## In This Issue: FEB 9 - 15, 2014

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Roots and Tubers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Cereals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Fruits and Vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Coconuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Herbals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Sanitary and Phytosanitary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Agricultural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Upcoming Events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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“We know there is a lot of education that should go into that to turn that around. Because you should not, in fact, turn your back on what is yours because you had a bad experience with it.”

**For more information see page 11**

AGRICULTURE IN THE NEWS is a monthly newsletter which provides a compilation of selected news articles on issues affecting agriculture in the Caribbean region. Articles from Newspapers, Online News Service Agencies, Newsletters and Press Releases are featured.

For copies of documents cited, visit the web address or source of the information provided.
Our Vision

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

Our Mission

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

www.cardi.org
Roots and Tubers


YESTERDAY marked the official start of a regional conference on cassava in the Caribbean and Latin America, which was held at the 3 Ws Pavilion of the Cave Hill Campus.

The joint initiative of the University of the West Indies, Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management of Barbados and the Food and Agriculture Organisation has brought together experts from various national, regional and international institutions to expound the myriad of opportunities that can be derived in the region from this single-crop.

Coordinator - Caribbean Sub-Regional of the FAO Dr. J R Deep Ford told the conference attendees that the three day conference must be more than a talk shop, but a clear road map of where the industry is headed.

“I am stressing the importance of practical actions and this applies as well to this regional conference of cassava that we are starting today (yesterday). It is intended to produce more than talk and papers – it is intended to produce recommendations on improved varieties and technologies linked to particular final products, recommendations on policy level action that are needed to stimulate the investments needed, recommendations on how we get bakeries and feed millers to use more cassava flour to make bread and produce livestock feed.”

He said the conference comes at a very important juncture for the Caribbean and Barbados and for FAO.

“The cassava conference is fundamentally about improving livelihoods and food security in the Caribbean through the building of a cassava industry, the campus Centre for Food Security and Entrepreneurship is as its name implies and its location of the UWI campus suggests is a technology, education, policy and entrepreneurship centre promoting food security across the region.”

“Governments have finally recognised that agriculture must be one of the key pillars of economic growth if the region is to survive and recover from this economic crisis. The conference will therefore explore how cassava can contribute to this effort.”

Yesterday’s event also marked the launch of the Centre for Food Security and Entrepreneurship which Dr. Ford said is intertwined with the objectives of the conference.

“Without technology, policy, education, and entrepreneurship, building a regional cassava industry will not be easy. Without the success of the cassava industry and similar agricultural industries there will be no dynamic demand that will sustain the relevance and the support of the centre.”

“We must have practical inputs from the centre to support the cassava industry and we must have products and increasing outputs defining the success of the cassava industry that galvanises and justifies support for the work of the food security centre over the longer run.”

He revealed that an informal cassava working group will meet on Thursday to chart the way forward.
based on the information received from stakeholders during the three day conference. “We anticipate that a more formal regional working group will be put in place to effectively and efficiently promote the process of the development of a Caribbean cassava industry,” he said. (JH)

Project to increase sweet potato production under way. Antigua Observer Newspaper, 5 February 2014
http://www.antiguaoobserver.com/project-to-increase-sweet-production-under-way/

Full Article

ST JOHN’S, Antigua – Antigua & Barbuda is getting some much-needed assistance from the Japanese government to increase the yield of sweet potatoes in an effort to reduce the country’s food import bill.

Close to US $20,000 has been allocated for the project currently under way in Antigua & Barbuda, St Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

The funding, being channelled through the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), will be used to enhance the sweet potato crop through the Tissue Culture Technology.

Tissue culture involves the production of disease-free, high quality planting material in a laboratory.

Two different species of the sweet potato plant were recently imported to the island for the experiment now under way at the CARDI facility in the Betty’s Hope area.

The plants will be propagated in special phases until they are ready to be transplanted into the soil.

Senior Technician at the Betty’s Hope CARDI facility, Bradbury Browne said two varieties were also imported from St Lucia and St Vincent for the second trial.

