**FAO urges countries to step up action against destructive banana disease. FAO, 14 April, 2014**

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**For more information see page 1**

**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.

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Our Vision

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

Our Mission

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

www.cardi.org
Banana

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**Full Article**

Following its spread to Africa and the Middle East, Fusarium wilt TR4 increases the risks to livelihoods and banana markets.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is warning countries to step up monitoring, reporting and prevention of one of the world’s most destructive banana diseases, Fusarium wilt, which recently spread from Asia to Africa and the Middle East, and which has the potential to affect countries in Latin America.

The TR4 race of the disease, which is also known as Panama disease, is posing a serious threat to production and export of the popular fruit, with serious repercussions for the banana value chain and livelihoods, FAO said in an information brief.

Banana is the eighth most important food crop in the world and the fourth most important food crop among the world’s least-developed countries, according to FAOSTAT, the UN agency’s data-gathering and analysis service.

“Any disease or constraint that affects bananas is striking at an important source of food, livelihoods, employment and government revenues in many tropical countries,” said Gianluca Gondolini, Secretary of the World Banana Forum. The Forum, whose Secretariat is based at FAO headquarters, promotes sustainable banana production and trade.

“The spread of Fusarium wilt banana disease could have a significant impact on growers, traders and families who depend on the banana industry,” Fazil Dusunceli, a plant pathologist at FAO, said.

“Countries need to act now if we are to avoid the worst-case scenario, which is massive destruction of much of the world’s banana crop,” said Dusunceli.

**Recommended action**

At the country level, FAO specifically advises:

- Awareness raising at all levels and adoption of appropriate risk assessment, surveillance and early warning systems;
- Implementation of phytosanitary measures to prevent the spread of the disease through agricultural practices, irrigation and drainage systems, transportation, vehicles, containers, tools or visitors;
- Preventive measures, including quarantines, the use of disease-free planting materials, prevention of movement of infected soil and planting materials into and out of farms, and disinfection of vehicles;
- Capacity building in National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPO) in planning, extension and research, including the use of rapid and accurate diagnostic tools;
• Training of technical officers, producers and farm workers in disease identification, prevention and management under field conditions, and appropriate instructions to visitors.

While other races of the disease have existed for many years, TR4 has caused significant losses in banana plantations in Southeast Asia over the last two decades, and has recently been reported in Mozambique and Jordan.

TR4 infects the Cavendish banana varieties, which dominate global trade, as well as other susceptible varieties used for local consumption and markets. Despite damage to the banana plant and to production, the fruit itself remains edible.

Soil-borne disease

Fusarium wilt is caused by the fungus Fusarium oxysporum f.sp. cubense (Foc). The disease is soil-borne and the fungus can remain viable for decades. Once the disease is present in a field, it cannot be fully controlled by currently available practices and fungicides. The best way to fight the disease is to prevent its spread, which includes avoiding movement of diseased plant materials and infected soil particles.

“We need to raise awareness of this threat, coordinate efforts among countries and institutions for effective implementation of appropriate quarantine measures, and also work with banana producers, traders, plantation employees and smallholder farmers to help to minimize the spread of the disease,” Dusunceli said. He also highlighted the importance of research in better understanding the disease and developing alternative varieties that are disease resistant.

FAO’s information note stresses the importance of using disease-free seedlings and avoiding movement of infected soil and planting materials into, and out of, farms, through transportation, visitors or other means.

“A concerted effort is required from stakeholders including the industry, research institutions, governments and international organizations to prevent spread of the disease,” the note reads.

Raising awareness

FAO and its partners, including the World Banana Forum (WBF), the scientific community and the banana industry are among those making efforts to increase awareness of the inherent threat of TR4.

The issue will be on the agenda of a series of upcoming meetings in Kenya, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago, with the aim of addressing a range of issues related to TR4, including developing action plans for its prevention, monitoring and containment.

The banana crop is vulnerable to a number of diseases in various parts of the world, including the Black Sigatoka disease, Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW), Bunchy Top Disease (BBTD) and Fusarium Wilt, but Fusarium’s soil-borne nature makes it especially challenging.
Livestock

**Vasant: More development needed in poultry industry** by Camille Bethel. Trinidad Express, 17 April, 2014, pp.26

Full Article

The local poultry industry needs to be made more competitive so as to increase its market share, Minister of Trade, Industry and Communications Vasant Bharath said on Tuesday.

Bharath spoke at the opening of the first Calidena workshop, which was hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, the Caricom Regional Organisation for standards and Quality and the German National Metrology Institute (PTB) at the Kapok Hotel, St Clair.

Bharath said, “The poultry industry in Trinidad and Tobago is a highly sophisticated, mature industry with a significant amount of investment on the ground. They have continued to increase the use of technology. They have also continued to employ large amounts of people and, if my memory serves me right, I think the poultry industry in Trinidad and Tobago contributes to 60 per cent of the agriculture GDP. “It is a significant industry we need to continue to develop, we need to make more competitive, so that they are in a position where they can ward off competition and continue to increase market share.”

Bharath said poultry is consumed in T&T more than any other meat and constitutes the largest part of the protein diet locally. “Word has it that we are probably in the top five of chicken consumption per capita in the world, so that is not something to be sneezed at.

“In 2011, the Ministry of Legal Affairs appointed a poultry industry standing committee and it is my hope that the stakeholders and regulators are able to move from words of intent to action because, as I said, the opportunities are boundless and endless as far as this industry is concerned,” he pointed out.

He said a key component of maximising the country’s potential as an investor-friendly economy is the ability to create quality products here.

“To be able to remain competitive, we have got to understand that undeniably that quality is at the heart of it all. Quality is now seen as a given in any product we wish to market and to sell and continue to stay in business on a sustainable basis.

Ulrich Harmes-Liedtke, an economist and the PTB consultant and facilitator of the Calidena workshop, said the PTB, which is the guardian of quality of products made in Germany, is a key component of the success of the German economy.

“Germany is a leading exporting economy. To make this possible, it is important to have quality products. PTB is not here to [export] German goods, but we are working as part of the German Development Corporation. PTB has a long-term commitment to promote national standard of all the institutions involved in the quality of products.”
He said the Calidena instrument was first developed in Central and South America, where the Caribean has many linkages.

The Calidena is to make the infrastructure more relevant for trade and the local consumers as well and will give input and guidance on how to develop the appropriate quality infrastructure responding to the needs of the private sector and the consumers and also increasing the opportunity for export.

Herbals

**Rising demand for herbal medicine can increase cultivation of medicinal trees.** World Agroforestry Centre Press Release 15 April 2014


**Full Article**

NAIROBI, Kenya (14 April 2014) -----Formalizing trade in herbal medicinal products has the potential to increase the demand for on-farm grown raw material and raise the level of cultivation of medicinal tree species in smallholder farms.

A study carried out by the [World Agroforestry Centre](http://worldagroforestry.org) (ICRAF) in Kenya shows that trade in herbal medicinal products is rising in the urban areas and formalization in terms of better hygienic packaging and labeling of the products is likely to increase cultivation of these tree species.

