ICT4Ag: Let’s Plug & Play! CTA, 4 November, 2013
http://www.cta.int/en/component/cck/?view=item&id=734

On Monday 4 November 2013 at 7:30am, several hundred people from the world of ICTs for agricultural development will enter the doors of the Serena Hotel in Kigali, Rwanda, for the start of the international conference ICT4Ag.

This highly anticipated event kicks off with an invitation to participants to ‘get their hands dirty’! Plug and Play Day brings together some 35 ICT4Ag innovators and entrepreneurs. They will showcase their latest mobile apps, Web2.0 and social media tools and share with participants how they can be applied to agricultural development.

For more information see page 17

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
Cereals and Grain Legumes


Full Article

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) - This year's corn crop has soared to a new national record, breaking expectations in many states that received too much rain early on and a summer dry spell that brought back drought concerns.

In its first crop supply and demand report since the partial government shutdown, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said Friday it expects 13.99 billion bushels of corn, more than the September forecast of 13.8 billion bushels. The previous record was 13.1 billion in 2009.

Some observers thought there would be a subpar harvest in the Midwest, including Iowa and Nebraska. Heavy rains delayed spring planting by several weeks, causing some farmers to give up planting the wettest fields. Then, drought conditions returned in the summer months.

"Better than expected" are the three most popular words in Iowa right now, said Chad Hart, an agriculture economist at Iowa State University.

"When they started to drive the combine in the field they thought, 'Oh this probably isn't good,' but by the time they got down that first row they were saying those magic three words," he said.

Exceptional harvests were found around the country, thanks to adequate rain and cooler temperatures at the time corn pollinated. At least 18 states will set records for the amount of corn produced per acre, among them are Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, and Ohio.

"I was pleasantly surprised at both the corn and beans," said Jerry Main, 74, who farms about 500 acres in southeast Iowa near Fairfield.

A 65-acre field he planted several weeks late in mid-June is yielding about a half a crop, he said. The hot summer further stressed his crops.

"We would have had a bumper crop if we'd just had another inch or two of rain in August," he said.

Iowa barely maintained its status as the nation's top corn producer with an estimated 2.2 billion bushels. Illinois was second at 2.1 billion bushels, Nebraska third (1.6 billion bushels) and Minnesota fourth (1.3 billion).

But with great abundance comes lower corn prices.

A year ago, corn peaked at more than $8 a bushel as supplies dwindled in the drought. On Friday morning, corn fell to $4.17 a bushel before the report, the lowest price since 2010. It rebounded to $4.25 later in the day.
Farmers who rent land at average prices typically need around $4.40 to $4.60 a bushel to break even. But profitability is highly dependent on how much a farmer pays for rent. Many farmers own their own land and not all pay average or above prices.

"We're talking about tremendous revenue still to this market," Hart said.

Corn users, including ethanol manufacturers, see higher profits with lower grain prices.

Improved profit has led some ethanol makers to reopen plants that had been closed because they weren't making money.

Cargill Inc. announced Monday it had restarted production at a plant in Fort Dodge, Iowa, idled since 2011 and Three Rivers Energy in Coshocton, Ohio, resumed production last month at a plant it bought in receivership that had last operated in 2008.

Livestock producers who buy corn-based feed for cattle, chickens, and hogs also benefit from lower corn prices.

Consumers, though, won't see food prices significantly affected.

**Putting biological nitrogen fixation to work for smallholder farmers: Improved legume technologies can boost entire farming system from the ground up.** International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), 8 November 2013


**Full Article**

A pan-African project aimed at improving legume technologies to counter the debilitating impact of low-nitrogen soils on agricultural production is generating higher yields and new income streams for smallholder farmers.

Since it began in 2009, N2Africa set out to increase the adoption of improved nitrogen fixing legumes – specifically soybean, cowpea, groundnut and common bean – and support the creation of new markets for the resulting crops so that farmers continue to improve the quality of their soil, as well as improve household income and nutrition.

To date, the project has reached more than 250,000 smallholder farmers across eight countries with better genotypes of legumes and rhizobia inoculants. These, in addition to phosphorus fertiliser and improved crop management practices, more than doubled legume yields in many cases. They can also improve performance of successive crops by as much as 50 per cent as a result of improved soil nitrogen levels. Net household income rose by an estimated average of $355 per year.

In Kenya, N2Africa has helped more than 10,000 farmers access niche soybean markets, which have the potential to grow significantly. The demand from the processing industry alone leads to the import of over 8 million tons of soybeans annually from Uganda, Rwanda, DRC and other countries.
N2Africa is a collaborative project led by Wageningen University with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Howard G. Buffet Foundation. The first phase of N2Africa ends this year and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recently approved phase two of the project.

The project started at the end of 2009 in Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. Liberia and Sierra Leone were added two years later, with funding from the Howard G. Buffet Foundation. This year activities started in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda.

**Increasing crop yields and soil health**

Many soils in Africa are severely depleted of nitrogen, making it difficult for smallholder farmers to produce the yields needed to feed growing populations.

Yet, according to Bernard Vanlauwe, R4D Director of IITA, “smallholder farmers often cannot access or afford the inputs needed to put nitrogen back into the ground. Biological nitrogen fixation (BNF) can help them do this – and earn them additional income at the same time.”

Nitrogen fixation is the process by which certain plants, including legumes, take nitrogen gas from the atmosphere, incorporate it into their tissue, and subsequently into the ground, improving soil health and the overall productivity of the farming system.

