**Food Security, Small-scale Women Farmers and Climate Change in Caribbean SIDS** by Nidhi Tandon. Caribbean Climate, 25 October, 2013

Both long-term climate change and immediate-term economic crises are bringing the issue of food security into sharper relief, particularly in those Caribbean countries where food security is already volatile and faces a series of risks and challenges.

**For more information see page 14**

**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.

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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
Citrus: pests and diseases - Citrus Greening

Tropical pepper plant could provide tool against HLB. Fresh Fruit Portal, October 23rd, 2013 http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2013/10/23/tropical-pepper-plant-could-provide-tool-against-hlb/?country=trinidad%20and%20tobago

Full Article

A tropical pepper plant native to the Amazon jungle may offer a natural tool against citrus greening. Researchers from Brazil’s Fundecitrus and the Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) believe that the Matico pepper plant could function as an insecticide against Diaphorina citri, the species behind citrus greening or Huanglongbing (HLB).

The plant found in Acre and southern Amazonas is rich in dillapiole, a compound found in dill weed fennel root that has been found effective against pest control in India, Europe and the U.S.

The compound inhibits the detoxifying enzyme P450, causing the insect to poison itself with its own food, such as orange tree sap.

Embrapa researcher Murilo Fazolin said dillapiole interferes with the insect’s metabolism, inhibiting its ability to detox and provoking a relatively non-aggressive death.

“The compound alters the chemical warfare between the plant and the insect, favoring the plant that is under attack,” he said.

Oil from the pepper could be used as an insecticide in combination with conventional products to improve efficiency. This could reduce the need for recommended commercial applications by up to 25%, Embrapa indicated.

The Embrapa branch in Acre has also found the oil effective against pests for pineapples, beans, corn and coffee.


Full Article

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — University of Florida researchers have some encouraging results in the battle against citrus greening.

They have identified citrus cultivars, in this case 16 citrus rootstocks, most of which show a lower rate of infection and more tolerance to citrus greening – the dreaded disease that has wreaked havoc through Florida’s citrus industry since its arrival in the state in 2005.
Growers use citrus rootstocks, part of a plant that includes a portion of root, as a foundation to graft new trees, as opposed to growing them from seed.

For now, data on the rootstocks are limited, but the scientists will gauge their potential in test plots, and UF fast-tracked their release this summer for large-scale testing by an industry in dire need of solutions.

Greening has cost Florida’s economy an estimated $4.5 billion in lost revenues since 2006 and poses a huge threat to the state’s $9 billion citrus industry, the nation’s largest. It weakens and eventually kills infected trees. Greening has also spread to the country’s other big citrus-producing state, California, where it was detected in 2012.

Large-scale trials of the promising rootstocks could begin in March 2014, and it could be another three to five years before they are available to growers, said Jude Grosser, a horticulture professor with UF’s Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred.

Grosser and Lake Alfred colleagues Fred Gmitter, a horticulture professor, and Bill Castle, a horticulture professor emeritus, have led the effort to develop the rootstocks. They are all faculty members in UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

“What’s happening is fields are becoming living laboratories now because the greening disease is spreading so quickly,” Grosser said. “Some people have estimated that 70 percent of the trees in the entire state are infected now, and it’s predicted to go up in the 90s in a very short time.”

“Everything’s being challenged by the disease, and we’re seeing differences in the rootstock material in the field,” he said. “We’re seeing very genetically diverse material interact with the diseases, and some things are reacting better than others.”

In some cases, the researchers have seen commercial rootstocks with 70 percent infection rates next to experimental varieties that are only 10 to 20 percent infected, but still producing fruit, after four years of exposure to the disease. Whether the trees grown on the less affected rootstocks will survive and remain productive is something the researchers will continue to monitor.

One of the reasons greening has hit the citrus industry so hard is that growers depend on just a few varieties to produce their crop, because they’re most likely to withstand Florida weather and still make fruit consumers want to buy, Grosser said.

“For the course of the last several 100 years, we’ve been eliminating the genetic diversity in the wild, so citrus has kind of gone to a monoculture where there are just a handful of varieties grown,” Grosser said. “So you’ve limited your ability to adapt when there is a new pressure that comes along.”

Gmitter said it’s fortunate the researchers have maintained a diverse selection of citrus varieties for just such an occasion.

