has increased its staff complement by approximately 30 per cent.

Plans for the Future

“Our aim is to supply the local market through island-wide distribution, after which, we shall be looking at exporting concentrate throughout the Caribbean and the United Kingdom. In the medium-term, we plan to be an earner of foreign exchange. This, in addition to being the sole and exclusive supplier of 100 per cent grapefruit juice to the manufacturers of the Ting brand which, as you know, boasts 100 per cent Jamaican grapefruit,” he said.
The Bog Walk plant is located on seven acres of land, with an additional seven acres, which can be used for future expansion.

JBL has been in operation since June 1998 and is a subsidiary of S.M. Jaleel & Company Limited (SMJ), one of the largest manufacturers of non-alcoholic drinks in the English-speaking Caribbean.

JBL’s products include a range of carbonated soft drinks, exotic fruit juices, purified and flavoured water, energy drinks and other flavoured beverages, including

Livestock


Full Article

A stalwart of the local food industry. " That was how Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management, Lennox Chandler, described the late Carmeta Fraser last evening, as he officially declared Carmeta's, the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation's (BADMC) retail meat shop, open to the public.

Located at the BADMC, Princess Alice Highway, The City, Carmeta's will carry a variety of local, fresh products such as Blackbelly lamb, chicken, goat meat, rabbit, pork, beef, turkey wings, cassava, breadfruit and sweet potato flours, jellies, jams, seasonings, seasoned meat products, sugar cakes and nut cakes, just to name a few.

Mr. Chandler said that in addition to improving the retail visibility of the BADMC's freshly butchered meats, Carmeta's would also provide a sustainable customer-focused marketing channel for local farmers and agro-producers who were serviced through its Agricultural Services Department.

Additionally, he pointed out that at a time when Government and Barbadians were "crying out" for a reduction in food prices and, by extension, the food import bill, Carmeta's was well-placed to lower food imports, while providing safe and healthy food options for its customers. The Acting Permanent Secretary said the shop would provide high quality products at competitive prices.

He added that there could be no more fitting tribute to Mrs. Fraser who was known for coining the phrase "Food Comes First!" than to adhere to her admonition.

Mr. Chandler also made a call for the recipes of Mrs. Fraser and those of another pioneer of local cuisine, Marion Hart, to be captured and immortalised in cookbooks and sold at the shop.

"The work of these two ladies will prove invaluable to those persons who are desirous of experimenting with and enjoying local Barbadian produce," he said.
Climate Change


*Full Article*

**Castries Saint Lucia Thursday February 7th 2013,** The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat will launch a twelve-part television (TV) series on climate change on Wednesday February 13, 2013 from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

The television series, which was recently completed with the assistance of a Saint Lucian based consultant firm, is a first-time initiative of its kind for the OECS Secretariat, and is expected to contribute to awareness building efforts of an OECS-USAID Climate Change Project aimed at “Reducing the Risks to Human and Natural Assets Resulting from Climate Change (RRACC).

The launch ceremony will take place at “Our Planet” a state of the art cinema theatre in downtown Castries and the agenda will include the preview screening of selected episodes in the series, performances on climate change related issues, brief remarks from relevant officials and a cocktail reception.

An estimated 60 invited guests are expected to attend the ceremony, representing local, national, regional and international agencies involved in environmental conservation and climate change related work in the OECS region.

This first time TV series initiative, produced by the OECS Secretariat features climate change impacts and solutions - with an emphasis on issues related the water, tourism and agricultural sectors, as well as highlights on vulnerabilities to coastal areas, and increased exposure to natural disasters, such as hurricanes.

The series is part of the awareness component of the USAID-funded climate change project (RRACC), and is expected to generate increased curiosity on climate change and specifically, provide tips on how the public can make individual choices that will help them better cope with climate change related issues.

The RRACC Project is a five-year developmental project which was launched in 2011 to assist OECS governments with building resilience through the implementation of climate change adaptation measures.

Specifically, RRACC will build an enabling environment in support of policies and laws to reduce vulnerability; address information gaps that constrain issues related to climate vulnerabilities; make interventions in freshwater and coastal management to build resilience; increase awareness on issues related to climate change and improve capacities for climate change adaptation.

Full Article

The Caribbean Weather Impacts Group (CARIWIG) will hold its inaugural workshop in Kingston, Jamaica on February 6-7, 2013. The workshop is part of CARIWIG’s effort to initiate and sustain consultations to determine community needs for the generation of quantitative climate information for climate impact assessments and the broader decision-making process in the Caribbean.