In addition, N2Africa demonstrated that farmers could significantly increase their legume yields by combining improved varieties with rhizobium inoculants, phosphorus fertiliser and accompanying agronomic management practices.

Rhizobium bacteria are found in soil, and are responsible for fixing nitrogen but different legumes need specific rhizobium strains to fix well. By adding the correct inoculum to legume seed before planting, farmers can further increase their yields.

Professor Ken Giller, N2Africa Director, said: “There have been very few projects that have been able to test technologies at the scale that we’ve been able to. We have measurements and observations on thousands of farmers’ fields across Africa. With these we can understand what the reasons are for better or poor crop performance, and what particular technology fits each type of farmer. Legumes are very flexible crops, and suitable for both the wealthier or poorest farmers.”

“We've got proof of massive improvements in yield at field level, due to the right combination of better genotypes of legumes and rhizobia, adapted fertiliser and improved crop management.”

**Developing markets**

Lack of access to markets means many smallholder farmers in Africa struggle every season to sell their goods. N2Africa technologies are helping Kenyan farmers exploit gaps in the local and national soybean markets.

In western Kenya, N2Africa linked soybean farmers with lucrative commercial and non-profit markets:
• Food manufacturer, Promasidor, set up 16 soybean grain collection points to buy Kenyan soybeans for Sossi, a soybean product available in Kenyan supermarkets. In 2012, Promasidor bought 160 tons of soybean from Kenyan farmers.

• N2Africa farmers supply 220 tons of soybean each year to three soybean processing factories set up by UNIDO and the Government of Japan to provide soy products for school feeding programmes and emergency relief.

• On a local scale, N2Africa has supported farmers to set up their own soybean processing plants, including mincer, soaking basin, filters, press plates and pasteurizing pans. Women use them in late afternoons to mince soybeans for their evening meals.

Jeroen Huising, CIAT Scientist and N2Africa programme coordinator, said: “In contrast to staple crops, like maize and rice, legumes fetch a higher price. But we need to support farmers to have access to these markets. Once we do that, the technology has the potential to be self-sustaining – enabling farmers to increase the nitrogen in their soils, attain higher yields and earn more money through crop sales.”

For more information visit www.n2africa.org/ or visit www.n2africa.tv/ to watch N2Africa TV.

Fruits and Vegetables - plant protection

Defending food crops: Whitefly experimentation to prevent contamination of agriculture. by Science daily, 13 November, 2013
http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/11/131108102150.htm

Full Article

Nov. 8, 2013 — On November 8th, JoVE, the Journal of Visualized Experiments, will introduce a new technique to aid in the development of defenses against diseases threatening food crops worldwide. The method, published under the title Transmitting Plant Viruses Using Whiteflies, is applicable to such at-risk crops as tomatoes and common bean plants. The whitefly method provides a means of interfering with the plant-contamination process as well as the cultivation of plants that are altogether resistant to infection.

"For example, the described technique is used to develop tomatoes with resistance to tomato yellow leaf curl virus, which is a big problem in tomato production in the southern U.S. and in many parts of the world," said Jane Polston, the principle investigator at the University of Florida's Department of Plant Pathology. In the article accompanying their JoVE video, Polston and her colleagues write that numerous genera of whitefly-transmitted plant viruses (such as Begomovirus, Carlavirus, Crinivirus, Ipomovirus, Torradovirus) are part of an emerging and economically significant group of pathogens affecting important food and fiber crops.

The technique includes reliably rearing whiteflies with a specific virus while omitting the possibility of cross-contamination to other viruses -- an easily encountered problem because of the sheer number of whiteflies used in testing. Such contamination would jeopardize the results of an entire experiment. After exposing large numbers of a particular plant species to a specific whitefly-transmitted virus, a researcher can then note which individual plants resisted infection and why. This article outlines how to generate hundreds or thousands of infected plants year-round by exposing them to whiteflies each week. Therefore, the whitefly-assisted transmission method provides researchers with a powerful
means for continued experimentation in developing plant defenses against the threat of whitefly-transmitted disease.

Polston said that she published this technique through JoVE's video format because it was difficult to explain it through traditional text-only journals. "I have never published like this before and wanted to try it," she said, "And it was very difficult to describe some of the details of this technique in writing. Video was a better approach."

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**Agro-energy**

**Guyana has achieved much in expanding bio-energy opportunities- Minister Ramsammy – at Close-out symposium.** GINA, 6 November, 2013  

**Full Article**

A “Close-out” Symposium held at the Ministry of Agriculture today, heard of the objectives achieved six years after a Technical Cooperation Agreement – ‘Expanding Bio-energy Opportunities in Guyana” came into being, and which was spearheaded by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in collaboration with several other stakeholders.

The agreement which has ended, provided the assistance that was needed to enhance the capability of the government in defining a critical path for promoting the development of its agro-energy sector.

As an outcome of this project several achievements have been made, including the draft agro-energy policy being formulated, a bio-ethanol demonstration plant installed at the Albion Sugar Estate, 115 plus persons from 23 agencies have been trained in bio-energy areas, that exceeded its target by more than 60%, modules and manuals have been developed for utilisation in various technical institutes, financial instrument to promote investments in this area signed, visits by bio-energy investment delegations and project developers to Guyana and preliminary bio-energy projects identified.