“We took that approach from the beginning to try and get as much genetic diversity into our breeding program as possible,” Gmitter said. “You don’t know what the future is going to bring or what the future problems are going to be.”
Gmitter said he is cautiously optimistic about the rootstocks and that they need to be validated on a large scale.

“They may be part of an integrated solution to citrus greening that includes managing psyllids, the insect that spreads greening, and improved nutritional programs to keep citrus trees healthy,” he said. “All of those things together might contribute to an effective way of managing this disease and remaining profitable and keeping this industry alive.”

Climate Change

Climate Change and Coevolution: Scientists Have Done the Math. Science Daily, 24 October, 2013
http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/10/131024102156.htm

Full Article

When scientists attempt to understand how climate change might reshape our environment, they must grapple with the seemingly endless complexity of interacting systems. For those considering the likely fate of particular species, there is now a relatively simple rule of thumb to help calculate the likely effect of climate change where species interact.

"A lot of the discussion about climate change focuses on the fate of individual, iconic species, but to evaluate the effects of future environmental changes we need to account for interactions between species," James Cook University evolutionary ecologist Tobin Northfield said.

"We need to consider how species co-evolve -- how they are adapting in response to each other, as well as in response to climate change. In addition, as difficult as it may seem, we need to account for changing interactions, as the species evolve."

Research published this week in PLOS Biology argues that where species have conflicting interests (for example where one species becomes very aggressive towards the species it competes with for food) their coevolving relationship is likely to reduce the effects of climate change on both species.

Where species interact in a non-conflicting way (for example where one species simply avoids the other species it competes with for food, rather than becoming aggressive) the effects of climate change are likely to be greater.

Dr Northfield, now at James Cook University in Cairns, worked at the University of Wisconsin with Dr Anthony Ives to develop a rule of thumb to help scientists calculate how co-evolving species might change over time.

"When evaluating the effects of climate change, there is already so much to consider, we were hoping to find some simple answers,” Dr Northfield said.

Drs Northfield and Ives have developed modelling tools and guidelines to help scientists extrapolate from the short to longer term.
"Many earlier studies have looked at how climate change might affect the evolution of particular species, and more recently there has been some investigation of how interacting species might change in the short term."

"We used simple models of competition, predation and mutualism to consider how these interactions might change over longer time periods, and how that, in turn will affect each species," Dr Northfield said.

"The nature of climate change means that we don't have years and centuries to observe changes in nature. Mathematical modelling gives us a way to calculate what the future might look like," he said.

The study began, with funding from the United States Department of Agriculture, as an investigation of how pest insect population densities might change in cropping regions.

"One of our findings is that when predators attack crop pests and benefit agriculture, such as lady beetles eating aphids, the predator and prey will both evolve in response to climate change and will reduce the effect of climate change on crop damage," Dr Northfield said.

The researchers have suggested ways to evaluate their rule of thumb.

"Insect populations are a good testing ground for our theory, because it is relatively easy to include many insects in an experiment, and they reproduce quickly, allowing faster evolution," Dr Northfield said.

"For example, by looking at insect/plant interactions at different latitudes, it is possible to observe how coevolving species, and their interactions, vary in different climatic conditions.

"If you know what type of coevolution drives the interaction, you can make predictions of how it will affect the species densities across the different latitudes."

The paper also suggests ways for researchers to determine which type of coevolution (conflicting or non-conflicting) drives a particular species interaction.

"This is not as clear and straightforward as you might think," Dr Northfield said. "In some plant-insect relationships, for example, some insects that pollinate flowers can also evolve to steal from the flower without providing the flower with the benefits. Of course, this conflicts with what is best for the plant. So we've also developed some guidelines for classifying species interactions."
Soil and Water Management


**Full Article**

Issues of water security faced by Small Island Developing States will feature high on the agenda when the 7th Global Biennial International Waters Conference (IWC) comes off at Hilton Barbados from Monday, October 28, until Thursday, October 31.

Minister of the Environment and Drainage, Dr. Denis Lowe, will deliver the feature address during the opening ceremony on Monday, October 28 beginning at 9:00 a.m., while Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, Edison Alleyne, will speak at the closing ceremony on Thursday, October 31, beginning at 2:30 p.m.

The conference, which is being hosted by the Government of Barbados under the theme: Economic Valuation as a Tool to Bridge the Science-Policy Gap, is expected to highlight the issues of water security that confront Small Island Developing States daily.

