More focus on growth in agricultural sector needed.  
Barbados Advocate, 5 March 2014  
Farmers and other persons involved in the agricultural sector need to focus on how they can take their business to the next level.

This is the belief of the CEO of the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS), James Paul who spoke to the media after a tour of AgroFest at Queen’s Park on Sunday morning.

For more information see page 8

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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
Small ruminants

Farmers urged to gear up for more goat meat production by Glenis Rose. Jamaica Information Service, 7 March 2014

Full Article

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Roger Clarke, has urged farmers to prepare to significantly increase the rearing of small ruminants as the Government intends to import less goat meat into the country.

“We are self-sufficient in pork and in poultry, but we import a lot of mutton. We eat a lot of curry goat, but some 80 per cent of the goat meat we eat is imported. We want to change that and that is why we are seeking to improve our programme for small ruminants,” Minister Clarke said.

He was addressing the 58th Annual Hague Agricultural Livestock and Food Show in Falmouth, Trelawny, on March 5. The show which attracted thousands of patrons, was held under the theme, ‘Empowering youths in agriculture: grow what we eat, eat what we grow’.

The Agriculture Minister, while congratulating the farmers for the work they have been putting into their farming activities, resulting in the sector recording more than 10 per cent growth in the last quarter of 2013, indicated that there is still much more work to be done.

“As we seek to expand the rearing of goat and sheep, the Ministry’s Livestock Unit at Bodles is currently implementing a small ruminant production four-year project, with emphasis on the provision of improved genetics of goat and sheep for breeding and expansion of the government’s nucleus of herds for dissemination to farmers on satellite farms,” Minister Clarke informed.

He pointed out that the project would lead to the production of fatteners for meat and other value-added products.

“The project is now in year two, with over 50 per cent of the animals required and we expect to acquire the remaining 50 per cent by the end of March 2014. Not only are we focused on increased production but it is also important that we increase our productivity,” Minister Clarke asserted.

Turning to other areas of the targeted growth in the agricultural sector, the Minister indicated that plans are underway for the resuscitation of inland fishery resources.

“Let us also talk about our fisheries and aquaculture sector. Even as we continue to reap the successes of our marine fishery conservation areas, we are also working to promote the resuscitation of our inland fishery resources and for that reason we have dedicated two agro-parks, one at Hill Run in St. Catherine and one at Meylersfield in Westmoreland to aquaculture. We are rebuilding the abandoned fish ponds, as we seek to rebuild the aquaculture sector in Jamaica,” Minister Clarke told the opening ceremony for the show.
Meanwhile, Minister Clarke disclosed that the Ministry is continuing dialogue with a local seafood restaurant chain with a view to increasing their purchasing and sale of local fish.

He also informed that the Ministry is exploring the possibility of introducing the rearing of silver snapper, which would result in a larger-size fish being produced for fillet purposes.

“This is the moment. Let us seize this moment because Jamaica’s hope and Jamaica’s future lies significantly in the growth and development of the agricultural sector … if we are to grow the economy, we have to grow the agriculture sector focusing on issues of food security, import substitution and increased output both in our produce sector and our livestock sector,” the Minister emphasised.

Organics

http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-food-safety-20140223,0,6831660.story#ixzz2uNFCnkw

Full Article

Local growers are discovering that proposed FDA regulations would curtail many common techniques, such as using house-made fertilizers and irrigating from creeks.

HUSTONTOWN, Pa. — Jim Crawford was rushing to load crates of freshly picked organic tomatoes onto trucks heading for an urban farmers market when he noticed the federal agent.

A tense conversation followed as the visitor to his farm — an inspector from the Food and Drug Administration — warned him that some organic-growing techniques he had honed over four decades could soon be outlawed.

"This is my badge. These are the fines. This is what is hanging over your head, and we want you to know that,” Crawford says the official told him.

Crawford’s popular farm may seem a curious place for the FDA to move ahead with a long-planned federal assault on deadly food poisoning. To Crawford's knowledge, none of the kohlrabi, fennel, sugar snap peas or other crops from his New Morning Farm have ever sickened anyone. But he is not the only organic grower to suddenly discover federal inspectors on his land.

In 2010, after a years-long campaign, food-safety activists persuaded Congress to give the FDA authority to regulate farm practices. The next year, an outbreak of food poisoning that killed 33 people who ate tainted cantaloupes put pressure on the FDA to be aggressive.

Now, farmers are discovering that the FDA's proposed rules would curtail many techniques that are common among organic growers, including spreading house-made fertilizers, tilling cropland with grazing animals, and irrigating from open creeks.

Suddenly, from small family operations nestled in the foothills of Appalachia to the sophisticated organic-grower networks that serve Los Angeles and San Francisco, the farms that celebrity chefs and food-conscious consumers jostle to buy from are facing an unexpected adversary.
They're fighting back. Even though full enforcement of the rules is still years away, they are warning customers that some farms would have to close.

"They are going to drive farms out of business," said Dave Runsten, policy director for Community Alliance with Family Farmers in Davis, Calif.

"The consumer groups behind this don't understand farming," Runsten says. "They talk out of both sides of their mouth. They demand these one-size-fits-all regulations, then say, 'I don't want to hurt those cute little farmers at the farmers market. I shop at the farmers market.' It is frustrating."

Many farmers who take part in the locally grown food movement argue that contamination is a problem of industrial-sized farms and that some of the practices the FDA might ban actually make consumers safer.