In 2007, the Government of Guyana initiated the preparation of an agro-energy policy for the country as an indication of its commitment. This policy was in line with the sustainable and climate change initiative and also aligned with the global commitment to reduce green house gases and local pollution. As a result of this, the Technical Cooperation agreement was signed.

During his update on this project, Minister of Agriculture Dr. Leslie Ramsammy highlighted that this bio-energy project has had a lot of benefits for the country as, “Guyana has an opportunity to use agriculture to face the global challenge.” He added that Guyana has a bio-energy programme, and it is ready to expand and excel in this regard.

Among the key objectives of this project were improving its capacity to identify and evaluate investment opportunities in the bio-energy production chain, capacity building and the transfer of technology, intuitional strengthening along with developing a financial vehicle to promote investment opportunities and developing a strategy to harness Guyana’s potential for bio-energy production.
Minister Ramsammy also highlighted that the bio-ethanol demonstration plant has thus far produced more than 1000L of fuel and it has the potential to produce more when utilised at its full capacity.

He said the industry is considering a 10% blend of fossil fuel and bio-ethanol gases, and one of the elements that can used to do so is sugar cane.

The Minister said that Guyana still has the potential for sugar; which can be cultivated in the intermediate savannahs, specifically for the creation of bio-ethanol gases without shortening the demand for sugar.

They are also looking at the rice husk, which is a good agent for the production of bio-energy and palm oil which can be used for the production of bio-diesel.

The University of Guyana (UG) has also been playing a major role in this field. A PowerPoint presentation of a bio-energy plant that can be used for daily activities that was created by the institution’s final year students was also presented at today’s event.

The Ministry will soon be launching its own bio-digester for its kitchen and canteen. “It is an example of what can be done,” said the Minister.

The other partners in this project are Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Programme (CREDP), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) with support from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the Guyana Government.

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**Soil and Water Management**

**Caribbean Ministers endorse the importance of strengthening wastewater management in the Region.** Global Water Partnership Caribbean Press Release, 6 November, 2013


**Full Article**

Five (5) Caribbean Ministers with responsibility for water resources management from Barbados, Anguilla, The Commonwealth of Dominica, Nevis and the Turks and Caicos Islands, and five (5) senior ministerial/ government representatives from Saint Kitts, Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, Guadeloupe and Belize have endorsed recommendations for placing greater value on wastewater in the region and its role in the holistic management of water in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The recommendations came out of the 9th High Level Session (HLS) Ministerial Forum, which was held in Barbados on October 10th and 11th, 2013 under the theme “Water and Sanitation and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Addressing Wastewater Policy and Financial Challenges in the Caribbean.” The 9th Forum took place under the auspices of Dr. The Honourable David Estwick, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Water Resource Management through the support of the Barbados Water Authority (BWA).
The Ministerial Forum is held annually as a joint initiative of the Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) and the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA). The UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme through the Global Environment Facility’s Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management (GEF CReW) continued to provide financial support to this year’s event following its initial collaboration at last year’s HLS Ministerial Forum in The Bahamas. The Forum provides a unique platform for Ministers and senior officials involved in water resources management to share experiences and propose strategic directions for the resolution of water and wastewater issues affecting Caribbean SIDS. To date, the Forum is an unmatched regional event, being the only meeting of Caribbean Water Ministers.

Key recommendations arising out of the Declaration signed by the Ministers at the Forum were the recognition of wastewater’s important cross-sectoral linkages within various sectors and that wastewater management should be regarded as a supportive service that adds value and not costs. Also significant in the Declaration was the proposal for adopting holistic approaches that prioritise Integrated Urban Water Management and treat wastewater as a resource and not a waste. Echoing a similar sentiment during one of the discussion sessions at the Forum, Mr. Victor Poyotte, Executive Director of the Caribbean Water and Sewerage Association Inc. (CAWASA) said “Water and wastewater cannot be looked at in isolation.”

During the discussions at the Forum, the Caribbean Ministers and senior government officials presented their perspectives on a range of issues which included achieving financial sustainability in wastewater management; the importance of wastewater management in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the impacts of climate change; the challenges climate change will pose for wastewater management in SIDS; establishing a wastewater policy agenda and associated challenges; wastewater financing; the ratification and implementation of the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities (or LBS Protocol); among other issues. Also raised during discussions was the need for establishing and enhancing regional mechanisms for agency collaboration and prioritising wastewater management at the highest policy and decision-making level and the value of expanding south-south cooperation and sharing of expertise and best practices.

The Forum of Ministers therefore recognised the need to prioritise programmes, actions and investments in wastewater management in relevant sectors where the most impacts existed, for instance in urban areas and vulnerable communities. Accepting that capital costs are likely to provide a significant impediment for our small and fragile economies, the need for concessory funds and grants were underscored as being essential to establish or upgrade wastewater infrastructure in the region. A presentation by GWP-C’s keynote speaker at the Forum, Professor Kalanithy Vairavamoorthy, Director of the School of Global Sustainability of the University of South Florida and an internationally-recognised expert on urban water management, spurred the Ministers’ interest in natural wastewater systems that could be launched incrementally or combined with existing infrastructure, as providing another option that could be pursued.