A key feature of the conference will be three technical site visits, developed under the theme: Ridge to Reef, Barbados, which are designed to highlight a range of water management challenges faced by Barbados. In addition, traditional and new management approaches in the areas of land use planning, coastal zone management, wastewater re-use and treatment, marine protected areas and groundwater protection, will form the core elements of the site visits.

The technical conference is also geared towards encouraging opportunities for learning on scientific and technical innovations and interaction training for International Waters project managers and country representatives. It is also expected to review the usage of economic valuation as a means of translating project outcomes into policy.

Over 200 participants are expected to attend the conference, including project managers and leaders from government ministries, trans-boundary basin commissions, the private sector, civil society, donor agencies, along with the Global Environment Facility’s (GEF) Secretariat and its partner agencies.

The conference is organised jointly by GEF and the United Nations Development Programme
Nitrogen fertilizer remains in soils and leaks towards groundwater for decades, researchers find by Mark Lowey. UToday, University of Calgary, 22 October 2013

Full Article

Long-term legacy of past fertilizer applications must be considered in reducing nitrate contamination of aquatic ecosystems, study indicates

Nitrogen fertilizer applied to crops lingers in the soil and leaks out as nitrate for decades towards groundwater – “much longer than previously thought,” scientists in France and at the University of Calgary say in a new study.

Thirty years after synthetic nitrogen (N) fertilizer had been applied to crops in 1982, about 15 per cent of the fertilizer N still remained in soil organic matter, the scientists found.

After three decades, approximately 10 per cent of the fertilizer N had seeped through the soil towards the groundwater and will continue to leak in low amounts for at least another 50 years.

The study was led by researcher Mathieu Sebilo at the Université Pierre et Marie Currie in Paris, France, and by Bernhard Mayer in the Department of Geoscience, and included several research organizations in France.

More time may be required to reduce contamination

Their paper, “Long-term fate of nitrate fertilizer in agricultural soils,” was published this week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America.

The findings show that losses of fertilizer N towards the groundwater occur at low rates but over many decades, says Mayer, professor of geochemistry and head of the Applied Geochemistry Group.

That means it could take longer than previously thought to reduce nitrate contamination in groundwater, including in aquifers that supply drinking water in North America and elsewhere, he says.

“There’s a lot of fertilizer nitrogen that has accumulated in agricultural soils over the last few decades which will continue to leak as nitrate towards groundwater,” Mayer says.

Canada and the U.S. regulate the amount of nitrate allowed in drinking water. In the 1980s, surveys by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Geological Survey showed that nitrate contamination had probably impacted more public and domestic water supply wells in the U.S. than any other contaminant.

Using stable isotopes to track contamination

Mayer is an internationally recognized expert in the use of stable isotopes to track contaminants in the environment.
The French-University of Calgary study is the first that tracks, using stable isotope “fingerprinting,” the fate of fertilizer N remaining in the soil zone over several decades.

The research team used a stable isotope of nitrogen, N-15, as a tracer to track fertilizer nitrogen applied in 1982 to sugar beet and winter wheat crops on a pair of two-metre-square plots at a site in France.

Over the 30-year study, the researchers measured the amount of N-15 labelled fertilizer N taken up by plants and they quantified the amount of fertilizer N remaining in the soil.

The novel aspect of their study was that they subsequently determined the long-term fate of this N ‘pool’ retained in the soil. Their measurements of seepage water from locations two metres deep in the soil revealed the amount of fertilizer nitrate leaking towards the groundwater.

**Study’s findings**

The team found that 61 to 65 per cent of the N-15 fertilizer applied in 1982 was taken up by the sugar beet and wheat plants over the 30-year study.

However, 32 to 37 per cent of the fertilizer N remained in the soil organic matter in 1985 or three years after application, while 12 to 15 per cent still lingered in the soils after three decades.

Between eight to 12 per cent of the fertilizer N applied in 1982 had leaked in the form of nitrate toward groundwater during the 30 years, and will continue to leak at low rates “for at least another five decades, much longer than previously thought,” the study says.

The scientists predict that about 15 per cent of the initially applied fertilizer N will be exported from soils towards the groundwater over a time span of almost one century after the 1982 fertilizer application.

**Comparison to Alberta**

Mayer speculates that if the same research were done in Alberta, the findings would be similar in terms of fertilizer uptake by plants and nitrogen retention in the soils, although Alberta’s comparatively dry climate and different geology might slow the rate of nitrate seeping towards the groundwater.