Traditional medicine is practiced in in many rural areas in the developing world. The World Health Organization estimates that about [80% of Africans](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs312/en/) rely on traditional medicine to meet their health needs and this could increase because some also rely on herbal medicine.

The study published in the scientific journal, *Forests Trees and Livelihoods*, says that In Kenya, the majority of traditional medicines are sold as wild plant parts, but in urban areas, demand for traditional medicines is rising and this is leading to increased formalization of the market, with traditional medicines now found in powders, liquids and creams.

Jonathan Muriuki, lead author of the study and research scientist at ICRAF, believes that as lifestyles improve, consumers demand better quality. “This opens up greater opportunities for trade in medicinal tree products among actors in the value chain, such as collectors, producers, healers, processors, manufacturers and even exporters,” outlines Muriuki.

Muriuki and co-authors set out to learn where medicinal plant traders in Kenya sourced their raw materials and to determine if formalization of the market could provide more opportunities for cultivation.

“Cultivation would not only provide a sustainable supply of medicinal products but also increase the incomes of poor smallholder farmers while addressing current problems of over-harvesting and resource degradation which have reduced the abundance of wild materials.”
Their research revealed that 49 per cent of traders in herbal medicine sourced materials from farms and the demand was rising. However, 69 per cent of traders expressed a preference for materials sourced from the wild mainly because they perceived these would have higher potency because the plants will have grown to full maturity and in rich soils and less interference from human activities such as chemical application.

Those who preferred farm-sourced material said this was because of expected higher quality from good crop husbandry, increasing scarcity in the wild, and for some, a deliberate choice to conserve wild resources.

“While these types of formal enterprise are fairly recent in Kenya, we found that they are all experiencing annual growth and demanding more uniform raw materials which cultivation can provide,” says Muriuki.

The study reveals that most farmers sell timber and fruits from their trees but are not selling medicinal tree products because they do not have access to markets “Farmers stated they would sell medicinal products if they had access to market opportunities,” says Muriuki. “Access to markets for other tree products has led to increased cultivation of these, so it would be fair to assume the same could be applied for medicinal trees”.

To improve the market in traditional medicines, the study recommends linking traders to farmers in the form of grower groups, especially women, which could initially focus on the most traded species as alternative crops are recommended.

**Organics**

**Brazil plans organic food promotions for World Cup.** FreshFruitPortal.com, April 17th, 2014

**Full Article**

As host of this June’s World Cup, Brazil will aim to take full advantage of the spotlight by promoting organic and sustainable foods to consumers.

The nation’s Ministry of Agriculture announced a US$400,000 educational initiative at the beginning of the month to disseminate information on organic production and its potential benefits.

Once finalized, the plan will carry out a national Organic Week at the end of May and a campaign called “Brazil Organic and Sustainable” to take place during the World Cup.

“The campaign is based largely on promotions during events with the largest possible number of consumers participating and events that attract spontaneous media coverage to help share the importance of consuming organic products,” the Ministry of Agriculture’s press office told www.freshfruitportal.com.
“It will take advantage of the movement passing through cities hosting games, resulting in a large concentration of people from Brazil and abroad and calling attention to the importance of organic products.”

Organic Week has been held in Brazil since 2005 and has continued to spread to a greater number of cities.

“Production and consumption of organic products are growing significantly in Brazil. Proof of this growing demand is the rise in imports of organic products from various parts of the world to meet Brazilian consumer demand,” the ministry said.

The ministry reported more than 2,000 organic product registrations from abroad for export to Brazil.

**Invasive Species**


**Full Article**

Measures to stop invasive alien species of plants, animals or insects getting into the EU, or limit the ecological and economic damage caused by those that do, were backed by Parliament on Wednesday. The legislation bans species declared to be of “Union concern” and requires more and better-coordinated action by member states to tackle the threat.

“Invasive alien species cause damage worth at least €12 billion every year in the EU and many member states already have to spend considerable resources in dealing with them”, said MEP Pavel Poc (S&D, CZ) who steered the legislation through Parliament. His report was approved by 606 votes to 36, with 4 abstentions.

“Their efforts are very often not effective simply because these the spread of these species does not stop at national borders. Cooperation among the member states is therefore crucial. The negotiations were very difficult and we had only limited time to strike a deal”, he added.

The legislation would require EU member states to ascertain the routes of introduction and spread of invasive alien species (IAS) and set up surveillance systems and action plans. Official checks at EU borders would also be stepped up. For widespread IAS, member states would have to draw up management plans.

*Alien species of “Union concern”*

Species to be listed as being of “Union concern” should not be introduced, transported, placed on the market, kept, bred, grown or released in the environment, says the text.

In negotiations, the Council of Ministers agreed to Parliament’s request that the IAS list should not
be capped at just 50 species, as originally proposed. This open list would prioritise species which are an emerging issue and those that cause the most significant damage. MEPs also inserted provisions to tackle IAS that are of concern for single member states, while those that are native to only part of the EU are to be tackled by means of enhanced regional cooperation among member states, facilitated by the European Commission.

Member states would have to define appropriate penalties for breaches of the legislation. Where authorised by the Commission, they could nonetheless grant specialized establishments permits to carry out certain commercial activities with IAS. MEPs also insisted that a dedicated scientific forum must be set up to advise on the scientific aspects of applying the new rules and the “polluter pays” principle for the recovery of restoration costs.

Background
According to the European Commission, IAS are a major and growing cause of biodiversity loss and species extinction. IAS can also be vectors of diseases or directly cause health problems (e.g. asthma, dermatitis and allergies). They can damage infrastructure and facilities, hamper forestry or cause agricultural losses. IAS are estimated to cost the EU at least €12 billion per year.

Next steps
The legislation now needs to be formally approved by the Council of Ministers.
Procedure: Co-decision, first reading agreement

Lionfish population down by Athaliah Reynolds-Baker JIS, 14 April 2014
http://jis.gov.jm/lionfish-population/

Full Article

The National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) is reporting a 66 per cent reduction in sightings of the ferocious Pacific lionfish in Jamaican waters.

This is just one of the many successes achieved under the recently concluded Mitigating the Threat of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Insular Caribbean (MTIASIC) project, which was launched four and half years ago.

The lionfish is a voracious predator, believed to have entered Caribbean waters from a protected environment in the United States after a natural disaster in 1992. By 2006, experts said, they could be found on almost every reef in Jamaica.

Their population can be as high as 250 lionfish per hectare – a situation which has been threatening smaller marine fish, shrimp, crabs, and other crustaceans on which they prey. The livelihoods of fisher folk and the island’s fish exports were also at risk.

However, over the course of the past four year, under the National Lionfish Project, targeted removal strategies have seen the population in frequently visited areas reduced significantly. It is now down to approximately 80 lionfish per hectare in some areas.

The project also produced the now quite popular and successful, ‘Eat it to Beat it’ campaign, as well as a number of other public awareness initiatives geared at stemming the population of the lionfish.
Speaking at the closing-out ceremony of the MTIASIC project held at the Pollyanna hotel in Kingston on Friday (April 11), Minister of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change, Hon. Robert Pickersgill, lauded NEPA and other stakeholders for the successful implementation of the MTIASIC programme.