After importation they were placed in an enclosed humidity chamber for six to 10 days before they were transferred to a weaning and hardening facility constructed for the purpose of micro-propagating and multiplying.

“The tubers will remain in the facility for about six to eight weeks before they are planted out in the field. Once transplanted, cuttings will be distributed to local farmers for replanting,” Browne said.

Farmers who receive the slips will be able to plant them for further reproduction, thus expanding the growth of the commodity.

Browne said the plants will be distributed to a select group of farmers who demonstrated the ability to care for them.

The farmers will be selected by the extension officers in the Ministry of Agriculture.

The ministry, in 2011, earmarked sweet potato, cassava, corn, pumpkin, squash, and hot peppers among the varieties of vegetables to be used to boost the prospects of food security.

Most of these seedlings are cultivated at the CARDI facility.
Cereals


**Full Article**

Curtin University researchers have found a way to breed disease-resistant wheat with no downside, potentially bringing multi-million dollar savings to Australia’s agricultural industry.

According to John Curtin Distinguished Professor Richard Oliver, Director of the Australian Centre for Necrotrophic Fungal Pathogens (ACNFP) at Curtin, farmers can lose more than 0.35 tonnes per hectare in wheat yields to Yellow Spot, even after applying fungicide.

For an average-sized farm of 4000 hectares, this could mean an almost $500,000 loss to disease per year -- or about $212 million worth of damage to the wider Australian agricultural industry.

Funded by the Grains Research & Development Corporation, Professor Oliver and his team, in conjunction with independent research provider Kalyx Australia, have demonstrated that by taking away disease-sensitivity genes from the wheat germplasm, pathogens find it difficult to latch onto wheat and cause damage.

"Our finding will help breeders produce crops in which disease losses are 60 to 80 per cent lower, and would be a real win for farmers -- they will often be able to avoid using foliar fungicides," Professor Oliver said.

"Before now, breeding for resistance to Yellow (Tan) Spot and Septoria Nodorum Blotch was very time-consuming -- no molecular markers were in use. The key has been to supply breeders with specific proteins (we call them effectors) that the fungi use to cause disease.

"For the first time, our technology allows for a steady and sustained improvement in disease resistance without affecting the farmer's pocket.

"Furthermore, breeders are able to devote more time and resources to breeding for yield, as well as for rust and frost resistance."

Using large wheat variety trials provided by Kalyx Australia, the team looked at yield loss of different cultivars (plants chosen for breeding because of desirable characteristics) when subjected to natural disease and stress pressures in the WA wheatbelt.

They compared cultivars with disease-sensitivity genes to cultivars that lacked these particular genes, and were able to show that the cultivars lacking the gene showed no yield loss and in some instances increased yields in the presence of disease.

From this, the team were able to conclude if a sensitivity gene was eliminated, there would be minimal associated risks and it would be a safe and straightforward strategy for improving disease resistance.
Professor Oliver said this research had never been done before as direct mapping for disease resistance had not led to useful molecular markers.

"Previously geneticists would infect plants that were progeny of crosses between relatively resistant and relatively susceptible parents before doing the QTL (quantitative disease-resistance gene) mapping. But as disease resistance is multifactorial due to the several effector reactions, the QTL mapping was always a bit fuzzy and was therefore never passed on," Professor Oliver said.

"Our research looks directly at the loci that recognise the pathogens, which can be readily identified using a process we developed earlier, thereby bypassing the need for QTL mapping."

**Fruits and Vegetables**

*Vegetable mix shows pest control promise in Taiwan.* Fresh Fruit Portal Newsletter, 14 February, 2014


**Full Article**

In response to demand for tighter food safety practices, the Taiwan Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) announced it has made progress in cultivating cucumbers without the use of pesticides.

In a conversation with [www.freshfruitportal.com](http://www.freshfruitportal.com), TARI’s Dr. Yu Zhiru spoke about the institute’s new vegetable oil technology and its possible applicability to farmers cultivating a number of food crops.

