

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

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

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Cassava

New farine processing plant for Kalinago Territory by GIS Dominica, 14 August, 2013.

<http://news.gov.dm/index.php/news/4-headline-news/897-new-farine-processing-plant-for-kalinago-territory>

Full Article

Plans are underway for the construction of a Farine Processing Plant at the old boxing plant site in St. Cyr.

The facility is the final component of the Carib Territory Community Capacity Building project funded by the Caribbean Development Bank.

Sylvanie Burton, the Project Coordinator stated that the planning phase of the project is well advanced. She says, “A number of major stakeholders have and continues to be involved for the planning process of this project. These institutions include the Bureau of Standards, Personnel from the Environmental Health Unit, Dexia, CARDI, The Produce Chemists Lab, The Small Business Unit and the National Export Strategy who assisted us with the market research. The Bureau of Standards will very soon provide us with a design brief and a training module to have this component implemented.”

Parliamentary Representative for the Kalinago Territory, Hon. Ashton Graneau is looking forward to the construction of the facility.

He believes it will have a major economic impact on the Territory.

“This factory, in no way competes with or disrupts the operations of the existing mills in the Territory as was previously perceived by some proprietors. The ultimate objective is to add value to the product using farine as a base to provide a variety of packaged items by responding to the market demands in the French West Indies, North America and the Caribbean Region. A project of that nature is no doubt obliged to create sustainable jobs for our people, especially our farmers who will be required to produce manure on a large scale.”

Cereals and Grains

USDA Gives Growers Bullish News by Bryce Knorr, 16 August, 2013

<http://farmfutures.com/story-usda-gives-growers-bullish-news-29-37662>

Full Article

Lower USDA carryout estimates set stage for August weather rally.

Multiple agencies from USDA tag-teamed the grain markets with a series of surprising reports in August. But growing season weather should have the final say about how big crops will be this year.

The weather, of course, caused plenty of uncertainty already this year, which added extra urgency to USDA data releases. That's what caused the agency's Aug. 12 crop production, supply and demand reports to attract even more nail-biting than normal. After a series of bearish reports, this time USDA provided more friendly news, at least for bullish growers.

USDA's first estimates of corn and soybean production based on in-field samples as well as farmer interviews showed both crops were smaller than traders expected. The National Agricultural Statistics service, put corn production at 13.763 billion bushels, more than 200 million bushels below trade guesses, but a record nonetheless. Carryout at the end of the 2013 marketing year 12 months from now would still be burdensome 1.837 billion bushels, keeping average cash prices below \$5, according to another part of USDA, the World Agricultural Outlook Board.

December corn futures tumbled to their lowest level in almost three years in the wake of the report. But that downturn didn't last long. USDA made no changes to its acreage estimates in the Aug. 12 report. However, three days later another part of USDA, the Farm Service Agency, released voluminous data on the acres farmers are required to certify every summer after planting. That report showed farmers were prevented from planting 3.4 million corn acres during the cold, wet spring of 2013.

This rather shocking number appeared to confirm results of Farm Futures survey of farmers, who reported sharply lower acreage this spring as well, making our estimate of a 13.485 billion bushel crop more plausible.

USDA's soybean numbers were also eye-popping. NASS put the soybean crop at 3.255 billion, 165 million less than its previous estimate done through a statistical analysis. Yields were lower than expected, but the agency also found 500,000 fewer planted acres when it resurveyed farmers in 14 states. The FSA certified acres found weather prevented farmers from planting 1.6 million acres this spring, confirming the lower number.

As a result of the smaller crop, the WAOB said projected ending stocks a year from now would fall to 220 million bushels. That's still a comfortable number, if growing season weather cooperates. With dry weather settling in over much of the Midwest in mid-August, that cooperation was anything but sure, especially for soybeans. Prices rallied, making what seemed like disappointing markets a little more interesting.

Corn prices appear to have put in at least an early low after the USDA reports. Now comes the rest of the guessing game: Just how big is the 2013 crop?

