
As the Regional leader in agricultural research for development, the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), at its Jamaica Unit Open Day on Wednesday 19 February, 2014 announced the signing of an hallmark Agreement with Diageo parent Company of Red Stripe,

For more information see page 2

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

Jamaica’s Agriculture Minister commends CARDI as the Institute signs Agreement with Red Stripe, Diageo. Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) Media Release, 21 February 2014


Full Article

February 21, 2014: As the Regional leader in agricultural research for development, the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), at its Jamaica Unit Open Day on Wednesday 19 February, 2014 announced the signing of an hallmark Agreement with Diageo parent Company of Red Stripe, to provide technical assistance to a Project to grow 36 acres of cassava for the supply of tubers for processing into sugars and planting material to establish 300 acres of cassava.

The Honourable Roger Clarke, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, in his Feature Address at the Open Day welcomed the announcement of the Agreement signed between CARDI and Red Stripe, Diageo. He indicated that this is an important initiative to move Jamaica forward. He urged CARDI to ensure this important project is a success. “We must grow cassava efficiently in order to reduce out import bill as we strive to feed ourselves and to move Jamaica forward.” The Minister concluded that “a country that can feed itself is truly an Independence country”.

Dr. Arlington Chesney, CARDI’s Executive Director, indicated that ‘this initiative opens a new and exciting vista for cassava as a serious, large scale commercial crop for the Region. It also heralds a new relationship between targeted and result driven research and large commercial business in the Region’.

This Programme is the first step in a series of activities for the eventual production of over 2,000 acres of cassava for use by Red Stripe, Diageo. The cassava will be utilized to produce cassava sugar which is intended to replace imported high maltose barley syrup presently used in the production of Red Stripe beer. Diageo plans to replace about 30% of its imported barley syrup with the substitute cassava sugar produced from the 2,000 acres of cassava.

Phase 1 - Production of the 36 acres is expected to commence immediately at Bernard Lodge, on land already leased by the Company. Land clearing has commenced; and it is expected that within the next 4 weeks, approximately 6 acres of the area will be tilled, provided with irrigation and planted. The Project will also ensure knowledge transfer as targeted beneficiaries, primarily farmers, on the production of cassava for tubers and planting material will be trained.

Mr. Morris Taylor, CARDI’s Commodity Leader, Roots and Tubers based in its Jamaica Unit is the coordinator of the Programme, with other expertise in soil management, agronomy, water management and entomology to be provided by the technical staff of CARDI from across the Region.

CARDI, as the Region’s premier agriculture research for development Agency, has been, over the past 35 years, leading successful trials in increased productivity of cassava for fresh use and processed products, in the countries of Barbados; Belize; Dominica; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; Montserrat; St Lucia; St Vincent and the Grenadines; and Trinidad and Tobago. These successes
have been achieved through concerted, pioneering and fortuitous work in the areas of partnerships and collaborations; germplasm development, improvement and exploitation; production systems; and post-harvest technology and value added development.

CARDI signs Agreement with Red Stripe, Diageo … cassava sugar to be used as replacement for barley syrup. Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) Media Release, 19 February 2014

Full Article

February 19, 2014:- As the Regional leader in agricultural research for development, the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), at its Jamaica Unit Open Day on Wednesday 19 February, 2014 announced the signing of an hallmark Agreement with Diageo parent Company of Red Stripe, to provide technical assistance to a Project to grow 36 acres of cassava for the supply of tubers for processing into sugars and planting material to establish 300 acres of cassava.

This Programme is the first step in a series of activities for the eventual production of over 2,000 acres of cassava for use by Red Stripe, Diageo. The cassava will be utilized to produce cassava sugar which is intended to replace imported high maltose barley syrup presently used in the production of Red Stripe beer. Diageo plans to replace about 30% of its imported barley syrup with the substitute cassava sugar produced from the 2,000 acres of cassava.

Phase 1 - Production of the 36 acres is expected to commence immediately at Bernard Lodge, on land already leased by the Company. Land clearing has commenced; and it is expected that within the next 4 weeks, approximately 6 acres of the area will be tilled, provided with irrigation and planted. The Project will also ensure knowledge transfer as targeted beneficiaries, primarily farmers, on the production of cassava for tubers and planting material will be trained.