The Ministers also acknowledged the need to mobilise and secure grassroots support and public awareness as a necessary condition for garnering political support for initiating wastewater policies and programmes. According to the Honourable Troy Liburd, Minister of Works and Communications of Nevis who participated in the 9th Forum “Wastewater is not at the forefront of everyone’s mind.” He said “Information on wastewater does not trickle down to the average man; the challenge is to distribute this information.”

The Ministerial Recommendations were signed on October 11th, 2013 by Dr. The Honourable David C. Estwick, Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management of Barbados; The Honourable Evan Gumbs, Minister of Infrastructure, Communications, Utilities and Housing of
Anguilla; The Honourable Reginald Austria, Minister of Lands, Housing, Settlements and Water Resource Management of The Commonwealth of Dominica; The Honourable Porscha Stubbs-Smith, Minister of Environment and Home Affairs of the Turks and Caicos Islands; and The Honourable Troy Liburd, Minister of Works and Communications of Nevis. Also endorsing the recommendations were Mr. Lenrick Lake, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy of Saint Kitts and Nevis and senior officials representing Caribbean Ministers with responsibility for water from the countries of Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, Guadeloupe and Belize.

Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) and the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA) are committed to supporting the realisation of the recommendations coming out of the 9th High Level Session Ministerial Forum, in cooperation with national governments, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and other partners. Furthermore, the GEF CReW project which is due to end in 2015 has pledged its continued support for the convening of the 2014 High Level Session Ministerial Forum and to achieving the Ministerial recommendations.

Agriculural Development

Food, Wine and Rum Festival will give winners major exposure. Barbados Advocate, 10 November, 2013

Full Article

Some of the winners of the National Independence Festival of Creative Arts (NIFCA) Culinary Arts Exhibition and Professional Cook-Off will gain further exposure for themselves and their work during the staging of the Food, Wine and Rum Festival later this month.

This was revealed by Chief Executive Officer of the National Cultural Foundation, Cranston Browne as he gave remarks on Friday at the official launch of the 2013 NIFCA Culinary Arts Exhibition and Professional Cook-Off at Sky Mall.

“This year the top four professional chefs from the cook off will be a part of the line-up at the Food, Wine & Rum [Festival’s] Sizzle Street event at Queen’s Park on Saturday, November 23. In addition, some of the top winners exhibiting here will also have a chance to see their products and have some commercial activity at this same Sizzle Street event.”

Browne also noted that the partnership between the two festivals is a beneficial one.

“The Culinary Arts Exhibition, a staple on the NIFCA calendar, also makes November a time about celebrating our local chefs, their creations and local cuisine. This is also supported in November by the Food, Wine and Rum Festival which showcases Barbadian culinary talent during this month. We have partnered with the Food, Wine and Rum Festival for the first time this year to establish some linkages between the two… We believe that it would give our local professional chefs more opportunities to showcase their talents at both festivals and turn the spotlight on the local culinary industry at a time when we are promoting all things ‘Bajan’. This could only be beneficial for the local chefs since they will get more exposure to an international market,” he further explained. (MG)
**Minister: Barbados is a culinary destination.** Barbados Advocate, 10 November, 2013


**Full Article**

Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Stephen Lashley is of the view that Barbados can be marketed as destination of choice based on its local cuisines.

He shared this perspective while speaking at the official launch of the 2013 NIFCA Culinary Arts Exhibition and Professional Cook-Off in Sky Mall on Friday.

“We must be proud, and we must be ready to share our cuisine with the world. We must be confident enough to serve authentic Conkies, Cou-Cou and Steamed Flying Fish, Macaroni Pie, Pudding and Souse – in the most prestigious restaurants. I have absolutely no doubt that like countries such as Italy, France, or Mexico, we can successfully use our cuisine as a tourism marketing tool, and promote Barbados as a place to come to enjoy our food. One thing is for sure, if we can develop this confidence, we will undoubtedly make great savings on our food importation bill,” he explained.

During Friday’s launch, members of the public got the opportunity to view the various displays of the sweet treats, beautiful cakes, pastries and other culinary delights created by entrants of the NIFCA Culinary Arts Exhibition.

It was also announced at the launch that the winners of the evening’s incentives awards included: Leroy Barrow – Enid Maxwell Award for the Culinary Arts; Ellerton Primary School – Outstanding Participation by a Primary School; Graydon Sealy Secondary School – Outstanding Participation by a Secondary School; and the Association of Women in Agriculture – Best Booth Displayed by a Community Group. (MG)

**Current initiatives at the Ministry of Agriculture.** Belize Guardian, 7 November, 2013


**Full Article**

A delegation from the Chilean Government visited Belize on Monday of this week to look at the current plant and animal health systems, which is under the Belize Agriculture Health Authority (BAHA), to find gaps and prepare proposals to make improvements in those systems. This is happening as the Ministry of Agriculture embarks on its Annual Work plan for 2014 and 2015 from Wednesday to Friday of this week in Central Farm.

The Ministry of Agriculture is also preparing to hold an important forum on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO), starting at 9:00 am, in Central Farm, on December the 10th of this year. The purpose of the GMO forum is to examine the pros and cons of GMOs’ where an expert from both the Caribbean and Central America will be brought in to meet with their Belizean counterparts – to focus on the GMO issue.

“We know that GMOs are being planted around the World, especially in the United States; we know we import food from the United State, which is G.M.O produced…the G.M.O Agenda is there in the
forefront, we need to address it more consistently, because the population needs to know the pros and cons of what G.M.O is and G.M.O can do,” says Roberto Harrison, Belize’s Chief Agriculture Officer.