The National Lionfish Project formed part of the larger MTIASIC, which was financed by the Global Environment Facility, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The project has also seen the development of a National Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Strategy and Action Plan, which will guide policy over the next six years.

IAS are plants, animals or micro-organisms introduced deliberately or unintentionally into areas where they do not occur naturally.

MTIASIC Coordinator, Nelsa English-Johnson, informed that other achievements under the MTIASIC include a two-fold increase in nesting of the Jamaican iguana. This was accomplished under the Jamaican Iguana Recovery programme, which aims to conserve Jamaican iguanas by eradicating invasive feral animals in the Hellshire Hills.

There was also the implementation of a Pet Trade pathway toolkit, which is aimed at addressing the Pet Trade, one of the major pathways through which IAS are introduced into Jamaica.

Also, through regional workshops, the project helped to develop a regional IAS strategy, where Jamaica led on developing the freshwater and marine components of the regional strategy.

Ms. English-Johnson said the project was also able to increase the country’s capacity in putting in place protective measures in the Lower Black River Morass (Ramsar Site) to safeguard against two freshwater plants, and other animals that are negatively impacting the wetland, which is of international importance.

**USDA empowers citizens with the knowledge to prevent invasive pests.** USDA APHIS News, 2 April 2014

**Full Article**

WASHINGTON, April 2, 2014
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today proclaimed April as Invasive Plant Pest and Disease Awareness Month. Each year during April, USDA amplifies its public outreach about the risks that invasive plant pests, diseases and harmful weeds pose to America's crops and forests and how the public can prevent their spread. These non-native, destructive species can seriously harm the economy, environment, or even human health.

“Invasive species threaten the health and profitability of U.S. agriculture and forestry, and the many jobs these sectors support,” said Kevin Shea, Administrator of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). “To protect that crucial value, USDA and its partners work hard every
day to keep invasive pests and diseases out of the United States and to control those that may slip in. This April, we’re asking all Americans to be our partners in this critical work.”

Invasive plant pests and diseases can jeopardize entire industries such as U.S. citrus or hardwood timber. For just one disease huanglongbing (HLB or citrus greening), in one state, Florida—the losses are alarming: more than $4.5 billion in lost citrus production from the 2006/07 to 2010/11 production seasons. One invasive pest, the emerald ash borer beetle, has destroyed tens of millions of American ash trees in our forests and communities. Scientists have estimated the cost of all invasive species to all economic sectors to be approximately $120 billion yearly.

With stakes this high, public awareness and action become key elements in protecting America’s agricultural and natural resources. APHIS created its Hungry Pests public outreach program to empower Americans with the knowledge they need to leave these “hungry pests” behind. For instance, invasive pests can hitchhike in and on the things we move and pack, such as firewood, plants, fruits and vegetables, outdoor furniture and agricultural products ordered online.

So this April, APHIS is asking Americans to visit HungryPests.com to learn what invasive plant pests and diseases are in their state or threaten it. Get information about damaging pests that USDA and its partners are combatting right now, especially tree-killing pests that are beginning to emerge this spring and into the summer. Be on the lookout for the emerald ash borer and Asian longhorned beetle, which starve trees to death by boring into them and eating their insides. Keep an eye out for the gypsy moth, whose hungry caterpillars can strip trees and bushes bare. Not all tree threats are insects; sudden oak death disease, caused by a fungus-like organism, can kill many types of trees as well as many landscape plants, such as camellias and rhododendrons.

Most importantly, learn the “Seven Ways to Leave Hungry Pests Behind,” such as buying firewood where you burn it, or only moving treated firewood if you must bring it with you. Such simple actions could save a forest or an entire industry from devastation by invasive species. Individual citizens play a vital role. This month, be on the lookout for videos, articles and social media buzz on invasive species and how to stop their spread. Start by joining the conversation on the Hungry Pests Facebook Page.

For its part, APHIS has numerous partners at the federal, state, county and local levels, and at universities and nongovernmental organizations. Through its many safeguarding activities abroad, on the border and across the country, APHIS helps to ensure a diverse natural ecosystem and an abundant and healthy food supply for all Americans. Please join us in the effort to protect these vital resources.
Climate Change

**Climate change vs food security** by Kimberly Castillo. Trinidad Express, 17 April 2014: pp. 29,31

**Full Article**


It is only the fourth month of the year but already extreme weather events have grabbed news headlines around the world.

These events appear to back up a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) last year which stated the number, frequency and intensity of hot days and heatwaves was increasing, along with an increase in the intensity and number of heavy rainfall events.

With longer and colder winters in some parts of the world, drought-like conditions in others, intense rainfall during the dry season and prolonged periods of dry conditions in the rainy season—never before have weather patterns been as unpredictable as they are today.

Climate change not only impacts weather patterns and our biodiversity, it also has a direct bearing on food security. And it’s engaging the full attention of researchers and scientists today.

In the latest major report released last month by the IPCC on the causes, effects and solutions of climate change, the impact on food security was isolated as an area of serious concern. In the report—the second of a series from the UN’s climate panel, the IPCC warned that all aspects of food security including availability of food, stability of food supply and utilisation of food, are potentially affected by climate change.

The Express got a first-hand look at some excerpts from the yet to be published book Impact of Climate Change on Food Security in Small Island Developing States. It notes that our climate is warming at a pace unparalleled in the history of the planet and that we no longer have the luxury of pretending that climate change is not happening. In the book’s introduction, the authors offer the sobering reminder that a failure to acknowledge the challenges posed by climate change and start planning is a recipe for disaster. In addition, it states that more than 97 per cent of climate scientists around the world agree that the global warming and changes which have occurred over the last 100 years are attributable to human activities.

Our carbon emissions here at home do not rival those of larger nations like China, the US or Australia, however as a small island nation, we are among those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change said lecturer in agricultural extension at the Faculty of Food and Agriculture at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Dr Wayne Ganpat. That being the case, it is unfortunate that right here in Trinidad and Tobago, many are not paying much attention to the impacts of climate change, he noted.

“Small island developing states are particularly at risk because of their small size, their geographic location. Because of their low-lying nature, sea level rise will inundate coastal areas,” said Ganpat. In small island developing states where a lot of people choose to do farming close to the coastline, agriculture would be seriously affected. As the earth warms and sea levels rise, fertile land will
become either flooded or useless as a result of salinity prompting many to move further inland, said Ganpat. But as a result of climate change and extreme weather patterns, farm lands further away from the coastline are also susceptible to soil erosion due to intense rainfall and crops will be devastated by more frequent, higher intensity storms, he added.

Extreme weather events; droughts, hurricanes, tropical storms can devastate the agricultural production of small islands according to the authors of Impact of Climate Change on Food Security in Small Island Developing States. They noted that in 2004, Hurricane Ivan impacted Grenada’s two cash crops, nutmeg and cocoa which led to losses equivalent to 10 per cent of their GDP, in 2012, Hurricane Sandy damaged over 45 per cent of farms that grew bananas in Jamaica. And the 1997/98 droughts in Fiji resulted in 50 per cent losses in sugar cane production. Total losses were calculated at US$50 million.