Nitrate contamination of aquatic ecosystems can be reduced by farmers following the 4Rs of nutrient stewardship: applying the right fertilizer source at the right rate, the right time and the right place (see http://www.nutrientstewardship.com/what-are-4rs)
Food Safety

Small changes can reduce produce contamination. Cornell Chronicle, 23 October 2013
http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2013/10/small-changes-can-reduce-produce-contamination

Cornell researchers have identified some agricultural management practices that can boost or reduce the risk of contamination in produce from two major foodborne pathogens.

For example, applying manure within a year of harvesting produce boosts the odds of contaminating a field with salmonella, the biggest single killer among the foodborne microbes, report the researchers. And irrigating fields within three days and cultivating fields within a week of harvest significantly raised the risk of listeria monocytogenes contamination. However, establishing a buffer zone between fields and potential pathogen reservoirs, such as livestock operations or waterways, was found to be protective against salmonella.

The study is published online in the journal Applied and Environmental Microbiology (scheduled for print in December).

“This is going to help make produce safer,” says first author Laura Strawn, a graduate student in the field of food science. “We could significantly reduce risk of contamination through changes that occur a few days before the harvest.”

Many of the risk factors were influenced by when they were applied to fields, which suggests that adjustments to current practices may reduce the potential for contamination with minimal cost to growers, says Strawn, whose co-authors include Yrjo Grohn, professor of epidemiology; and Randy Worobo and Martin Wiedmann, Cornell professors of food science.

Foodborne illness sickens an estimated 9.4 million people and kills about 1,300 annually in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Produce accounts for nearly half the illnesses and 23 percent of the deaths.

“The research is the first to use field collected data to show the association between certain management practices and an increased or decreased likelihood of salmonella and L. monocytogenes,” says Strawn. “These findings will assist growers in evaluating their current on-farm food safety plans (e.g., ‘Good Agricultural Practices’), implementing preventive controls that reduce the risk of preharvest contamination and making more informed decisions related to field practices prior to harvest. Small changes in how produce is grown and managed could result in a large reduction of food safety risks.”

Other co-authors of the study, which can be found online, were all from Cornell and include Steven Warchocki, technician in food science; and Elizabeth Bihn, senior extension associate in food science and the Good Agricultural Practices coordinator.

The study was supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
Agricultural Development

Nevis Farmers urged to increase production; be more consistent. ZIZ Online, 25 October, 2013
http://zizonline.com/nevis-farmers-urged-to-increase-production-be-more-consistent/

Full Article

NIA Charlestown Nevis — Agriculture Minister on Nevis Hon. Alexis Jeffers called on farmers to increase production and to be strategic in their approach for a more consistent production.

Mr. Jeffers was at the time delivering remarks at the recently concluded Conference on the Economy 2013, which was hosted by the Nevis Island Administration (NIA) on October 18, 2013 at the Red Cross conference room. The event which was held in preparation for the 2014 budget was held under the theme “Building the pillars for a strong society, a healthy people and a vibrant economy.”

“I want to challenge our farmers to not only increase production but to be strategic in your approach so that the production can be consistent. We have made considerable inroads into the hospitality sector where production is concerned but the major concern has always been consistency. We must be more mindful of this and find practical ways to overcome this major hurdle,” he said.

The Minister noted that the island’s farmers had the relevant technical assistance available at the Department of Agriculture and as such consistency of production should not be one of the major challenges faced by the Department.

“We should not be faced with the situation where for three months of the year we have an abundant supply of a commodity, a scarcity for the following three and then another glut for the next two. In order for us to capitalise on the demands of the tourism sector, we must be more consistent in our production,” he said.

Mr. Jeffers contended that as a result of the problem, farmers had to return to crop scheduling which he explained would right the situation.

“Farmers, there is the dire need to return to crop scheduling which proved to be extremely successful when efforts were made at entering the Four Seasons market. If it proved successful then, it can be successful now. It was the crop scheduling concept which eventually led to what became known as the Nevis Model, an initiative that was hailed not only here in Nevis but throughout the region,” he said.

Meantime, Mr. Jeffers urged farmers to step up their use of technology citing that they should also be prepared to make greater investment.

“As we advocate increased and consistent production, we also urge farmers to step up in your technology, but to do so you must be prepared to invest. Most of us should be aware of the benefits of shade house production or protected Agriculture and that is one avenue to which our farmers can look.

