**In This Issue Mar 2 - 8, 2013**

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**TT gets $350 million in EU grants** by The Government Information Service of Trinidad and Tobago, 5 March, 2013  

Trinidad and Tobago has received approximately $350 million in grants from the European Union to support its exit from the sugar industry. This is according to Planning and Sustainable Development Minister, Bhoendradatt Tewarie.

**For more information see page 23**

**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
Roots and Tubers

The Dual-Purpose Sweetpotato by Rory Sheldon. International Potato Center, 7 March, 2013

Full Article

Over the past 18 years, CIP has been developing sweetpotato as a potential remedial crop for rural farmers who are experiencing exacerbated levels of malnutrition and poverty as a result of increased demands on the output per unit of land for food and livestock. With high levels of productivity and low input requirements, the sweetpotato is the perfect crop for many of these farmers as its usefulness for both food and feed (dual-purpose) make it attractive in areas where land availability is declining.

A systemic problem faced by poor rural farmers around the world, which has the effect of exacerbating malnutrition and poverty, is one where growing human populations create increased demands on the output per unit of land for food and livestock. Intensified production systems are generally characterized by continuous cropping with few external nutrient inputs and the removal of fodder for feeding of livestock with limited recycling of nutrients and organic matter back into the soil. This essentially results in the depletion of soil nutrients and organic matter and can result in severe hardships for a great deal of rural farmers and those on whom they depend.

Recognizing the severity of this problem over 20 years ago, Dr. Carlos Leon-Velarde from the International Potato Center (CIP) realized that mixed crop-livestock systems have a crucial role to play in the bio-economical improvement of outputs for rural farmers, and that improving methods for sweetpotato cultivation could increase their ability to feed and provide nutrition for their families. Dr. Leon-Velarde and a CIP team began looking towards the sweetpotato as a potential remedial crop for these farmers because of its high productivity and low input requirements, while its usefulness for both food and feed (dual-purpose) makes it attractive in areas where land availability is declining.

This was how CIP’s work on dual-purpose sweetpotato began, and it has continued to evolve over the past 18 years. Dr. Leon-Velarde began to form a global CIP-driven team which focused on utilization rather than breeding, and as this team incorporated different management strategies of sweetpotato over the years, they began to increase the amount of foliage produced, while improving the quality of vines as an animal feed. Different cutting frequencies were tested as well as several genetic materials from the collection at CIP’s renowned Genebank, before the team managed to define an index of root to biomass to find those varieties that will maximize the production of vines while maintaining good productivity of tuberizing roots.

Sweetpotato takes approximately 150 days from planting to harvest, and if it is cropped for tubers alone, the plant will produce large amounts of roots, but leave a poor quality of fodder owing to an increment in the amount of fiber in the leaves. However, Leon-Velarde’s research reveals that if sweetpotato vines are cut 65 to 70 days after emergence, a high quality fodder can be obtained. This fodder can be stored in microsilos or given directly to livestock as feed. The roots are not affected by the cutting with the same quality crops of sweetpotato harvested as usual.

As CIP-led research into dual-purpose sweetpotato progressed, the CIP team conducted studies around Peru and the rest of the world in countries such as the Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Kenya, Uganda, and Papua New Guinea. Initially two partners were sought in each country in order to conduct tests and analyze how increased foliage could improve the
bio-economic situation of farmers living in these different cultures and environments. Tests were undertaken to extract leaf proteins, which were precipitated out following boiling in hot water. This extraction was found to contain a very high concentration of proteins, which was used to feed piglets in Asia. The team then developed animal nutrition models to simulate the increment in productivity of different animal species, both ruminants and non-ruminants, as a result of using fodder obtained from dual-purpose sweetpotato cuttings.

This study started by Dr. Leon-Velarde over 18 years ago is being continued by CIP today. Research consistently demonstrates evidence to support the hypothesis that dissemination of the dual-purpose sweetpotato could help improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers operating in mixed crop–livestock systems around the world. This research into dual-purpose sweetpotato has the potential to substantially increase the level of livelihoods of a great number of rural farmers and their families, allowing them to produce more quality fodder for animal feed and crop fertilization without harming their output yields of the sweetpotato roots.

Grains and Legumes

Increased wheat production seen in 2013 by the FAO, 7 March, 2013

Full Article

Rome - First forecasts for the 2013 wheat harvest point to production increasing to 690 million tonnes - 4.3 percent up on 2012. This would be the second largest crop on record, according to the latest issue of FAO's quarterly Crop Prospects and Food Situation report.

The production hike is expected mostly in Europe, driven by increased plantings in response to high prices and a recovery in yields in some countries, notably the Russian Federation.

The outlook in the United States, while less favourable because of earlier drought conditions, has improved somewhat over the last few weeks.

Meanwhile, the recently lower prices of wheat and, to some extent, maize kept the FAO Food Price Index - also published today -- unchanged at 210 points for the second consecutive month in February. That is 2.5 percent, or five points, less than in February 2012.

Since November 2012 the Index has moved within a narrow 210 - 212 point range as increases in the prices of dairy products and oils/fats were largely balanced out by declines in the prices of cereals and sugar.
Too early for global cereals forecast

At this stage of the season, with the bulk of the coarse grains and paddy crops yet to be planted it is still too early for even a preliminary global cereal forecast for 2013.

But prospects for the first 2013 coarse grains crops in the southern hemisphere are generally favourable. Rice prospects are also encouraging in several countries below the equator.

The Crop Prospects and Food Situation report focuses on developments affecting the food security situation of developing countries. In its review of food insecurity hotspots, the report highlights the following countries, among others:

Syria, where an estimated 4 million people are in urgent need of food and livelihood assistance as severe civil conflict continues. In addition, the Syrian refugees are putting strain on other countries in the region. Some international food assistance is being provided.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea, where a dry spell in May-June 2012 followed by localized floods in July-August cut crop production and damaged agricultural infrastructure. Chronic food insecurity exists in the country, with 2.8 million severely vulnerable people requiring food assistance during the 2012-13.

Escalating conflict

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo escalating conflict has increased the total number of internally displaced people to an estimated 2.7 million. Agricultural activities have been hindered, especially in the eastern areas, while high food prices continue. Nationally, a total of 6.4 million people are estimated to be in a state of food and livelihood crisis.

Mali, where insecurity in the northern part of the country has disrupted food commodity flows and resulted in large population displacements. This has worsened the already precarious food situation created by drought in 2011.

Sudan, where about 3.5 million people are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance, mainly in conflict areas.

Regarding international food prices, FAO's Cereal Price Index averaged 245 points in February, down by just less than 1 percent from January but still 8 percent higher than in February 2012.

The FAO Oils/Fats Price Index averaged 206 points in February, up 0.4 percent from January. The rise was driven by palm oil, mainly reflecting the expected seasonal production slowdown and reduction in inventories from their current high levels.
The FAO Dairy Price Index averaged 203 points in February, 2.4 percent, or 5 points up from January, representing the most substantial increase since September 2012. The rise was principally a reflection of falling production in Oceania due to hot weather.

The FAO Meat Price Index averaged 178 points in February, the same as January. Poultry prices were slightly lower and pork marginally higher, while other types of meat remained largely unchanged. The meat index has remained substantially stable since October 2012.

