



IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

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Agriculture *in the* News



Issues Affecting Caribbean Agriculture

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Guyana/Trinidad Agriculture agreement forging ahead- land to be identified within two weeks by GINA, 20 November, 2013 <http://gina.gov.gy/wp/?p=17082>

Guyana and Trinidad are forging ahead with an agreement which allows for investors from the twin island republic to engage in large scale farming in Guyana, and will see both countries engaging in more economic activities.

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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.



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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.

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Rice

Record breaking year for rice production – over 529,000 tonnes produced by GINA, 19 November 2013

<http://gina.gov.gy/wp/?p=16999>

Full Article

The rice industry continues its outstanding performance, hitting an all time high this year, surpassing the fixed targets, as well as the 2012 figure by over 107,000 tonnes. Rice production for 2013 topped 529,384 tonnes exceeding the 422,057 tonnes produced in 2012, thereby increasing by 25.43 percent.

According to figures provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, both crops for 2013 far outperformed their targets. Rice yield for 2013 has exceeded the targeted production of 413,031 tonnes, by 28.17 percent or 116,353 tonnes. This year's first crop target was 203,553 tonnes, but its yield was 264,321 tonnes, an increase of 29.85 percent. The second crop target of 209,478 was exceeded by 26.54 percent, reaching a production figure of 265,063 tonnes.

Rice farmers sowed a total of 165,461 hectares; harvested 160,742 hectares and produced 805,121 metric tonnes of paddy in 2013.

This in itself is historic as the projection was that Guyana would have achieved 500,000 tonnes, but only by the end of 2015. This also pushes forward the possibility of Guyana possibly reaching 600,000 tonnes before the 2020 projection.

The sector continues to experience yearly increase in rice production due to more land being brought under cultivation, and the provision of improved farming techniques with better seed varieties, which in turn have led to improved yields per hectare.

A major incentive for the latter has been the price for Guyana's rice improving, which thus far has been stable. The 2012 rice production grew by 5 percent over the 2011 output.

Climate change

Barbados/USAID Agreement to address climate change signed by Julia Rawlins-Bentham BGIS, 20 November, 2013

http://gisbarbados.gov.bb/index.php?categoryid=9&p2_articleid=11594

Full Article

Flooding in Trents and Holetown, St. James and along the West Coast will be addressed when a US\$7,049,000 Climate Change Agreement signed between Barbados and USAID (US Agency for International Development) comes into being.

The three-year agreement was signed by Minister of the Environment and Drainage, Dr. Denis Lowe and US Ambassador to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, Larry Palmer, at the Ministry's new headquarters, Warrens Tower II, Warrens, St. Michael, recently.

The Minister explained that the project, which falls under the Water Resource Management and Flood Resilience Climate Change Adaptation Programme, was expected to use technical and scientific-based approaches to cover six main areas.

Those areas are improved flood management, a framework for improved management and control, analysing water quality, water harvesting, improving climate science systems and increasing awareness and public education.

Dr. Lowe explained that the project would look at improved flood management. He added that Trents in Holetown, St. James, traditionally prone to flooding, would benefit from the design and construction of appropriate storm water drainage structures.

In addition, the Minister said there would also be an analysis of the causes of the pollutants and debris upstream of the Holetown Lagoon, and an examination of effective measures to reduce or eliminate the marine environment hazards.

“Barbados remains committed to ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is in place to protect our inland, coastal and marine ecosystems from flooding events,” he said.

The Minister noted that the project would also coincide with work already being undertaken by the Coastal Zone Management Unit and the Drainage Division along the island’s West Coast. “The intensity and frequency of rainfall this year, particularly during the hurricane season, has taken a toll on our drainage system,” he said, noting the systems were designed in an era when the threat of climate change was not a prominent issue.

Mr. Palmer also told those present that without urgent strategic action, climate change matters that affected Barbados, including the availability of fresh water and the impact on coastal areas resulting from higher sea levels, were expected to worsen.

“For the US government, this partnership with the Ministry is one piece of our much broader climate change programme in the Eastern Caribbean, working in collaboration with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, its member states and other regional organisations,” he said.

Soil and Water Management

Future-proofed: Smarter water use for an uncertain climate by CGIAR, 15 November 2013,
<http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/2013/11/smarter-water-use-for-an-uncertain-climate/>

Full Article

Climate change will have a “profound” impact on water resources that could have serious knock-on effects for agriculture, according to a new report published by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) today.