While corn pollinated without facing excessive heat in most areas, soils began to dry out after several weeks of disappointing rains. Crop tours will spread out over the Midwest in coming days, while traders hit the highway, too, for vacation and the Labor Day weekend, doing some scouting of their own. Weekly crop condition reports also will be scrutinized for any whiff of deterioration.

However, without signs of visible loss in yield potential, upside from this rally may be limited. Even if the crop is somewhat smaller, carryout could still double because demand may be slow to recover from the stressed levels of the drought year. Warmer weather is also adding growing degree days, removing some of the threat from a freeze in September.

Our survey showed farmers have priced less of their 2013 production than normal, so this rally is a chance to get caught up on sales. Higher soybean prices could help put in a floor for the corn market,

but serious rallies will take a significant decline in production. Deferred futures for stored inventory have moved into our projected \$4.68 to \$5.30 target range for selling unless the crop is much smaller.

Soybeans are making noise again, rallying November futures more than \$1 in just a week. That's not the only good news for prices. China is aggressively buying soybeans, helping early sales reach record levels for the period before the start of the marketing year. That's an indication that our biggest customer thinks prices were cheap, and reflects optimism that a stabilizing economy will keep the need for soybeans growing at a strong clip in the year ahead.

Seasonal trends also support a rally after the August crop report. There's typically production uncertainty in the U.S., but the market also rallies into September to convince growers in South America to plant all the soybeans they can. Farmers in both Brazil and Argentina want to shift some ground back to soybeans this year from corn, and this rally won't hurt that desire. Growers in Brazil also benefit from the stronger dollar, which gives them more purchasing power in their weak local currency.

If the crop doesn't get any bigger, a sales target for futures of \$12.80 to \$14.10 looks possible, if demand stays strong. But before holding out, make sure to get caught up on sales at least to 35% of expected production. Revenue Protection crop insurance should provide upside protection with November futures closer to the policies' base price of \$12.87.

Wheat prices keep getting positive news – and keep struggling to confirm harvest lows.

USDA Aug. 12 cut its forecast of 2013 ending stocks by 25 million bushels to 551 million, thanks to stronger early season exports. China and Brazil are both buying more U.S. wheat, though sales to North Africa and the Middle East are sparse.

However, while it cut carryout, USDA also lowered its forecast average price for the crop to \$7, recognizing the reality of both lower wheat and corn prices as well.

The market could still rally into the fall, if dry conditions from long-term drought on parts of the Plains hamper seeding of winter wheat. But soil moisture in Kansas is much improved, so rallies could be limited. Growers also should be watching July futures in Kansas City and Chicago, because the discovery period for crop insurance base prices is underway. Making weekly sales of planned 2014 production that exceeds the bushels you expect to cover with Revenue Protection is a good idea.

Also take advantage of good basis for wheat in many areas. Storing for gains in a world that has all the wheat it needs looks risky this year.

Fruits and Vegetables

Mexican papaya variety promises high yield. Fresh Fruit Portal, 13 August 2013
<http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2013/08/14/mexican-papaya-variety-promises-high-yield/?country=trinidad%20and%20tobago>

Full Article

Mexican researchers have released the new high-yielding papaya variety that is expected to satisfy both domestic and export markets.

The MSXJ variety, which is a cross of red-fleshed cultivars, is slated to have high heat tolerance during flowering and fruit development, according to its developers at the National Institute for Forestry, Agriculture and Livestock (INIFAP).

Its heat endurance, as well as size and disease resistance, is an inherited trait from parent variety Maradol.

During evaluations in Michoacán, the hybrid yielded 132 tons (MT) of fruit per hectare, compared to Maradol's 71MT.

INIFAP estimated that it will be possible to increase production by 53.7% over current Maradol output.

Average national production in Mexico currently comes in at 50.11 MT per hectare. In Michoacán, production is lower at 32.3MT per hectare.

MSXJ is recommended for planting in the spring and summer months of May or June in Mexico, with 2,500 plants per hectare.

More than 2,000 hectares of papaya are currently planted in Michoacán, according to Mexico's Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA).