The FAO Sugar Price Index averaged 259 points in February, down 3 percent, or 8.6 points, from January. Prices declined for the fourth consecutive month, on the expectation of a relatively large world production surplus and improved export availabilities in 2012-13.

Livestock

Cell phones revolutionizing Kenya’s livestock sector. FAO Media Centre, 1 March 2013

Full Article

Mobile phones send first alerts for livestock diseases, and Web access by cell phone means endless innovations are improving Kenya’s livestock industry by leaps and bounds.

Rome - Farmers and veterinarians across Africa are increasingly using cell phones to issue alerts quickly about possible animal disease outbreaks at a very early stage and to track wide-scale vaccination campaigns.

Mobile phone applications are making ‘early warning’ a matter of seconds instead of weeks for animal disease outbreaks, and essential veterinary care can be tracked with pinpoint accuracy and speed, thanks to the Global Positioning System function now directly integrated in most cell phones.

“FAO and partners are piggy-backing on this enormous uptake of mobile phone technology for uses in reporting animal disease outbreaks, tracking vaccination campaigns and the delivery of veterinary treatments, such as deworming animals,” said Robert Allport, FAO Kenya’s Assistant FAO Representative for Programme Implementation.

EpiCollect tracks animals’ medical history via the mobile Web

In Kenya, for example, where three out of four people now have a mobile phone, FAO has partnered with the Royal Veterinary College and local NGO Vetaid, to support the pilot testing of a mobile phone application developed by researchers at the Imperial College London’s School of Public Health. The application, called EpiCollect, helps to track animal vaccination and treatment campaigns. The application and storage space are provided for free on the EpiCollect website, which assigns a unique location for each project. That location is known only to the users – such as national veterinary officials and field vets – involved in the project. The EpiCollect database is not searchable, so prying eyes won’t find potentially sensitive information.
“Cellular phones eliminate delays in receiving field data, since all the information is relayed via the mobile network,” said Allport. In addition, the information is assigned a geographic location, so locations are extremely accurate and available in real-time.

Until only some five years ago, veterinarians would have to travel to remote locations, record data, and then travel back to district-level offices to process the paperwork. Now, the information can be transmitted in real time. The data – for example on the total number of livestock in a herd and the number of animals vaccinated – is stored and then relayed to the project location on a project-specific website. As herds move from one location to another, for example for fresh pasture, their movements can be regularly followed and updated.

*Skipping the wired Internet directly to Web 2.0*

At present, EpiCollect is only being used by field veterinarians with phones provided by Google Kenya for the testing phase, as the tools are honed and glitches ironed out according to feedback coming from users. Eventually, the tools could be made available to village elders and well-established networks of community animal health workers, as more and more Kenyans upgrade to Internet-enabled phones and prices for the technology inevitably come down. Although only a third of Kenyans have access to the Internet at present, 99 percent of those Internet subscriptions are for access from a mobile phone.

FAO also has a Global Animal Disease Information System, known as EMPRES-i, which can house and display data on disease outbreaks gathered from the field once outbreaks are confirmed. FAO has developed the EMPRES-i Event Mobile Application (EMA), which will feed reports on animal disease outbreaks into the database. The technology, available for phones with Blackberry and Android operating systems, is scheduled to be field tested by Ugandan veterinary services in the first half of 2013 as a first pilot supported by the government of Ireland. EMA is also being developed for iPhones.

Without delays, animal diseases can be quickly detected and isolated when alerts come in digitally. Early warning can prevent the death of tens of thousands of animals, thus safeguarding livelihoods and food security, and preventing diseases that can sometimes be passed to humans.

“The FAO EMPRES-i system is truly a global public good, and our reporting and response times are being constantly improved, now thanks to incredible technology,” said Juan Lubroth, the FAO’s Chief Veterinary Officer. “Prevention, preparedness and early response are powerful concepts that when translated into tools can be effectively used against infectious diseases, thereby safeguarding people’s livelihoods, fend off hunger and, in some cases, human illness,” he added.

In addition, FAO’s Regional Emergency Office for East and Central Africa, partnered with Oxfam, is using Nokia Data Gathering (NDG) to monitor water points in pastoralist areas as an early warning indicator for drought in Kenya and Ethiopia. Communities monitor water levels regularly via Internet-enabled phones. In the Karamoja area of neighbouring Uganda, the same NDG system is being used by local chiefs to monitor drought indicators to allow for early response, in partnership with ACTED.

FAO is also assessing how mobile technologies can be used to better link livestock producers with markets and livestock traders.

“Traders won’t travel to a remote area to purchase animals unless they have a guarantee that they will be able to buy a minimum number of animals. Otherwise, the expense of making the trip isn’t
worthwhile,” FAO Kenya’s Allport said. “But if sellers at market can relay information to a central point about how many animals they have, where and at what price, then the market functions more efficiently and pricing becomes more transparent. They can also collectively bargain for better prices.”

Digital pens for writing in the field

In a number of countries in Africa, Kenya included, a new-fangled version of the old fashioned pen and paper is giving added appeal to digital data gathering in the countryside. Not only is the information relayed in seconds to a central server for analysis, but also the pens enable veterinarians to write the same way they always have done, chatting with farmers without the ‘interference’ that modern mobile technologies can create.

“One of the most important aspects of a veterinarian’s work is building up a good relationship and trust with farmers and people,” explained Phillip Fong, FAO’s Regional Data and Information Officer based in Nairobi, who had earlier introduced digital pens to Southern Africa, where they have proven a success.

Field workers and veterinarians cannot take endless minutes punching in information on a phone, trying to find the small keys on a touch screen that might be impossible to see in the bright sunlight.

A digital pen, however, has a miniature infrared camera that records writing as the pen passes over paper, sends the data wirelessly using Bluetooth technology to a cell phone and then onward to a central server for analysis.

The knock-on benefits of mobile technology appear as limitless as human imagination.

Herbals

Agriculture Ministry to install semi-processors in spice growing areas. Ministry of Agriculture Guyana, 6 March, 2013


Full Article

The Agriculture Ministry is moving to set up semi-processors in communities that are cultivating spices in an attempt to increase production and add value to the commodities. Minister of Agriculture Dr. Leslie Ramsammy said the ministry could start installing the processors as soon as June and Hosororo, Region One is set to be the pilot community.

The Ministry of Agriculture has been having much success with its spice project; cultivation of turmeric, black pepper, ginger and nutmeg in Regions 1, 7 and 8. Transporting the spices to the markets on the coast has posed a problem, which has in turn deterred the farmers from increasing production, thereby limiting the growth of the project. The installation of the semi-processors is expected to address these issues.

In an invited comment to the Government Information Agency (GINA), Minister Ramsammy explained the difficulty. “The reason why the farmers are not going into greater acreage of the spice is because people do not use what they grow there. A major part of it has to be exported internally, that is
to Georgetown. In exporting to Georgetown, transportation becomes a problem. So for us to increase, the production, get more farmers engaged we have to ensure that we can bring the product to the market place which is the coast, mainly Georgetown more cheaply. We are looking to change that, and that is by putting in semi-processors in the communities.”