But despite uncertainty about the precise impact of climate change, it argues that the development of more resilient food production systems based on smarter water use is the most effective response.

“It’s quite simple: for the world to feed 9.6 billion people in 2050, it needs to significantly improve water management to produce more food, meet the increasing demands of other water users, and address the challenges created by climate change,” said Peter McCornick, Deputy Director General – Research, IWMI, and one of the lead authors of *Tackling Change: future-proofing water, agriculture and food security in an era of climate uncertainty*.

“The threat needs to be taken very seriously.

The report, which synthesizes several years of IWMI research, was funded by the CGIAR Research Programs on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), and Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE).

With around 95% of farmers in sub-Saharan Africa already depending on often unreliable seasonal rains and sharp declines in groundwater in parts of Asia – largely due to demands from agriculture and competition from industry and cities – water shortages are likely to make food production in these areas increasingly precarious.

Now, projected rises in average temperature, more extreme weather, and changes in precipitation patterns are expected to exacerbate the problem further, affecting vast swaths of arable land. But uncertainty over exactly what the effects will be, should not stall efforts to reduce the risks to farmers, the authors warn.

“What’s certain is that these changes, from climate and other factors, are not going to wait for us,” continued McCornick. “This means we have to be clear about our priorities and make significant investments in ‘no-regrets’ solutions for improving water storage and water access, and sustainably boosting farm productivity that make sense regardless of the impact of climate change.”

“If we’re not proactive, we’re very likely to see climate change intensify the stresses on our water resources, especially in many of the world’s poorest and most water-scarce countries. As well as threatening food production at the farm level, this could also cause lasting damage to complex ecosystems that currently support hundreds of millions of people.”

The report details a range of options for governments and communities to “future-proof” food production, which, if combined, could significantly improve the use of water in agriculture. These range from small-scale methods for storing rainwater on-farm and using it more efficiently to large infrastructure investments, such as dam and reservoir construction. Underground water storage – to capture floodwater – is highlighted as one promising new avenue of research.

It also stresses the need for more equitable access to water for women and marginalized groups to ensure they are not disproportionately burdened by the effects of climate change, and flags the need for improved institutional processes to ensure water management policies are implemented effectively.

“We’ve seen that we can enhance livelihoods and food security through a research agenda that explicitly links improved agricultural water management, food security, and climate change, and that works to understand and reduce the vulnerabilities of farming households,” continued McCornick. “Now we need to redouble efforts to fine-tune and implement these solutions, to build the resilience of smallholders and the food production system as a whole.”

Download Report http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/Publications/Books/PDF/tackling_change_future-proofing_water_agriculture_and_food_security_in_an_era_of_climate_uncertainty.pdf

Agricultural Development

Guyana/Trinidad Agriculture agreement forging ahead- land to be identified within two weeks by GINA, 20 November, 2013

<http://gina.gov.gy/wp/?p=17082>

Full Article

Guyana and Trinidad are forging ahead with an agreement which allows for investors from the twin island republic to engage in large scale farming in Guyana, and will see both countries engaging in more economic activities.

Earlier this year, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago whereby land will be made available to investors and farmers of the twin island for agricultural development.

During a press briefing today at the Ministry of Agriculture's Regent Road Office, Agriculture Minister, Dr. Leslie Ramsammy disclosed that discussions were held with Trinidad's, Agriculture Minister Devant Maharaj who was also present at the briefing, to push the agreement forward.

"We are at the beginning of a collaboration that will benefit both countries," Minister Ramsammy said. No financial investment will be made by either governments, but rather, agricultural and economic activities will be facilitated in both countries.

However, Minister Ramsammy highlighted that Guyanese farmers pay about \$1,000 per acres annually depending on the geographical area, and based on the crop, location and the size of the investment, an arrangement will be made with the Trinidadian Government.

Several visits were made and meetings held by officials from Trinidad and Guyana. As a result, several commodities were identified that would be best suited for the land. These include corn, soya, cassava, legumes and fish rearing and poultry to some extent.

"We have now agreed on what this collaboration will entail, Trinidad will put out an advisory and the investors will be referred to the Guyana Government and the agreement will be finalised," Minister Ramsammy pointed out.

Guyana has a huge amount of land that can be used for agriculture purposes. Outside of the 500,000 hectares that are under full or some cultivation, there is also the potential for 3.3 million hectares. Minister Ramsammy added that now that the commodities are identified, appropriate land space will be considered within the next two weeks.