Mr. Morris Taylor, CARDI’s Commodity Leader, Roots and Tubers based in its Jamaica Unit is the coordinator of the Programme, with other expertise in soil management, agronomy, water management and entomology to be provided by the technical staff of CARDI from across the Region.

CARDI, as the Region’s premier agriculture research for development Agency, has been, over the past 35 years, leading successful trials in increased productivity of cassava for fresh use and processed products, in the countries of Barbados; Belize; Dominica; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; Montserrat; St Lucia; St Vincent and the Grenadines; and Trinidad and Tobago. These successes have been achieved through concerted, pioneering and fortuitous work in the areas of partnerships and collaborations; germplasm development, improvement and exploitation; production systems; and post-harvest technology and value added development.

Dr. Arlington Chesney, CARDI's Executive Director, indicated that ‘this initiative opens a new and exciting vista for cassava as a serious, large scale commercial crop for the Region. It also heralds a new relationship between targeted and result driven research and large commercial business in the Region’.
Genetically modified potatoes 'resist late blight' by Matt McGrath. BBC News 17 February 2014

Full Article

British scientists have developed genetically modified potatoes that are resistant to the vegetable's biggest threat - blight.

A three-year trial has shown that these potatoes can thrive despite being exposed to late onset blight.

That disease has plagued farmers for generations and it triggered the Irish potato famine in the 1840s.

EU approval is needed before commercial cultivation of this GM crop can take place.

The research is published in the journal Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B. Potatoes are particularly vulnerable to late blight, a fungus-like organism that loves the damp and humid conditions that often occur during the growing season in Europe.

The speed with which this infection takes hold and the devastating impacts on the crop make it the number one threat to six million tonnes of potatoes produced in the UK each year.

Farmers have to be continuously on their guard and need to spray up to 15 times a season to protect against the disease.

As part of an EU-wide investigation into the potential for biotechnology to protect crops, scientists at the John Innes Centre and the Sainsbury Laboratory began a trial with blight-resistant potatoes in 2010.

The researchers added a gene to Desiree potatoes, from a wild South American relative, that helps the plant turn on its natural defences to fight off blight.

The scientists involved say that the use of techniques to add extra genes was crucial in developing a plant resistant to the blight.

"Breeding from wild relatives is laborious and slow, and by the time a gene is successfully introduced into a cultivated variety the late blight pathogen may already have evolved the ability to overcome it," said Prof Jonathan Jones, of the Sainsbury Laboratory, the lead author of the research paper.

"And I think it is better to control disease with genetics than with chemistry."

In 2012, the third year of the trial, all the non-GM potatoes became infected with late blight by August while the modified vegetables remained fully resistant to the end of the experiment.

There was also a difference in yield, with the GM variety producing double the amount of tubers.

The scientists say that since the potatoes are grown from tubers rather than seeds, they are sterile and the issue of GM pollen escaping into the wild does not arise.
One area the scientists cannot comment on is the taste, as they were barred from eating the GM variety. However, they do not believe there is any mechanism by which the new genes can impact the flavour.

As late blight is a highly adaptive organism, the scientists at the Sainsbury Laboratory are eager to find more resistance genes and add them into the plant in a "stack".

This would make the chances of late blight overwhelming these potatoes very low. However, it might make the GM variety more expensive to plant.

"The balance will be in favour of the farmer," said Prof Jones.

"Yes, they may pay more for the seed but they will spend an awful lot less on fungicide."

The scientists believe the big challenge will be in getting regulatory approval for the new variety in Europe. The researchers have licensed the technology to an American company, Simplot, which wants to grow them in the US.

"I think it is unfortunate that American farmers are going to benefit from the fruits of European taxpayers' funded work way before Europeans," said Prof Jones.

"This kind of product will likely be on the US market within a couple of years and if we are lucky within eight to 10 years in Europe."

Critics of GM crops said that no matter how big the scale of the environmental benefits, they believe that consumers will not be interested.

"Is anyone really going to grow, sell or buy genetically modified potatoes?" said Liz O'Neil, director of GM Freeze.