Last year, Mexico harvested an estimated 14,226ha and produced almost 713,000MT.

California citrus farmers import a parasitic wasp from Pakistan to battle citrus greening, a disease threatening their groves by Ricardo Lopez. Los Angeles Times. Business, 4 August 2013
<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-predator-wasp-20130804-dto,0,2567489.htmlstory>

Full Article

Pesticides haven't worked. Quarantines have been useless. Now California citrus farmers have hired an assassin to knock off the intruder threatening their orchards.

The killer-for-hire is *Tamarixia radiata*, a tiny parasitic wasp imported from Pakistan.

Its mission: Rub out the Asian citrus psyllid, which has helped spread a disease that turns citrus fruit lumpy and bitter before destroying the trees.

The pest is wreaking havoc in Florida's 32 citrus-growing counties. In California, it's been detected in nine counties, most of them south of the commercial growing areas in the Central Valley. Farmers are hoping the *Tamarixia* wasp can help keep it that way.

The wasp, which flew coach in a carry-on bag from Pakistan's Punjab region, is a parasite half the size of a chocolate sprinkle. But it kills psyllids like a horror movie monster, drinking their blood like a vampire. The female wasp can lay an egg in the psyllid's belly. When it hatches, it devours its host.

The wasp "is going to be our number one weapon to control to Asian citrus psyllid," said Mark Hoddle, an invasive species expert at UC Riverside, who, over several trips, brought legions of wasps to California.

"We have no other choice except to use this natural enemy or do nothing. And the 'do nothing' option is unacceptable."

A tiny parasitic wasp imported from Pakistan is used to attack nymphs of Asian citrus psyllids.

So far, Hoddle and his teams have released more than 75,000 wasps across the Southland to beat back the disease, known as *huanglongbing* or citrus greening. The malady was first detected in California last November in a backyard citrus tree in Hacienda Heights.

The disease can lie dormant for a few years before tests are able to detect it, so experts suspect other trees are already infected.

"We're looking for a needle in the haystack before it sticks us," said Joel Nelsen, president of the California Citrus Mutual, a trade group.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has enacted quarantines in nine states, including Florida, Texas and California. The quarantines prohibit interstate movement of citrus trees and require labeling of citrus nursery stocks from areas where greening has been detected.

In California, the quarantine covers nine counties. The northern border of the quarantine region had stretched across Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties, but on Wednesday, agriculture officials expanded it to 178 square miles in Tulare County where the psyllid was detected.

That recent discovery raises the fear that the pest is creeping into prime citrus growing areas. It could threaten California's \$2-billion industry, which accounts for about 80% of the U.S. fresh market citrus production. Florida's citrus is primarily processed for juice.

Since 2010, California growers have spent about \$15 million yearly to fight the psyllid. Much of that money goes toward massive detection and awareness efforts. That's on top of millions the federal government and state Department of Food and Agriculture have kicked in.

The psyllids don't kill citrus trees. They're merely the agent that spreads *huanglongbing*. An infected psyllid acts much like a dirty syringe flying from tree to tree, feeding and depositing a bacterium each time it unfurls its stinger.

Whether the killer wasp can bring the psyllid to heel remains to be seen.

Florida growers imported a strain of the wasp from Vietnam, but it proved ineffective. The predator never took hold, partly because there was not enough genetic diversity needed to establish a population, researchers said. Some Florida growers now are looking to develop genetically modified citrus that would be immune to greening — a controversial strategy that could turn off consumers.

In California, farmers are betting on the wasp — and on Hoddle and his wife, Christina. The UC entomology experts have spent their careers helping control invasive species around the world.

Since late 2011, they have been releasing the wasp, mainly in Los Angeles County. Agriculture officials halted pesticide spraying in the county this year, partly because it proved too cumbersome. Six out of 10 citrus trees in the county grow in backyards, making large-scale containment efforts difficult.

"This is ground zero for our war," Hoddle said.