“The core technology is to truncate the possible invasion of crop pests,” Yu said.

“The different crops have different ways of specific operation. We use cucumbers as an example. In the net installations on site, we can isolate a lot of pests, leaving behind only insects that can be put under control with the use of a vegetable oil mix.

“Before planting, we use weeding and flooding to eliminate pests. Then if the crop is well managed afterward, we won’t have a significant problem. If not, we will normally apply the vegetable oil mix so there is not a problem with crop maturity.”

If applied well, Yu said this method con match the costs of standard pesticides. The potential cost benefits grow considering that many pests may become resistant to pesticide treatments. Yu explained that such resistance can force growers to increase the quantity of chemical treatments.

“In comparison, pests will be less prone to resistance, which means the cost will be less than with the use of pesticides,” Yu said.

The researcher said the technique arose from a contamination study carried out by the Taiwanese Department of Health between 2010 and 2012. The study selected the top 10 fruits and vegetables with greatest pesticide residue, including beans, peas, sweet peppers and cucumbers.
“We first chose the crops with the most pesticide residue for experiments. We don’t want farmers to use excess pesticides on these products, as much for the environment as for consumer health,” Yu said.

“We are currently using the material available on the market, such as the vegetable oil mix that began to be sold at the beginning of 2012. There are other materials that entered the market earlier. Now I have transferred the technology from the vegetable oil mix to three Taiwanese factories for production and wholesale uses.”

Yu said the technology is still taking off in Taiwan, but he encouraged producers to trust the product.

“This is just the start of a big advancement. Currently, the acceptance rate with growers is high but the use not so much,” he said.

“We have the material. The question now is how to establish a standard operating procedure so that farmers can follow it as an example.”

Through the technology’s development, Yu said the team has consulted with growers for feedback.

“Af ter the operation is successful, we will open dialogue to interested farmers and associations so they can come and learn,” he said.

Similar product testing has been carried out on strawberries, while trials are in the works for Indian jujubes. For strawberries, TARI group leader Gao Jinghua said six or seven farmers had used the method successfully for two to three years.

Coconuts


Full Article

Last Thursday, several representatives of agro-food groups from Haiti and the Dominican Republic have met at the Council Agribusiness Dominican (JAD), in order to exchange experiences and analyze a project to plant millions of coconut trees, whose the European Union has funded the study.

Attended the meeting, on the Haitian side Robert Brutus, "Leogan Chatuler Router", Nelson Garcia and Jeffery D. Read and on the Dominican side : César V. Paniagua, Bolívar Toribio Veras, María Gómez, César Espaillat, Martín Familia, Apolinar Germosén, Rafael Ledesma, Frank Valdez, Carlos de la Rosa, Guido Malan, Pedro García and Raymundo Roig.

“There are about 1 million coconut trees in Haiti and we have about 2 million in the Dominican Republic. The objective, however, is to have 8 million plants in total, because companies like Coca Cola have big plans with coconut in the world because they want to start an energy drink that is made
with coconut,” explained Osmar Benitez, the President of JAD, adding "They want water coconut, cream, milk, oil and wood among other things, as soon as production has increased."

During the meeting, the Haitian entrepreneur, Hubert Dufort stressed the importance of the meeting and recalled that Haiti was a major producer of essential oils that exports to France and could combine the expertise of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, to launch a joint project to produce coconut.

Herbals

New quality criteria to be developed for booming spice and herb sector: Modern standards expected to benefit small-scale farmers, consumers. FAO, 11 February 2014

Full Article

11 February 2014, Kochi, India/Rome - An international effort has been launched to develop quality standards for key products of the multi-billion dollar spice and herb trade.

The sector has been enjoying rapid growth for several decades on the back of burgeoning demand from the booming economies of Asia and elsewhere, and increased recognition of the health and culinary benefits of herbs and spices.