“The initial cost may seem prohibitive but the long-term gains can prove tremendous. The Ministry of Agriculture may not be in a position to assist financially but could facilitate the transfer of the requisite knowledge to successfully execute shade house production. We can organise the necessary training through our allied agencies,” he said.
In addition, Mr. Jeffers told farmers that if they adopted new technology apart from the training exercises organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, could source their own technical information from the Internet.

“This is something that many farmers are already engaged in, but in this the information age, I would encourage all farmers to get on the computer and learn new things. If you don’t, then ask your children to do it for you.

“Agriculture is dynamic and every day something new is being discovered, new information is being released on various aspects of the sector and we must keep pace with new technology and information,” he said.


Full Article

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in collaboration with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), on October 23 launched the Irish Potato Programme for the crop year 2013/14.

The proposed production target is 600 hectares for autumn; 600 hectares for spring; and 50 hectares for summer. In order to achieve this, the Ministry will be providing support in the sum of $68 million towards the autumn and spring crops.

Speaking at the launch held at the Ministry’s Hope Gardens offices in St. Andrew, portfolio Minister, Hon. Roger Clarke, noted that increasing local potato production is one of the strategies being employed to reduce the country’s high food import bill.

He said that the programme aims to: improve access to markets for farmers, who plant Irish potato; supply 100 per cent of the national demand (15 million kilograms) of table Irish potato by 2015, in keeping with the RADA marketing plan; and provide crop care support (chemicals) for 50 per cent of the targeted acreages for fall and spring.

The initiative also seeks to introduce and pilot the use of new potato varieties for the production of fries. Two hectares of potato, specifically for this purpose, will be grown and processed during the 2013/14 season.

Minister Clarke also informed that private grants are being pursued for 40 hectares for 2013. These hectares will be specifically for use by young people and women.

He further disclosed that the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) will be providing $50 million to retrofit a storage facility at Lydford in St. Ann. “We will also be making available $50 million if we have to intervene to stabilize prices…we want to make sure that the price doesn’t drop below the production cost for our farmers,” he stated.

Agriculture In the News October 20 - 26, 2013. Issue compiled by CARDI
As it relates to reports of a shortage of Irish potato on the local market, the Agriculture Minister explained that “in a sense, it was kind of deliberate, because local farmers had some Irish potato still. For six or seven months we never imported one pound of Irish potato into this country, and if we are going to encourage our farmers to be in production, we are not going to allow them to be defeated by imports. Irish potato can be grown in Jamaica...we are putting the facilities in place so that we can be self-sufficient, and also export. There is market for it in the region”.

More farmers and vendors to be recognized at Roseau Market Day by GIS Dominica, 24 October, 2013.

Full Article

The Roseau Market is expected to be buzzing with activity on Saturday October 26th for the final of “Market Day with a Difference,” activities during this Independence season.

Market Day with a difference is observed every year to highlight the hard work of the island’s farmers and vendors and their contributions towards national development.

On that day, a large variety of produce of the island’s many farmers and vendors will be on display and available for sale to patrons and visitors alike.

It is expected that Government officials, dignitaries and special invited guests will be taken on a special extended tour of the Roseau Market to interact with vendors in keeping with the renewed emphasis on farmers and vendors.

An official ceremony to begin from 8:00 a.m has been planned where a number of the islands farmers and vendors will be recognized for their outstanding contributions to the progress and development of agriculture and the Roseau Market over the years.

The event will also feature an address from Dominica’s Trade Minister Hon. Dr. Colin McIntyre. Cultural presentations at strategic locations on the grounds of the Roseau Market will also form part of the day’s activities. Market Day with a difference took place simultaneously in Portsmouth and Marigot on October 19th, 2013.


Full Article

Come March 2014, the Ministry of Agriculture, as part of the key components of the EU funded Banana Accompanying Measures (BAM) Project will conduct an Agricultural Census.
The census which will provide updated information from the last census carried out in 1995 will seek to assist Government to make more informed decisions about the country’s agricultural development.

Angus McIntyre, Programme officer at the EU National Authorizing Office responsible for coordinating the Banana Accompanying Measures (BAM) activities in Dominica explained that the development of an agricultural census will satisfy the need for individual farm assessments of farm conditions.

“It will give an updated count of Dominican farms, the people who operate them, the acreage of various crops under production as well as land use, ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, use of energy, market value of products, income and expenditures among other things” he noted.

He added that during the census activities Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will be conducted in order to provide baseline data on the Dominican agricultural sector.