The two day event will bring together managers, technical personnel and policy makers from 25 national, inter-governmental and regional entities. The stakeholder consultation will focus on some of the region’s economic lifelines: the water, agriculture and coastal resource sectors.

The discussions will shape the course of the CARIWIG Project, which seeks to create tools that will enable the region to reliably access locally relevant unbiased climate change information in a manner that complements their planning cycle.

The CARIWIG project is funded by the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) and will be carried out in partnership with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (Belize), University of East Anglia (UK), University of the West Indies (Jamaica) and the Institute of Meteorology (Cuba).

Drawing climate change lessons from Andean farmers by CIP’s Production System and Environment Sub-Program, 6 February 2013.  

Full Article

The international scientific community agrees that one of the largest effects of climate change is the increasing annual and seasonal variability of temperature, precipitation and solar radiation, which brings about an increased frequency of heat waves, extreme cold spells and severe droughts and floods. However, in some regions of the globe, this unsettling variability has historically been commonplace and not a recent consequence of climate change.

The Peruvian-Bolivian Altiplano is one of those regions in the world where generations of farmers have dealt with and successfully adapted to high climatic variability. Historically, through the sophisticated and rational use of local physical and biological resources, Altiplano farmers have always managed to ensure the safety of their food security, despite the odds against them.

In the face of a rather fragile agriculture, affected by climate variability, people of the Altiplano developed an approach similar to the strategy of modern investors in the stock market, who diversify their investment portfolios to deal with the risk and volatility of speculative finances. Thus, the Andean families learned to invest natural, social and financial capital in a diversified portfolio of options to deal with uncertainties and climate risks.
A clear example of this strategy is shown by the way in which potatoes are still grown by traditional farmers. Potato is the staple crop of the farming household and the basis of food security for the local economy. The strategy for coping with climate variability involves the simultaneous planting of many varieties (variety mixtures) in the same cropping field during a growing season. These mixtures may total more than 40 to 50 different varieties and landraces and the composition of the mixture may vary in subsequent years, based on the yields obtained under the experienced weather conditions and the expected returns based on the forecasted weather for the following planting season.

The rationality behind the use of varietal mixtures, which is somewhat contrary to the common logic of using a single adapted and high performance variety, has been explained by the CIP scientists working with CCAFS - the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security - using potato growth simulation models. This analysis shows that early varieties with early tuber formation and fast tuber filling rates can produce a harvest when early frosts are intense, severely affecting the later varieties. These are able to produce higher yields, especially since they are more tolerant to late blight and intense frosts and droughts.

Additionally, mixtures also include some potato varieties tolerant to pests and diseases, of which the incidence and severity are also determined by meteorological conditions. Moreover, mixtures are also diverse in terms of cooking quality and end-use of the tubers. The net result of the use of potato mixtures is then a reduction of vulnerability and food insecurity in a society that has practiced subsistence agriculture in an environment of high climatic variability.

Women play key role in the Altiplano in the conservation of potato genetic resources

Women in the Altiplano have played and still play a key role in the development and maintenance of this adaptive production strategy. They are actively involved in observing the performance of the different varieties in response to factors causing abiotic and biotic stresses and in the selection of the better-adapted varieties and landraces. Women also exchange knowledge, experiences and genetic material in the traditional fairs, enhancing and preserving traditional knowledge.

Traditional societies such as that found in the Altiplano are rapidly integrating their agricultural practices to the modern input and output markets. However, the principles in which they had based their survival in the face of climate variability for thousands of years are still valid. For this reason, the experience in the Altiplano makes us realize the need to study systematically and in an unbiased manner the rationality of ancient practices and their applicability to the new situations created by climate change and the increased climate variability around the globe. Understanding this knowledge and the principles involved would help develop and strengthen new strategies to face climate change in different parts of the world. One lesson learned from these societies is the importance of biodiversity conservation.

Agricultural Development

Canadian University: Lakeland leads new agricultural training project in Belize. University of Belize, 6 February 2013.

Chilly temperatures didn’t deter the warm collegial spirit between Lakeland College officials and guests from Belize at the Vermilion campus last month.