Belize does not yet have a position on whether to allow G.M.Os to be planted; a case of interest for producers of corn and soy bean, two commodities that are produced in large quantities in the country.

Meanwhile; the Mediterranean fruit fly in Belize is now under “control” and the quarantine has been lifted. The medfly outbreak was a cause of concern because of the quantities of flies that were found in the Hopkins Area. As a result, the public is reminded to refrain from bringing in fruits and vegetables into the country since this most destructive fruit pest can threaten foreign exchange earners such as a striving papaya industry in the North of the Country.

The National Cattle Sweep is also now continuing in both the Stann Creek and Toledo District in an effort to test for both Brucellosis and Tuberculosis and also to establish a farmer registry of cattle in the Country. The Cattle Sweep is a requirement to be able to export beef to Mexico, even though an informal trade now exists with cattle to Guatemala. So far the success of the Cattle Sweep has caused the price of cattle to rise to $2.00 a pound on the hoof.

Both efforts to maintain Belize free from medfly and beef free from pathogenic components have not come about cheaply.

“The National Cattle Sweep, which will cost in excess of twelve million dollars for establishing the system and disease status, not including ongoing maintenance costs of a disease free area to be able to export to Mexico and elsewhere…the current med fly surveillance and eradication program costs the Country half a million dollars on a yearly basis to maintain, with this year requiring an additional $170,000.00 to establish a checkpoint and to eradicate the massive outbreak in the Southern region,” reports Francisco Guiterrez, Director of Plant Health at BAHA.

As expressed by a Ministry of Agriculture Official recently, the current efforts by the Ministry of Agriculture to guarantee Belize’s continued food security has already gotten some attention from the Caribbean Community and the Americas. Indeed; CARICOM is considering Belize as its “saviour” said the official.


Full Article

Chief Executive Officer of the Barbados Agricultural Society, James Paul, says there will be a need to change the way things are done in the local poultry industry, to meet consumer demands.

He was speaking to the media over the weekend, where he highlighted that one of the findings coming out of the organisation’s annual general meeting is that the production side of doing business must be diversified.

“People are not cooking as much. And some want ready to cook and ready to use food. This is something in the earlier years when we looked to define policy in the industry, we focused on primary products but processed products were something that was not paid attention to,” he explained.
“That is something now we recognise that is changing and the industry has to respond, and what therefore we might need to do is to look to see how we could educate our processors to be able to respond to changing consumer tastes in the market.

He said this would include differences in terms of production they would have to develop in the farming community to be able to cope with those changes. ―For instance, it is not just a question of producing a whole chicken anymore, a lot people are looking for seasoned chicken, ready to cook meats.”

Furthermore, the challenge will be to get them to focus on those issues. “Because we still want to preserve the market for local farmers, it is just that the consumer wants the same product but prepared differently and more convenient.”

Paul also highlighted the impact that recent rainfall has been having on the industry. “A lot of the rain has been localised, but the farmers have been having some challenges. We have noticed that the supply of produce during this particular period has not been what it has been in previous months.”

“But October is usually the wettest month of the year. So we are hoping that as we go further into the last quarter we will see an improvement in the weather which will lead to better growing conditions,” he said. (JH)

**Agricultural Trade**

**Commit to tough decisions and follow through – Chair of COTED.** CARICOM press release, 8 November, 2013  

**Full Article**

(CARICOM Secretariat, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown, Guyana) Commit to tough decisions, and follow through on them. That was the challenge thrown out by the Honourable Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Guyana and Chair of the Council of Trade and Economic Development (COTED), on Friday.

Delivering the address at the opening of the Special Session on the Strategic Direction of the Council at the Princess International Hotel, Providence, Guyana, the Minister said that the acceleration of implementation was the most important element of what had to be done within the Community if CARICOM were to succeed.

COTED, she said, should initiate critical change, with maximum haste, since a significant amount of the mandate of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) devolved around the COTED. Pointing out that the only direction for CARICOM “is forward”, Minister Rodrigues-Birkett said the special session should ponder how COTED could be a change driver.

The Council, she advised her colleagues, should harness the ideas and input of Caribbean public in its policy-making and implementation processes. She made a special call for the engagement of the private sector as the engine of growth, jobs and innovation, even as she encouraged regional businesses to organise themselves for structured dialogue with the Community. She also sounded the
call for an energised external trade policy and expanded opportunities in South America and deepen trade and investment relations with ACP partners.

The youth, universities and technical colleges should also be engaged, the Minister said, and added that the media partnership should be strengthened to regroup and rebuild the regional integration message.

“We have to make adjustments to our mode of operation if we are to achieve these goals,” she said. Also at the opening session, Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, CARICOM Secretary-General addressed COTED’s role in the Community’s change agenda. The Special Session, he said, was set against the background of a quest for innovative ideas to drive the progress of the integration movement.

“After forty years, our integration movement continues to endure, giving us cause for celebration in the midst of our reflection and introspection. And as any organisation which wishes to remain relevant to its members, we are engaged in seeking ways to improve the way we do business,” Ambassador LaRocque said

A rigorous session on the strategic direction of the Council, he said, would be of inestimable value to both the reform process currently underway in the Community as well as to the future operations of COTED.