Food safety advocates have urged regulators to hang tough. "We don't believe large facilities are the only place where outbreaks are happening," said Caroline Smith DeWaal, food safety director at the Center for Science in the Public Interest in Washington. Farm-to-fork growers, she said, need to accept that emerging strains of E. coli and other bacteria can just as easily seep into the produce sold at a farmers market as into the batches of salad bagged at giant processing plants, and they need to tweak their methods to protect against it.

"At the end of the day, consumers will be paying a little bit more for this. But a few cents here may help avoid a severe illness," Smith DeWaal says.

Congress passed the landmark Food Safety Modernization Act amid alarming reports from public health agencies about widespread food contamination. Tens of millions of consumers are sickened by tainted food each year, and some 3,000 die annually as a result, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Parents of children who died from drinking contaminated juice or eating unsafe spinach rallied lawmakers with horrifying stories. Concerns about bioterrorism also played a role. The new rules are meant, in part, to make the nation's food supply less susceptible to tampering.

The century-old FDA has ample experience breaking up unsafe pharmaceutical factories and food processors but is still finding its way around family farms. At a recent congressional hearing, Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) seized on one draft set of rules in which the FDA declared kale is "never consumed raw."

"I was going to offer to make a kale salad for you," she said to Michael Taylor, a deputy commissioner. "It causes you to wonder if those who are writing these rules have ever set foot on a farm."

Over the summer, the owner of the last working farm in Akron, Ohio, which had been supplying produce to locals for 117 years, said he was throwing in the towel and blamed the FDA's new rules. Don Bessemer told the Akron Beacon Journal that he was up for fighting pests and even drought, but not bureaucrats. Thirty workers lost jobs.

Federal regulators have been scrambling to find the right balance ever since the draft rules set off controversy. The FDA has backed away from some of its positions, and Taylor points out that
thousands of the smallest farms would be exempt from new inspections under an agreement negotiated in Congress.

"This is the first time that the FDA will have regulated produce safety on the farm," he said in an interview.

"It is understandable people have concerns and questions," he added. "We have learned a lot during this last year."

Regulators have been poring over comments from some 20,000 groups and individuals. On listening tours at farms, they have gotten an earful from growers such as Judith Redmond, one of the owners of the 350-acre Full Belly Farm in the scenic Capay Valley northwest of Sacramento. Redmond says she is bewildered by proposed restrictions on compost that could make it impossible to use on some crops.

"We think they should be encouraging people to use compost," she said. "To consider it dangerous or potentially harboring pathogens is the wrong message to be sending."

While the FDA is striking a conciliatory tone, protest is sure to follow when revised rules emerge this summer. That much is clear just from listening to both sides on issues as esoteric as how long farmers should be required to leave manure in a compost pile.

Farmers say they simply don't have the facilities to do what food-safety groups are demanding.

Crawford, for example, fertilizes his farm with manure made from the waste of his 300 chickens. Composting it for as long a period as the draft FDA rules require would be impossible, he says.

He worries, too, about rules requiring him to keep animals away from the crops.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest will be pushing the FDA not to yield.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," Smith DeWaal said. "Why not create a cooperative whose sole job it is to truck this stuff to a composting facility and truck it back? It's an expense, but way better than the unexpected expense of a major recall and implications to your farm if an outbreak is traced to your product. There are costs either way."

That might make sense to Crawford, the farmer, if he saw convincing evidence the manure he is using is dangerous. But he hasn't. What he sees is an added expense that will give another reason for farmers operating on the margins to call it quits.

"The public loves to love and idealize us little family farmers," he said. "But the vast majority of us are hanging by a thread. Now, the government is saying, 'We are going to put a lot more weight on that thread.'"
Climate change

**Indoor Mini-Farms to Beat Climate Change.** Caribbean Climate Blog. 3 March 2014

**Full Article**

Industrial engineer Ancel Bhagwandeen says growing your food indoor is a great way to protect crops from the stresses of climate change. So he developed a hydroponic system that “leverages the nanoclimates in houses so that the house effectively protects the produce the same way it protects us,” he says.

Bhagwandeen told IPS that his hydroponic project was also developed “to leverage the growth of the urban landscape and high-density housing, so that by growing your own food at home, you mitigate the cost of food prices.”

Hydroponics, a method of growing plants without soil using mineral nutrients in water, is increasingly considered a viable means to ensure food security in light of climate change.

His project is one of several being considered for further development by the Caribbean Climate Innovation Centre (CCIC), headquartered in Jamaica.

The newly launched CCIC, which is funded mainly by the World Bank and the government of Canada, seeks to fund innovative projects that will “change the way we live, work and build to suit a changing climate,” said Everton Hanson, the CCIC’s CEO.

A first step to developing such projects is through Proof of Concept (POC) funding, which makes available grants from 25,000 to 50,000 dollars to successful applicants to “help the entrepreneur to finance those costs that are related to proving that the idea can work,” said Hanson.

Among the items that POC funding will cover are prototype development such as design, testing, and field trials; market testing; raw materials and consumables necessary to achieve proof of concept; and costs related to applications for intellectual property rights in the Caribbean.

A POC competition is now open that will run until the end of March. “After that date the applications will be evaluated. We are looking for ideas that can be commercialised and the plan is to select the best ideas,” Hanson said.

The CCIC, which is jointly managed by the Scientific Research Council in Jamaica and the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute in Trinidad and Tobago, is seeking projects that focus on water management, resource use efficiency, energy efficiency, solar energy, and sustainable agribusiness.

Bhagwandeen entered the POC competition in hopes of securing a grant, because “this POC funding would help in terms of market testing,” he explained.