In response to the sector's growth and the extraordinary diversity of the trade and its products, the global food standards body the Codex Alimentarius Commission last year established the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH). The first meeting of the CCSCH will be held in the southern Indian city of Kochi in Kerala state from 11-14 February.

The new Committee is hosted by India and is responsible for promoting worldwide quality standards for many of the most important spices and culinary herbs.

"By developing such standards, Codex wants to contribute to the safety, quality and fairness of the international spice and herb trade," Ren Wang, Assistant Director General of FAO's Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department said. "Once clear internationally accepted standards are established, consumers can trust the safety and quality of the spices and herbs they buy.

"Importers can trust that the spices and herbs they order and then have delivered will be in accordance with their specifications.

"Perhaps most importantly, the millions of smallholder farmers who grow spices and herbs for a living can see more clearly what they should be growing and to what standard," Wang said.

Established by FAO and WHO in 1963, Codex develops harmonized international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice to protect the health of the consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.

The Commission is already helping to regulate the safety of many spice and herb products - like all other foods - with its general standards for hygiene, contaminants, and pesticide residues. The new
committee will be part of a continuing effort to establish quality standards at a global level for many of
the world's most important spices such as black pepper, vanilla and nutmeg and herbs like rosemary,
thyme and basil.

According to the FAO publication *Spices and Herbs for Home and Market*, there are around fifty spice
and herb plants of global trade significance, but many other spices and herb crops are expanding and
offer good returns to small-scale farmers.

Spice and herb plants provide seeds and fruits, leaves and stems, flowers and buds, roots and
rhizomes, bark and resins that can all be commercialized in various forms. Each of these products can
then be sold fresh, frozen, dried, whole or ground, distilled into oils or solvents extracted into
oleoresins.

With such a diverse range of by-products and uses, booming international demand and expanding
areas of production, the need for international standards is clear. While there are standards for some
spices and herbs already, there is no global body that provides product specific, harmonized quality
standards for whole and ground spices and culinary herbs.

**Climate Change**

**Caribbean Green Tech Incubator Launched.** CCCC, 9 February 2014.

**Full Article**

The Caribbean Climate Innovation Centre (CCIC) was launched today (Monday, January 27, 2014) at
the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI) in Trinidad and Tobago. The World
Bank/infoDev initiative, which is being administered by the Jamaica-based Scientific Research
Council and Trinidad and Tobago-based Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI), will
function as an incubator for businesses solving climate change problems and promote investment in
green technology in the region. The Centre is one of eight globally, as others are located in Ethiopia,
Ghana, India, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa and Vietnam.
The Centre will provide grant funding of up to US$50,000.00 to MSMEs/ entities to assist them in
developing prototypes for commercialization.

**The Centre’s five focus areas are:**

- Solar Energy – e.g. Residential and commercial self generation, residential and commercial water
  heating, solar powered air conditioning
- Resource Use Efficiency – e.g. waste-to energy, materials recovery, reuse and recycling
- Sustainable Agribusiness – e.g. water/ energy efficient irrigation systems; waste management; high
  value agribusiness; sustainable land use practices; waste to energy; wind and solar energy for farms
- Energy Efficiency – e.g. Lighting, household appliances, air conditioning, commercial cooling and
  ventilation systems, consumer behavior, building and energy management systems, building design
  and materials
- Water Management – e.g. Potable water, rain water harvesting, efficient irrigation, wastewater
  treatment and recycling, water use efficiency, desalination
Dr Ulric Trotz, Chairperson of the CCIC, and Deputy Director of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, says the CCIC comes to fruition at a point when unsustainable and inefficient energy consumption exacerbates the enormous socio-economic constraints faced by Member States of the Caribbean Community.