“COTED’s agenda and deliberations must be more strategic as they seek to address the challenges faced by our Member States. And the work of the Preparatory Meeting of the COTED must be such as to allow the Ministers space for strategic deliberation,” he told the Meeting. He added that the role of institutions that relate to COTED was equally important as they were an integral part of the integration architecture and were established to facilitate economic and trading arrangements.

Minister Rodrigues-Birkett and Secretary-General LaRocque were of one accord on the role of the private sector, and the haste with which change had to be effected. Ambassador LaRocque wants the session to devise a mechanism to bring the regional private sector to the table, since it is that sector that produces and trades.

“Honourable Ministers, the pillar of economic integration rests largely on the shoulders of the COTED and, as you deliberate on forging a strategy for the future operations of this Council and seek answers to boost our growth and development, there is an urgency which must infuse your deliberations,” the Secretary-General said.

The traditional two-day year-end regular Meeting of the COTED was split to allow for the day-long strategic session on Friday as well as the COTED Ministerial on Saturday.
Food Security

**FAO expects more balanced food markets, less price volatility.** By the FAO, 7 November, 2013

**Full Article**

Food Price Index rose slightly in October, driven by higher sugar prices
7 November 2013, Rome - Food commodity markets are becoming more balanced and less price volatile than in recent years thanks to improved supplies and a recovery in global inventories of cereals, according to FAO's Food Outlook report published today.

"The prices for most basic food commodities have declined over the past few months. This relates to production increases and the expectation that in the current season, we will have more abundant supplies, more export availabilities and higher stocks," said David Hallam, Director of FAO's Trade and Markets Division.

The sharp increase in 2013 cereal production mostly stems from a recovery of maize crops in the United States and record wheat harvests in CIS countries. World rice production in 2013 is expected to grow only modestly.

**Cereal stocks**

Global stocks, ending in 2014, are also anticipated to increase, by 13 percent, to 564 million tonnes, with coarse grains alone up by 30 percent, mostly in the United States. Wheat and rice stocks are also projected to rise, by 7 percent and 3 percent respectively.

The expansion in world cereal stocks would result in the global cereal stocks-to-use ratio reaching 23 percent, well above the historical low of 18.4 percent in 2007/08.

In 2013, the world food import bill is set to decline by 3 percent to $1.15 trillion, with import costs of cereals, sugar, vegetable oils and tropical beverages falling, but dairy, meat and fish remaining firm, according to FAO's latest Food Outlook.

**Food prices rise slightly**

The FAO Food Price Index, also published in this report, rose slightly in October, averaging 205.8 points. This was 2.7 points, or 1.3 percent above September, but still 11 points, or 5.3 percent below its October 2012 value. The slight increase was largely driven by a surge in sugar prices, although prices of the other commodity groups were also up.

The Index, which is a measure of the monthly change in international prices of five major food commodity groups (including 73 price quotations), has undergone some changes in the way it is calculated, although the new approach did not significantly alter the values in the series. The revised Index has also been extended back to 1961. The revisions are discussed in the Special Feature section of Food Outlook.

Forecasts for other commodities include:
Cassava - World cassava output is expected to increase for the fifth consecutive year and to reach 256 million tonnes in 2013. The expansion is being fueled by rising demand for food in the African continent and increasing industrial applications of cassava in East and Southeast Asia, especially for ethanol and starch.

Sugar - World sugar production is forecast to increase only slightly in 2013/14. The rise is likely to be limited in Brazil, the world's largest sugar producer and exporter, where unfavourable weather conditions have hampered harvesting operations. World sugar consumption is set to grow by about 2 percent in 2013/14.

Oilseeds - World oilcrop production could climb to an all-time high in 2013/14, supported by record soybean crops in South America. Global output of oilseed products should match world utilization for the second consecutive year, although a sizeable surplus is possible in the case of meals/cakes.

Meat - World meat production is anticipated to grow by 1.4 percent in 2013. Prices have remained at historically high levels since the beginning of 2011. There is no sign of overall price decreases, despite reduced feed costs.

Dairy - World milk production in 2013 is forecast to grow by 1.9 percent. Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean are expected to account for most of the increase, with only limited growth elsewhere. International dairy products prices have declined from their April peak, but still remain at historically high levels.

Fisheries - Aquaculture continues to boost overall fish supply, pushing quotations down from earlier levels. Fish consumption per capita keeps growing, with aquaculture in the process of overtaking capture fisheries as the main source of supply for direct human consumption.

Eating local produce can have a positive impact on economy – Minister Clarke by Andrea Braham, 7 November, 2013

Full Article

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Roger Clarke, says eating local produce can have a positive impact on the nation’s economy, environment and health.

“There are very essential reasons to ensure that we ‘grow what we eat and eat what we grow’. First of all, our economy depends on this. Whatever we do, we must seriously endeavour to decrease the US$1 billion food import bill. It is unsustainable. You can’t borrow money to buy food from abroad and that is one of the causes for the dollar to be sliding,” the Minister said.

He was addressing the launch event of the 10th anniversary celebration of Eat Jamaican Day, held on November 6 at the Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS) head office on Church Street, Kingston. Eat Jamaican Day 2013 will be observed on November 25 with a number of activities to mark the day.

The Minister emphasised that Jamaica does not wish to be threatened by food insecurity and as a sovereign nation aiming to become the place of choice to live, “we want to ensure that the kinds of foods we eat are wholesome and nutritious and that these foods are available in the right quantities.”
He pointed out that while the Eat Jamaican campaign has resonated with Jamaicans, the challenge is to ensure that it truly has an impact.