The goal is to reduce the psyllid population and provide a line of defense between urban areas in Southern California and the commercial growing zones.

Hoddles and teams they've trained have been going neighborhood to neighborhood releasing thousands of wasps and tracking the parasites' success.

The Hoddles conducted extensive testing to make sure the wasp wouldn't disrupt California's ecosystem, considering that past efforts at introducing non-native species have gone awry.

To satisfy the federal government's concerns, the Hoddles quarantined the wasp for 18 months and performed several experiments to see whether it would attack native species. Time after time, the wasp attacked only the Asian citrus psyllid. After the researchers submitted a 60-page report to the Department of Agriculture, the release program was green lighted. The wasp poses no danger to humans or pets, Hoddle said.

On a recent weekday, the Hoddles drove to Pico Rivera. It was their third trip to the area, where most of the homes have unfenced front yards, providing easy access.

The back of their Toyota SUV contained their tools: a cooler with vials of wasps, a clipboard with log sheets and equipment to inspect citrus trees.

At each tree on their route, the procedure was the same: For one full minute, they circled the tree, counting the psyllids and looking for evidence that the wasp was preying on them. The psyllid, about the size of an aphid, is easy to spot.

The first few trees were unremarkable, and the Hoddles wondered whether the wasps had survived the winter.

Still, "It's good. We're finding clean citrus," Hoddle said before walking another yard.

It's still too early to say the wasp releases are working, Christina Hoddle said. To confidently conclude that the wasp is slashing the psyllid's numbers, at least three years of data are needed.

While the team is only about 18 months into the effort, some areas have shown promise. At some release sites, the psyllid population has been drastically cut.

At one of the last homes they visited, the Hoddles saw just how densely the psyllids can congregate. After getting permission to enter a fenced yard, they were dismayed to see one small, shrubby tree crawling with psyllids.

The pest had blanketed some of the branches in a sugary wax, an excrement of young psyllids.

The tree would need more aggressive treatment. Instead of one vial of wasps, Mark Hoddle reached for two.

He carefully opened the first one, placing a small tree branch directly inside the vial's opening.

The wasps wasted no time. "They're all over these guys!" he said. "They're going to town."

After a few minutes, he tied the vial to the tree with a wire. The last wasps would wander out on their own later.

As their work wrapped up for the day, the Hoddles headed back to their car.

They would be visiting another neighborhood the next day. The battle would be a long slog, with no certain outcome.

"California has been preparing for this day," Mark Hoddle said. "It'll be hard to fault the citrus industry. I think they've done everything possible."

Agro-energy

Want better biofuels? Get the wood out by Robert F. Service. Science Now, 15 August 2013

<http://news.sciencemag.org/biology/2013/08/want-better-biofuels-get-wood-out>

Full Article

Wood is strong, abundant, and cheap. But when it comes to the hot prospect of turning trees and agricultural waste into an energy source for cars and trucks, wood gets in the way. Now, scientists say they've found a possible solution to this difficulty, one that could dramatically reduce the cost of tomorrow's fuels.

The problem with wood is a component in its cell walls known as lignin, which confers rigidity. Engineers must first remove the lignin to get to the sugar-rich cellulose in plants, which they ferment into alcohol-based fuel. Researchers have been looking for ways to reduce the amount of lignin in trees and plants without harming their ability to grow.

It's no easy task. Lignin isn't like other long-chain biological molecules. DNA and RNA, for example, are copied directly from molecular templates. Lignin's structure, by contrast, is more haphazard. Plants generate a series of molecular building blocks called monomers that are sent to cellular reaction chambers. Here, the monomers link together in branching chains. But the exact structure depends on the concentration of the individual monomers, which varies slightly in different plant species. Ultimately, the branching lignin wraps around the sugar-rich cellulose fibers that make up the bulk of the plant, strengthening the cell walls and supporting the tubelike vessels that transport food and water up the stem.

For the last decade, plant biochemists have thought they knew all there was to know about the steps involved in synthesizing lignin. For example, they thought that in one key process, a single enzyme carried out two different jobs. But when tests failed to lend conclusive support, Wout Boerjan, a molecular geneticist at Ghent University in Belgium, suspected there was more to the story.