The 48-year-old engineer says he wishes to build dozens of model units and “distribute them in various areas, then monitor the operations and take feedback from users.” He said he would be
testing for usability and reliability, as well as looking for feedback on just how much light is needed and the best locations in a house or building for situating his model.

“I would then take the feedback, and any issues that come up I can refine before going into mass marketing,” he said.

Bhagwandeen’s model would enable homeowners to grow leafy vegetables, including herbs, lettuce and tomatoes, inside their home or apartment, with minimal expense and time.

The model uses smart electronics, meaning that 100 units can run on the same energy as a 60-watt light bulb, he said. So it differs from typical hydroponics systems that consume a great deal of energy, he added. His model can also run on the energy provided by its own small solar panel and can work both indoors and outdoors.

Bhagwandeen said his model’s design is premised on the fact that “our future as a people is based more and more on city living and in order for that to be sustainable, we need to have city farming at a family level.”

A U.N. report says that “the population living in urban areas is projected to gain 2.6 billion, passing from 3.6 billion in 2011 to 6.3 billion in 2050.” Most of that urban growth will be concentrated in the cities and towns of the world’s less developed regions.

To meet the challenges of climate change adaptation, the CCIC “will support Caribbean entrepreneurs involved in developing locally appropriate solutions to climate change.”

Bhagwandeen said that support from organisations like the CCIC is critical for climate change entrepreneurs. “From the Caribbean perspective, especially Trinidad and Tobago, we are a heavily consumer-focused society. One of the negatives of Trinidad’s oil wealth is that we are not accustomed to developing technology for ourselves. We buy it.”

“We are a society of traders and distributors and there is very little support for innovators and entrepreneurs.”

He said access to markets and investors poses a serious challenge for regional innovators like himself, who typically have to rely on bootstrapping to get their business off the ground.

Typically, he said, regional innovators have to make small quantities of an item, sell those items, and then use the funds to make incrementally larger quantities. “So that if you get an order for 500 units, you cannot fulfill that order,” he said.

Fourteen Caribbean states are involved in CCIC: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The Caribbean CCIC is one of eight being developed across the world.
Food Security


Full Article

Feeding Barbadians is this island’s top priority.

This is according to Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development, Denis Kellman, who spoke to the media after touring the various stalls on the last day of AgroFest at Queen’s Park yesterday.

“I understand the importance of agriculture to Barbados and as you know, I now wear the hat of Minister of Housing, which would say to you that I respect agriculture. We have a commitment to house Barbados, but our first commitment is to feed Barbados and what we are looking at is that we have to ensure that we have enough land available so that people would be able to live in houses, so if you do not feed people, then there is no need to house them so feeding is first and housing is second in our books.”

He stated that in order to make sure that this happens, it would call for certain partnerships and synergies to be developed between the different Ministries and the sectors that fall under them and this is one of the goals of the Rural Development Commission (RDC).

“As we made the tour this morning, you would have seen the many manufacturers, you would have seen many people in agriculture and you would have seen people in industry. … We do not talk about synergies, we create synergies because of the productive ministries whether it be Culture, Agriculture, [or] Tourism, Manufacturing, Rural Development is the incubator for all of those industries.”

The Minister, whose portfolio includes the RDC, said that the Commission would therefore lead the charge in providing any support in order for the productive sectors to grow.

“That is why we have been speaking very widely about how we would lead the fight in the growth of the productive sectors in Barbados. In every productive sector, you must have a foundation and Rural lays that foundation for the productive sector and that is why we call ourselves the incubator, we build the foundation and then we would pass it on.”

Kellman added that after they have provided persons in this sector with the required knowledge and skills, they would then let them use that foundation to develop.

“We would take the lead as we are in community tourism. We would do it industry, we would do it in culture, we would do it in agriculture and we would do it in manufacturing and then we would pass it on to the particular industries.”

Full Article

WASHINGTON – The all-food component of the Consumer Price Index was forecast to rise 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent in 2014, according to the US Department of Agriculture’s Food Price Outlook issued Feb. 25. Such a level of price inflation would represent a jump from 1.4 percent in all-food price inflation in 2013, the report said.

Foods consumed at home with the highest price inflation forecasts in 2014 were beef, veal and poultry, expected to show a 3 percent to 4 percent rise in prices compared with 2013. The food items expected to show the lowest rates of price inflation were fats, oils, cereals and bakery products, whose prices were expected to show price advances of 1.5 percent to 2.5 percent in 2014, the Food Price Outlook said.

Forecast changes in prices paid to producers (the Producer Price Index) for 2014 showed a wider range of changes. On the high end, prices paid to farmers for cattle were expected to rise 5 percent to 6 percent in 2014. Farm eggs were expected to rise 4 percent to 5 percent in 2014.

Some of the widest declines in producer prices forecast for 2014 included farm-level soybeans and wheat, expected to fall in price by 7 percent to 8 percent in 2014 compared with 2013, and wholesale wheat flour, which was expected to decline in price by 9 percent to 10 percent from the previous year, the USDA said.

Agricultural Development

More focus on growth in agricultural sector needed. Barbados Advocate, 5 March 2014

Full Article

Farmers and other persons involved in the agricultural sector need to focus on how they can take their business to the next level.

This is the belief of the CEO of the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS), James Paul who spoke to the media after a tour of AgroFest at Queen’s Park on Sunday morning.

He said that too often these persons do not think about developing their business and the society encourages this attitude by supporting their small man mentality. However, while it is important for institutions like the Rural Development Commission (RDC) and individuals to lend assistance to the small man as well, these are not the persons who would help the economy to develop.