“Campaigns such as this one are important and essential to keep the message and the appeal alive. This Eat Jamaican campaign should not be taken lightly and its contribution in terms of social marketing and awareness building should not be undervalued,” Minister Clarke said.

In officially launching the day, the Minister thanked the JAS, the sponsors and the farmers, who are supporting the effort.

In the meantime, JAS President, Senator Norman Grant, observed that over the past 10 years, there have been greater awareness and definitive steps made by consumers to choose local produce and support the agriculture sector.

He further pointed to an incremental reduction on the rate of food imports, which can be attributed to the impact of the Eat Jamaican campaign.

The JAS President informed that this year, the focus is on celebrating the 10th anniversary of the campaign and the organisation will be bringing together major players within the local food sector to showcase Jamaica’s cuisine utilising indigenous foods and drinks.

Among activities for the Eat Jamaican Day celebration, will be a major exposition at King’s House involving organisations and agencies related to agriculture. There will also be a Farmers’ Cook Off; presentation of Eat Jamaican essay competition winners; and an awards function honouring individuals and organisations that have made valuable contributions to the campaign over the past 10 years.

“We are working with the supermarkets and different outlets in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture….to take this process forward. We want to provide supermarkets with certificates with the Eat Jamaican logo for them to display at their point of sale to show that they are supporting the local agricultural sector and they are helping the farmers to grow,” Senator Grant said.

The Eat Jamaican Day celebration is part of activities by the Ministry of Agriculture to mark ‘Eat Jamaican Month’ in November.

Consumers urged to continue to purchase local products by Andrine Davidson, 6 November, 2013

Full Article

Consumers have been encouraged to continue to buy local products, by Acting Executive Director, Jamaica 4-H Clubs, Ron Blake, in order for the country to reap long-term benefits.

Speaking to JIS News at the Lauriston/Thompson Pen Community 4-H Club’s Stew Festival on Saturday, November 2, at Brooklyn Park, Spanish Town, in St. Catherine, Mr. Blake explained that as a partner of the ‘Eat Jamaican Campaign’, being celebrated in November, the Jamaica 4-H Club continues to advocate for production and consumption of local food.
Addressing the issue of the prices of local produce, Mr. Blake is encouraging buyers to consider their support for local produce as an investment in the growth of the Jamaican economy.

“The expense is a short term one. In the long run, when you ignore local production, you are destroying the local industry. Once that happens, there is no competition for the imported product. At that time, prices are going to be erratic and higher than they are now,” he pointed out.

Mr. Blake said there is a recognition of the need for a higher level of competition between local and imported products, and Jamaicans must become more actively involved in growing their own food.

“To beat this, we need to get more people producing, and to expand local production,” he said.

Mr. Blake pointed out that local foods are the better choice, because of their health benefits. “The produce bought locally are healthier, because there is no need to preserve them for export. There is no need to treat them (with chemicals) to extend the shelf life,” he added.

He informed that the 4-H Club is also moving swiftly with projects that can impact the lives of young farmers.

“Our big project now is that we have selected 20 youngsters who will receive five acres to grow onions. We are hoping that by the next planting season, they will get into production,” Mr. Blake said.

He explained that these young farmers have no collateral and that the organization is currently courting corporate Jamaica to provide attractive loans to them.

The Stew Festival, which was well supported by residents of the surrounding communities, featured a number of activities, including the sampling of stewed meat and fruit dishes, bounce-about for the children, performances by the Troopers marching band and a gospel concert.

Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) soldier, Rohan King, emerged top chef in the cook-off in which entrants competed for the top prize using ingredients from a mystery basket. He upstaged last year’s champion, Ricardo Bennett, also from the JDF.

The Acting Executive Director also threw his hat into the ring with his creation, edging Claudette ‘Miss Lyttle’ Pious for third place.

The event was supported by exhibitors, including the Jamaica Information Service (JIS), Consumer Affairs Commission, Social Development Commission, JDF, National Insurance Scheme (NIS), Jamaica Library Service, Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP), Mavis Bank Coffee, Victoria Mutual Building Society, Caribbean Choice Enterprise and Caribbean Dreams.
ICT4Ag: Let's Plug & Play! CTA, 4 November, 2013
http://www.cta.int/en/component/cck/?view=item&id=734

Full Article

On Monday 4 November 2013 at 7:30am, several hundred people from the world of ICTs for agricultural development will enter the doors of the Serena Hotel in Kigali, Rwanda, for the start of the international conference ICT4Ag.

This highly anticipated event kicks off with an invitation to participants to ‘get their hands dirty’! Plug and Play Day brings together some 35 ICT4Ag innovators and entrepreneurs. They will showcase their latest mobile apps, Web2.0 and social media tools and share with participants how they can be applied to agricultural development. In addition, participants will also get to test-drive the technologies for themselves.

Tuesday 5 November 2013 sees the start of the main conference. The conference is divided into three streams – emerging innovations; capacity strengthening and stakeholder empowerment; and enabling environments. In addition to the very many parallel sessions run by a variety of organisations, there are also side events. Details of all of these can be found on the conference website.

The final day of the conference offers participants the chance to see innovative ICT solutions in action on a number of field trips. These include Huguka Radio, an agricultural and rural development radio station and Gicumbi, an individual initiative where university staff (IPB) link with farmers to provide knowledge and farming practical solutions. For more information on the field trips click here.