The region, which is among the most vulnerable places to climate change and climate variability, imports in excess of 170 million barrels of petroleum products annually, with 30 million barrels used in the electric sector alone, at a cost of up to 40% of already scarce foreign exchange earnings. This dependence on ever more expensive imported fossil fuels increases our economic vulnerability and reduces our ability to invest in climate compatible development. Therefore, it’s crucial that we support initiatives that can make the region’s energy sector more efficient through increased use of renewable energy, which will in turn reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

This comes at a time when economies around the world are re-orientating towards low-carbon, green growth pathways, which have the potential to make some of our established industries, including tourism, more attractive to discerning travellers who are willing to spend more for environmentally sensitive travel packages.

The Centre offers this region a unique opportunity to leverage technological innovation in its bid to adapt and mitigate challenges brought forth by climate change, with particular focus on energy efficiency, resource use, agriculture and water management, as the regional technology space is rapidly evolving and seems poised to take-off with the advent of events and groups like DigiJam 3.0, Caribbean Startup Week, Slashroots, among others. This is encouraging as the development, deployment and diffusion of technology are key factors in any effort to mitigate and adapt to the current and future impacts of climate change. So the Centre is uniquely positioned to capitalize on these developments and focus them to achieve essential technological advancement.

~Dr Ulric Trotz, Chairperson of the CCIC, and Deputy Director of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre

Tree roots in the mountains ‘acted like a thermostat’ for millions of years. Oxford University, 6 February, 2014
http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news_releases_for_journalists/140206.html

Full Article

For the first time, scientists have discovered how tree roots in the mountains may play an important role in controlling long-term global temperatures. Researchers from Oxford and Sheffield Universities show temperatures affect the thickness of the leaf litter and organic soil layers, as well as the rate at which the tree roots grow. In a warmer world, this means that tree roots are more likely to grow into the mineral layer of the soil, breaking down rock into component parts which will eventually combine with carbon dioxide. This process, called weathering, draws carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and cools the planet. The researchers say this theory suggests that mountainous ecosystems have acted like the Earth’s thermostat, addressing the risk of ‘catastrophic’ overheating or cooling over millions of years.

In their research paper published online in Geophysical Research Letters, the researchers carried out studies in tropical rain forests in Peru, measuring tree roots across different sites of varying altitude – from the warm Amazonian Lowlands to the cooler mountain ranges of the Andes. They measured the
growth of the tree roots to 30 cm beneath the surface, every three months over several years. At each of the sites, they also measured the thickness of the organic layer above the soil. This information was then combined with existing data of monthly temperature, humidity, rainfall, and soil moisture in order to calculate the likely breakdown process of the basalt and granite rocks found in the mountain ranges of Peru.

Using this model, based on field data in Peru, the scientists were able to scale up in order to calculate the likely contribution of mountain forests worldwide to global weathering rates. The researchers then calculated the likely amount of carbon to be pulled out of the atmosphere through weathering when the Earth became very hot. They looked at the volcanic eruptions in India 65 million years ago (known as the Deccan traps). The model also allowed them to calculate the weathering process and carbon feedback after the Earth’s cooling 45 million years ago, when great mountain ranges like the Andes and the Himalayas were first formed.

The paper suggests that mountainous regions may play a particularly important role in drawing carbon out of the atmosphere because they have abundant volcanic rock which is highly reactive to weathering when it disintegrates.

Lead researcher Chris Doughty, from the School of Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford, said: ‘This is a simple process driven by tree root growth and the decomposition of organic material. Yet it may contribute to Earth's long-term climate stability. It seems to act like a thermostat, drawing more carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere when it is warm and less when it is cooler.

‘A series of climatic events over the last 65 million years ago have resulted in global temperatures rising and falling. However, the weathering process that regulates carbon dioxide in the atmosphere may be buffered by forests that grow in mountainous parts of the world. In the past, this natural process may have prevented the planet from reaching temperatures that are catastrophic for life.’

Sanitary and Phytosanitary

New project will strengthen sanitary and phytosanitary regulations in the Caribbean. Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) Press Release 13 February 2014


Full Article

EU initiative to be implemented by IICA is designed to strengthen the legal framework governing the sanitary and phytosanitary standards applied in the region.