“I want to emphasise that RDC is about growth. Right? We in Barbados have become too satisfied with trying to support the small man. It is good to support the small man, but you cannot be a small man consistently. We need to have businesses that are going to step up to help this economy. You can’t help it being small.”
Paul said that there are a lot of institutions out there such as banks which have funds which persons can borrow from and the RDC has a variety of programmes for these persons to develop the necessary skills and knowledge that they would need to grow and prosper in addition to funds and therefore, all they need to do is to utilise these resources.

The CEO stated that persons can actually combine the resources of different institutions to reduce their risks and concentrate instead on exploring new avenues for expanding and enhancing their products.

“You can actually leverage the risk that you have by using RDC’s funds with the bank’s funds to help to develop a product even further. We are talking about growth and what I am saying is that businesses in Barbados need to stop limiting themselves. People need to stop thinking that ‘the only place that I can grow is in the kitchen garden or that is the only place where my produce would grow. I must always operate from home’ because that does not create the type of employment that Barbados needs and too often the emphasis has been on Government.”

Paul said that they want to see persons stop looking for hand outs.” The kind of attitude that we want among businesses is to grow and that is why this year, we talk about innovation and we talk about entrepreneurship. Okay? Because it does not mean staying small and begging every year for a space at AgroFest. Leave that for somebody else now who really needs it, who is really starting out, a youngster coming out of school who wants to start a business, he needs that help, you don’t need that help anymore. You are an accomplished business so you are trying to grow your business.”

Instead, they need to develop the type of attitude of self-improvement. “Those are the types of businesses that we need to encourage and RDC is doing that and even if you look at some of the people who came to AgroFest this year, we brought in some new ones who are doing really great things. What we want to see is that those businesses progress and they grow and they continue to employ people within the economy and keep the pressure off of Government.”


**Full Article**

The Agro Investment Corporation (AIC) has been living up to its mandate to modernize the country’s agricultural and agribusiness base, boost employment in the sector and lay the groundwork for increased production and improved productivity.

Agriculture in Jamaica has been dogged by low productivity as small farmers, who make up the bulk of the country’s agricultural producers, eke out a minimal existence primarily on small individual plots of land.

These small plots cannot facilitate large-scale production as their location on marginal lands and other sites poorly suited to farming, has militated against the use of modern inputs, such as irrigation and land preparation using tractors and specialized equipment.

Historically, the best lands on the plains have, for centuries, been restricted to crops such as sugar cane, at the expense of other crops which could also help to grow the economy by earning precious foreign exchange and substituting expensive inputs in animal feeds like corn, through crops such as sorghum.
The AIC, an agency of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, is addressing these shortfalls by focusing on making land available to groups of small farmers as well as larger investors, and facilitating access to modern inputs in some instances, through the Agro Park Programme.

While some of the projects implemented so far have been pilot programmes with attendant teething pains, the agency is reporting overall success in its endeavours with some 1,024.6 acres under production and employment of some 1,046 persons.

The AIC is also advancing the use of scientific animal husbandry in the production of high quality meats to be processed by a modern small ruminant abattoir (being developed under the Agro Park Programme) for entry into the hotel trade and other established local markets.

The Agro Park Programme is also embarking on a project to increase local inland fisheries, ensuring that the requisite food safety standards are met. The plan is to partner with Rainforest in employing creative marketing programmes to increase demand for various fish products.

Overall, the Agro Park Programme is expected to save Jamaica over $5 billion (US$48 million) annually, while providing employment options for 5,156 persons.

Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Roger Clarke, is depending on the Agro Parks to play a critical role in Jamaica’s economic recovery process.

“The Agro Parks are being developed to produce crops to support import substitution or replacement of selected imported crops as well as producing crops used as raw material for agro processors, fresh produce exporters, the School Feeding Programme and hotels and restaurants. The simple fact is that we must reduce our annual food import bill of US$1 billion as we simply cannot sustain this,” Mr. Clarke emphasizes.

There are nine Agro Parks, which are located at: Amity Hall, St. Catherine; Hill Run, St. Catherine; Ebony Park, Clarendon; Spring Plain, Clarendon; New Forest/Duff House, Manchester/St. Elizabeth; Plantain Garden River, St Thomas; Yallahs, St Thomas; Etingdon, Trelawny; and Meylersfield, Westmoreland.

Chief Executive Officer of the AIC, Everton Spencer, says the parks are geared at maximizing productivity by developing under-utilised lands and infrastructure adapted to the changing nature of agriculture/agribusiness development and facilitating access to funding sources.

“We have been making significant strides in establishing productive ventures that result both in improved yields and enhanced earning and employment for farmers,” Mr. Spencer notes.

Among the successes is the establishment of 188 acres of sorghum, in partnership with Caribbean Broilers, of which 138 acres have been harvested at the Amity Hall Agro Park. The project has resulted in foreign exchange savings of over US$50,000 (J$5.3 million), with projections to establish some 818 acres within the 2014/2015 financial year that could result in savings of US$795,000 (J$83.5 million).

At Amity Hall, small farmers reaped and sold 213,205 pounds of vegetables, tubers, and condiments, earning $6.9 million between April and October last year. Currently 115.9 acres of land are under production, including onions, fruits, vegetables, tubers and condiments, while 100 acres of hay are in production in support of a private sector led small ruminant expansion project.
Other positive components include a youth in agriculture programme, geared at encouraging young persons to enter agriculture through a partnership with the 4-H Clubs at Amity Hall, of which 20 youth have been selected, lease documents issued and financing arranged through a range of financial institutions, private companies and local development agencies.