Coastal fisheries stand to be adversely impacted by climate change. Increased carbon emissions which are pumped into the atmosphere and are absorbed into the oceans results in ocean acidification (also described as the osteoporosis of the ocean) which slows reef growth and affects the marine species that depend on the reef for survival. In the Fijian islands, ocean acidification has been linked to an overabundance of marine algae which has devastated some shorelines making it uninhabitable for many marine species, observed Ganpat. Researchers using computer models to predict the effect that warming oceans could have on marine biodiversity have concluded that climate change could affect the distribution of ocean species as fish are migrating from tropical seas towards cooler seas. Migration due to cooler ocean temperatures and ocean acidification could lead to numerous extinction of species, researchers caution.

If carbon emissions continue unabated, what can be expected? The publication Impact of Climate Change on Food Security in Small Island Developing States notes that “climatologists expect surface temperatures to increase, precipitation patterns to change, sea ice levels to decrease, ocean temperatures to increase, ocean pH to decrease and sea levels to rise. Climatologists also expect increased frequency of extreme weather events”. The authors add that each nation must plan now to address food security and human well-being in their countries.

To ensure food security in a world with a changing climate, farmers must adapt, said Ganpat. That means implementing water management techniques like micro irrigation tubes and rain water harvesting and good agricultural practices to prevent soil loss. Shade houses or net houses are becoming increasingly popular as they protect crops from intense rainfall and enable farmers to farm year round.

Aquaculture is another important adaptation strategy, Ganpat added. Inland fisheries make it possible to farm fish in a controlled environment that is not subjected to the variability of the climate but it also has its critics who contend that they are breeding grounds for disease and pests and that farmed fish are not nearly as nutritional as their wild counterparts. However, educating and sensitising the public on how climate change will impact us here in T&T is the first crucial step, Ganpat stressed.

“We say that we are too small and that big countries need to reduce their carbon emissions but we all should do what we can to contribute by renewable energy sources and by cutting down on the carbon products that we use, we have to go in that direction because we all indirectly contribute to global warming,” said Ganpat.

“We might say developed countries contribute more but small island developing states are most impacted in several areas and food security is the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The sooner we take action, the better.”
The publication *Impact of Climate Change on Food Security in Small Island Developing States*, is expected to be released later this year.


**Full Article**

**The Growing Benefits of a Warmer World** March 18, 2014

Global warming has stalled for the last 16 years, but the warming that has occurred over the last 150 years -- despite what is commonly believed -- has actually been beneficial. In fact, the earth should continue to see benefits from warming for the foreseeable future, says H. Sterling Burnett, a former senior fellow with the National Center for Policy Analysis.

- A study by economist Richard Tol found that until 2080, and potentially beyond that, a warming trend would have a positive impact on the world's economy. Over the last 150 years, the globe has warmed an average 0.8 degrees Celsius. An additional 2.2 degree rise in temperature would continue to yield substantial benefits.

- Climate change over the last century has added 1.4 percent to global economic output, Tol found. By 2025, that figure should reach 1.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

- Increases in carbon dioxide (CO2) have added 0.8 percent to GDP because of the boost to agriculture. Similarly, the temperature increase has reduced the demand for heating, adding 0.4 percent to GDP. With higher CO2 levels, plants thrive and become more efficient in their use of water. And because most of the warming has reduced low nighttime temperatures, the globe has seen fewer growth-stunting frost events, as well as longer growing seasons.

- Agronomist Craig Idso determined that a 300 parts per million rise in CO2 increases plant biomass 25 percent to 55 percent.

- From 1961 to 2011, the annual value of improved plant growth grew from $18.5 billion to more than $140 billion, amounting to a total of $3.2 trillion.

- From today to 2050, Idso determined that increases in CO2 will result in $9.8 trillion in additional crop production. Notably, it is Africa that is benefiting largely from improved agricultural production.

- Growing faster than all other continents, one-third of African countries are growing at 6 percent per year. And from 2005 to today, the amount of people living below the poverty line has fallen from 51 percent to 39 percent.

- African farmers are replacing crops introduced by colonial governments with traditional crops that grow best in warm, dry conditions. In sub-Saharan Africa, the growth of agricultural GDP increased from 2.3 percent per year in the 1980s to 3.8 percent each year from 2000 to 2005.
• Food production is actually outpacing population growth in Uganda and the 15 countries of West Africa. The poverty rate in Ghana has fallen in half, while farm output has increased 5 percent every year for the last two decades. Even Ethiopia and Malawi are growing record amounts of crops and exporting surpluses.


Soil and Water Management

Minister for Agriculture calls for safe farming practices. GIS St Lucia, 16 April, 2014

Full Article

Agriculture & Fisheries Incentives Bill encourages farmers to protect the island's waterways

Minister for Agriculture, Food Production, Fisheries, Co-operatives and Rural Development, Hon. Moses Jn. Baptiste, presented for the first time, in Saint Lucia's House of Assembly, the Agriculture & Fisheries Incentives Bill. The purpose of the Bill is to provide incentives to persons within the agricultural and fisheries sectors and related areas.

One of the provisions generating animated discussion at Tuesday's house sitting, states, there should be no cultivation of bananas, vegetables, food and root crops within 25 metres of waterways in order to qualify for incentives.

The Agriculture Minister said it is important to educate farmers on best practices.

"We must be bold and honest with our farmers. We must gather the courage because our future depends on it. There are some who can afford to go overseas for cancer treatment but many can't. We must protect our people. The use of chemicals near our waterways is dangerous and we must correct that. We must stop playing with the future of our country," said a passionate Minister for Agriculture.

Minister Jn. Baptiste stressed that while there are many farms located on riverbanks the majority of the island's farmlands are located inland. Where farmers are located near waterways, the Ministry will assist them in understanding the implications of poisoning rivers and other water sources through the use of chemicals.

In his presentation, Prime Minister Hon. Dr. Kenny D. Anthony stressed that serious consideration must be given to the cost of development. According to the Prime Minister, no government or group should be blamed for the mistakes of the past, but it should be acknowledged that farming practices that are insensitive to the environment have been costly. He called for a joint approach with a view to preserving the environment.
"Let us join hands to protect the integrity of our waterways, without necessarily compromising the livelihoods of our farmers," concluded the Prime Minister in his presentation.

While the Bill speaks to existing farms, it will serve as a guide to the requirements for new investment in the agricultural sector.

**GWP-C to Host National Consultation in Trinidad and Tobago for Stakeholder Inputs on a Global Goal for Water.** Global Water Partnership, 15 April, 2014

**Full Article**

The Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) will be hosting a National Stakeholder Consultation in Trinidad on April 16th, 2014 which forms part of a global consultation exercise to get country level feedback from twenty-six (26) countries on proposals for a dedicated Water Goal in the United Nations (UN) Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Of the 26 countries selected for the global initiative, Trinidad and Tobago is the only Caribbean territory. This means that the stakeholder inputs received from Trinidad and Tobago will influence the larger global policy dialogue and will help to ensure that the Caribbean has input into the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, in June 2012 (Rio+20) triggered a broad consultative exercise both within and external to the UN, to consider the Post-2015 Development Framework. In 2013, the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was a part of this activity, as it led a global consultation process by hosting national dialogues on Water in twenty-two (22) selected countries as a follow-up to the UN Survey on Water Resources Management which was carried out in 2011. The national consultations were carried out to get country level feedback from the 22 countries on their water priorities, to help shape the UN Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Antigua and Barbuda had been selected as the focus country from the Caribbean region for these dialogues. As the Caribbean arm of the GWP, the Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) contributed to the global exercise, by working together with its partner, the Antigua Public Utilities Authority (APUA) to host a one-day workshop in April 2013 under the theme “Water in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.”