On Thursday, 17th October, 2013 the National Authorizing Office for the European Development Fund in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry and Central Statistics Office conducted the first in a series of stakeholder consultations for the Agriculture Census 2014, at the Public Service Union Building on Valley Road.

The aim of that consultation was to introduce the Agriculture Census to stakeholders, to gain an understanding of the information needs of stakeholders and present the draft census questionnaire for feedback.

Stakeholders from agencies representing farmers, governmental and non-governmental agencies, public and private sectors and farmers participated in first of a series of planned consultations.

**Backyard garden started at the Adele School.** Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 21 October, 2013

**Full Article**

With greater emphasis being placed on special needs students, the Ministry of Agriculture commemorated World Food Day with the launch of a backyard garden pilot project at the Adele School on Wednesday 16th, October.

The Ceremony was attended by the Governor General Dame Louise Lake- Tack, Minister of Agriculture the Hon. Hilson Baptiste, the Clergy, and other government officials.

The observance of World Food Day is being used as a catalyst to promote and educate the public on the Zero Hunger Initiative. Minister Baptiste told the gathering that it is his vision that before December each child at the school will be able pick the fruits that were planted.

Minister Baptiste added that the children at the school are all special gifts.
He believes that with such a programme in place it further assists parents in the realisation of the importance of food accessibility, while the implementation of the Food and Nutrition Policy will be the guideline for all.

“Our job in the Ministry of Agriculture is to bring the question of food to the forefront; we want every person in this country to understand the value of good nutritional food,” Minister Baptiste said.

The cutting of the ribbon leading to the garden was done by the Governor General Dame Louise Lake-Tack and Minister Baptiste. With the spotlight on hunger and malnutrition, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has set out to achieve ambitious goals to reduce, by half, the prevalence of hunger between 1990 and 2015.

Sixty-two developing countries out of the 120 monitored by FAO have already reached this target.


Full Article

Some eleven thousand fruit trees will be distributed to farmers throughout the country over the next three months.

The announcement was made by Minister of Agriculture, Saboto Caesar, during his address at an agricultural festival held at Heritage Square on 16th October to commemorate World Food Day 2013.

Minister Caesar said that the distribution will be carried out as part of the post Hurricane Thomas recovery process. He also re-stated the commitment of the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure food security for all Vincentians.

World food Day was observed this year under the theme: "Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition".

The Minister expressed confidence that the production targets for the 2013/14 crop year will be achieved. “Our confidence is bolstered by the outstanding performance that we have achieved over the past two years,” he stated.

Minister Clarke informed that in 2012, the local market demand for table potato reached 16.8 million kilograms, up from 15.4 million kilograms 2011.

“The good news is that the country was almost 80 per cent self-sufficient in the production of table potatoes in 2012,” he pointed out.

Meanwhile, Minister Clarke noted that in the last quarter, the agricultural sector grew by 8.4 per cent.
Food Security


Full Article

World Food Day was recognized on the 16th October, with the Ministry of Agriculture using the occasion to further promote its Zero Hunger Initiative, launched last year.

The aim of the Zero Hunger Initiative is to eradicate poverty and hunger in the country.

Senior Extension Officer within the Ministry of Agriculture, Owalabi Elabanjo said the ministry would be stepping up its assistance to individuals starting their own backyard gardens. They have also extended this to elderly care homes and the Adele School for special needs children.

The first garden was set up on the 15th October, at the St Vincent De Paul Day Care Centre in the Ovals community, then at the Seventh Day Adventist Home for the Elderly in Gambles.

Officials from the ministry were on hand for the planting of cabbage, lettuce, sweet pepper and seasoning pepper seedlings.

“‘Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition’ is the theme and the main focus of World Food Day 2013, so we want to make sure that food is available to everyone, especially the elderly,” the senior extension officer said.

He added, “Gardening is a form of therapy for the elderly. Instead of just sitting down and talking, two or three of them could go in the garden and work, which is also a form of exercise.”

The gardens are created from pallets, which were filled with soil ahead of the actual planting. This is among activities to recognize World Food Day. World Food Day, observed annually, focuses attention on solutions in the drive to end hunger.