So Boerjan and his colleagues ran genetic screens of the genes expressed in *Arabidopsis thaliana*, a small plant commonly studied in biological laboratories. When the researchers determined which genes were active in plants that were making lignin, they noticed one that hadn't been identified as central to lignin biosynthesis, a gene for an enzyme called caffeoyl shikimate esterase (CSE). They then engineered *Arabidopsis* plants so they didn't have the CSE gene. As the researchers report online today in *Science*, the plants still grew. [But they contained 36% less lignin and were about a third smaller than their unaltered counterparts](#). They also didn't droop or fall over, though some of their vessels for transporting food and water collapsed. Still, when the shorter plants were dried, cut up, and processed, they yielded four times the amount of sugar-rich cellulose as did the unaltered plants. What's more, they gave up this extra cellulose without the expensive high-temperature processing usually required to remove the lignin prior to fermenting biofuels.

"That's an extremely valuable observation," says Clint Chapple, a biochemist at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. **The work provides hope that if the same gene-removal technique works in poplar trees and other biofuel crops, it could significantly decrease the cost of making fuel, he says. That, in turn, could obviate the need for making biofuels from corn, sugar, and other food crops and thereby reduce the need for using prime agricultural land to grow biofuels.** Because

lignin removal is also required when making paper and a variety of chemicals from plants, the new technique could reduce the costs of these processes as well, Boerjan says.

Boerjan also suggests that lignin-modified trees and plants may be engineered to grow as well as their unmodified cousins. When lignin is reduced in the vessels that transport food and water, plants tend to be stunted or not grow at all. But other researchers have previously shown that it's possible to engineer plants so that lignin remains high in the vessels but is reduced in plant cell walls, allowing these plants to grow just as tall as their unaltered cousins. By using genetic engineering to restore the plant's vessel lignin, Boerjan thinks researchers may be able to produce plants that appear just as tall and vibrant as their unaltered cousins but that are far easier and cheaper to convert to biofuels, paper, and chemicals. If so, that would give the burgeoning bio-based economy, which is struggling to replace petroleum derived products with versions made from renewables, much needed support.

Soil and Water Management

Soil biodiversity crucial to land management and response to climate change. University of Manchester News, 13 Aug 2013

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/news/display/?id=10521>

Full Article

Research by scientists at The University of Manchester shows maintaining healthy soil biodiversity can play an important role in optimising land management programmes to reap benefits from the living soil.

The findings, published in the latest edition of the journal PNAS, extend the understanding about the factors that regulate soil biodiversity.

The team says more research on soil food webs – the community of organisms living all or part of their lives in the soil - and their response to land use and climate change could also improve predictions of climate change impacts on ecosystems.

In one of the largest studies of its kind, a team of researchers from across Europe looked at soil in 60 sites across four countries, the UK, Sweden, Greece and the Czech Republic, to assess the role of soil food webs in nutrient cycles in agricultural soils. Soil food webs describe the community of organisms living all or part of their lives in the soil and their complex living system interacting with other substances such as carbon and nitrogen. The study shows for the first time that there is a strong link between soil organisms and the overall functioning of ecosystems.

Until now most studies which have investigated the reduction of soil biodiversity and how this carbon and nitrogen cycling have been laboratory-based or focused on one group of organisms in the soil rather than the wider picture. This is the first time researchers have looked at the entire

community of organisms. The team explored soil found under land used in various ways including intensive wheat rotation farming and permanent grassland. It found there were consistent links between soil organisms and soil food web properties and ecosystem functioning on a large scale, across European countries.

Dr Franciska De vries, from The University of Manchester's Faculty of Life Sciences who was lead author of the research, said: "We found that the condition of the soil was less tied to how the land was used and more influenced by the soil food web properties.

"Soils contain a vast diversity of organisms which are crucially important for humans. These organisms help capture carbon dioxide (CO₂) which is crucial for helping to reduce global warming and climate change.