Hosororo, Region One grows a large quantity of turmeric (dye), hence its selection as the pilot community. “We have already started the process of procurement from India of the semi processor. This would reduce the transportation cost of turmeric significantly to one-eight. The processor will take eight pounds of turmeric and process it down to one pound and then that gives you the powder, which you transport,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Minister explained that the ministry will be seeking to introduce spice cultivation to areas on the Coast and to over time put in place semi-processors at these locations. “We will do similar things in the other regions. Right now Sterling Products can buy up all of the products. They have the capacity to produce, but eventually if we are going to produce enough for Guyana’s utilisation and for export to the Caribbean, we will have to utilise the coast.”

“We have successfully done turmeric and ginger at the Number 63 Nursery, and we are now looking to promote it among the coast, because on the coast of course we solve the problem of transportation so we are trying to get more farmers to cultivate it on their plots,” he said.

The ministry is also seeking to promote spice cultivation along the Pomeroon, particularly black pepper, as the area is ideal for its production.

“The in terms of the coast we expect at the Number 63 Nursery and at NAREI we will put up small semi – processing plants for the farmers’ utilisation,” he said

Turmeric and Ginger Project yields $291m in earnings. Jamaica Information Service, 4 March 2013

Full Article

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is reporting earnings of some $247 million from 207 acres of ginger and $44 million from 123 acres of turmeric, totalling $291 million during the last year.

The Turmeric and Ginger project, which was launched by the Ministry in February 2012, has recorded the impressive results, despite the effects of drought and Hurricane Sandy in October last year.

Some 384 farmers have been assisted to cultivate 422 acres of turmeric and ginger under the project.

Project placed in overdrive

In an interview with JIS News, General Manager of the Export Division in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Sylburn Thomas, says the Ministry is committed to accelerating the growth of the ginger and turmeric industries, and in this regard will be significantly expanding the project to engage more farmers to produce at least 60 per cent of current demand this year and 100 per cent by 2014.
He says the Ministry has strategically introduced ginger and turmeric cultivation in its agro parks to ensure achievement of this objective.

According to Mr. Thomas, in order to unlock the economic potential of these industries, the Ministry is continuing its research programme in ginger and turmeric agronomy and pest and disease management.

The project has been implemented islandwide, but ginger is mostly concentrated in the parishes of Clarendon, St. Thomas, Trelawny, Portland, and St. James, while the turmeric project is mostly located in the parishes of Clarendon, Westmoreland, St. Thomas, Trelawny, St. Catherine and St. Mary.

Four greenhouses have also been set up at the Ministry’s research stations in Orange River, St. Mary; Bodles, St. Catherine; and Montpelier, St. James, to focus on hydroponic technology and overall economic optimization of this production system.

Meeting the global demand

“There is growing global demand for both ginger and turmeric. Current demand exists for 21,000 metric tonnes of Jamaican ginger valued at $3 billion and 676 metric tonnes of Jamaican turmeric, valued at $190 million. The products are being exported in quantities sufficient to retain short-term market interests, while the Ministry addresses the structural supply hurdle through its development programmes,” Mr. Thomas points out.

The Ministry currently contracts farmers to produce ginger and turmeric at guaranteed prices.

The cultivation of ginger and turmeric is relatively labour intensive, and has the potential to contribute to rural economic diversification and employment.

Since February 2012, the project has employed a monthly average of 1,024 unskilled persons. An additional 60 persons have been contracted to work in processing operations from January to April 2013 and 14 agricultural graduates have also been employed on the project to provide dedicated extension service to ginger and turmeric farmers.

Other spices to be targeted

Meanwhile, Mr. Thomas says the Ministry’s spice industry development initiatives, which are implemented through its Export Division, will also be targeting the cultivation of nutmeg, pimento, cardamom and cinnamon.

Nutmeg and pimento seedlings are currently available from the Ministry and tissue culture techniques are being considered to produce planting material to introduce commercial cardamom cultivation in Jamaica.

At present the Ministry provides technical and business support to encourage investments in essential oils and oleoresin extraction, particularly from pimento, pimento leaf, ginger, nutmeg, mace and lemongrass.
**Agro-energy**

**Small farmers risk exclusion from biofuels certification schemes.** FAO Media Centre, 26 February 2013

**Full Article**

FAO report warns that certification schemes could become indirect trade barriers if not properly managed.
The way certification schemes for biofuels are structured makes it difficult for smallholder producers and many developing countries to participate in export markets, according to a new report from FAO.

The report, *Biofuels and the Sustainability Challenge*, finds that current certification schemes, which are voluntary and largely privately-operated, might exclude small-scale farmers because they are dominantly designed for large-scale agro-industry. Many certification schemes are data- or information-intensive and require costs and capacities that are often out of reach for most smallholders.

"As structured, these schemes would tend to favour big players and provide incentives for scaling up production to absorb certification costs," the report says.

But certification can have some positive impacts on business, including "improved efficiency within a supply chain ... decreased risk, higher transparency and increased awareness about problems in the supply chain."

**Market access**

At the same time, however, the schemes, "to the extent that they are established to control imports, can hinder trade and reduce market access - especially for developing countries with comparative advantages in business production, and which see in this industry a real opportunity for development and for overcoming rural poverty and high unemployment".

"Many developing countries express concern that certification schemes can become indirect trade barriers when not managed properly," the report continues.

For example, while it is easy for producers in industrialized countries to comply with the demand for education opportunities to be provided for employed farmers, it could be much more difficult for small-scale producers in developing countries.

Similarly, big companies routinely keep financial records needed for audits while smallholders tend to keep information in their heads on data such as yields, fertilizers and other inputs needed for Greenhouse Gas Emissions estimations.

"To increase certification uptake, governments and international organizations in consumer and producer countries should establish complementary mechanisms to create an enabling environment," the report suggests.
National legislation

"Such mechanisms could include national legislation, public procurement policies, tax incentives and tax relief and start-up grants. Financial institutions also have an important role to play to support and enable schemes."

One way to reduce costs for smallholders is to promote local inspection bodies, the report adds. "These involve lower costs for the producers, are better able to conduct spontaneous examinations and are generally better informed about on-site characteristics.

"There are positive, negative and mixed impacts of biofuel certification," the report concludes. "Environmental impacts for certification can bring positive benefits if they facilitate forest planning and inventory, silviculture, biodiversity protection and monitoring and compliance."

"Economic impacts can also be positive if certification can generate price premiums... for suppliers, ensure decent wages for workers and ensure market access. On the downside there are negative effects on smallholders who appear to be left out of the certification schemes."

Climate Change

Improving climate protection in agriculture by Technische Universität München (TUM), 7 March 2013

Full Article

Agriculture is responsible for around ten to twelve percent of all greenhouse gases attributable to human activities. This raises the question of how these emissions could be reduced. A recent study has investigated – for the first time – the full range of factors that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, namely soil and climate conditions, the agricultural model and the farming intensity on both organic and conventional holdings. The study has enabled scientists to develop a new model that will allow agricultural landholders to determine and improve their climate balance.

As part of the study, scientists investigated 40 organic and 40 conventional agricultural holdings across Germany's four agricultural regions. They focused exclusively on crop and dairy farms. The scientists recorded all relevant climate gas streams during the entire production process, including methane, nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide. In the case of dairy farms, they also factored in the purchase of soybean meal from South America and all related greenhouse gas emissions.