The University of the West Indies has also committed $600,000 in support of the venture, while the young beneficiaries have also been exposed to training in developing business plans and enhanced production methodologies.

Among the major infrastructure improvements at Amity Hall are the establishment of irrigation and drainage systems on some 1,900 acres of land, with significant bridge and road improvements undertaken, to allow access to large agricultural equipment, such as planters and harvesters.

At Ebony Park, 70 farmers have produced and harvested over 478,523 pounds of onions, vegetables, roots and tubers, hot peppers and other condiments at an approximate value of $21.5 million.

Over at Spring Plain, 100 acres have been cleared and irrigation installed, in preparation for the establishment of 60 acres of onion during the spring planting season. Interest has already been expressed regarding a lease on the green houses located at Ebony Park to be used as storage for the onions. Also, a marketer is interested in leasing an existing packaging/storage facility, to have it retrofitted to cure and store onions.

At Duff House/New Forest, 158 acres of condiments, hot pepper and vegetables are being cultivated. The Yallahs Agro Park, recently launched, is also underway, with 22.45 acres of onions in the ground.

The Plantain Garden park has yielded 7,624 pounds of ginger from just four tenths of an acre out of a total of 10 acres, with the farmers set to earn significant sums to be paid directly from the Agriculture Ministry.

Continuing the drive at import substitution, a tilapia fish rearing project is being implemented and currently 224 pond acres are under production.

With regard to the small ruminant abattoir in Westmoreland, the project is being rolled out as a Public/Private Partnership and $80 million in funding has been committed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as equity.

The AIC continues to facilitate the investment efforts of the private sector, and most recently it enabled a 36-acre experimental project at Bernard Lodge, being implemented by Red Stripe to grow cassava to replace grain in the brewing process.
United Nations calls for pro-family farming policies. FAO, 5 March, 2014

Full Article

5 March 2014, Budapest/Rome - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva today appealed to governments to boost support to the world’s small-scale family farmers in order to win the fight against hunger.

Ban said the International Year of Family Farming being celebrated in 2014 called “for commitments” in a message relayed by Graziano da Silva to the Global Forum and Expo on Family Farming in Budapest.

“Governments can empower family farmers, especially women and youth, by creating policies conducive to equitable and sustainable rural development,” Ban said. “This includes better infrastructure to reduce the amount of food lost after harvest when small-scale producers are unable to store, process and transport their goods.”

The UN Secretary-General also encouraged public and private lenders to provide vital financial services such as credit and insurance.

Ban warned that small-scale family farmers are particularly vulnerable to climate change events such as extreme weather, droughts and floods.

Pro-family farming policies

In his address to the forum, Graziano da Silva echoed the UN Secretary-General in urging governments to adopt explicitly pro-family farming policies.

He underlined that family farmers, fisher folk, forest-dependent people, pastoralists and traditional and indigenous communities are key for food security in most countries but at the same time are among the world’s most vulnerable populations.

A recent study of 93 countries shows that family farms account for over 90 percent of all farm holdings, he told the forum.

Family farmers also manage most of the world’s farm land, including 63 percent in Europe, he said.

“Apart from producing a high proportion of the food we eat, family farmers are by far the biggest source of employment in the world,” the Director-General stressed, adding that they are also the guardians of the world’s agro-biodiversity and natural resources.

Land grab threats

Graziano da Silva underlined the importance of protecting family farmers from rising threats to their traditional access to land posed by insecurity and land grabbing.

The Committee on World Food Security’s approved Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure as well as its Principles on Responsible Agricultural Investments currently being negotiated are of great importance to keep these threats in check, he said.
“Large private sector investments in agriculture exist and will continue, whether we like it or not,” he explained. “So it is paramount that there is a common understanding on how to invest in ways that are sustainable and protect the rights of family farmers and poor communities.”

Special ambassadors

Secretary General of the Asian Farmers Association Esther Penunia, President of the southern area of the artisanal section of the National Federation of Fisheries of Mauritania Mohammed Ould Saleck, and President of the European Farmers Association Gerd Sonnleitner were formally appointed as FAO Special Ambassadors on Family Farming at today’s forum.

They join the other special ambassadors already nominated for the Year: Ibrahima Coulibaly, President of the National Coordination of Peasant Organizations of Mali, and Mirna Cunningham, former Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.


Full Article

Agriculture in Haiti represents 25% of national GDP, it support approximately 45% of the needs of the population, 60% of jobs created but can barely generate 100 million dollars; many small producers did not even manage to survive with single income from their crops and are even forced to migrate to big cities, while in neighboring Republic, agriculture representing only 8.7% of GDP generates $ 800 million.

In order to increase production and income of farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development, in collaboration with the World Bank in 2013 launched a pilot program of subsidies on request for farmers, entitled "Strengthening of Agricultural Public Services" (RESEPAG)

Through the program, approximately 3,000 farmers of the Southern Department receive vouchers that allow them to partially finance plowing services, purchase of fertilizers and pesticides and to benefit from training. These services and products are purchased from eligible suppliers.

According to Jean Jacques Débalio, Departmental Director for the South of the Ministry of Agriculture, this subsidy mechanism on demand, is already bearing fruit. He said observe a net increase of agricultural production at the departmental level, and a return of some migrants to the countryside "When we look at the bulletin of the National Coordination of Food Security in the South, certainly they are currently people who are food insecure, but the amount was considerably reduced [...] Everything is not only due to RESEPAG but, all the projects, with the increase in production has allowed us to have some food availability in the department [...]