"This research highlights the importance of soil organisms and demonstrates that there is a whole beneath our feet, inhabited by small creatures that we can't even see most of the time. By liberating nitrogen for plant growth and locking up carbon in the soil they play an important role in supporting life on Earth."

The researchers hope the findings will help in predicting how land use and climate change will impact on ecosystems and looking at ways to minimise negative changes.

Dr De vries, from The University of Manchester, said: "Soil biodiversity is under threat by a range of pressures such as urbanisation, climate change, pollution and expanding production of food, fibre and biofuel but the topic remains severely understudied.

"We hope that this research will in the longer term will help us to devise ways for farmers, landowners and conservation agencies to optimise the way they manage land to reap benefits from the living soil and reduce carbon emissions."

The research also involved Professor Richard Bardgett, from The University of Manchester. The study was part of the EU 7th framework project Soilservice, led by Katarina Hedlund from Lund University, Sweden.

The research is published by PNAS this week (week beginning 12 August). Full reference: "Soil food web properties explain ecosystem services across European land use systems" with a manuscript tracking number of 2013-05198RR in online Early Edition (EE).

Agricultural Development

Time to take the drudgery out of Agriculture by Ashlee Cox, 17 August, 2013

<http://www.barbadosadvocate.com/newsitem.asp?more=local&NewsID=31939>

Full Article

WITH agriculture facing many challenges at this present time, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management (MAFFW) decided that it was time to place much more emphasis on this sector.

To that end, they have launched an inaugural Agricultural Science, Technology and Innovation Competition. Under the theme, ‘Improving Lives Through Innovation in Agricultural Science and Technology’, Deputy Chief Agricultural Officer, Charleston Lucas, has challenged Barbadians to ‘take the drudgery out of Agriculture’.

“The Ministry, this year, thought that we needed to place an emphasis in agriculture, in terms of looking at ways and means in which we could have a greater thrust forward,” he noted.

Speaking at the 2nd Workshop for the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST), held at the Ivan Harewood Centre, Christ Church, he explained that there was a strong link between food, health and productivity.

Explaining that for this competition, they were looking mainly for innovative ideas, he stressed that such ideas also needed to be commercial and easily implemented.

“So we thought that we would have a competition where we zoned in on agriculture and what we are asking is for a new idea, a creative idea, something useful,” he noted.

Continuing, he stated, “We are talking about innovation, that just means there is knowledge out there, ideas and some little things being done and what we want persons to do is just to harness them together. Use this knowledge and create something that is useful to agriculture, take some of the drudgery out of agriculture. Enable us to increase efficiency in probably somewhere in farming, marketing or the production side.”

Stating that it was important that the idea could be implemented almost right away, or at least ‘very soon’, he explained that it also needed to increase productivity, which would have a great positive impact on being competitive, which should result in larger quantities being sold.

To those interested, he noted that the deadline for a two-page synopsis of the idea was by October 13, 2013 and that they would be assessed in the following ways: Innovativeness will be 50 per cent, Market Potential and Usefulness will be afforded 30 per cent and the Implementation Process will be 20 per cent.

Caribbean should embrace technology by the Barbados Advocate, 16 August, 2013
<http://www.barbadosadvocate.com/newsitem.asp?more=local&NewsID=31916>

Full Article

The yields from some of the vegetable crops grown in the Caribbean region are much lower than what has been achieved in other countries around the world, such as Brazil and Mexico.

According to Professor Chandra Madramootoo, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at the McGill University, Quebec, Canada, the countries of the Caribbean should look to embrace technology to improve these yields .

Professor Madramootoo explained that the lack of research and development and by extension the inadequate use of technology is counted among the vulnerabilities of the Caribbean region in its quest to achieve food security.

With that in mind, he said embracing new initiatives would help to cut down on the region's food imports, which have been rapidly rising above the exports. He made the remarks while in Barbados recently to speak at a seminar on the topic of "Global Food Security Implications for the Caribbean".