Strategies for improving climate balance

Fossil fuels, above all diesel, are one of the main sources of CO2 emissions in agriculture. However, greenhouse gases are also emitted during the manufacture of mineral nitrogen fertilizers and pesticides, agricultural machines and equipment.
"There are different ways of improving a farm's climate balance," explains Professor Kurt-Jürgen Hülsbergen from Technische Universität München (TUM). "One effective strategy is for landholders to grow feed themselves rather than purchase soy from another source. Farms can also streamline production processes and deploy modern technology to obtain higher yields without increasing the amount of energy required."

In crop farming, increasing nitrogen efficiency is a key factor. High levels of nitrous oxide are released into the environment if crops are unable to utilize all of the nitrogen fertilizer that was spread. The production of nitrogen fertilizer is also energy intensive, which further increases the climate balance of unused nitrogen.

In contrast, the greenhouse gas CO2 can be stored long term as humus in the soil, and thus eliminated from the climate balance. "This can be achieved by planting legumes as part of a diversified crop rotation strategy," explains Professor Gerold Rahmann at the Thünen Institute. "Using soil less intensively and applying organic fertilizer also helps."

Topping the charts: organic versus conventional farming

Organic farming is more energy efficient and produces less land-specific CO2 emissions. This advantage, however, is offset by the significantly lower yields achieved through organic farming practices. The pilot organic crop farms produce around twenty percent less emissions per yield unit than conventional holdings.

Organic dairy farms use more plant fodder grown on site and do not import soybean meal. This strategy pays off, according to Hülsbergen: "The pilot organic farms we looked at emit around 200 grams less CO2 per kilogram of milk than conventional farms with the same milk yield."

Most interestingly, the investigations show that yields and greenhouse gas emissions fluctuate significantly between different organic farms in some cases to an even greater extent than the fluctuations between organic and conventional holdings. This demonstrates that the individual know-how of farm managers plays an important role in the greenhouse gas balance and that there is significant potential for improvement at individual farms.

Putting theory into practice

This is the first time that a study has provided a 360-degree overview of climate-relevant factors impacting all emissions related to livestock and crop farming. "We have a workable model that will enable us to identify the causes of low energy efficiency and high greenhouse gas emissions," adds Hülsbergen. "We are now optimizing this model so that it can be used directly by climate change advisors in the agricultural sector."

More information on the study

The study was carried out from 2009 to 2012 as part of a collaborative project between TUM, the Thünen Institute, the University of Bonn, the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle Wittenberg and Bioland Beratung. The study is financed by Germany's Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection and by the Federal Program for Organic Agriculture and Other Forms of Sustainable Agriculture (Bundesprogramm Ökologischer Landbau und andere Formen nachhaltiger Landwirtschaft).
Putting local climate know-how on the map by Peter Richards. Inter Press Service News Agency, 5 March 2013
http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/03/putting-local-climate-know-how-on-the-map/

Full Article
KINGSTOWN, St. Vincent, Mar 5 2013 (IPS) - A new weapon in the arsenal against climate change is tapping local knowledge to bridge the policy gap and let communities make their own informed decisions about how to manage livelihoods, natural resources, culture and heritage.

“In the past, most climate change initiatives have been top-down, coming from the government level,” says Martin Barriteau, executive director of Sustainable Grenadines (Sus Gren), a trans-boundary non-governmental organisation committed to the conservation of the coastal and marine environment and sustainable livelihoods for the people between Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Not only will climate change be costly, it could be the thing that cripples small island economies.

“[But] our communities, especially the ones on the coast, have been witnessing and adapting to the effects of climate changes over time,” he says.

Enter P3DM – participatory three-dimensional modelling, which merges conventional spatial information systems with local people’s own “mental maps” to produce scale relief models that can be used jointly with Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Participatory 3D models are manufactured at the village level using paper and layered cardboard. Based on their personal knowledge of the area, informants depict land use and cover and other features on the model by the use of pencils, pushpins (points), yarns (lines) and/or paint (polygons). Once the model is completed, a scaled grid is applied to transpose spatial and georeferenced data into GIS.

For example, the models can bring communities together around priority areas such as flood zones, drought concerns, fish populations and mangrove protection.

The maps are also an educational tool for youth and children. Abdon White, a geography teacher at Union Island Secondary School, told IPS, “One of the first tasks we had, we did the tracing of the contour lines and that enabled us to actually build the P3DM model of Union island.

“One part of the CX syllabus is the map reading section and that they work with contours and distances and it will help them to get a better understanding to working with maps, distances, scales because the whole part of the entire project had to deal with legend and building the key to mapping. The entire exercise will be good for them to improving their overall map skills,” he said, referring to his pupils’ involvement and how he sees it benefiting them in writing the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) exam.
In general, Barriteau says P3DM brings that “sense of awareness of climate change to these communities with the hope that they will be empowered in making decisions about climate which would [then] inform policy decisions”.

Last week, SusGren, in collaboration with the Netherlands-based Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), brought together members of local communities and regional and international organisations on Union Island, one of the Grenadine Islands, for a one-week participatory three-dimensional mapping exercise.

It’s no secret that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and other Caribbean islands are especially susceptible to the impacts of climate change and extreme climatic events, such as hurricanes and floods.

“Impacts of climate change in the Caribbean are projected to include sea level rise, ocean warming, and changing rainfall patterns,” the organisers said in a document circulated at the workshop.

“These are expected to have a significant economic and social impact. Threats from climate change and extreme climatic events are exacerbated by the ongoing problems caused by human development, including inappropriate land use and poorly planned physical development, inappropriate agricultural practices on slopes, point and non-point source pollution including from improper disposal of solid wastes.”

TNC’s “At the Water’s Edge” project focuses on helping small island states enhance their resilience to climate change by restoring and effectively managing their marine and coastal ecosystems and strengthening local capacity for adaptation.

The new mapping technology will aid this project by building local, national and regional capacity to support eco-based adaptation, empowering communities within the pilot sites in Grenada and Union Island, and developing the communications capacity of community-based organisations and NGOs.

On completion of the workshop, participants are expected to be in a position to discuss the value of local spatial and traditional knowledge as well as describe how P3DM can be used to document, geo-reference and visualise local knowledge. The four- by eight-foot model will belong to the community.

“Anyone wanting to use it must first seek the permission from the community. Sustainable Grenadines, which is leading the initiative on Union Island, would be working with the local community to develop ecosystem based solutions to deal with the effects of climate changes,” Barriteau says.

He said a suite of concrete climate change adaptation strategies will emerge from the P3DM initiative, and hopes it will not be viewed as just another overly technical, jargon-laden “fix” that obscures more than it enlightens.
“We hope that P3DM will put communities in the forefront on climate change issues. Not only are they bombarded, most times they are not involved. According to a Caribsave Climate Change study, sea level rise scenario 2050 is estimated at 489 million dollars to the economy of Grenada. Not only will climate change be costly, it could be the thing that cripples small island economies,” he added.

Tyrone Hall, a communications consultant at the Belize-based Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Climate Change Center (CCCCC), told IPS that the three-dimensional mapping is being done across the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) region on a small-scale, “so sharing our experiences via new media tools such as social media allows us to make public in an accessible way our experience and the lessons learnt.