"The law says that they will have to be labelled GM. Experience shows that the UK doesn't want GM in its shopping basket, and British farmers are far too smart to grow something they can't sell."

Regulatory hurdles

Other researchers welcomed the development but were equally negative about the chances of these new potatoes being grown in the UK.

"Late blight of potatoes is a difficult disease to control, and using genes from distant relatives is a valuable tool," said Prof Chris Pollock, of Aberystwyth University.

"Unfortunately, the problems in the current European regulatory process, which is expensive and extremely slow, means that this advance by UK scientists is far more likely to help farmers in other countries."

Only 600 of the GM potato plants have been grown, but the scientists have had to spend £40,000 to protect them over the three years of the trial.
Cereals

Nutrient Expert® offers a 'nutrient smart' approach to fertilizer use, by increasing efficiency and reducing emissions. CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), 20 February 2014

Full Article

A fertilizer decision-support tool, Nutrient Expert® for South Asia, launched in India last July, has been selected as the 'best innovation' in the Information and Communications Technology Solutions category at the Bihar Innovation Forum II, according to a press release from the International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI). The toolkit has been developed by IPNI in collaboration with International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and validated in close collaboration with National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (Indian Council of Agriculture Research, Agriculture Universities, Departments of Agriculture), private sector (seed and fertilizer industry representatives) and farmer organisations.

The tool is being used as part of a ‘nutrient smart’ approach to fertilizer use in CCAFS project of Climate Smart Villages in India to increase efficiency in nutrient use and reduce emissions. Nearly 90 percent of small-holder farmers do not have access to soil testing facilities and the tool can provide location-specific fertilizer recommendation to individual farmers.

The Bihar Innovation Forum is a one-of-a-kind platform that aims to identify, celebrate and scale-up innovations for the betterment of rural livelihoods in the State.

Fruits and Vegetables

Dutch firm rolls out innovative mobile cooling technology. FreshFruitPortal.com, 21 February, 2014

Full Article

Exporters of temperature-sensitive fresh produce could now have a new mobile pre-cooling unit at their disposal that offers a flexible and energy-efficient solution for achieving extended shelf-life, according to ripening room specialist BG Door International.

Managing director Jan van Kessel told www.freshfruitportal.com the group’s latest innovation is designed for products that need to be cooled fast, such as berries and lettuce, and is even used by one customer to dry out the delicate leaves on physalis.

“Our Mobile Pre-Cool Unit brings down the temperature of the product quickly,” Van Kessel explained.
“Traditionally it takes 12 hours or so to cool produce but this technology only needs a third of that time. As a result, produce spends less time in the coldstore, which means it can be shipped quicker and has a longer shelf-life.”

The technology works by forcing the cold air from within the coldstore through the cartons to cool down the produce faster. The unit is mounted onto a maximum of 24 pallets at a time and comprises a tarp which is pulled over the cartons, plus a remote-controlled, energy-saving electric fan that generates 20,000 cubic meters of cool air per hour.

The entire unit is mobile, meaning it can be easily moved by forklift truck and positioned anywhere within the coldstore.

According to Van Kessel, exporters are keen to use the unit due to its ability to control temperature and its flexibility of use.

“Berry sales are booming and major berry companies will pay more for fruit supplied at the optimum temperature, so customers from all over the world are asking for this pre-cooling unit.

“The Mobile Pre-Cool Unit can be used for any period of time from a couple of months to the duration of a season.

“The technology is also helping to reduce waste which contributes to the overall bigger issue of sustainability. We showcased the technology at Fruit Logistica 2014 and sold two units right there. We’ve had lots of interest – from Canada to Colombia and also Spain.”

Broadening the reach

The Mobile Pre-Cool Unit marks BG Door’s continued progression into tailor-made ripening room solutions following the company’s success over the last 25 years as a leading provider of ripening room doors, for mainly bananas and tropical fruits.

To make that shift, in 2004 BG Door merged with an existing associate, v.d. Heiden Systems, after recognizing the potential to complement its own portfolio with the manufacturer’s ripening equipment.

“V.d. Heiden was a competitor of sorts…They had new ripening technology that we thought was interesting but they lacked an international sales reach. BG Door has that global focus, so it’s a partnership that works well.”