[...] The increased production has significantly reduced the prices of food commodities, thereby improving access to food. One of the challenges of the program now is to enable farmers to continue to increase their income despite the decline in prices. That is why it is important to work on the techniques postpone crop and farm management allowing to benefit from other support to improve storage conditions or learn how to transform their products to add them value."
The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is to lead a series of research on a new all natural bio-stimulant formulation, Vitazyme, being considered for introduction in the agricultural sector.

The exercise, slated to commence this month (March), will entail extensive field trials to determine Vitazyme’s potential to enhance soil composition and boost crop output.

Manufactured by the United States-based firm, Vital Earth Resources Incorporated, Vitazyme is an organic/all-natural liquid growth formulation which, when applied to the roots of crops, such as fruits, vegetables, and small grains, improves their yield and quality.

Vitazyme, which contains approximately 12 biological activators, is described as a safe, non-toxic solution for usage in modern agricultural practices. Its properties include: vitamins, enzymes, and other powerful but gentle growth stimulators, such as B-vitamins, triacontanol, glycosides, brassinosteroids, and porphyrins.

Its introduction in Jamaica is being pursued in light of the significant success it has recorded in countries such as Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

The Ministry’s consideration of Vitazyme is consistent with the Government’s strategic priority of job creation and economic growth, focusing on development and growth of key productive sectors, such as agriculture; and to achieve food security.

Vitazyme is being distributed across the Caribbean through a partnership between Vital Earth Resources and a Canadian entity, Health 2000 Canada, Incorporated, with the regional office of the latter’s agricultural division, Health 2000 Agro (H2K Agro), doing the distribution.

Director General in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Don McGlashan, tells JIS News that discussions were initiated between Portfolio Minister, Hon. Roger Clarke and representatives of H2K Agro, during which they presented data on the successful results of Vitazyme’s application in other countries.

“The technology appeared ‘sound’ in its application for Jamaica, and looking at reports from work done in Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, and as far away as Vietnam and the Philippines, there were enough testimonials…which suggested Vitazyme can be an important tool for use in Jamaica’s agriculture,” he points out.

Subsequent to the meetings, he says Mr. Clarke requested that the necessary correspondence and follow-ups be undertaken to determine the feasibility of introducing Vitazyme in Jamaica. The Director General informs that activities, to this end, have been planned and are slated for roll-out by March.

Mr. McGlashan says the research and trials will be spearheaded by the Ministry’s Research and Development Division, and its Soil Health Technical Working Group; as well as the Sugar Industry Research Institute (SIRI).
He tells JIS News that the Working Group’s membership comprises representatives of the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA); International Centre for Environmental and Nuclear Sciences (ICENS); the Rural Physical Planning Unit; Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), and farmers.

The Director General informs that several short-term projects will be implemented, spanning six-month periods, initially involving vegetable farmers. Additionally, he says trials involving fruit trees will also be conducted, pointing out that these will span a longer duration, ranging up to two years.

Noting that trials will be “multi-locational,” Mr. McGlashan says several farmers have already been identified, with at least two on-farm trials slated for New Forrest/Duff House, Manchester; and Bog Walk, St. Catherine. He advises that dialogue is continuing with other farmers to ensure a “greater level of participation.”

He explains that farmer selection is based on registration with RADA, and “having a track record of participation in on-farm trials/demonstration plots.”

“Farmer participation is critical and several of the trials will be conducted on farmers’ holdings with supervision from the Ministry,” he notes.

The Director General says SIRI will also initiate trials involving sugarcane, while the College of Agriculture, Science and Education (CASE), in Portland, have confirmed that they will be participating in the trials.

“If the experiments with Vitazyme are successful, the Ministry’s role would be to provide the data and technical guidance, so that farmers can make informed decisions regarding the usage of Vitazyme in their production inputs,” he says.

To heighten stakeholder awareness, Mr. McGlashan tells JIS News that the Ministry has started a sensitization programme, particularly targeting farmers. The first seminar was held in January at its Research Station in Bodles, Old Harbour, St. Catherine.

That seminar was attended by the Minister, representatives from Health 2K Agro, Vital Earth Resources, CASE, fertilizer and farm suppliers, and farmers, all of whom made presentations. The Director General says other fora are slated for later this year.

Mr. McGlashan informs that the overseas representatives and other stakeholders were taken on field trips to farms in St. Elizabeth to interface with farmers, to observe local farming practices, “and to get first-hand knowledge of what obtains in Jamaica’s agriculture.”

Regarding distribution, Vitazyme’s Jamaica Country Manager, Donovan Brown, advised stakeholders at the seminar that the product is currently available only for trials, and confirmed that HSK Agro has the necessary inventory to supply Jamaica.

Meanwhile, Mr. McGlashan assures that the Ministry will continue its stakeholder sensitization activities, to include inputs from RADA’s Extension Service, to ensure that “our farmers are exposed to the latest information and modern technological innovations.”

This should boost Jamaica’s agricultural output and, in the process, reduce the country’s nearly US$1 billion annual food import bill, and safeguard the nation’s nutrition and food security.
Small farmers important too. Barbados Advocate, 3 March 2014. 

Full Article

Small farmers also have a vital role to play in the growth of the agricultural sector and the overall contribution that this industry can make to the development of the Barbadian economy.

This is the belief of Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development, Denis Kellman, who spoke to the media after touring the various stalls on the last day of Agrofest at Queen’s Park yesterday.

Referring to an advertisement recently from the Ministry of Agriculture where they asked for various sizes of land from a half acre and upwards, he said that they have been able to get buy-in and he was pleased to see that the focus was not just on the large farmers.

