Breeding resilient germplasm, in St Vincent and the Grenadines

The CARDI St Vincent office has been implementing a five year project seeking to broaden the narrow genetic base of dasheen (taro) and to develop varieties that have outstanding agronomic, yield and nutritional potential. Fifty elite taro varieties were imported from Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and multiplied by micro propagation and weaned and hardened at the Tissue Culture Laboratory, Orange Hill, St Vincent and the Grenadines. After morphological characterisation they were planted in different agro ecological zones across the island. Twenty five genotypes were then selected and concurrently evaluated in St Vincent and the St Lucia. The criteria used for assessing the genotypes were informed by the export market requirement for dasheen; weight (2lbs and above), oval shape, white to off white colour, number of suckers, plant height and taste. From these trials, 11 genotypes satisfactorily met the established criteria. The CE/IND/24, BL/SM/83, BL/SM/80 and BL/SM/13 in particular scored high and will form the core genotypes for conducting crosses in 2016.

The CE/IND/24 genotype displays attributes required by the export market.

CARpDi Cayman Islands
hosts field day

CARDI in collaboration with the Cayman Islands Agricultural Society (CIAS) and the Department of Agriculture (DOA), Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure (PLAHI) held a field day on 14 April 2016 at the Institute’s experimental site in Bodden Town, Grand Cayman.

The in-field forum sought to sensitise/update the farming community of the work CARDI has been doing in collaboration with the DOA, specifically as it relates to the field trials in pepper and forages. Participants were able to observe the use of different planting densities for seasoning peppers on yield, irrigation systems, the use of sticky traps to monitor field pest and the evaluation of forage plots for Mulato II (Brachiaria spp.) and Guinea Grass (Panicum spp). CARDI Representative Ansari Hosein facilitated the field visit and hosted a Question and Answer session.
Promoting value addition of cassava and sweet potato in Antigua and Barbuda

The CARDI Antigua and Barbuda Unit through funding under the Agricultural Policy Programme hosted a training workshop for bakers on the use of composite sweet potato and cassava flour for bread making. The sweet potato varieties used were the Beauregard (orange flesh) and purple flesh whilst the sweet cassava (butter stick) was used. For bread making 40% of the flour mix was either replaced with grated sweet potato or grated cassava. Various types of bread were demonstrated to participants. Dr Greg Robin together with the master baker teamed up with the ABS TV morning programme to sensitize the public on this activity. There is a keen interest by the bakers to adopt the technology, however the bakers have indicated they would prefer to receive sweet potato and cassava in a frozen grated form. The project will now investigate the establishment of an intermediary stage and the purchase of an appropriate grater.

Supporting the diversification of the St Lucia's agriculture sector

The Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have under its Agriculture Diversification Programme identified cassava as one of the priority root crops for development. CARDI, a strategic partner of the Ministry of Agriculture fully supports this diversification thrust and under the Agricultural Policy Programme (APP), has identified three high yielding sweet cassava cultivars (MCol 22, Uncle Mac and Y-Me) from its germplasm bank in the Mabouya Valley. These cultivars are currently being multiplied at the field station and on plots of selected farmers for the production of planting material for distribution to farmers. Recently, these cassava cultivars have found themselves in the mix of other roots and tubers on the shelves of the major supermarket chain (Consolidated Foods Ltd.) which in the past was not conceivable. The fresh tubers are also being sold by farmers to private bakeries where the tubers are processed into a mash for mixing with imported flour, for making bread and other products.

Boosting Jamaica's livestock industry

Jamaica is one of seven CARICOM member states that will benefit from the Latin American Small Ruminants Programme and the Caribbean Small Ruminants Capacity Building Programme. The programme which was officially launched on June 16, at the Hounslow Demonstration and Training Centre in St Elizabeth, Jamaica will seek to improve the stock of sheep and goat in the country, while training persons in animal husbandry with particular emphasis on small ruminants. The project is being implemented jointly by the Agriculture Ministries of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, with the Caribbean Agriculture Research and Development Institute (CARDI) being the executing agency. The initiative is being funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization, (FAO) and the Government of New Zealand.