"We are not keeping up with the technology investments and new germplasms, improved practices, cropping practices, fertiliser practices – there is a big accomplishment that can be made just by dealing with technology," he said.

Turning his attention to exports from the Caribbean, he noted that there is only a narrow band of the crops exported from the region, adding that the Caribbean mirrors what is seen globally in terms of the percentage contribution of agriculture to the gross domestic product (GDP).

"Every single country in the region has witnessed a decline, and in some countries a sharp decline, of the contribution of agriculture to GDP... We need to keep reiterating this message and I am pleased that the Minister of Agriculture recognises that we need to reinvest in production, R&D [and] training to bring those contributions of agriculture to GDP higher if we want to address that food import bill that we have seen," the professor said.

Referring to some of the products being imported, the Canada-based educator said that the Caribbean region is in "very bad shape" in terms of the commodities being brought in and consumed. He noted that in almost every case there has been an increase in the consumption of carbohydrates, proteins, fats and oils, while there has been a decrease in the consumption of fruits and vegetables. He said that this has been responsible for the rising trends of obesity among females as compared to males. (JRT)

National Budgets - Agriculture

BARBADOS

THE 2013 FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND BUDGETARY PROPOSALS PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF BARBADOS BY THE HON. CHRISTOPHER PETER SINCKLER M.P, MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2013 AT 4: 00 p.m.

2013 Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals CORRECTED COPY available

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Extracts

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AGRICULTURE

Major Agriculture Reform:

In the area of agriculture our principal focus in the next eighteen months, Sir, will be the initiation of the major restructuring of the local sugar cane industry at long last. As is well known, this industry has been on a steady and sure decline for many years now, having suffered not only from a dismantling of the preferential arrangements with Europe but also because of serious internal challenges relating to financing and excess cost over the ability to earn.

And in the face of a failure by the authorities to do a serious restructuring of the industry it has now come to a juncture at which an ignominious collapse was awaiting. This administration has however, designed, and successfully sought financing to advance, a major restructuring of the industry over the next three years, starting next year, in what is called the Barbados Cane Industry Project.

Funding for this exercise (which will see the re-engineering of an existing sugar factory so as to allow it to engage multiple applications, including the production of bio-mass for the co-generation of electricity) has been agreed with the Japanese Bank of International Corporation and Japanese commercial banks for up to US270 million dollars.

Negotiations with all stakeholders including the workers' representatives have already begun and the Ministry of Agriculture will be making a fuller pronouncement of the details of the project in the coming weeks.

It is expected that this project will begin implementation in the first quarter of next year and run for three full years. It will radically reform sugar agriculture while having very positive spin-off effects on non-sugar crop production.

With this process well on the way, it is government's intention to forge ahead with other initiatives in the short term to give a boost to the local agriculture sector including the creation of a 2 million dollar grant initiative specifically for small farmers to engage in increased crop production. This initiative will be established and run by the BAS in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Secondly, my ministry in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the BHTA, will be proposing a special programme to incentivise local hotels to use more local produce in their properties.

At present when hoteliers and hotel developers seek concessions from the Ministry of Finance these are freely given to promote investment and assist in earning foreign exchange.

This, for all intents and purposes, will continue well into the future. However, it is the intention of my ministry to institute a policy that ties future requests for concessions and waivers by local hotels and restaurants to a demonstrable use of domestic produce and even manufacturers.

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National Growth Measures Matrix. Macroeconomic Framework .Table 1: Growth Measures over the Short to Medium Term

Major Agriculture Reform

- Cane Industry Project (US 250 million 2013-2016)

- Higher Investment in non-sugar crop production etc. (US10 million dollar production grant incentive initiative – 2014)

- Farm to Hotel incentive schemes (tying future tourism incentives to increase use of local produce 2013-14)

- BNOG longer term initiative with rum producers

Food Security

OAS official warns Caribbean countries by the Barbados Advocate, 16 August, 2013

<http://www.barbadosadvocate.com/newsitem.asp?more=local&NewsID=31919>

Full Article

IF countries in the region fail to address the issue of food security, they may one day have to confront the question of food dependency.