San Jose, Costa Rica, February 13, 2014 (IICA). With a budget of 11.7 million Euros, implementation is under way of a project aimed at raising the productivity of the agricultural and fisheries industries of 15 countries that belong to the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM), as well as improving the access of those countries’ products to global markets.

The first step in carrying out the initiative, financed by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), is to establish the priorities for modernizing the sanitary and phytosanitary regulations of the Caribbean countries.
So far, IICA specialists, working with representatives of the Caribbean community (CARICOM) and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) – partners in the initiative – have met with senior officials in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Jamaica and Belize to explain the scope of the project and determine the needs of each country with regard to agricultural health and food safety (AHFS).

“The aim is to develop national action plans to implement the general components of the project, such as the modernization of the legal framework for animal and plant health standards, the coordinated application of such measures at the national and regional levels, and capacity building in the countries,” explained Robert Ahern, manager of IICA’s AHFS Program, based at the Institute’s Headquarters in Costa Rica.

The 15 CARIFORUM countries that will benefit from the project are Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

The European Union selected IICA as the executing agency for the initiative, with implementation spread over a 42-month period. The agreement for the joint effort was signed last year in Guyana, during the Caribbean Week of Agriculture, by the Director General of IICA, Víctor M. Villalobos, and the Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Union, Robert Kopecky.

In the second half of February, the IICA, CARICOM and CRFM delegations will continue their meetings with counterparts in Guyana, Suriname, the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

In the Dominican Republic, the National Committee for the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (CNMSF) will also support implementation of the project.

For further information:
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Agricultural Development


Full Article

ONCE recognised as a zone of agricultural dynamism, the region is now forced with a task of digging itself out of a hole as it relates to food security.

Principal and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the UWI Cave Hill Campus Professor Sir Hilary Beckles said between the 16th and 18th centuries, every square inch of land was pressed into agriculture for export. Denouncing the type of labour utilised at that time, he acknowledged that the colonisers and imperialists transformed the Caribbean into the world’s most dynamic agricultural economy.

His comments came yesterday during a Regional Conference on Cassava in the Caribbean and Latin America and Launch of the Centre for Food Security and Entrepreneurship at the 3Ws Pavilion.
Fast-forward to the 21st century, the principal told the attendees that he left a recent symposium in Berlin, with a clear view of the rapid growth of the world’s population over the past six decades, which is disproportionate to the level of food production, particularly in the region.

“I was struck by a graph showing the leap of the world’s population in the last 60 years after remaining fairly constant over the past 800 years. Food production is trying to catch up with this. When I saw production of food in the various areas of the world frantically trying to cope with this global explosion of the earth’s population, the Caribbean was not on the growth curve. I was concerned about that... We are a massive importer of food, we do not feed ourselves.”

He lamented that one cannot help but feel a certain responsibility for this fact. He told the high level agricultural experts attending the seminar, “I know all of you here are trying, your hearts are dedicated to the issue of Food Security, production, finding solutions to our problems...but against the background, we know we have to do much more.”

Sir Hilary pointed to the declining allocation of acreage to agriculture in the region as one of the main problems facing the region. “I have seen the data across the Caribbean and in almost every jurisdiction, the acreage available to agriculture and food production has declined significantly.”

“So here you have it a massively growing population, acreage available to agriculture declining across the region, output of foods for export or even for consumption is of great concern. You put those trends together and you can see the nature of the problem.”

“I believe when you travel the region, you are struck by the issue of the abandonment of agricultural land. And yet in my judgement, I know we have the skills, we have the culture, we have the technology, we know what we have to do, but somehow the policies, the fiscal arrangements, financial arrangements, commitments, it is not coming together,” he lamented. (JH)

Agriculture is ours! Barbados Advocate, 11 February, 2014.

Full Article

A CONCERTED effort must be made to change the image of farming and agriculture.

Word of this from Principal and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the UWI Cave Hill Campus Professor Sir Hilary Beckles who says there is a dislike for agriculture among a significant part of the population because of the history of labour degradation associated with slavery.