BG Door launched its range of ripening room technology a couple of years ago with a modular cooling system called EcoTop which is designed to offer exporters maximum fruit quality at a low cost.

Then during the second half of 2013, the firm introduced EcoTop Start, a so-called ‘plug and play’ ripening unit for fruit such as bananas and tropicals.

“EcoTop Start is a pre-mounted ripening unit that is ready to use. It features the necessary components to ripen bananas in small volumes and in areas where there are no refrigeration facilities available.”

With that in mind, Van Kessel said EcoTop Start is ideal for small-scale grower-exporters as well as suppliers in countries where refrigeration facilities are scarce, such as China, India and Indonesia.
“Asia is our objective. Suppliers in this region want to start ripening bananas but they don’t have the volume to fill a conventional ripening room or the facilities to do so.

“But with EcoTop Start they can buy four units that can be shipped in one 40ft container. It’s a low-cost solution, plus it also has low energy consumption which cut costs further.”

Pastures new

To cement its relationship with v.d. Heiden in January BG Door relocated its sales office from Houten to a site next to its partner in Barendrecht, near the Port of Rotterdam.

“Since Barendrecht is at the heart of the fresh fruit and vegetables trade in the Netherlands we are now as close as possible to our accounts,” Van Kessel said.

The move also made logistical sense since BG Door’s production facilities are already located in the area.

With the partnership clearly flourishing, the duo have bought their neighbor’s premises to allow the group to grow and manufacture more products in the future. Van Kessel also revealed that BG Door and v.d. Heiden now planned to merge their branding and marketing, starting with the launch of a new logo shortly.

Holding growers hands’ to reach the European fruit market. FreshFruitPortal.com, 18 February, 2014
http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2014/02/18/holding-growers-hands-to-reach-the-european-fruit-market/?country=trinidad%20and%20tobago

Full Article

With only around a year in operation to date, Germany’s Import Promotion Desk (IPD) has joined the likes of Dutch and Swiss counterparts focused on building market opportunities for growers in developing countries. During Fruit Logistica in Berlin, www.freshfruitportal.com caught up with IPD’s Christa Langen and Swiss Import Promotion Programme’s (SIPPO) Jonas Spahn to discuss initiatives that benefit both small farmers abroad, and consumers in their own countries.

With the Netherlands’ Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI), the two governmental agencies work together to create better opportunities for growers from various parts of the world, with each group focusing on specific “target countries.

While SIPPO’s partnership portfolio includes growers from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, the Ukraine, Indonesia, Colombia, Peru and South Africa, IPD’s selection of growers is more limited as its had less time to develop.

“The IPD is new, but we do cooperate with CBI and SIPPO, which means they do the sourcing of companies. For example, there are little Peruvian companies that do seedless grapes, pomegranates and avocados, Langen said.

She said the purpose of the initiative was simply to establish business.
“If you look for the advantage on the German side it is about offering new reliable, qualified suppliers of produce. We are responsible for Peruvian, Egyptian and Indonesian companies because they have been selected within the program.

“It’s to help small and medium sized enterprises to develop in a way that they can export to the German market. Some of them have really wonderful products, but they don’t know how to sell.

“For us it sounds very simple, but they don’t know how to make markets for themselves, how to supply, and they don’t necessarily have the certificates needed.”

She said the service provided was essentially matchmaking.

“We bring out experts that by telephone make appointments for the companies, and unite them with retailers or whatever interested buyers there might be.

“They also work on the follow-up - it’s really like the “re taken by the hand and told, ‘do send the sample’, ‘send the information’. It’s about teaching, accompanying them and bringing them to market.”

Exhibitors represented by IPD at the event included Peru’s RVR Agro, Fundo Sacramento, Agricola Alpamayo, Cultivos Organicos, Natural Green, Peak Quality del Peru, Sociedad Agraria Estanislao del Chimu, Indonesia’s Sabiin, and Egypt’s El-Shrouk Company for Food Industries.

For Spahn, who is SIPPO’s project manager for fruits and vegetables, the work brings a range of success stories and challenges.

“If you look at Indonesia, as an export country they don’t have so much interest in exporting to Europe as they have so many big markets around them like China or Singapore,” he said.