The warning has come from Ambassador Albert Ramdin, Assistant Secretary General of the Organisation of American States (OAS). Speaking at a recently held national seminar held to discuss food and nutrition security in Barbados, he said the time is ripe for countries in the region to re-invest in institutions and re-build their agricultural tradition on our own terms. He made the point as he noted that a reactive rather than a proactive attitude is likely to be at the root of why many countries have not actively pursued the prospects of food security, as it relates to economic diversification.

“While many of our economies are largely based on services, tourism, exports and energy for the fortunate few, food production and food security has not consumed our attention, to the degree it should. Ladies and gentlemen, the bridge is in front of us, and we must cross it, now... I hesitate sometimes and wonder whether the stigma of our colonial past has affected our reasoning and judgement about safeguarding future, with the promotion of agricultural entrepreneurship,” he warned.

The Ambassador added that while food security has become one of the most “actionable items of this era”, with the issue being raised at almost every high profile meeting and conference over the past few years, including the OAS General Assembly in Bolivia in 2012, and the Summit of the Americas four

years ago in Trinidad & Tobago, one has to question what progress has been made in helping countries to become more food secure.

“There have been small and sporadic pockets of success in individual countries. Many governments of the region have moved to incentivise the agricultural sector and encouraged local consumption drives. Right here in Barbados we have seen private sector interventions, like the donation of land to the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus by Eddie Edghill, for training and research in agriculture to attract a younger generation of producers, and that is commendable and should be encouraged, not only here but in the rest of the region as well. However, in the face of worrying trends in the region over the past decades, I believe that individually and collectively, we can and we must do more,” he contended.

Ramdin’s comments came as he noted that the contribution of agriculture to GDP in the Caribbean dropped significantly from the 1970’s to the early 2000’s; and he noted that at the same time, there has been an exorbitant increase in our food import bill, which is now hovering around US\$4 billion. The OAS official said this is worrisome, as it is an indication that the region does not have direct control over a significant percentage of its food supply.

“At the OAS we have witnessed the direct link between food security, development, poverty and even stability in many countries. It is easy for us to sometimes feel removed and far away from the reality of people living in hunger. Yet, the FAO says there are approximately 53 million people in Latin America and right here in the Caribbean who go hungry every day. Many believe there is no morally justifiable reason for the persistence of hunger in a hemisphere like ours. But these numbers are painful evidence that the issue of food security has not been adequately addressed in our region. We are not as far removed from this issue as we would like to think,” he maintained. (JRT)

Upcoming Events

September 2013

Science Forum 2013

Date: 23-25 September 2013

Location: Bonn, Germany.

Description: Will focus on “Nutrition and health outcomes: targets for agricultural research”

Website: <http://www.scienceforum13.org/>

First International Conference on Global Food Security

Date: 29 September - 2 October 2013

Location: Noordwijkerhout, The Netherlands

Website: <http://globalfoodsecurityconference.com/index.html>

October 2013

First Global Yam Conference “Yams 2013”

Date: 3-6 October, 2013

Location: Accra, Ghana

Description: First Global Yam Conference “Yams 2013” will be held in conjunction with the 12th Symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops (ISTRC)-African Branch, from 3 to 6 October 2013 in Accra, Ghana

Website: <http://www.iita.org/web/yams2013>

12th Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA)

Date: 4-12 October, 2013

Location: Guyana International Conference Centre, Guyana

Theme: Linking the Caribbean for Regional Food and Nutrition Security and Rural Development

Email: cwaguyana2013@gmail.com

November 2013

International Conference on ICT4ag

Date: 4-8 November 2013

Location: Kigali, Rwanda

Website: <http://www.ict4ag.org/en/>

Entomology 2013: Entomological Society of America (ESA) 61st Annual Meeting

Date: 10-13 November 2013

Location: Austin, Texas, USA

Theme: Science Impacting a Connected World

Website: <http://www.entsoc.org/entomology2013>