Dr. Gordon Holder of the University of Belize and Yvonne Palma from the Belize Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, were at Lakeland to begin putting together a framework for a new three-year $440,000 project that will enable Caribbean countries to develop training programs that align with the needs and demands of its agriculture industry.

During their visit, the Belize guests met with representatives from Lakeland’s International and Distance Learning department, the School of Agricultural Sciences, and the Curriculum Development and Faculty Training department. They also toured the college farm and met with various local agricultural-based companies. Areas of greatest interest were the livestock handling facilities, grain storage and feed mix systems, as well as the crop production system. They also explored the student managed farm concept.

“The focus of the project is to help Caribbean countries revamp its post-secondary agricultural education system so that it is more responsive, applied and demand-driven with industry needs,” says Mark Butler, director of international and distance learning. He adds that Lakeland is the lead college and, in addition to ensuring that the project’s structure and delivery is sound, will provide support for curriculum development and instructor training. Additional partners also in attendance during the week included Bow Valley College and Parkland College. They will work on developing counseling and support systems for students, helping with industry engagement, as well as a social media component.

Initially, project work will begin at a regional level at the University of Belize. The university is currently rebuilding its agricultural school after a two-year closure from 2006 to 2008. It wants to revamp its educational programs – which integrate crops and livestock production – so that they are relevant to current and future industry demands. It also wants to develop its current university farm operation to a model that is similar to Lakeland’s Student Managed Farm.

“Ultimately, our goal is to have a workforce that has the skills required by employers for current and future jobs throughout the Caribbean,” says Holder. “We view training to be much more valuable if it is done in a productive, hands-on environment. Lakeland also prepares its students to think critically so that they can make the right decisions for managing farming operations. This is the same approach that we want at the University of Belize.” Holder adds that once the project is underway regionally, its outcomes will expand to benefit other countries in the Caribbean. “We want the system to be sustainable. It’s important for our global economy,” says Holder.

The project is part of the CARICOM Education for Employment Program which is funded by the Canadian International Development Agency. It is also supported by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

The Mass Metrology Laboratory of the Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ) has been designated as the Regional Reference Laboratory, making it the first of its kind in the region.

The designation, by the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), is in recognition of the BSJ’s capabilities in mass metrology and the value of these capabilities to the development of the regional infrastructure.

Speaking at the official ceremony held on Friday morning (February 1) at the BSJ offices in St. Andrew, Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce, Hon. Anthony Hylton hailed the move as being of “extreme significance” in the development of industry and commerce in the region.

“Most trade involves the measurement of mass or volume. Standards underpin quality, and hence, the undeniable impact of the value of metrology on commerce and trade, especially in agricultural products and by-products, which form the backbone of exports from Jamaica, and most of the Caribbean region,” he said.

The Minister noted that standards development is critical to Jamaica’s effort to develop a competitive economy as the basis for deepening its integration into the global supply and value chains.

“The ability of our exports to penetrate global markets hinges on the degree to which our exporters are in compliance with standards that are imposed on the conduct of trade,” he added, citing the recent passage of the Food Safety and Modernisation Act (FSMA) of 2010 that calls for new standards requirements for food exporters.

“We therefore consider the designation of the Mass Metrology Laboratory of the Bureau of Standards as an important indication that we are moving in the right direction towards developing a strong international reputation as a country that is standards-driven,” he stated.

He pointed out that the BSJ’s Metrology lab has been described by the Caribbean Metrology Network (CARIMET) as “the most well equipped lab in the region, with the highest level of experience and expertise”.

Mr. Hylton said the regional designation has been wholeheartedly endorsed by Germany’s National Metrology Institute (PTB), which has provided significant technical support for the development and operation of the laboratory for 25 years.

Executive Director at BSJ, Yvonne Hall, stated that the designation is a “signal step” for the bureau “as it moves forward in the economic development of the country and as we recognize that standards and quality is the infrastructure for global trade”.

During the ceremony Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) were signed between the National Metrology Institutes (NMI) of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the BSJ; and the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) and the BSJ in recognition of the facility.

Mass metrology provides a unique measurement of the mass change resulting from any process step. Metrology, which is the science of measurement, plays a key role in industry, international trade and...
in everyday life. Accurate and reliable measurements are critical in assuring product quality, and in supporting environmental, health and safety issues.

The Mass Metrology Laboratory of the BSJ was among the earliest of the metrology laboratories at the BSJ, and in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The Bureau provides metrology services through a number of laboratories to various sectors including health, telecommunications, security, construction, food and beverage, and mining.
Fruta, Busta and Chubby.