He stressed that this project will in no way affect small scale farmers but rather, there will be added opportunities for them.

Meanwhile Minister Maharaj said that the project puts the two countries at the peak of revitalising agriculture in the region.

Immediately, Trinidad will be advertising for agriculture investors, site visits will be arranged, requests for proposals will then be solicited, and thereafter, evaluation will be made by both sides before finalization, he stated.

He expressed hope that the Trinidadian investors will seize the opportunity because Trinidad has less land available and Guyana offers much more possibilities. The products will also require some processing facilities being set up in Guyana before exporting. This will also result in more jobs opportunities being created.

This project follows through on the Jagdeo initiative proposed to CARICOM for countries to collaborate with Guyana and expand its underdeveloped agricultural lands. This strategy is geared towards reducing food import bills from countries outside the region, increase inter-regional food security, and reduce food inflation.

Trinidad and Tobago is currently looking at ways and means through which it can reduce its import of food from outside of CARICOM; however, it does not have the availability of land at its disposal to grow more of its own food, hence they took up this offer.

\$400 Million Being Spent on Rehabilitation of Sugarcane Roads by Chris Patterson. Jamaica Information Service, 15 November, 2013

<http://jis.gov.jm/400-million-spent-rehabilitation-sugarcane-roads/>

Full Article

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Roger Clarke, says that approximately \$400 million is being spent on the rehabilitation of 200 kilometres of cane roads island-wide.

He said the project is aimed at improving efficiency in the transportation of sugar cane from farm to factory, and forms part of the Government's overall strategy to support the recovery of the industry.

"This year, we are spending, through the Sugar Transformation Unit, \$400 million on cane roads all over the country... and we would have done more this year but because of fiscal space, we couldn't spend more," he said.

Minister Clarke was speaking at the All-Island Jamaica Cane Farmers' Association annual general meeting held on Wednesday, November 13, at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, New Kingston.

He informed that next year, work will be undertaken on an additional 280 kilometres of roads, to increase market access for farmers, while improving employment prospects for community members.

Mr. Clarke reiterated the Government's commitment to the continued strengthening of the country's sugar industry through the implementation of several projects and initiatives.

He added that this is in a bid to, among other things, position the industry to record incremental increased outputs, and safeguard the welfare of the sector's workers.

The Minister also stressed the need for increased production from cane harvests to meet the sugarcane quotas.

"What we need to do is to lift productivity to the maximum that if we were to get a decrease in price, it could be compensated by productivity and therefore that is what we have to do. We have to make sure that we get more sugar per acre than what we are getting now, not just more tonnes per acre, but more sugar, because that is what we are paid for," he said.

He further urged farmers to ensure that their yields are of the highest standard at all times.

Irrigation Systems Completed At Two Agro Parks by Garfield L. Angus. Jamaica Information Service, 21 November, 2013

<http://jis.gov.jm/irrigation-systems-completed-two-agro-parks/>

Full Article

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Roger Clarke, says that work has been completed on irrigation systems for two agro parks and the schemes should be fully operational in short order.

He said that the systems at Yallahs, St. Thomas and Ebony Park in Clarendon are now ready for operation. “At Yallahs, it is finished now, and we should be commissioning that system within a couple weeks,” the Minister stated.

He was speaking to journalists during a tour of the Amity Hall Agro Park in St. Catherine on Friday, November 15, with President of the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency Michel Martelly.

Meanwhile, he informed that the design work has been completed for the installation of an irrigation system as Spring Plain in Clarendon.

“We have identified 100 acres there for onion production and land preparation is well on its way, and there is irrigation water available in that general area,” the Minister informed.

He said that the Ministry is “making great effort” to boost the production of onions to put a dent in the importation of the crop.

“We have just finished reaping onions at Plantain Garden, St. Thomas, and that, combined with the irrigation systems at Yallahs, Ebony Park and Spring Plain, will enable farmers “to produce in earnest”.

Turning to operations at Amity Hall, Minister Clarke said that the small farmers “are doing quite a bit there”.

“They have pumpkin, potato, sorrel, okra, onion,” he pointed out, noting that the Caribbean Broilers Group is currently reaping sorghum, and will also be planting red peas.

A total of nine agro parks are to be established across the island, which are projected to realize foreign exchange savings of some \$4 billion, provide employment for about 5,000 persons, and reduce the importation of targeted crops.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture Minister said that come next year, the Ministry will be paying keen attention to greenhouse farmers, in order to streamline their practice.