Key to the Consultation was setting the national agenda for water development in Antigua and Barbuda specific to the water resources needs and challenges unique to the country. With the inputs of stakeholders at the local level in Antigua and Barbuda, a Country Report was created setting out the key priority issues for a Water Development Agenda beyond 2015. The national report was contributed to the global report on all 22 countries in the survey which was submitted to the UN Task Team and UN Open Working Group in May 2013 as a stakeholder contribution for their consideration in developing the future agenda. It was well received by the UN who is keen to have the perspective from country stakeholders.

The National Stakeholder Consultation to be held in Trinidad and Tobago forms part of the second phase of this global exercise to now discuss the proposals for a Water Goal in the Post-2015
Development Agenda, together with specific targets and indicators for such a goal to help meet sustainable development priorities from a national perspective.

This is a major step forward in an attempt to have a Global Goal for Water in the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the National Consultation will provide an important means to raise awareness and get feedback from stakeholders (within and outside of the water sector) at the country level.

Download the UN-Water Paper on a Post-2015 Global Goal for Water which will form the basis of discussions at the National Consultation in Trinidad and Tobago and the other Consultations in the global consultation activity.

Agriculture Development

**National plan for agriculture.** Barbados Advocate, 17 April, 2014  

**Full Article**

A Ministry whose focus will be food and nutrition security and the creation of a new policy on food imports are among several strategies that are in the process of being developed, as Government looks to take the agricultural sector to the next level.

According to Prime Minister Freundel Stuart, a draft National Agricultural Policy was presented to his Cabinet last November, and that plan is based on a vision which recognises, among other things, that agriculture is much more than primary production; that an improved level of food security is fundamental to the growth and diversification of the Barbadian economy; and that the production of food locally must contribute to employment creation and the creation of business enterprises.

Speaking yesterday morning at a symposium put on by the Barbados Agricultural Society at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, the Prime Minister indicated that the modernisation of the sector is a prerequisite to poverty alleviation, a reduction in the cost of food and the high food import bill, which was $653 million in 2011. In an effort to execute this vision, he said a strategic plan has been drawn up. This plan, he noted, has two broad objectives – the reform of the sugar industry by creating a new sugar cane and the implementation of a national food and nutrition plan.

PM Stuart added, “My vision for agriculture in Barbados is one of positive, effective and enduring change to the sector distinguished by creativity in its outlook, cost effectiveness in its production methods and consistency in its practice. It is our attitude to change that will make the difference. We need to start the change in agriculture with haste.”

To that end, he told the agricultural stakeholders present that the new food and agricultural sector will concentrate on six new industries – a sugar cane industry, producing sugar for local consumption, energy by way of ethanol fuel and molasses for the rum industry; a fruit and vegetable industry; a root crops industry; a Blackbelly sheep industry; a livestock feed industry; and a modern fishing industry. To advance these sectors, he explained that Government in addition to the creation of the new ministry and policy for food imports, is also looking at establishing a Barbados Agricultural Marketing Facility which will feature a wholesale market, a market information system
and a farmers’ mall; implementing new land use policy that identifies food production zones; and creating an agro-tourism council as well as a new policy on food safety.

Additionally, he said thought is being given to the development of a model farm and farmers’ training centre and a National Agricultural Commission, consisting of representatives from Government, the private sector, the farming community and the University of the West Indies.

“There is only so much that Government can do. What we need is for Barbadians of all classes, races, religions, ages and genders to commit themselves to taking part in the realisation of this new vision for agriculture,” he said. (JRT)

**Fair of the peasantry, a success on the Island of La Gonâve.** Haiti Libre, 15 April, 2014


**Full Article**

As part of the social program "Kore Peyizan" and actions provided for in Special Plan of the Island of La Gonâve (West Department), at the initiative of Marie Mimose Félix, Minister Delegate for Promotion the peasantry in collaboration with the Economic and Social Assistance Fund (FAES), the Office of the Minister organized a Fair of the peasantry on 11 and 12 April 2014 in Pointe-à-Raquette and Anse-à-Galets, whose costs are estimated at more than 3 million Gourdes.

Thousands of residents of communities Palma and Nan Kafe (Anse-à-Galets), as well as those of Ti Palmis (Pointe-à-Raquettes), were pleased to be able to benefit from this agricultural fair. In order to revitalize the market of local suppliers and improve the living conditions of the local population, 1,000 agricultural tools kits (hoes, mattocks and pruning), 2,000 kits of seeds (beans, maize, pigeon pea and groundnut) and 400 goats were distributed to farmers and small farmers of the island.

The beneficiaries were selected through a process established by the two municipal commissions "Kore Peyizan" constituted in Pointe-à-Raquette and Anse-à-Galet of representatives of vice-delegate, of Mayor, CASECS and associations of growers, fishermen and farmers of La Gonâve, who worked in collaboration with the technical staff of the Office of the Minister Félix, associations of growers, fishermen and farmers of La Gonâve, who worked in collaboration with the technical staff of the Office of the Minister Félix.

In addition, the Minister wanted that a thousand people are registered with the registrar of civil status to allow each of them to get a birth certificate.

Recall that in the framework of the Special Plan of the Island of La Gonâve (120,000 inhabitants), further action will be considered in the medium and long term. As the development of a land use plan of the island, the rehabilitation of roads and adequate ports, the establishment of a center for shipbuilding, the establishment of a fund for the development of fisheries, the construction of lycées and universities, the establishment of a credit system, the construction of a referral hospital and the promotion of tourism development.
Farmers receive fertilizer donation. GIS St Lucia, 10 April, 2014

Full Article

External Affairs Minister, Hon. Alva Baptiste negotiated the donation with Moroccan Ambassador, H.E. Mohamed Benjilany

The Agricultural sector is making headway in bringing farmers back to full production following the devastation done to the sector during the passage of the December 2013 trough system.

Non-banana crop producers from throughout the island, whose production was interrupted, have begun receiving fertilizer under the sector's Post Trough Recovery Programme.

Approximately 3200 bags of fertilizer have been donated to the Department of Agriculture through negotiation with the Government of Morocco by Saint Lucia’s Foreign Affairs Minister.

On Friday April 4, 2014 a ceremony to hand over the fertilizers was held outside the Agricultural office in the Mabouya Valley where Saint Lucia’s External Affairs Minister Hon. Alva Baptiste; Agriculture Minister, Hon. Moses Jn. Baptiste and Parliamentary Representative for Dennery North Hon. Shawn Edward addressed farmers and agricultural officers on the assistance being given by the Government of Morocco.