Full Article

The world economy will never go back to what it was 20, 15 or even 10 years ago. And, that is why Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS), James Paul, believes that Barbados needs to embrace renewable energy if it is to achieve a sustainable agricultural sector.

He made these comments yesterday during the launch of Agrofest 2013 at Divi Southwinds Beach Resort. The event, which will be held under the theme: Renewable Energy - Leading the Charge into the Future takes place from February 22 - 24 in Queen's Park, The City.

The CEO, who gave an overview of the annual agricultural exhibition, said fossil fuels could no longer be the answer if local agriculturalists were to survive.

"We need to show agriculturists what their options are...Fossil fuels have gone up in price. Corn is edging back up above $7 a bushel...Last month there was some dipping in the price of corn but looking at the markets now, it is edging back up. We have to recognise that things have changed. It will never ever go back to what it was in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s or even the 1990s. It will not go back there, so... if we are to continue agriculture as we go forward, we have to recognise that we have to promote that thing which gives our local agriculturalists the greatest competitive advantage and that is investment in renewable energy," Mr. Paul emphasised, adding that those in the sector should take advantage of the incentives which were currently available for renewable energy.

Mr. Paul also encouraged schools to take advantage of one of the competitions the BAS staged this year - The Schools Renewable Energy Competition. It aims to teach children how to conduct energy audits at home and at school.

"...If we do not involve our young generation in terms of the concepts we will not succeed in passing on the very skills we need to succeed as a society. That energy audit competition is an exciting one because ... [it helps children] to be more efficient in the use of energy," Mr. Paul stated.
The Ministry of Agriculture will ramp up its buy-local campaign this year, an effort aimed at bolstering the health and wealth of the nation, Extension Officer Owalabi Elabanjo said.

The high food import bill and the concomitant focus on moving closer to food sovereignty as well as the perils of processed foods have been main talking points for ministry officials in recent times.

Elabanjo said while farmers are rising to the challenge, consumers are not doing likewise.

“People are not buying as we expected, so this year we will increase awareness to buy local and utilise fresh food,” the extension officer said. “It’s good to have production, but if people are not buying in volume, for both consumption and utilisation, it’s going to affect the farmers.”

Elabanjo noted the paradox of the seemingly “sophisticated way of eating, like using more frozen foods or eating from the can” when, in fact, consumption of this kind can be detrimental to people’s health.

“We will be sensitising the public through a campaign to buy local, eat fresh and to be concerned with their health and our economy. We want to let consumers know that once the food is available, they should support the farmers, because when you do this, you support our economy and your own health,” Elabanjo said.

On the matter of food production and availability, the extension officer reported that the weather conditions have been favourable for farmers.

“A lot of onion and tomatoes are being planted. Even now in early January, tomatoes are being harvested, so between now and August there should be no shortage of tomatoes once we continue with this trend and the weather pattern remains the same,” Elabanjo said.

Other crops destined for a bountiful harvest are okras and carrots, as well as cucumbers and sweet peppers, which have been scare lately. “But we have been overcoming the shortages through backyard gardening,” Elabanjo added.

The Backyard Gardening Initiative has been hailed for its success locally and for being a model for the region, the extension officer noted.

He said the ministry will continue to support backyard gardeners, with the distribution of seeds and technical assistance.

This year, added focus will be on the production of herbs and spices, Elabanjo said.

“Those farmers who are already in the programme, we ask that they continue to grow food and keep on inviting us to visit the backyards to see what is being grown and to see how we can assist them. We
also welcome newcomers and advise them to visit current backyards to see what some of the best practices are,” Elabanjo said.

Upcoming Events

February 2013

AGROFEST 2013

Date: 22 to 24 February, 2013
Location: Queen's Park, Bridgetown, Barbados

Contact: Barbados Agricultural Society http://www.baselinevoice.org/

June 2013

49th Annual Meeting Caribbean Food Crops Society (CFCS)

Date: 30 June to 6 July 2013
Location: Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

Description: The 49th Annual Meeting will be celebrated 30 June to 6 July in the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Trinidad. Joint meeting of the CFCS, Caribbean AgroEconomic Society (CAES) and the International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS). Theme: Agribusiness Essential for Food Security: Empowering Youth and Enhancing Quality Products.

Contact: CFCS website http://cfcs.eea.uprm.edu/