Full Article

Both long-term climate change and immediate-term economic crises are bringing the issue of food security into sharper relief, particularly in those Caribbean countries where food security is already volatile and faces a series of risks and challenges. Climate change, in particular, adds urgency to the call for renewed focus, prioritisation and integrated adaptation approaches to natural resource management, land use policies and long-term macro-economic frameworks and where these intersect.
Through participatory research and interviews with women in farming communities in Dominica and Antigua, Tandon (2013) argues for small-scale, ecologically sensitive farming and fishing as a critical way to anchor local food security of rural populations, shelter domestic food markets and secure the natural bio-diversity of Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Women play a core role in articulating what food security looks like to them—and have a keen appetite for peer-to-peer networks of training, technical knowledge sharing and distribution of information to support sustainable livelihoods and the long-term viability of their communities.

Women involved in farming and fishing alike are important contributors to both national and household food security, though unrecognised, unvalued and undervalued in a sector that is still one of the most depressed sectors in society. Representatives of both these constituencies expressed consistent concerns about their food security, defined less by consumer considerations and more by production capacity and maximised nutritional content.

When asked about climate change in the context of their local environments, women shared their personal experiences and perspectives based on daily and seasonal activities. They framed the issue around timescales of immediate needs and seasonal harvest cycles. In interviews and conversations it is apparent that their understanding and articulation of the phenomenon of climate change is inexact, one common observation being the unprecedented seasonal changes and the difficulty of relying on weather patterns. However, none of the farmers interviewed drew a link between climate change, rises in sea level, increases in sea surface temperatures, coral bleaching or coastal erosion. Unlike the Pacific islands, where the rise in sea level is visible and immediate, in the Caribbean islands this change is not yet recognised as such—what is most salient is the recurrence of climate induced storms. The human and social dimensions of climate change are yet to be fully developed and understood in this Caribbean context.

In the country studies, challenges facing agriculture remain: finance, land availability, local or regional marketing infrastructure and labour costs. The societal stigma attached to farming is changing—and there is now a generation of young professionals (women and men) returning to the primary sector as the new income security. What is not quite clear is whether these e security concerns and/or whether there is a genuine desire to learn about farming and a less resource-consumentive approach.

The economic crisis and its lingering effects have forced a transition to alternatives and a return to multi-source income approach to livelihoods. This opportunity for more positive investment and attitudinal shifts towards farming and fishing clearly exists but needs additional support for adaptation to, and management of, climate change. Survey participants in Dominica identified concurrent action to combat climate change on three fronts (Table). Furthermore, gender concerns are still peripheral to discussions on livelihoods and climate change. The mix of climate change, livelihoods and cyclical crises has largely had negative effects on livelihoods and well-being. Calls for consistent attention to the needs of both men and women, particularly in vulnerable rural communities, are an obvious part of the solution. Political will and leadership to ensure that each country’s economic development is inter-locked with environmental and gender issues is needed more than ever.

In 2013, agricultural thinking in the region still continues to be dominated by preserving a commodity-based agriculture value-chain framed by trade preferences. “While various attempts have been undertaken to harness the capacity for domestic consumption or to turn crops or agricultural waste into bio-ethanol, as yet none of this is about creating regional food security” (Jessop, D. (2009).
**Full Article**

FAO at Green Global Growth Forum in Copenhagen calls for “innovative thinking” to measure and cut global food loss and waste along the food chain.

21 October 2013, Copenhagen/Rome - Keeping track of the enormity and nature of food loss and waste is essential to reducing the problem and to speeding efforts to eliminate hunger globally, FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva told participants at the Global Green Growth Forum (3GF) in Copenhagen.

"FAO estimates that each year, one-third of all food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted - around 1.3 billion tons. This costs around 750 billion dollars annually. If we reduce food loss and waste to zero it would give us additional food to feed 2 billion people," Graziano da Silva said.

Graziano da Silva joined leaders of partner agencies at the 21-22 October forum in discussing plans for a new global standard for measuring food loss and waste announced at 3GF by the World Resources Institute (WRI).

"One of my priorities in FAO is opening our doors to potential allies. Fighting food loss and waste is clearly one area in which partnership is needed. Developing a global protocol can help provide clear measurements and indicators on which we can base guidance on how to reduce food loss and waste," said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva.

Most food loss takes place in post-production, harvesting, transportation and storage, and is primarily related to inadequate infrastructure in developing countries, while food waste is largely a problem in the marketing and consumption stages in more developed countries.

"Zeroing food loss and waste is one of the elements of the Zero Hunger Challenge launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the Rio+20 Conference last year. Because of all this, FAO has a huge vested interest in bringing about rapid reductions in food losses and waste," Graziano da Silva said, "specifically in relation to improving the efficiency and inclusiveness of our food systems."