“It has demonstrated that it isn’t just those large farmers alone, that the small farmers also have a role to play in agriculture if we are to reverse the growth. If we can get every single small farmer producing again, it makes significant difference to the growth of the economy.”

In order to ensure that the Rural Development Commission (RDC) is able to assist these small farmers – many of whom would be young – to grow, they need to facilitate a situation where all of the related industries can be on hand to assist these persons and this is why he has spoken with the head and the directors of the RDC about this matter, he said.

“I have said to the Board, to the Director that it is important that we roll out our agricultural arm, we roll out our community tourism arm, we roll out our cultural arm, we roll out our industry arm and we roll out our manufacturing arm because we have to build that foundation and encourage people from the small and the young how to grow.”

Kellman said that this is proof that they comprehend how imperative it is to teach these farmers the fundamentals of how to thrive in farming.

“What you would be seeing is that we also understand the importance of building out Barbados also and we are now concentrating on building out Rural as our mandate and it starts from St. Lucy and goes as far up to St. Philip and Christ Church because we have to create new areas of interest for tourism.”

He said that recent comments made by Minister of Tourism, Richard Sealy, concerning the lack of new sites has grabbed their attention and this is one of their new roles – to build out new sites for tourism, and this is exactly what they are doing.

Kellman added that too much focus is placed on the development of the physical infrastructure of this island and while this is important, they also need to concentrate on other areas as well.

“Too many people concentrate on roads and houses and we are also doing that too, but we have to ensure that we deal with the fiscal and the current account problems so that we can build out these things.”
DuPont Pioneer launches "Encirca" farm data services platform by Carey Gillam. Reuters, 27 February 2014
http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/02/27/farming-dupont-data-idUKL1N0LV22820140227

Full Article

(Reuters) - DuPont Pioneer, the agricultural seed unit of DuPont, said on Thursday it was launching a suite of "whole-farm decision" services aimed at boosting crop productivity, a line of business many in the agricultural sector are racing to offer.

The platform of data and technology services, to be called "Encirca," will have a dedicated website and a team of about 50 Encirca sales and service agents through key corn- and soybean-growing areas of the U.S. Midwest, DuPont said.

The move, which comes just ahead of the key U.S. spring planting season for corn, soybeans and other crops, follows several deals the company has signed with various information and technology partners.

DuPont Pioneer Director of Decision Services Joe Foresman said he expects the series of offerings planned under the Encirca umbrella to have a "pretty material impact" on company revenues.

"There is definitely pent-up demand," said Foresman.

"EncircaSM View" will provide farmers with a free information site on crop observations as well as a fee-based program that includes market news and analysis, grain trading capabilities and location specific weather forecasts. It launches in March.

Farmers can track crop performance and conditions across a range of three to 50 counties in their area through a mobile application as part of the offering.

DuPont said it is pricing its fee-based program at $150 a month after an initial set-up fee of $450.

Farmers already face rising input costs and a squeeze on profit margins, and Foresman said enhancing the level of information farmers have to make decisions about crops will help their profitability.

In July, DuPont Pioneer plans to release "EnciraSM Yield," another fee-based offering that will help growers assess specific decisions on seeding, chemical applications and water usage. The company has not yet set the pricing for that, Foresman said.

Last week DuPont, the largest U.S. chemical maker by market value, announced a three-year agreement with the University of Missouri and the U.S. Department of Agricultural Research Service for collection of soil, topography and watershed data.

Earlier this month DuPont announced a deal with DTN/The Progressive Farmer to provide weather and market information to farmers, along with new grain trading capabilities, all accessed through
mobile devices. In November, DuPont inked a deal with farm machinery company Deere & Co to provide farmers a wireless transfer system for their data.

DuPont and rival Monsanto Co are racing to capture market share in the burgeoning "precision agriculture" arena, turning farm-related data into new profit streams by incorporating analytics on an array of data points, including soil types, fungicide application timing, weather patterns and pest management.

Officials from both DuPont and Monsanto have said the future of farming and increased food production will be closely tied to sophisticated analyses of data to inform farmers on how to boost production as well as profits.

Agricultural Technologies

Agricultural Technologies Could Increase Global Crop Yields as Much as 67 Percent and Cut Food Prices Nearly in Half by 2050. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 12 Feb, 2014

Full Article

New study identifies most promising agricultural tools for feeding the world’s poorest

February 12, 2014, Washington D.C.–Increased demand for food due to population and income growth and the impacts of climate change on agriculture will ratchet up the pressure for increased and more sustainable agricultural production to feed the planet. A new report by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) measures the impacts of agricultural innovation on farm productivity, prices, hunger, and trade flows as we approach 2050 and identifies practices which could significantly benefit developing nations.

The book, Food Security in a World of Natural Resource Scarcity: The Role of Agricultural Technologies, released today, examines 11 agricultural practices and technologies and how they could help farmers around the world improve the sustainability of growing three of the world’s main staple crops – maize, rice, and wheat.

Using a first-of-its-kind data model, IFPRI pinpoints the agricultural technologies and practices that can most significantly reduce food prices and food insecurity in developing nations. The study profiles 11 agricultural innovations: crop protection, drip irrigation, drought tolerance, heat tolerance, integrated soil fertility management, no-till farming, nutrient use efficiency, organic agriculture, precision agriculture, sprinkler irrigation, and water harvesting.

Findings from the book indicate:

- No-till farming alone could increase maize yields by 20 percent, but also irrigating the same no-till fields could increase maize yields by 67 percent in 2050.
Nitrogen-use efficiency could increase rice crop yields by 22 percent, but irrigation increased the yields by another 21 percent.