“We also see social media as a natural fit with this activity given its participatory nature. The CCCCC is in a position to use its broad online social media platforms to share this exercise with a wide audience, particularly given our strong relationship with the Small Island Developing States (SIDS DOCK) Secretariat that includes the Pacific islands,” he added.

Barriteau said that as part of the part of the Union Island P3DM process, a film will be developed that will be shown in other ACP countries while the CTA is “driving this methodology worldwide”.

Grenada will be the next Caribbean country in which the P3DM exercise will be held in April. Organisers says the core problem the project will tackle is that policies to address the impacts of climate change have been created largely without the effective engagement of local communities – from which useful traditional knowledge exists and among whom much of the adaptation action will need to be taken.

“The effect is that policy responses in the Caribbean have largely been at the general policy level, with few specific policies or plans developed to address priorities at the landscape or site level,” they say.

“Sectoral considerations or traditional knowledge have not been adequately considered, stakeholders are not effectively engaged and there has been little on the ground action to build resilience or to ‘climate proof’ key sectors such as tourism and agriculture.”
Soil and Water Management

United Nations launches concerted push for effective drought policies. FAO Media Centre, 8 March 2013

Full Article

Need to focus on building resilience and reducing risks

Droughts cause the deaths and displacement of more people than cyclones, floods and earthquakes combined, making them the world’s most destructive natural hazard. Yet while droughts are expected to increase in frequency, area and intensity due to climate change, effective drought management policies are missing in most parts of the world. Three United Nations institutions have now joined forces to promote the development and adoption of practical and proactive policies at the national level to make drought-prone countries more resilient.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and other partners will hold a High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy on 11-15 March 2013 in Geneva to focus on drought preparedness and management policies.

“Since time immemorial, drought has been a feature of the natural variability of our climate,” said WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud. “The frequency, intensity, and duration of droughts are expected to rise in several parts of the world as a result of climate change, with an increasing human and economic toll. We simply cannot afford to continue in a piecemeal, crisis-driven mode. We have the knowledge and experience to reduce the impact of drought. What we need now is the policy framework and action on the ground.”

“Despite being predictable, drought is the most costly and the deadliest disaster of our time. The decision to mitigate drought is ultimately political. Governments of all drought-prone countries need to adopt, mainstream and operationalize national drought policies, based on the principles of early warning, preparedness and risk management,” said UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja. “The cost of crisis management far exceeds that of risk management and early action and we should not wait until the next drought, causing famine and claiming human lives.”

“More extreme and frequent droughts resulting from climate change are having devastating food security impacts, especially in the most vulnerable regions of the world,” said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva. “To buck this trend, we must build resilient, ‘drought-resistant’ communities. This means not simply reacting after the rains fail, but investing over the long-term, so that when drought does hit, people and food systems can weather the blow.”

The High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy brings together world leaders, government decision-makers, development agencies, and leading scientists and researchers. Government leaders include His Excellency Issoufou Mahamadou, President of the Republic of Niger, whose country has been repeatedly hit by devastating droughts, most recently in 2011-2012.
Heavy Human and Economic Toll

Since the 1970s, the land area affected by drought has doubled. Women, children and the aged often pay the heaviest price.

Most recently, droughts have affected the Greater Horn of Africa and the Sahel region, the USA, Mexico, Northeast Brazil, parts of China and India, Russia and Southeast Europe. The most vulnerable countries are in the world’s drylands, with the poorest communities in Africa and parts of western Asia are at particular risk.

The effects can last long after the rains return, with food remaining scarce and expensive and depleted water resources, eroded soils, weakened livestock, and legal and social conflicts lingering for years. Often, droughts are broken by major flood events, so they catch communities when they are most vulnerable, and add to the damages experienced.

Today, 168 countries claim to be affected by desertification, a process of land degradation in the drylands that affects food production and is exacerbated by drought. At the Rio+20 Sustainable Development Conference held last June in Brazil, world leaders identified desertification, land degradation and drought as global challenges and committed to strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world, in which degradation of new areas is avoided and unavoidable degradation is offset by restoring an equal amount of land in the same time and in the same ecosystem. This is an achievable target. Sustainable land management practices, including restoring degraded lands and improving soil and water management that help to mitigate drought already exist, but need to be reflected, supported and scaled up by national policies.

From Crisis Management to Disaster Risk Reduction

The purpose of the High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy is to encourage countries to move from crisis management to disaster risk reduction – an approach already successfully embraced for hazards such as tropical cyclones and floods.

Specific targets include:

- Proactive mitigation and planning measures, risk management, public outreach and resource stewardship as key elements of effective national drought policy;
- Greater collaboration to enhance the national, regional and global observation networks and information delivery systems to improve public understanding of, and preparedness for, drought;
- Incorporation of comprehensive governmental and private insurance and financial strategies into drought preparedness plans;
- Recognition of a safety net of emergency relief based on sound stewardship of natural resources and self-help at diverse governance levels;
- Coordination of drought programmes and response in an effective, efficient and customer-oriented manner.

Increasing Resilience, Focusing Efforts

Better drought management is one of the priorities of the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) now being implemented by governments with support from the United Nations. Climate
services aim to increase drought resilience by improving climate information and services, especially for the most vulnerable. They will build on fast improving climate prediction capabilities.

The GFCS aims to give global access to improved services for four priority sectors – food security and agriculture, water, health and disaster risk reduction – by the end of 2017.

Technology to tackle drought, by CGIAR Consortium 5 March, 2013
http://www.cgiar.org/consortium-news/technology-to-tackle-drought/

Full Article

As drought tightens its grip in many parts of the developing world, causing human suffering and massive economic losses, planners are turning their attention to promising ways of harnessing science to lessen the impact.

Monitoring and early warning systems, water saving technologies and risk management measures are just some of the strategies being explored for better drought preparedness. A High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP), due to be held in Geneva from March 11-15, will seek to “provide practical insight into useful, science-based actions to address (the) key drought issues,” say organizers.

One promising new tool, developed by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and partners, is helping plant breeders to comb through plant genetic resource collections more rapidly and accurately – to identify precious traits such as drought tolerance, resistance to extreme temperatures or diseases that are now more prevalent due to changing climate patterns. Scientists will then be able to use these characteristics to create crop varieties that can withstand higher temperatures and need less water.

ICARDA reports that its tool – Focused Identification of Germplasm Strategy (FIGS) – is bringing researchers closer to the 6 million crop genetic resources housed in the world’s 1700 agricultural genebanks. Using a set of sophisticated algorithms FIGS iterates masses of plant genetic information – matching agro-ecological data with data on plant traits and characteristics.

Remote sensing for crop forecasts

Meanwhile, a joint project between the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), the International Research Institute for Climate and Society at Columbia University (IRI) and NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) is exploring how satellite data can improve the accuracy of crop yield forecasting. Crop yield predictions can be useful for agricultural insurance schemes and help improve the resilience of rural livelihoods and food systems to climate-related risk. A CCAFS blog reveals that promising results in using remote sensing to forecast crop performance on large-scale farms is now being followed up by research into how to adapt these techniques for smallholder farms.

In parts of India, where rainfed rice production is the major livelihood of farmers, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) scientists are using time series satellite imagery to map communities prone to drought and other stresses. The information generated will enable rice scientists and planners to
develop adaptive measures and help farmers vulnerable to drought to reduce their losses by using improved varieties and appropriate crop management technologies.