“By mandate we work in Indonesia but we experience it to be very difficult, because the exporters have a different perspective. They don’t necessarily see the necessity of something like Global G.A.P., because there is an Indonesian equivalent, IndoGAP.

“Our producer from Indonesia [Sabiin] has very nice dragonfruit but it’s not yet in the market. It has a big size, it’s a real eye-catcher.”

He said the program in Peru has been a highlight, as growers from the Andean country are known for their reliability and an interesting range of products.

“At the Peruvian stand we have products ranging from avocados to grapes, and also organic ginger and organic citrus. When we report the increase in turnover and jobs created, the Peruvians are really top notch when it comes to results.

“At the same time we have very interesting examples from Macedonia; very small table grape producers that are starting now in their first year to work with us, and working together.

“They know that they don’t have the volume to supply to German or French supermarket chains, but they actually join forces to combine or deliver the goods together, so there is this synergy, even between the companies that are with us.”

He said a similar trend had been seen with growers from Bosnia-Herzegovina.
“They still suffer from the idea of the war, and that there is not much more than chaos – this is totally outdated but the image is still the case.

“They can benefit from the Swiss appearance that we have, and we really work hard with them to teach them reliability and to be punctual.

“Being Swiss, it’s a bit of a cliché, but still it’s very important for us; there’s good discipline and team spirit at the stand.”

But why spend all this taxpayer money on supporting businesses abroad?

“We don’t have many resources and the Swiss have always been creators. Our company not only works in the import promotion that we discussed now, but we also have a mandate to support Swiss SMEs to export to foreign markets abroad,” Spahn said.

“When we go to countries that are not yet ready to import our Swiss goods, we pave the way basically. We are in the embassy, the foreign trade chambers, ministries, and we also work on a good image for Swiss services and products.

“Besides this, Switzerland has always had a very traditional humanitarian obligation. What we do is quite unique. We work on a company level and we try to improve the regional economies so that they can get access to market – it is a political decision to support emerging countries.”

SIPPO’s grower partners at the event include Peru’s Agricola Alpamayo, Cultivos Organicos, Natural Green, Peak Quality del Peru, Sociedad Agraria Estanislao del Chimu; South Africa’s F1 and Hazyview Tropics; the Ukraine’s LTD Chistiy Product – S and West Retail; Macedonia’s Extra Funghi Dooel, Frutema and Zoi-Union; Bosnia-Herzegovina’s Maočanka-Commerce and Voci Rasadnik; Indonesia’s Sabiin; and Colombia’s Suaga Organic Herbs.

Agricultural Development

Stakeholders Still Meeting by Theresa Blackman. Barbados Government Information Service (BGIS), 19 February 19, 2014

Full Article

Government is still engaging the agriculture and manufacturing sectors with respect to concessions for the hotel industry.

Minister of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development, Donville Inness, said that talks were still ongoing among the various stakeholders on this issue.

He noted that last Friday (February 14) representatives from the Barbados Manufacturers’ Association; the Barbados Agricultural Society; the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association; the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., and the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation met to
review present and any future concessions accorded to hotels, especially in the area of food and beverage, and the implications for the agriculture and manufacturing sectors.

“Right now we are looking at the concessions programme and how we can minimise the fall out to the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, and more importantly, how we can seek to bring the manufacturing, agriculture and hotel sectors closer together to agree on ways that all sides would get maximum benefits. And those were the main goals of our talks,” he said.

Mr. Inniss also noted that discussions will continue this Friday, February 21, and the Barbados Chamber of Commerce would be included in the meeting.

**Harvesting cities: tapping the potential of urban agriculture.** International Water Management Institute (IWMI), 16 January 2014

**Full Article**

**Historically, many governments have either ignored urban agriculture or limited it for health and safety reasons.**

But despite the lack of support, the sector has quietly gained traction – with an estimated 800 million people now involved in urban farming globally, generating as much as 20% of the world’s food production. Crop-raising in home gardens, vacant lots and open spaces under power lines, for example, help provide families with food and supplementary cash, while enabling them to become more resilient to climate change and other uncertainties. Furthermore, in many cities, most perishable vegetables found in markets are produced in inner-urban areas, contributing to the nutritious diets of the society at large.