Heat-tolerant varieties of wheat could increase crop yields from a 17 percent increase to a 23 percent increase with irrigation.

Yet, no single silver bullet exists. “The reality is that no single agricultural technology or farming practice will provide sufficient food for the world in 2050,” said Mark Rosegrant, lead author of the book and director of IFPRI’s Environment and Production Technology Division. “Instead we must advocate for and utilize a range of these technologies in order to maximize yields.”

However, it is realistic to assume that farmers in the developing world and elsewhere would adopt a combination of technologies as they become more widely available. If farmers were to stack agricultural technologies in order of crop production schedules, the combination of agricultural technologies and practices could reduce food prices by up to 49 percent for maize, up to 43 percent for rice, and 45 percent for wheat due to increased crop productivity. The technologies with the highest percentage of potential impact for agriculture in developing countries include no-till farming, nitrogen-use efficiency, heat-tolerant crops, and crop protection from weeds, insects, and diseases.

The anticipated negative effects of climate change on agricultural productivity as well as projected population growth by 2050, suggest that food insecurity and food prices will increase. For example, climate change could decrease maize yields by as much as 18 percent by 2050—making it even more difficult to feed the world if farmers cannot adopt agricultural technologies that could help boost food production in their regions.

“One of the most significant barriers to global food security is the high cost of food in developing countries,” Rosegrant explained. “Agricultural technologies used in combinations tailored to the crops grown and regional differences could make more food more affordable – especially for those at risk of hunger and malnutrition in developing countries.”

However, based on current projections, stacked technologies could reduce food insecurity by as much as 36 percent. Making this a reality, however, depends on farmers gaining access to these technologies and learning how to use them. This underscores the need for improved agricultural education to ensure that farmers are able to use the best available technologies for their region and resources.

IFPRI highlights three key areas for investments prioritizing effective technology use:

- Increasing crop productivity through enhanced investment in agricultural research
- Developing and using resource-conserving agricultural management practices such as no-till farming, integrated soil fertility management, improved crop protection, and precision agriculture
- Increasing investment in irrigation

Adopting the technologies examined in the study would increase food production and improve food security under climate change.
Health and Nutrition

Globalized diet: More food, less diversity, more associated risks by Stefanie Neno, 3 March, 2014.
http://www.ciatnews.cgiar.org/2014/03/03/globalized-diet-more-food-less-diversity-more-associated-risks/#sthash.BXd6eF8O.dpuf

Full Article

As experts have been suspecting for a while, and as many of us have certainly noticed, people’s diets around the world have become very similar. So much so that in the past 50 years the whole world has come to rely increasingly on just a few crops for most of its food supplies – including old favorites such as wheat, rice, maize, and potato but also more recent ones like soybean, sunflower oil and palm oil – along with meat and dairy products. Many local crops that used to be important in Africa or Asia such as sorghum, millet, rye, sweet potato, cassava, and yam are failing to keep up.

While we generally eat more calories, protein and fat than 50 years ago, the lack of diversity in such a “standard globalized diet” may deprive us from the micronutrients our body needs. It may also increase the occurrence of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes, even in countries that are struggling to make enough food available to their people. The other danger of relying upon just a few crops is that this makes agriculture and the global food system more vulnerable, and increases the risk of food crisis. Similar to the concept of portfolio diversification in finance, a diversified agriculture is more resilient to major threats like drought, insect pests, and diseases, all expected to worsen with climate change. Reversing this trend towards a standard globalized diet is hard to conceive, especially due to the very powerful underlying socio-economic forces, including urbanization and rising incomes but also trade liberalization, improved commodity transport, multinational food industries, and food safety standardization.

What’s happening in Northern Europe gives some hope though, as consumers – maybe more aware of the benefits of a diversified diet – care for more cereals and vegetables rather than meat, oil and sugar. Healthier habits and the promise of on-going and future research aiming to make those major crops more nutritious may reduce health risks; but this won’t protect us against the risks of failure of the global food system. Only strong measures to boost the genetic diversity of the major crops and the conservation of locally grown, but currently neglected crops, will.

Youth in Agriculture

Minister urges young people to get into agriculture. Jamaica Observer, 6 March, 2014.
http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latestnews/Minister-urges-young-people-to-get-into-agriculture

Full Article

KINGSTON, Jamaica -- Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Roger Clarke has issued another call for young people to choose agriculture as a viable career option.

Speaking at the 58th Hague Agricultural and Livestock Show in Trelawny on Ash Wednesday (March 5), Minister Clarke told patrons that the sector needed people to conduct research, to develop marketing plans and strategies; to get involved in technical areas; to become extension officers and
to drive the technological development of a sector that was currently growing and was essential for the country’s economic development.

“Let us keep the momentum going, young people,” he urged and noted that it was encouraging to see that the Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS) is also taking on the challenge of more youth involvement, with the theme for the show being Empowering Youth in Agriculture.

Clarke said that over the years farming has primarily been undertaken by men but the ministry has been encouraging more women and young people to become involved in farming through several projects.

“Working in collaboration with our partners, including the Rural Agricultural Development Authority and the 4H Clubs, the Ministry is committed to do more innovative work to support this ambitious goal. To date, we have trained over 102,000 youths and established over 453 school gardens,” he said.

A youth and women component has also been introduced in the Ministry’s Irish potato programme which targets 40 hectares of land, 38 hectares of which have already been planted with the number of beneficiaries being 168 youth and women.

Crops like Irish potato, ginger and peppers, the minister pointed out, can be grown on small acreages and young people were being encouraged to look to farming in such crops as a viable alternative for employment and income generation.

**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

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/)