Morocco’s Ambassador to Saint Lucia, His Excellency Mohamed Benjilany, expressed his government’s commitment towards assisting the region. Minister for Agriculture, Hon. Moses Jn. Baptiste expressed gratitude to the Government of Morocco for the assistance, whilst urging farmers to make optimal use of the fertilizers.

Friday’s distribution of fertilizers is in keeping with a promise made by the Department of Agriculture to give assistance to farmers involved in the production of various agricultural produce following the December trough.

According to the Moroccan Ambassador, this was the first batch of fertilizer being donated to the island under the agreement and represents the assistance for 2013.

A follow-up batch under the Moroccan assistance is already enroute to Saint Lucia and will be available for distribution by May of 2014. This will ensure that all deserving farmers benefit under the programme.

Non-banana farmers in Saint Lucia have also been receiving fertilizers through the assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, FAO. Some 200 bags have already been donated to the sector by the FAO.

The Post Trough Recovery Programme began with the desilting of aquaculture ponds and farm drains in many locations on the island and is being extended to livestock producers, fishers and other producers within the agricultural sector.
Marketing

New Market Info System on the way by Aisha Reid. BGIS Media Published, 17 April 2014

Full Article

Barbados will soon have a new market information system for the agriculture sector.

This was disclosed by Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management Dr. David Estwick, as he addressed the Barbados Agricultural Society’s Agriculture Symposium and luncheon yesterday, at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre.

Dr. Estwick said that the system is being set up by the Ministry in conjunction with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture.

He explained that the entity will allow the ministry to know what is being produced in Barbados’ agricultural sector, who is producing it, when it will be harvested, and the demand for the product.

He added that this would allow the farming community to know exactly what was needed from the various entities instead of just growing products in a random matter. “It is unfortunate because goods could probably be produced here [in Barbados] if you had a proper market information system that allows the domestic producers [and] … the farmer to know what government institutions like the Queen Elizabeth Hospital purchase, the Geriatric hospital, the Psychiatric hospital, the School Meals department, the Welfare Department, the restaurants, and the hotels purchase,” he noted.

Minister Estwick said that Barbados needed to move away from the “traditional way” of agricultural arrangements to one that focuses on agribusiness, agriculture in health, tourism, energy and the environment.

Trade

Promotion of food products: the EU wants to conquer the world. CTA - Brussels Office Newsletter N° 394, Tuesday, 15 April 2014

Full Article

On the 2nd April 2014, The Commission announced the EU will increase to EUR 200 million a year the budget for the promotion of food products and will be aiming at targeting non-European consumers. Following an agreement between the European institutions, the EU will also finance, under certain conditions, the promotion of processed products, including wine, beer and pastry products. This new framework, which must be endorsed by the end of the month by the European Parliament and the Council, "will help the EU opening up to new markets,” welcomed by Dacian Cioloș, Commissioner for Agriculture. Currently, annual funds allocated by the EU to promote its
Food products are 60 million, and only 30% of these funds go to marketing in third world countries, he noted. The increase to 200 Millions must be gradual from now until 2020. The Commission would devote all of these funds to promote outside the EU, but under pressure from the U.S., it was agreed to maintain the possibility of subsidizing campaigns directed to consumers within the Union. The new regulation eliminates the possibility for States to co-finance campaigns with economic actors, in exchange for an increase in participation by the EU reaching 70 to 80%. This co-financing alongside the private sector will reach 85% in case of issue with a specific product such as that experienced by Spanish cucumbers in 2011, when they were falsely accused of being the cause of the deadly E.coli bacteria.
Source: lafranceagricole.fr

Food Security

Food import bill down by Richardson Dhalai. Trinidad and Tobago Newsday Thursday, April 17 2014
http://www.newsday.co.tt/business/0,193513.html

Full Article

The nation’s food import bill has recorded a two percent reduction from 2010 to 2013 even as the country continued to register single digit food inflation rate for February 2014.

Food Production Minister, Senator Devant Maharaj disclosed at a flood relief and incentive cheque distribution ceremony at the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (Namdevco) regional administration offices, southern wholesale market, Debe yesterday.

Citing provisional data obtained from the Central Bank, he said the local agricultural sector experienced five consecutive quarters of growth from the first quarter of 2012 to the first quarter of 2013.

“Furthermore, the summary of economic indicators for September 2013 showed that growth for the first three quarters of 2013 remained positive and steady,” Maharaj said, adding, “there has been a two percent reduction in the food import bill from 2010 to 2013 and the food inflation rate also continues to be single digits at 5.2 percent in February 2014.”

He said Namdevco had also been mandated to assist farmers by sourcing fertilisers and reselling it to farmers at cost prices.

And regarding the incentive and flood relief distribution, Maharaj said approximately 986 incentive cheques and twenty three flood claim cheques to farmers from the counties of Victoria, Mayaro, Nariva and St Patrick had been prepared for distribution to the respective farmers.

“All together, the Ministry of Food Production has prepared a total of one thousand, six hundred and twenty (1620), cheques for incentives and flood relief to be distributed to the nation’s farmers and fisherfolk amounting to approximately $19.2 million,” Maharaj said.
Meanwhile, cocoa and coffee farmer, Mohan Boochoon, of Navet Village, Rio Claro, said he was grateful for the incentives given to the farmers saying, “I feel humbled to know that Government is doing everything to assist the farmers in this country.”

“At this point in time, the cocoa and coffee industry is down but with this assistance we are hopeful that this would be turned around,” he added.

Promoting food security and growth. Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 15 April, 2014  

Full Article

The United Progressive Party Government is well aware that the long term viability of the agriculture sector and its ability to increase its contribution to the economy of Antigua and Barbuda will depend on greater involvement of youth in the sector.

In this regard, the Ministry of Agriculture, with the support of the FAO, has developed a strategic plan for increasing involvement of youth in Agriculture.

This ten-year development plan was recently completed and will lead to the execution of a number of long-awaited projects such as Project 40:20 in Pares and the National Youth Farm.

The National Youth Farm is to be implemented over three phases and will provide training and employment for young people who have an aptitude for work in the agriculture sector and are interested in being part of a transformative process that will make agriculture more lucrative. At least 50 youth will participate in the first phase of this project.

The participants will receive practical training in agriculture techniques and procedures, will be directly involved in producing various crops, and will rear goats and other small ruminants.

Each participant will receive a stipend while participating in the initial stage of the programme. However, they will each have an opportunity to earn a larger income from the produce they grow and harvest on the Youth Farm.

The purpose of this programme is to demonstrate to young people the potential of agriculture as a viable source of income and the opportunities to operate successful farming businesses.

Over the course of four years, up to 200 youth will receive training under this programme and will be engaged in cultivating about 100 acres of land.
Praedial Larceny

More traceability needed for agriculture sector by Aisha Reid. BGIS Media, 17 April 2014

Full Article

Traceability is needed to help alleviate praedial larceny in Barbados.

This was asserted by Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management, Dr. David Estwick, as he addressed the Barbados Agricultural Society’s (BAS) Agriculture Symposium and luncheon yesterday, at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre.