Time-honored systems have long stored precious water in underground cisterns in countries such as Iraq and Syria. But from the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) comes news of how this member of the CGIAR Consortium is working with partners to investigate technology that could use below ground storage to alleviate both floods and drought.

Focusing on Thailand’s Chao Phraya River basin, scientists are seeking to harness natural processes to “turn the menace of floodwater into an opportunity.” The scheme involves providing incentives to farmers to allow parts of their land to percolate floodwaters and storing that water below ground for times of drought.

**Insurance pays off for farmers**

Insurance for farmers is proving an effective risk management strategy for drought prone areas in Africa and India. The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), which has been instrumental in developing index-based livestock insurance in the Marsabit district of northern Kenya and the nearby Borana region of southern Ethiopia, says the system is providing valuable protection for vulnerable pastoralists in some of the world’s harshest climates.

“In most of East Africa . . . insurance and similar types of risk management tools are not available to vulnerable pastoralists or smallholder farmers,” ILRI researcher Andrew Mude, told an ILRI blog. “Without insurance, herders’ families have little protection against the hunger and poverty that can come as a result of a significant drought.”

Calculations for payments are based on satellite images from NASA, which show the state of vegetation, an indicator of livestock health. The insurance pays out when evidence shows that drought stricken grazing lands are so poor that herders are expected to lose at least 15 percent of their herd.

In India, technology is being used to offer weather-based insurance to protect farmers from the impact of extreme weather events such as drought. The scheme uses a network of weather stations together with crop modeling and statistical techniques to work out the relationships between crop output and weather parameters. Farmers are insured against crop yield loss using a pre-established weather index.

Citing the system as an impressive model for climate smart agriculture, CCFAS explains that farmers receive an automatic payout when the weather veers above or below this mean level. Premium costs are affordable since insurance companies do not have to visit farmers’ fields to assess losses. More than 9 million farmers had signed up for the insurance program by the 2010/2011 growing season.

“Drought has major implications in terms of human lives lost and, increasingly, in terms of short-term and long-term economic losses,” says the draft declaration from top government officials due to attend the upcoming meeting on drought. “Societies need to be empowered with improved preparedness plans and related measures for better management of drought risks.”

Drought has also been described as “by far the most damaging of all natural disasters”. Exploration of technologies to build insurance, crop prediction and water conservation schemes form a crucial step on the path to ensuring that drought prone countries are better able to withstand the impact when disaster strikes.
Agribusiness


Full Article

Africa’s farmers and agribusinesses could create a trillion-dollar food market by 2030 if they can expand their access to more capital, electricity, better technology and irrigated land to grow high-value nutritious foods, and if African governments can work more closely with agribusinesses to feed the region’s fast-growing urban population, according to a new World Bank report launched today.

According to the Growing Africa: Unlocking the Potential of Agribusiness report, Africa’s food systems, currently valued at US$313 billion a year from agriculture, could triple if governments and business leaders radically rethink their policies and support to agriculture, farmers, and agribusinesses, which together account for nearly 50 percent of Africa’s economic activity.

“The time has come for making African agriculture and agribusiness a catalyst for ending poverty,” says Makhtar Diop, World Bank Vice President for Africa Region. “We cannot overstate the importance of agriculture to Africa’s determination to maintain and boost its high growth rates, create more jobs, significantly reduce poverty, and grow enough cheap, nutritious food to feed its families, export its surplus crops, while safeguarding the continent’s environment.”

*Agribusiness: strong growth opportunities*

Due to a combination of population growth, rising incomes and urbanization, strong demand is driving global food and agricultural prices higher. Supply issues – slowing yield growth of major food crops, slowdown in research spending, land degradation and water scarcity issues, and a changing climate all mean that prices will remain high. In this new market climate, Africa has great potential for expanding its food and agricultural exports.

Africa holds almost 50 percent of the world’s uncultivated land which is suited for growing food crops, comprising as many as 450 million hectares that are not forested, protected, or densely populated. Africa uses less than 2 percent of its renewable water sources, compared to a world average of five percent. Its harvests routinely yield far less than their potential and, for mainstay food crops such as maize the yield gap is as wide as 60 to 80 percent. Post-harvest losses run 15 to 20 percent for cereals and are higher for perishable products due to poor storage and other farm infrastructure.

African countries can tap into booming markets in rice, maize, soybeans, sugar, palm oil, biofuel and feedstock and emerge as major exporters of these commodities on world markets similar to the successes scored by Latin America and Southeast Asia. For Sub-Saharan Africa, the most dynamic sectors are likely to be rice, feed grains, poultry, dairy, vegetable oils, horticulture and processed foods to supply domestic markets.

The report cautions that even as land will be needed for some agribusiness investments, such acquisitions can threaten people’s livelihoods and create local opposition unless land purchases or
leases are conducted according to ethical and socially responsible standards, including recognizing local users’ rights, thorough consultations with local communities, and fair market-rate compensation for land acquired.

“Improving Africa’s agriculture and agribusiness sectors means higher incomes and more jobs. It also allows Africa to compete globally. Today, Brazil, Indonesia and Thailand each export more food products than all of sub-Saharan Africa combined. This must change,” says Jamal Saghir, World Bank Director for Sustainable Development in the Africa Region.

Value Chains are essential

Rice: Africa has become a major consumer and importer of rice, and Africans import half the rice they eat and pay top dollar for it, $3.5 billion per year and more. Ghana and Senegal are significant importers. Senegal is competitive among its neighbors, but it is held back by the difficulty farmers have in accessing land, capital, finance for irrigation expansion and appropriate crop varieties. Ghana produces fewer varieties of rice than Senegal, but at significantly higher cost, and levies 40 percent tariffs and other charges on imports. Poor grain quality, cleanliness and packaging are major deterrents for consumers constraining the sector’s performance.

Maize: A food staple for many Africans, maize is grown on 25 million hectares or 14 percent of cropped land. In Zambia where people eat on average 133 kilograms of cereals a year, maize provides half the calories in their diets. Zambia is competitive when importing maize but fails on exports. High transport costs, higher labor costs and lower yields combine to increase costs by one-third compared to Thailand, a major international producer of rain-fed maize. The report argues that Zambia’s future competitiveness depends on raising yields, reducing costs, and removing disincentives for the private sector in markets and trade.

In addition, the study reviewed value chains for cocoa in Ghana and dairy and green beans in Kenya.

“African farmers and businesses must be empowered through good policies, increased public and private investments and strong public-private partnerships,” says Gaiv Tata, World Bank Director for Financial and Private Sector Development in Africa. “A strong agribusiness sector is vital for Africa's economic future.”

Solutions

Agriculture and agribusiness should be at the top of the development and business agenda in Sub-Saharan Africa. The report calls for strong leadership and commitment for both public and private sectors. As comparators, the report cites case studies from Uruguay, Indonesia and Malaysia. For success, engaging with strategic “good practice” investors is critical, as is the strengthening of safeguards, land administration systems, and screening investments for sustainable growth.

The report notes that Africa can also draw on many local successes to guide governments and investors toward positive economic, social and environmental outcomes.
Agricultural Development

**Agriculture Minister discusses $11.6m supplementary estimates.** Government Information Service Dominica, 7 March 2013

**Full Article**

Debates by Government and Opposition Parliamentarians on the Supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year ending June 30th, 2012 continued when the Parliament resumed on Tuesday.