He said that recently, “the farmers held back on production in anticipation that we were going to have hurricane, and put me in a very precarious position where I am getting pressure to import things like sweet pepper, when we have the capability to produce that.”

Marketing

Sandals under close watch by Kerri Gooding. The Barbados Advocate, 23 November, 2013
<http://www.barbadosadvocate.com/newsitem.asp?more=local&NewsID=33540>

Full Article

The Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS) wants to meet with Sandals International to ensure that they buy as much local produce as they can.

In a press conference held at the BAS offices yesterday afternoon, Chief Executive Officer, James Paul told the media that the BAS has already expressed to Sandals that they wish to meet and discuss.

He said, “We are hoping that Sandals will be coming in here willing and able to follow the pattern that they have set in other Caribbean countries by supporting our local agriculture sector.”

With regard to holding talks with Sandals, he stated, “Since we have heard about the coming of Sandals, we have tried to make contact with their principals with a view to trying to understand the extent to which they will be prepared to support the agricultural sector. We have done this in partnership with our stakeholders in the manufacturing sector. We understand that some of the principals of Sandals will be visiting here in December, and it is our intention to approach their chief of Purchasing in order to understand what their policy will be in relation to the purchase of local agricultural produce.”

Paul said that such an approach is needed to assuage some people in the sector because, “there is some measure of concern within the agriculture sector in respect to the concessions that were issued, especially as they relate to food and beverages”.

Paul assured that the BAS is taking Sandals’ track record into account, considering that one reason for concern highlighted stems from complaints out of a neighboring territory where the hotel operates.

He said, “We know in terms of the history of Sandals in the region for instance, Jamaica, they have a reputation of purchasing from farmers in Jamaica. As a matter of fact, it was somewhat our understanding from farmers’ groups in Jamaica that they support local farmers heavily. We also understand that there is a similar experience in St. Lucia. However we also know that more recently there have been some complaints as to the extent to which Sandals is actually committed to purchasing locally from farmers in St. Lucia.”

Phyosanitary Measures

Ministry of Agriculture holds National Consultation on PhytoSanitary Measures by GIS Dominica, 21 November, 2013

<http://news.gov.dm/index.php/news/4-headline-news/1136-ministry-of-agriculture-holds-national-consultation-on-phyto-sanitary-measures>

Full Article

The Division of Agriculture/Plant Protection and Quarantine Unit is hosting three days of National Consultations on Draft International Standards for PhytoSanitary Measures (ISPM).

Member countries of the World Trade Organisation base their sanitary or phyto-sanitary measures on international standards, guidelines and recommendations set by The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

The convention makes provision for the application of measures by Governments to protect their plant resources from harmful pests.

The Division of Agriculture is hoping that these consultations will increase awareness and knowledge to all border control organisations and related agencies on the island.

The objective of these consultations is to review the implications of ISPM's at the national level and to provide comments and recommendations prior to adoption of the reviewed standards of the IPPC.

Ryan Anselm, Plant Protection Officer says, "Every year the IPPC, the International Plant Protection Convention develop draft standards. The IPPC's mandate really is to protect plant parts and plant products from invasive species. What they have done is, together with 178 countries develop draft standards so countries can comment and review those comments. The purpose of this meeting really is to bring together stakeholders, private sector customs and ports to review these draft ISPM's. These ISPM's once adopted will have implications for national, regional and international trade."

On Wednesday November 20th the movement of plants in international trade will be discussed.

On Thursday November 21st, the subject of discussion will be 'Minimizing Pests Movement in Sea Containers'. ..And on Friday November 22nd 'The Management of Pest Risk Associated with Movement of Wood or Timber,' will be discussed.

Anselm noted, "The overall objective is to see how best we in Dominica can regionally and internationally minimize and of course prevent the movement of pest and disease. One would know that we have serious problems with black sigatoka, citrus greening and others, so we are very much concerned with the invasive species and the exotic pests all around us, regionally and internationally. This is why it is important that we bring stakeholders together to put measures in place and to see how best we can prevent pests and diseases from entering Dominica."

Border Control and Frontline Officers from the Dominica Air and Sea Port Authority, Customs and Excise, Dominica Bureau of Standards, IICA, Private Sector Importers and Officers of Ministries of Trade, Forestry and Agriculture will participate daily.

Upcoming Events

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

Website:

<http://www.egfar.org/sites/default/files/files/Conference%20Announcement%2020%20September%202013.pdf>

Further information will be published at: <http://www.arc.agric.za/>