20 organisations are taking part in the conference exhibition. This is a great opportunity to see what both public and private sector organisations have been working on in this area.

Running alongside the conference is a hackathon. Teams of developers and entrepreneurs will be tackling difficult agricultural issues in a fast-paced competition. The goal is to produce innovative responses to the problems raised. The hackathon blog will have updates on how the teams are progressing throughout the week. http://hackathon.ict4ag.org/

A huge team of social reporters will be covering all activities from 4-8 November. Follow them on Twitter #ict4ag13 and Facebook.

There are several media activities throughout the week. A press conference has been scheduled for 5 November at 12:30. It will be attended by Rwandan ministers Dr. Kalibata, Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, and Hon. Nsengimana, Minister of Youth and ICT, as well as CTA director, Michael Hailu, David Bervinson of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Alloysius Attah, CEO, Farmerline, and Jennifer Britton from the CARICOM Secretariat.

The six finalists of the ICT4Ag media competition will also be present at the conference. They will take part in the final stage of the competition during ICT4Ag, where they will be judged on how well they cover the topic of ICT opportunities in agriculture, depth of analysis, and the originality of their approach.

The conference has begun!
Youth in Agriculture

Lauriston/Thompson Pen 4-H Club impacting young lives by Andrine Davidson, 6 November, 2013
http://jis.gov.jm/lauristonthompson-pen-4-h-club-impacting-young-lives/

Full Article

The leadership of the Lauriston/Thompson Pen 4-H Club is receiving kudos for the organisation’s outstanding performance in the Jamaica 4-H family of clubs, and the impact it has been having on the St. Catherine community where it is located.

“The performance of the club has been excellent. It has been a lot of hard work and sleepless nights,” says founder, Shian Christie, following the organisation’s successful staging of its seventh annual Stew Festival in the Spanish Town community, on November 2.

Now celebrating its 16th anniversary, the club was named 2013 Jamaica 4-H champion community club, capping what has been a highly successful year of activities. Among the many achievements are top prizes in key 4-H activities, such as budding and grafting, composing and potting, cake baking, pig care and management, goat care, and towel folding.

“Our 16th anniversary celebration was outstanding, and the sponsorship was overwhelming,” a proud Mr. Christie tells JIS News.

With an enrolment of more than 120 members, aged five to 25 years, the club is a model organization for development of other clubs.

“Lauriston and Thompson Pen Club is the leading 4-H community club in Jamaica and has created significant impact in Lauriston and its environs. It has, in fact, prevented many young persons from a life of crime and violence and many of them who have benefitted have taken up viable careers in teaching, agriculture, social work and business,” informs Ron Blake, Acting Executive Director of the Jamaica 4-H Club.

Mr. Blake identifies factors that have accounted for the accomplishments of the club as outstanding leadership and strong networking.
“The success of the club is hinged on the strong leadership of Shian Christie, the founder, and the network forged with the political, security, community and corporate St. Catherine. It underpins the energy and life of the club,” he says.

For his part, Mr. Christie attributes the club’s success to the involvement of the members and the community. “We work together. We achieve much because of the commitment,” he tells JIS News.

“We have chemistry and we gel,” adds Club President and Caribbean Maritime Institute student, Antonio Williams.

Mr. Williams notes that being a part of the 4-H movement provides practical benefits which enhance the lives and advance the careers of members. “We learn to develop our skills and see how successful we can be,” he says.

According to Vice President of the club, Tashine Charles, membership in the 4-H club equipped her with know-how, which she was able to apply to CXC examinations.

“I already had the knowledge and skills in Agriculture and Science, which is what I now teach,” says the proud clubbite. Miss Charles, now a trained teacher, who also specializes in Mathematics, is hoping that the club will attract new membership and impact more lives.

“My vision is for us to get more youth involvement, membership to grow, more persons to get into leadership, and develop more skills,” she says.

Meanwhile, Mr. Blake said the umbrella organization, which is active in hundreds of schools across Jamaica, is on a growth path.

“As an organization, the 4-H Club is strongly positioned at this time to continue to improve on our Key Performance Indicators. It is still by far the largest club and society in our schools,” he notes.

He says that the organization is working to meet the needs of its stakeholders in order to remain relevant. One such area is in the field of Information Technology.

“In responding to the dynamic expectation of our youth, the 4-H Club has significantly expanded its IT capabilities to deliver training, registration and social space for membership to interact. We have social media. All main platforms are available to our membership,” he points out.
Upcoming Events

November 2013

**International Conference on ICT4ag**
*Date:* 4-8 November 2013
*Location:* Kigali, Rwanda

**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

December 2013

**3rd Global Conference on Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security and Climate Change**
*Date:* 3- 5 December 2013
*Location:* Johannesburg, South Africa
*Description:* High-level discussions on a Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance. The Conference is organized by the governments of the Republic of South Africa, the Netherlands, and in collaboration with other partners, including FAO and the World Bank. The 3rd Global Conference in South Africa will provide the platform for global leaders; practitioners; scientists; farmers; organized agriculture; civil society; the private sector; and NGOs to discuss and share experiences on successes, and to deliberate the challenges and threats to food and nutrition security under the impact of climate change
*Further information will be published at:* [http://www.arc.agric.za/](http://www.arc.agric.za/)