Agriculture Minister, Hon. Matthew Walter in his presentation gave support to the supplementary appropriation of eleven million six hundred and thirty-four thousand four hundred and eighty-four dollars and three cents.

The Minister noted that this figure represents tangible evidence of Government’s prudent financial management principles.

“This amount of money represents seventy-seven percent of grant funds in contrast to twenty-two percent of local funds and one percent of loans. In essence, we can conclude that, this manner of expenditure represents a tangible evidence of prudent financial management by this Government.”

The Agriculture Minister in responding to items under his portfolio spoke of Government’s efforts to manage the Black Sigatoka Disease.

The Minister confirmed to the House that from the period July to December 2012, a total of six hundred thousand dollars was spent on managing the dreaded disease.

“Mr. Speaker, the total budget or the expenditure for Black Sigatoka is in the amount of 286 thousand dollars. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the Government of this country has ordered additional chemicals, in excess of 360 thousand dollars, so in total, we have invested in excess of 600,000 dollars in the fight against Black Sigatoka Disease.”

The Minister disclosed that Government over the past few months has been working to manage the Black Sigatoka which has been confirmed to be present in the south, central and north east regions of the island.

Minister Walter further informed the House that Black Sigatoka was recently found on plantain farms in Wesley and Concord.

The Minister called on members of the Opposition to join in the fight to eradicate the Black Sigatoka on the island.

“It is a fight. This is why I have made that genuine call on the Opposition to join in the fight. It’s not going to be a tug of war, it’s not going to be done in a divided manner but in a concerted manner that...
all hands must be on deck to be able to fight Black Sigatoka in this country because if we do not do it collectively it is evident that it will severely damage the agricultural sector in this country.”

The Minister also spoke of Government’s efforts to contain the Citrus Greening Disease now affecting citrus trees on the island. He disclosed the Ministry’s decision to cut affected plants.

The Minister also told the House that the citrus propagation facility at the Botanic Gardens has been very useful in assisting farmers who need replacement citrus plants.

Minister Walter also confirmed that a total of eighteen thousand five hundred and sixty-six citrus plants have already been distributed to farmers island wide.

Caroni workers receiving 2-acre plots – Seemungal by The Government Information Service of Trinidad and Tobago, 6 March, 2013

Full Article

Approximately 2,000 former Caroni (1975) Limited workers have received their two acre agricultural plots. This was announced by Minister of State in the Ministry of Food Production, Jairam Seemungal.

Speaking at the press conference on the Disbursement of EU Grant Funds, Minister Seemungal noted that as part of their voluntary separation packages former Caroni (1975) workers were promised two acres of state land to use for agricultural purposes.

He explained that the Ministry of Food Production, through the Commissioner of State Lands, and in collaboration with the Chief State Solicitor's Office, which falls under the Attorney General's Ministry was handling the distribution of the land.

"As of February 22, 2011, the Chief State Solicitors Office has noted that some 6,793 leases has been offered by the Commissioner of State lands to former Caroni workers; 4,800 leases have been received by the Chief State Solicitors Office and 4,584 have been prepared and about 2,000 have been distributed," Seemungal said.

He added that the Food Production Ministry would continue to help these farmers to become productive and increase their level of food production.

Planning and Sustainable Development Minister, Bhoendradatt Tewarie noted that about 2,400 farmers had received farmer related training, 3,343 sugar cane farmers had received over $81.5 million under the compensation package, and compensation packages for the over 9,000 plus former Caroni workers at an estimated $838 million (which includes salary arrears and severance payments) were agreed on and paid as well as the development of access road programs for more than 17 agricultural estates with 28 sub-divisions comprising 18,436 acres and 7,408 2-acre plots.
TT gets $350 million in EU grants by The Government Information Service of Trinidad and Tobago, 5 March, 2013  

**Full Article**

Trinidad and Tobago has received approximately $350 million in grants from the European Union to support its exit from the sugar industry. This is according to Planning and Sustainable Development Minister, Bhoendradatt Tewarie.

"Today the government of Trinidad and Tobago in receiving the final disbursement from the European Union which concludes the funding commitments of the EU Multiannual indicators program. Through the program Trinidad and Tobago has received a total sum of Euro $43.3 million (approximately TT$350 million) in grant resources to support this country's exit from the Sugar Industry," Tewarie said at the Eric Williams Financial Complex.

He added that Trinidad and Tobago will receive an additional $31.7 million Euros from another phase of the Multiannual Indicative Program 2011-2013.

Daniela Tramacere, the EU Delegation in Trinidad and Tobago's Charge d'Affaires said the organisation wants to see the tangible results of these grants in affordable food for the population and an improvement in income for local farmers.

Tewarie, in an immediate response said there had been an increase in the number of jobs created in the agricultural sector. This was a one percent increase which was between 700 to 800 new jobs and the $4 billion annual food import bill was down by $100 million as of the end of September 2012.

He noted that Government expected the food import bill to decrease even further as the mega farms impact the local food sector.

The Minister also referred to the Annual Report on Performance 2012 which revealed that food inflation had decreased from 29 percent to 22 percent.

Senator urges youth to get involved in farming. Jamaica Information Service, 5 March 2013  

**Full Article**

Young persons are again being urged to get involved in agriculture, so they can significantly contribute to the country’s food security and continued economic growth.

This call came from Government Senator, Floyd Morris, as he addressed the Kingston 4-H Club’s annual Parish Achievement Day, held recently at the Excelsior High School’s Mountain View Avenue location.

He said that agriculture is one of the critical planks for production and economic development, with the sector contributing some eight per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per annum. He said it is
important for the youth to understand that they have a key role to play in the development of the sector.

“It is extremely important that our young people…get involved in meaningful agricultural production because that is what is needed if Jamaica is to see the transformation and the sustainable economic growth that we need in our society,” Senator Morris stated.

He lamented that many young people tend to scoff at agriculture.

“They say agriculture is not a ‘sweet boy’ work or a ‘pretty girl’ job. They believe that agriculture is akin to an old man in a hat and ‘pitchy patchy’ pants and water boots, so they don’t want to get involved in agriculture,” Senator Morris said.

The Senator argued, however, that agriculture involves much more than toiling away in the field, noting that technological advancements have transformed the sector.

“For agriculture to be successful it has to be technologically driven and that is what we will have to instill in our young people and also to put in the necessary measures so that young people can access the technology to get into agricultural production,” he noted.

Senator Morris also emphasised the need to increase production to ensure food security and to reduce the high import bill of some US$1 billion per annum.

He commended members of the 4-H movement “for the tremendous role that you have been playing in terms of us achieving food security and ultimately, to put us on a path of sustainable economic growth.”

He further urged young people in the movement to ensure their involvement in agriculture continues after they leave school.

**Haiti - Agriculture : Taiwan gave $10MM for agricultural recovery** by Haiti Libre 3 March, 2013

**Full Article**

Friday, as part of recovery plan of agriculture implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture designed to meet 60 to 70% of food needs of the country, at the end of term of President Martelly, a memorandum of understanding was signed by Pierre Richard Casimir, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) accredited in Haiti, Bang-Zyh Liu.