"We already know a lot about how to cut food losses. But we need to invest more in a number of areas, especially in infrastructure such as roads and cold chains, but also improving market information. We also need to close the gap between the knowledge we have and what farmers and other actors in the food chain are actually doing. When we do that, we see good results," he said.

On food waste that occurs at the consumer end, Graziano da Silva called for more "innovative thinking" to keep retailers and individual households from throwing away food.

"Per capita consumer waste is around 100 kilograms in Europe and North America per year. In Africa, it is less than 10 kilograms a year per person," he said, adding, "We can do a lot from the local to the global levels, from producers to consumers, from personal choices to policy decisions that create an enabling environment to reduce food waste and loss."

"And with regards to food waste, it is also important to take into consideration that different cultures have different culinary traditions. We must take this into consideration," he stressed.
Graziano da Silva urged participants to maintain their commitment to working with producers, consumers, retailers, governments and international organizations to reduce food loss and waste, keeping in mind cultural differences that could influence choices.

Taking action

FAO works on numerous initiatives to reduce the loss of food in the agricultural process and throughout the food system from field to fork.

FAO launched the SAVE FOOD initiative together with the United Nations Environment Programme and Messe Dusseldorf to reduce food loss and waste along the entire chain of food production and consumption. SAVE FOOD now includes more than 150 public organizations and private sector partners and is currently conducting case studies on food losses in specific chains that will help us give guidance on strategies to upgrade the sectors concerned.

The organization also collaborates with UNEP, WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) and other partners in the Think.Eat.Save. campaign designed to target and change wasteful practices, especially at the retail and consumer end of the food-supply chain.

FAO is also beginning work on a food loss index and, through its Global Strategy for Improving Rural and Agricultural Statistics, the organization is developing assessment methodologies for obtaining post-harvest loss data that feeds into national statistics.

While in Copenhagen, the FAO Director-General also met with Danish government ministers, including Minister for Development Christian Friis Bach; Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Karen Angelo Hækkerup; and, Denmark’s Minister for the Environment, Ida Margrethe Meier Auken.

Youth in Agriculture


Full Article

A challenge has been thrown out to Barbadian youth, to cultivate a passion for agriculture.

This appeal came yesterday, as Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management, Dr. Lennox Chandler addressed the launch of The Sir Clifford Husbands Agricultural Challenge at Petrea Gardens, St. James.

Dr. Chandler, who spoke on behalf of the Minister, noted that young people must be encouraged to accept and appreciate farming and food production as viable career choices.

Speaking before an audience that included Governor General, Sir Elliott Belgrave; former Governor General, Sir Clifford Husbands; and Madame Justice Sandra Mason, the DPS said: “This initiative by
Sir Clifford which targets students at the level of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate is indeed a step in the right direction.”

Dr. Chandler also pointed out that like Sir Clifford, his Ministry has always had a keen interest and played a pivotal role in the engagement of the Youth in Agriculture programme, which the former Governor General patronised.

He said this was evidenced by our over fifty years of support for the Barbados 4-H movement, a movement which was established as a collaborative effort between the Ministries of Agriculture and Education.

Meanwhile, Sir Clifford stressed his love for agriculture and told those gathered that he believed the youth must be major contributors to the sector’s further development.

The Challenge will provide Secondary school students pursuing the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Agriculture Syllabus with the opportunity to show how science and technology, engineering and math can be applied to agriculture in creative ways.

The former Governor General is an avid supporter of the Barbados Branch of The Royal Commonwealth Society and its youth programmes.

Therefore the Branch, in his honour and in support of his vision of the youth in agriculture, conceptualised this competition in which the participants will be competing for the Sir Clifford Husbands Agricultural Challenge Shield.
Upcoming Events

October 2013
Cassava–Based feed system in Africa: Roadmap to a commercial feasibility
Date: 28-30 October 2013
Location: IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
Description The Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century, the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), the CGIAR research programs – Roots, Tubers and Bananas, Livestock and Fish, Humid Tropics, and the feed private sector, having common interests in the development of a cassava-base feed system in Africa are partnering to organize a workshop in IITA, Ibadan, Oct 28-30, 2013, to ask the question: What is the best way to develop a cassava-based feed system in Africa? http://livestockfish.cgiar.org/2013/08/19/cassava-feed/
Contact: Dr. Claude M. Fauquet, Director GCP21, CIAT. Email: c.fauquet@cgiar.org

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