Minister Estwick said that the Praedial Larceny Act was currently being examined by Cabinet, but there needed to be some “form of traceability to know exactly where all agricultural products come from”.

He said that the only way this could be achieved was if everyone involved in the buying and selling of agricultural products was registered.

“How do you trace produce from farm A to farm B into the hands of a consumer? … We need to bring produce into a registration system just as you have farmers registering in Barbados. Everyone who is going to be selling agricultural produce must be registered in the system, once you are registered in the system, any activity outside of the registration has to be illegal,” he noted.

He added that in order for the system to function effectively, it would have to be monitored by agricultural inspectors. “We had to meet with the police… We came up with a system where the agriculture inspectors are similar to traffic wardens who can go and check the areas where the selling takes place. We don’t think that will solve all the problems and so on, but we believe that bringing all agriculture vendors into a system of buying and selling is important,” he pointed out.

Dr. Estwick added that there also needed to be some form of receipt system between the farmers and vendors. He said that the system could not only be implemented through legislation, but that it needed the cooperation of everyone involved in the sector.

“How do you get everyone to give receipts and accept receipts? It is extremely difficult and you cannot legislate that, but it has to be done in some form of training, and this is something that can be done under the BAS with everyone who has a vested interest in the sector, so that they give out as a requirement a receipt,” he noted.

Government looking at praedial larceny issue by Sharon Austin. BGIS Media, 16 April 2014

Full Article

Government is taking a comprehensive look at the problem of praedial larceny across the island, with a view to tackling it in a holistic way.
This assurance came today from Prime Minister Freundel Stuart as he addressed the Barbados Agricultural Society’s Symposium at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre entitled Moving Towards A Viable and Vibrant Agricultural Sector.

Mr. Stuart told the gathering that his discussions with affected farmers during his recent tour of Agrofest impressed the seriousness of this scourge even more deeply on him.

Describing praedial larceny as most unfair to farmers, he continued: “Many have called for amendments to the law to provide for stiffer penalties, but penalties become relevant only after you have nabbed the perpetrator, and that is where the challenge has been…

“Intended approaches will include fixing the receiver with the responsibility to certify that the supplier can account for the origin of the item being supplied, in accordance with the standards set by the amended law. Penalties will be stiffened to deal with both parties if collusion is established.”

During his wide-ranging address, the Prime Minister said considerable data and studies had been produced on the agricultural industry and he suggested that the change must now be rolled out.

“My vision for agriculture in Barbados is one of positive, effective, and enduring change to the sector, distinguished by creativity in its outlook, cost effectiveness in its production methods and consistency in its practice. It is our attitude to change that will make the difference. We need to start the change in agriculture with haste,” he stressed.

Acknowledging that there was only so much that Government could do, he surmised that there was a need for Barbadians of all classes, races, religions, ages and genders to commit themselves to taking part in the realisation of this new vision for agriculture.

Mr. Stuart pointed out that there were some excellent ideas in the agricultural industry, but some major hurdles ahead. “For example, we have not yet been able to effect that much needed synergy between agricultural production and the consumption needs of the tourist industry. This is not the fault of the farmers of Barbados. Our hoteliers have had to be reminded constantly that visitors to our shores are in search of a new experience, and that includes a new culinary experience. The successful Oistins and Moontown experiences, I think, need to be replicated across the island,” he opined.

He added that there was also potential for the utilisation of the by-products of local agriculture in craft and artisanal products derived from animal hides, straw, seeds, roots and grasses for the souvenir market.

Ministry of Agriculture and police stepping up the fight against praedial larceny. Official Website of Government of Grenada, 14 April, 2014

Full Article

ST. GEORGE’S, GRENAADA, April 13, 2014 – GIS: A new assault on praedial larceny will be launched in Grenada on Tuesday 15, April. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Royal Grenada
Police Force (RGPF) are partnering with local farmers, to step-up the fight against the menacing act that has resulted in the lost of millions of dollars over the past decade.

A formal ceremony to unveil the new program will be held in St. George's at the National Stadium on Tuesday morning. Under the new program major stakeholders including agricultural extension field officers, farmers, estate owners, the Marketing and National Importing Board and operators of super markets, will see the use of modern digital technology to combat the illicit trade.

The renewed approach will see an amendment to the existing praedial larceny legislation, a major public awareness campaign, the use of state-of-the-art digital satellite equipment, infrared and other real-time surveillance equipment that will be put to use in the fight against farm thieves.

Described as the reinvigoration of the praedial larceny prevention programme, Agriculture Minister Hon. Roland Bhola and his policy team says the onslaught in stemming the scourge must be taken seriously since praedial larceny is one of the greatest threats to agriculture in Grenada.

The Ministry received reports that praedial larceny discourages Grenadian farmers from growing certain crops, which threatens national food security and rural livelihoods.

Additionally the unlawful act drives farmers to the point of considering poisoning their produce, which can threaten the health and safety of our people and our export trade.

The Ministry is also aware of the fact that theft of agricultural produce has led to physical confrontations between farmers and thieves, resulting in bodily harm to the farmers.

In recognition of these threats, the Ministry of Agriculture has undertaken to implement a vigorous program to tackle this economic and social hazard in our country.

**Crop theft crisis** by Janelle Riley-Thornhill, Barbados Advocate, 13 April, 2014


**Full Article**

The agricultural sector in this country is being stifled, and at the heart of the problem is a failure to properly deal with praedial larceny.

Economist Sir Frank Alleyne is adamant that more can be done to put a stop to this practice, but it will require a whole-of-society approach if the efforts are to bear fruit.

This, he said, could include creating a database to facilitate the registering of farmers, the produce that they sell and those who they sell it to; an approach which he indicated is being contemplated by the Ministry of Agriculture. Sir Frank explained that this system once implemented, would allow the relevant authorities to track crops and know which have been obtained illegally.

“Every person who is retailing agricultural produce, from the wayside vendor to the supermarkets should be required to present to the police or whoever is questioning them, a document which shows where they bought it from. So you can go and check, assuming they give you correct information, where they got it from,” he said in an interview with The Barbados Advocate.
Sir Frank contended that the problem of crop theft is more widespread and damaging to the sector than society is willing to recognise, and it is imperative that citizens and residents of this country do not condone the practice by purchasing items they know or even suspect have been stolen.

He maintained that while he is in favour of persons being self-employed and making a living through agriculture, they must do so through legitimate means.

“When people come with their trucks and accomplices to harvest somebody’s crop that is not praedial larceny; praedial larceny is small-scale stealing. That is commercial crop theft and that is what we are getting in Barbados,” he said.

The economist added, “In a small place like Barbados, you should be able to get on top of that problem. This is a small society, people know who the culprits are, but out of fear or just disregard for the issue they keep it secret.”

But, Sir Frank said the protection being enjoyed by those who blatantly steal crops, is discouraging potential farmers from getting into the business of agriculture, and so frustrating seasoned farmers that they want to bow out, and this is putting the sector in jeopardy.