In this memorandum, the Taiwanese government undertakes to make available to Haiti $10 million over a period of 4 years to increase the development of the cereal sector in the plain of Torbeck and certain zones in the plain of the valley of Les Cayes. Following the term of this agreement, 2 million will be disbursed in 2013, 3.25 million in 2014, 2.5 million in 2015 and 2.25 million in 2016.

In his speech, Ambassador Taiwanese declard, "It was time for Haiti and Taiwan to engage in the fight for the recovery of agricultural production, given the difficulties faced by the sector [...] What is
important is that this agreement concretizes the willingness of both governments to give Haitian farmers the means to enable them to become self-sufficient and more efficient.”

For his part, Pierre Richard Casimir thanked the Taiwanese government for his contribution and commitment to support the efforts of the Haitian government, aiming the effective recovery of production and the strengthening of food security in Haiti, stressing the good relations of cooperation between the two Nations.

**TT Food Production minister visits Guyana** by the Ministry of Agriculture Guyana, 1 March, 2013  

**Full Article**

Minister of State in the Ministry of Food Production of Trinidad and Tobago, Jairam Seemungal has praised Guyana’s agriculture development, crediting it as a country with the ability to become one that can feed the entire Caribbean.

The Trinidadian Minister of Food Production was at the time in the company of Minister of Agriculture Dr. Leslie Ramsammy and Agronomist within the Ministry of Food Production of Trinidad and Tobago, Nigel Grant addressing the media this morning at the Ministry of Agriculture, Regent Street.

The session was called by Minister Ramsammy to shed light on the outcome of were facilitated with the aim of identifying areas for the two countries to collaborate towards ensuring their food security.

Areas identified for collaboration surround the issues emerging out of the Jagdeo initiative—which identifies nine-key binding constraints in terms of food security and nutrition for the Caribbean, Minister Ramsammy said. He identified these areas for collaboration as; the countries’ and the region’s high import bill, the high tariff within the region, agriculture research and agro-processing.

The region’s food import bill has been of concern to all the governments in the Caribbean, Minister Ramsammy said. “Under the Jagdeo initiative, our various governments have been addressing this issue of the high food importation bill and looking to see how within our countries we could produce some of the things we import and within the region that we could collaborate with each other so that we can reduce importation from outside of the region.”

He stated that, “We are not proud of the fact that the Caribbean has the distinction of being the worst sub-region of the world when it comes to food importation. At least seven countries in our region today average an importation bill of more than US$500 per capita and a net food producer like Guyana has a per capita food importation bill of $250 per year. And this is in a world where the average importation per capita is $66,” he added.

There is also the high cost of moving food around the Caribbean which Trinidad has already taken steps to address.

He said that Guyana and Trinidad are hoping to collaborate to assist each other to better satisfy the Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures and agreement of all Caricom countries, so there can be more export of their goods in the region.
Collaboration in the area of research will see both countries tapping into the expertise of each other and other Caribbean territories as well. The objective is to create what he terms, ‘Centres of Excellence’ across the region in which each country will be known and recognised for its specialty in an area of agriculture research, and from which all can benefit. This will reduce the need for the countries to have to replicate the area of research, a task that would be very costly to the country, he said.

Trinidad as a country is dependent on oil, and its natural resources. Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has given a mandate to the new administration and in particular the Ministers in the Ministry of Food Production to reduce the country’s food import bill by 50 percent. Trinidad is hoping to tap into Guyana, in meeting this mandate, Minister Seemungal said.

“In Trinidad and Tobago, there is a saying, we cannot eat oil or we cannot drink it, all we want to do is feel comfortable that we can grow some of the food that we eat. We will never be able to grow all the food we eat in Trinidad,” he said.

The Trinidadian Minister said that Guyana has done tremendous research in some of the areas that the country has been exploring and noted that his country is especially impressed with Guyana’s work in the area of rice research. Minister Seemungal said that the Rice Research station is one of the best he has seen and comparable with those of Japan, Brazil and others.

He said that Trinidad would never be able to produce one-eighth of Guyana’s expected 2013 rice production. “What you can do however, we can learn from your experience and we can find ways of sharing,” he said. He said that Guyana has in fact been doing a great job in agriculture, “What I have seen of Guyana’s agriculture…Guyana can now compete with the bigger production countries in terms of food security. Guyana in fact can be one of the countries that feed the entire Caribbean”

The visiting Minister praised Guyana’s overall development. “Traversing various extremes of the countries, for my team it has really given us an experience in that we are now viewing agriculture in a different light. Guyana has been a pleasing experience in what the outside perception of the country is about, this is my first visit to Guyana actually, and I am pleasantly surprised to see the amount of development…what you all are able to do, and what you have done over the last two years in agriculture in particular I have seen more rice here than I ever seen in a lifetime”.

The outcome of the meeting is to be discussed at the Cabinet level of both countries, and the specific projects agreed upon are to be made public in two weeks’ time.
Upcoming Events

March 2013

High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy
Date: 11-15 March 2013
Location: Geneva
Description: The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and other partners will hold a High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy on 11-15 March 2013 in Geneva to focus on drought preparedness and management policies.
Information: http://www.hmndp.org/

2013 Climate Smart Agriculture Global Science Conference
Date: 20-22 March 2013
Venue: University of California
Location: Davis, California, USA
Description: The 2013 Climate Smart Agriculture Global Science Conference promises to bring three important issues under the spotlight: farm and food systems; landscape and regional issues; and the integrative and transformative institutional and policy aspects that will bridge across scales to link science and practice to ensure food security, poverty alleviation and multiple ecosystem services.
Information: http://ccafs.cgiar.org/events/20/mar/2013/climate-smart-agriculture-global-science-conference

April 2013

Adoption of Biotech Crops in the Developing World: Case Studies of Farmers from China, India and the Philippines
Date: 2-3 April 2013
Location: Manila, Philippines
Description: The John Templeton Foundation, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), the National Academy of Science And Technology (NAST Philippines) and the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSPII) are co-organizing a conference to present key findings of a research project Adoption and Uptake Pathways of GM/Biotech Crops by Small-scale, Resource-poor Asian Farmers in China, India, and the Philippines and their implications to biotech adoption particularly in developing countries.
Information: http://www.isaaa.org/conference/
May 2013

3rd Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century (GCP21) Strategic Meeting
Date: May 2013
Location: Bellagio, Italy
Description: The 3rd GCP21 Strategic Meeting, which will take place in Bellagio, Italy, in May 2013, will be focused on a daunting question: Is it possible to eradicate cassava viruses in Africa? The select group of 32 scientists and developers from 24 institutions who attend that meeting will focus on the use of a range of technologies to efficiently control cassava viruses.

June 2013

Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century (GCP21) second meeting on cassava landraces
Date: June 2013
Location: Tanzania
Description: Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century (GCP21) second meeting on cassava landraces is scheduled in June 2013 at IITA offices in Tanzania. The meeting’s goal is to deliver products such as draft standard operating procedures to collect, evaluate, preserve and identify these landraces and a roadmap to start the work in East and Central Africa.

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/

July 2013

International Conference on Tropical Roots and Tubers for Sustainable Livelihood under Changing Agro-climate
Date: 9-12 July 2013
Location: Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India
Website: http://isrc.in/internationalconference2013/