“We know there is a lot of education that should go into that to turn that around. Because you should not, in fact, turn your back on what is yours because you had a bad experience with it.”

He was speaking during a Regional Conference on Cassava in the Caribbean and Latin America and Launch of the Centre for Food Security and Entrepreneurship at the 3Ws Pavilion where he made the point that the black people in the Caribbean were brought from Africa because they were good at agriculture.

“It wasn’t simply because they were units of labour; they had a long tradition of high-yield agriculture.
So we have a population base that has a historic connection to high quality agriculture, yet we lament the relationships of the employment, but agriculture is ours.”

Sir Hilary stated that one role that the university has to play is to help to change the image of agriculture.

“You do not throw out the baby with the bathwater. We have to stay with our agriculture, our ancestral legacy. We modernise it, we apply all of the appropriate technologies to it as we have always done. We need in this university to produce graduates who are looking for career opportunities in agriculture. There are spaces available.”

He said the Faculty of Science and Technology is committed to developing an educational approach to agriculture that would make it attractive to a new generation of young people coming out of school with a different view of agriculture.

The principal explained that the development of a Centre for Food Security and Entrepreneurship is intended to develop a research centre of teaching and learning that would bridge academia with agribusiness and to participate as a university in the entrepreneurial aspect of that development.

He used the opportunity to express gratitude to the Edghill family who has made 30 acres of prime agricultural land available to the Cave Hill Campus for the facility. “The philanthropy of the Edghill family is outstanding,” he said. (JH)

Agriculture: First forum on agro-environment. Haiti Libre, 11 February, 2014

Full Article

Friday, ended the first edition of the Forum on agro-environment around the theme "Agriculture and the Environment, which conciliation possible ?", an initiative of the Studies and Programming Unit (UEP) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARND). This forum, which brought together hundreds of experts, professionals, researchers, producers associations, donors and local authorities aimed to promote the the taking into account of environmental concerns into agriculture-related interventions.

Funded by the Treasury and the World Bank "This initiative is part of the Government's policy aimed at promoting good agricultural practices protecting the environment while providing income to rural and urban populations in the country," declared Jean François Thomas the Minister of Agriculture which stressed "This is a major initiative, insofar as it will educate all stakeholders on the issues of this problem, lay the foundations for sustainable agriculture and to identify elements of reflection to address key challenges, including that to reach to cohabit harmoniously, a modern agriculture in connection with environmental practices, in coherence with the development needs of the agricultural sector."

Participants discussed, inter alia, issues relating to agricultural policy, agricultural practices identified as being environmentally friendly and their adoption by farmers "How to combine preservation / restoration of the environment with increased agricultural productivity in a perspective of sustainability and improving of incomes of producers," was the thread of this event.
The Forum took place in the form of exchanges between participants from different backgrounds around several themes grouped into 3 panels:

1. Public policy and the environment;
2. Review of practices and experiences of actors;
3. Normative and educational instruments.

Through this initiative, the MARNDR intended raise awareness operators in the public and private sectors on environmental issues related to agricultural activities and deepen the specifications assigned to the Environmental Unit of the UEP.

The agronomist Jean André Victor, who took part in one of the panels has advocated for support for farmers stressed the need to recognize the property rights of farmers, the most important actors in the agricultural sector.

This Forum initiates the start of the search for solutions to general problems confronted by the agricultural sector. A think tank was formed to follow up the resolutions taken at the end of this event.

_Agriculture Ministry helping food exporters improve operations._ Jamaica Observer, 09 February, 2014


**Full Article**

MONTEGO BAY, Jamaica (JIS) -- The Ministry of Agriculture says it has so far disbursed more than J$10 million to exporters in grants to assist in improving operations to meet the requirements of the United States Food Safety Modernisation Act (FSMA).

Following a tour of two export facilities in Western Jamaica on Friday (February 7) Agriculture Minister, Roger Clarke said he was “very pleased with the improvements by local exporters”.