Chief Executive Officer of the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS), James Paul confirmed to this newspaper the negative impact this activity is having on the sector, and revealed that the BAS is working in conjunction with the Ministry to implement a proof of purchase system, which they hope will be rolled out shortly. He said while the mechanism is unlikely to totally eliminate the theft of crops, if done right, it will make it quite difficult for persons to profit from stolen produce.

“The police have been slow in dealing with the problem and in some cases have not been able to do anything about it, but the proof of purchase form will help them catch the perpetrators. The fact is the theft of crops prevents farmers from making the kinds of returns they should make in order to encourage them to remain in agriculture, and if you keep on stealing from them they will get fed up,” he lamented.

Paul noted that this practice has in fact been one of the culprits responsible for prime agricultural land being left idle in this country, and until the police are able to enforce the law, he contends that it will remain one of the primary mitigating factors standing in the way of the sector’s advancement.

Youth in Agriculture

Call to timetable agricultural science in schools. OBSERVER media, 16 April 2014

Article

ST JOHN’S, Antigua – A noted regional agriculturalist yesterday called for the science of agriculture to be taught at all levels in the nation’s school system.

Dr Gregory Robin, local representative for the Caribbean Agriculture Research and Development Institute (CARDI), has been “insisting that my colleagues around that region and internationally, that we have got to get back to the schools.”
He said the call was “not for Antigua alone, but for the whole region. Teach the science of agriculture in the schools, starting at the primary schools.

“If we want to get that kind of impact in terms of our food security, we need to go back to the schools and education,” Dr Robin added.

Some schools in Antigua & Barbuda already have Agricultural Science on the timetable, but the expert said stigma associated with the profession has kept it at bay.

“It’s not the responsibility of the government alone. It’s the responsibility of parents and the community to remove the stigma on agriculture.”

He said, if approached as a science, young people will be more inclined to take the subject seriously.

“The people who do the soil analysis in the chemistry labs, they don’t have to be in the field,” he said.

More Young Persons Needed in Agriculture – Minister Clarke by Andrine Davidson. JIS, 15 April, 2014

Full Article

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Roger Clarke, has again called for greater youth participation in agriculture, while reiterating Government’s commitment to facilitating entrepreneurial activities in the sector.

“Given the youth’s willingness to adapt to new ideas, concepts and technology, it goes without saying that the future of agriculture in Jamaica resides with our young people,” the Minister said.

He explained that the Ministry has been encouraging more young people to become involved in agriculture through various programmes.

“Recognising their enormous potential for risk taking and innovation, the Ministry has developed several programmes targeting our young people. These include our Youth in Agriculture initiative, which encourages young people to become involved in agriculture-based activities as well as to seek to influence them to pursue careers in agriculture and agriculture-based industries,” the Minister informed.

Speaking at the Jamaica 4-H Clubs’ National Achievement Expo 2014, held on April 11 at the Denbigh Showground, in Clarendon, Mr. Clarke lauded the Movement’s focus on science and technology, through the creation of an Agri-Technology Park for the event.

He noted that this year’s theme, ‘Promoting sustainable agriculture, impacting climate change’, is timely and appropriate, and is part of the thrust for the sector and an area in which the future leaders should become actively engaged.
The Minister expressed high expectations for the upcoming Denbigh Agricultural Show, where a number of institutions will mount displays in the Youth in Agriculture Village, which will be an integral part of the event.

“Coming out of this, it is my hope that some of these projects will be developed into entrepreneurial activities. This can be facilitated through our Young Farmer’s Entrepreneurship Programme that is being executed by the Agro-Invest Corporation, where we give support in the form of land, provide access to markets, links to credit agencies and infrastructure,” Mr. Clarke said.

The Minister pointed out that agriculture is much more than farming the soil and rearing animals. It includes land husbandry, irrigation, agronomy, plant protection as well as social services, he said.

Noting that opportunities abound in the field, Mr. Clarke pointed out that students can realize their career potential in many areas in which agriculture is involved.

“You can become an agronomist, an agricultural engineer, an irrigation specialist, a hydraulic engineer, an electronic and computer engineer, a crop consultant, a laboratory technician, an animal nutritionist, a dairy scientist, a research scientist and the list goes on,” the Minister added.

He encouraged the students, teachers and volunteers to view farming as a viable avenue to create wealth, and to take steps to access the sector’s tremendous economic opportunities.

The Minister noted that Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean continue to be impacted by environmental challenges, including rising sea levels, longer hurricane seasons and more severe hurricanes.

He said it is for these reasons that the Government is seeking to introduce new technologies to young persons through the Youth in Agriculture initiative, “so that it will lead to, among other things, diversified modern farming practices, new varieties and animal strains, less soil pollution and use of more bio-energy.”

Mr. Clarke commended the Jamaica 4-H Clubs for its achievements through youth engagement in schools and communities, and applauded the 67 per cent increase in training opportunities, as well as 23 per cent growth in membership over last year.

“It is my hope that the 4-H Movement will continue to grow, and that the training activities will lead to more young people becoming farmers with innovative ideas to create new products, more efficient farming and greater use of technology,” the Minister added.

Meanwhile, Executive Director, Jamaica 4-H Clubs, Ronald Blake, said the day’s activities highlighted the attainment three main goals: showcasing the work of 4-H achievers and volunteers; alignment of the programme with the strategic objectives of the Ministry of Agriculture; and the culmination of parish achievement days and comprehensive evaluation of the national programmes.

The competitions among 4-H Clubs at the parish level were held in a number of areas, including: cake baking, pig care and management, goat care, composting and potting, budding and grafting.

The Expo, which attracted hundreds of 4-H clubbites, a group from the British Virgin Islands, teachers and volunteers from all parishes, featured a Healthy Lifestyle Village, 4-H Cubbies Village, an Agri-Science Technology Competition, as well as Agency displays. It was funded by entities, including the Ministry of Agriculture and the Development Bank of Jamaica.
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.

May 2014
Caribbean Sustainable Development Solutions Network
The launch meeting of the Caribbean Sustainable Development Solutions Network
Date: 7-8 May 2014
Location: University of the West Indies (UWI)-Mona Campus in Kingston, Jamaica.
Website: http://unsdsn.org/what-we-do/national-and-regional-networks/regional-sdsn/regional-sdsn-for-the-caribbean,

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/

7th Caribbean Beekeeping Congress and the 2nd Annual Caribbean Bee College
Date: 26-30 May 2014
Location: St. Croix, United States Virgin Islands at the Albert A. Sheen Campus, University of the Virgin Islands, Kingshill,
Contact: CBC.CBCVI@gmail.com

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

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/
XII World Congress of Computers in Agriculture and Natural Resources
Date: 27-30 July, 2014
Location: San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica
Description
This congress provides a forum for agriculture related professionals to exchange information on applications and developments in the use of Information Technologies. It covers a wide array of topics. These include new applications of well established and understood technologies to innovative and entrepreneurial applications of emerging technologies, in addition to issues related to policy and knowledge dissemination. Contributions from various countries will allow a broadened perspective for all attending. This congress is sponsored by International Network for Information Technology in Agriculture and the University of Costa Rica (UCR).
Abstracts submission deadline: 15 February, 2014
Website: http://wcca2014.ucr.ac.cr/

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

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/