Since 2005, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), with support from the Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food Security (RUAF Foundation), has led an effort to improve government support for urban agriculture in three cities in West Africa (Accra [Ghana], Freetown [Sierra Leone] and Ibadan [Nigeria]) and two cities in South Asia (Gampaha [Sri Lanka] and Magadi [India]) in two subsequent projects.

As a result, urban agriculture is now included in the city development plans of Accra and Freetown and provincial development plans in Gampaha, Sri Lanka. In both India and Ghana, urban agriculture is now being integrated into national agriculture policies and action plans, in efforts to enhance its potential to ensure food security.

Changes in some of the targeted urban areas have included adding agricultural extension officers, increasing training opportunities for farmers, improving the capacity of decision makers, allocation of funds for innovations and offering educational opportunities for the youth.
In a recent IWMI report on the topic, scientists attributed most of the successes to a process called Multi-stakeholder Policy Formulation and Action Planning (MPAP). The aim of this approach is to enable key players – government officials, farmers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and others – to work together to influence long-term policy change.

But urban agriculture is complex – it is inexorably linked to the environment, health, climate change, waste management, recreation, sanitation, land use and employment. Building consensus is difficult, researchers say, because stakeholders usually have different visions based on their experiences, agendas and information. A key challenge is getting governments to recognize the importance of urban farming in improving livelihoods, and offer support for projects and training opportunities.

“Some perceive urban agriculture as critical to improving livelihoods, while others see it as a threat to public health due to food safety concerns because of unhygienic practices in the use of wastewater,” says Pay Drechsel, Leader for IWMI’s research theme on Water Quality, Health and Environment. “MPAP proved to be very useful in linking scientific evidence into a dialogue with stakeholders to address those kinds of concerns.”

The MPAP approach evolved gradually in the five cities over the course of several years, with an urban agriculture development plan devised for each city. IWMI initiated the dialogue with government departments that provide extension services, and other key stakeholders that have the power to influence policy in the country. With their support, other groups were invited to participate.

Researchers conducted an inventory of urban agriculture farming systems in each city, reviewed land-use policies, and the institutional environment. Multi-stakeholder forums were established to create the cities’ strategic agendas. Cities were asked to support pilot projects that would address local research questions and issues, with a specific focus on strengthening farmer organizations in urban areas and developing capacity for innovation in farming systems, microenterprise development (in production and processing) and marketing (value chain development).

Leadership of each multi-stakeholder forum and process was handed over to a local institution based on mutual agreement of the group. Those institutions were generally agriculture ministries, city agricultural departments or universities. In some cases, IWMI continued to facilitate the process for some time.

Those involved realized that there were significant regional differences in how best to achieve policy change.

In Ghana, for example, policy seminars and advocacy were most helpful at a local level while in Sri Lanka, the key step to reach out to the national policy was a change in the provincial policy, which set an example for others. In India, on the other hand, the project started on the ground but quickly learned to better target the national Planning Commission, so that recommendations for change had the required backing from the top.

One challenge researchers faced was a rapid turnover of government officials, who are key to public policy change. They also found that interest waned when MPAP training focused too much on theories rather than hands-on learning. The participatory approach was initially conceived as a training course of several days at a retreat, in order to get the participants away from their work schedules. But adjustments in the duration were made when it was found that learning declined after a few days. “It was important that our partner institutions realized how urban farming can help them achieve their policy goals (like improved nutrition, jobs, income or resilience to climate change) rather than...
becoming an extra agenda on its own,” said Olufunke Cofie, head of IWMI’s West Africa office, Accra, Ghana, and RUAF coordinator for Anglophone West Africa.

Field study visits were seen to be particularly enriching. Team members in Accra, Gampaha and Magadi were exposed to innovative agricultural practices, such as small-space and water-saving technologies, and the safe use of wastewater.

“The MPAP approach led to policy change in urban agriculture and allowed us to learn more about the pathway to move from research to outcomes,” says Priyanie Amerasinghe, Head, IWMI Hyderabad office, India, and Senior Researcher, Bio-Medical Sciences, and also RUAF coordinator for South Asia. “However, there is no one formula, some successes were enabled by individual champions or individual components of the overall MPAP process, so a ‘light version’ of the process might be the way to go.”