Clarke noted that the programme was achieving its objectives, with 11 operations already benefitting from the assistance and 20 expected during the course of the year.

“Our commitment is to do whatever we can to make sure that we achieve the food safety standards necessary not only for exports, but to make our people aware of what food safety means, and we are well on our way. I think we have some very cooperative people working with and I think we will achieve what we have set out to achieve,” Clarke said.

He pointed out that as a result of the assistance the beneficiaries have been able to make improvements in their respective packaging houses, allowing them to handle more export volumes.

“We have a difficulty with what we import as against what we export, and therefore even if we were not able to bring down the importation substantially, if we can lift exports to a level it would put us in a position where we can live”, he said.
The FSMA was signed into law by President Barack Obama on January 4, 2011 to ensure the safety of the US food supply and gives the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) new authority to regulate the way foods are grown, harvested and processed.

Upcoming Events

2014 International Year of Family Farming (IYFF). FAO

Description
The 2014 International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) aims to raise the profile of family farming and smallholder farming by focusing world attention on its significant role in eradicating hunger and poverty, providing food security and nutrition, improving livelihoods, managing natural resources, protecting the environment, and achieving sustainable development, in particular in rural areas. The goal of the 2014 IYFF is to reposition family farming at the centre of agricultural, environmental and social policies in the national agendas by identifying gaps and opportunities to promote a shift towards a more equal and balanced development. The 2014 IYFF will promote broad discussion and cooperation at the national, regional and global levels to increase awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by smallholders and help identify efficient ways to support family farmers

February 2014

Seventh International Training Course In Vitro and Cryopreservation for Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources: Current Methods and Techniques

Date: 17 - 28 Feb. 2014,
Location: New Delhi, India

Description: The International Training Course is being organized by the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) - Bioversity International Centre of Excellence. NBPGR is one of the leading institutes under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi, India for plant genetic resources (PGR) management. The course will be conducted at NBPGR, IARI Campus, New Delhi, India. The participants will improve their skills in tissue culture, cryopreservation and in vitro conservation of crops relevant for their countries. They will also gain knowledge on the molecular techniques and protocols for conservation of plant seeds and tissues. The applicants must have a prior experience in the teaching areas of the course. Female scientists are particularly encouraged to apply.


Course documents

- Application form
May 2014

**Building Resilience for Food and Nutrition Security. IFPRI 2020 Conference**

**Date:** 15-17 May 2014  
**Location:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Website:** [http://www.2020resilience.ifpri.info/](http://www.2020resilience.ifpri.info/)

July 2014

**XII World Congress of Computers in Agriculture and Natural Resources**

**Date:** 27- 30 July, 2014  
**Location:** San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica  
**Description**

This congress provides a forum for agriculture related professionals to exchange information on applications and developments in the use of Information Technologies. It covers a wide array of topics. These include new applications of well established and understood technologies to innovative and entrepreneurial applications of emerging technologies, in addition to issues related to policy and knowledge dissemination. Contributions from various countries will allow a broadened perspective for all attending. This congress is sponsored by International Network for Information Technology in Agriculture and the University of Costa Rica (UCR).

**Abstracts submission deadline:** 15 February, 2014  
**Website:** [http://wcca2014.ucer.ac.cr/](http://wcca2014.ucer.ac.cr/)

**Conference on Ecological and Ecosystem Restoration 2014**

CEER is a Collaborative Effort of the leaders of the National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER) and the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER).  
**Date:** 28 July - 1 August, 2014  
**Location:** New Orleans, Louisiana, USA  
**Website:** [http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/CEER2014/](http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/CEER2014/)

August 2014

**XI International Congress on Management of Amazonian and Latin American Wildlife**

St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago,  
**Date:** 17 - 22 August 2014  
**Location:** St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago,  
**Theme:** “Alternative Sustainable Conservation & Utilization Methods for Neo-tropical Animals”  
**Website:** [http://xicimfauna.org/](http://xicimfauna.org/)