Information & Communication

Impressive list of winners in IICA CARDI Media Awards 2013. IICA/ CARDI Press release, 2 February 2014

Full Article

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) today announced the winners of their 2013 media awards competition held under the theme: ‘Food and Nutrition Security in our Hands: Linking Policies and Practices’.

The Excellence in Agricultural Journalism in Trinidad and Tobago awards were adjudicated by a team of highly-qualified professionals in the field of media and agriculture.

IICA’s Representative in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Gregg Rawlins and CARDI’s Executive Director, Dr. Arlington Chesney said the awards are about recognising journalists for their work on reporting on agriculture and all facets of the sector.

“We acknowledge all the journalists who took part in the awards and from the feedback from judges, calibre of entries was particularly high this year and I want to congratulate all the winners,” said Mr. Rawlins.

Dr. Chesney added, “We value the media and we do believe the fraternity has an important role to play in reporting on the agriculture sector as it is linked to life and livelihoods, health and nutrition, urban poverty and employment and much more and that is why we celebrate excellence in agricultural journalism via these awards.”

Both IICA and CARDI are looking forward to continuing to work with the media through training workshops and conferences and providing support and guidance to journalists.

IICA and CARDI have also acknowledged partner companies and organisations which are sponsoring some of the prizes this year.
To date the companies and organizations that are on board are state-owned National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago (NGC), Caribbean Chemicals and National Agricultural Marketing & Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO).

“We do expect other companies to join us as we salute some of the most outstanding journalists in Trinidad and Tobago,” said Mr. Rawlins and Dr. Chesney.

The awards function will take place at the Capital Plaza on Saturday, February 15, 2014.

**The 2013 winners are: PRINT**
- Best news story – **Ms. Sue-Ann Wayow, Trinidad Express** for ‘Pleading For Government Help’
- Best business feature – **Ms. Shaliza Hassanali, Trinidad Guardian** for ‘Fishermen Get Pushed Out’
- Best human interest story - **Ms. Shaliza Hassanali, Trinidad Guardian** for ‘One Man Stands in the Way’

**RADIO**
- Best news/feature story – **Mr. Sterling Henderson, i95.5 FM Radio** for ‘Challenges of livestock farmers in T&T’

**TELEVISION**
- Best news/feature story – **Mr. Khamal Georges, CNC 3** for ‘Protest on the High Seas’

**TELEVISION**
- Best news/feature video – **Mr. Vern Teekasingh, CNC 3** for ‘Protest on the High Seas’

**PHOTOGRAPHY**
- Best News Photograph – **Mr. Sureash Cholai, Newsday** for ‘Farmer’s Flood’
- Best Feature Photograph- **Mr. Jermaine Cruickshank, Trinidad Express** for ‘Bird’s Eye View’

**NEW MEDIA**
- Web-based and digital media – **Mr. Keron Bascombe** for ‘The Misunderstood Stakeholder’

**IICA/CARDI Special Award to Youth/Citizen Journalist**
- **Ms. Kevonne Kerr** for ‘Four point plan to reduce food import bill’

**Overall Media House Winner**
- **Guardian Media Limited**
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

- Full course announcement and outline
- Application form

March 2014

The United Nations' (UN) World Water Day

Date: 22 March 2014

2014 World Water Day (WWD) theme is "Water and Energy" and aims to raise awareness of the inter-linkages between water and energy. 2014 World Water Day (WWD) theme is "Water and Energy" and aims to raise awareness of the inter-linkages between water and energy.

Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) activities
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/)

June 2014
**The International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) Annual Meeting**
**Date:** 16-19 June 2014
**Location:** Edinburgh, UK
**Website:** [http://seedtest.org/en/annual-meeting-2014- content---1--1409.html](http://seedtest.org/en/annual-meeting-2014-content---1--1409.html)

July 2014
**50th Caribbean Food Crops society (CFCS) Annual Meeting, United States Virgin Islands.**
**Date:** 5-12 July 2014
**Website:** [http://cfcs.eea.uprm.edu/](http://cfcs.eea.uprm.edu/)

**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

**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/)