CARDI welcomes the Bahamas as the 14th member state

The Bahamas is the newest CARDI member state. On Monday 20th June, CARDI’s Executive Director Mr Barton Clarke and the Minister of Agriculture, Marine Resources and Local Government the Honourable Alfred Gray signed the instrument of accession formally establishing The Bahamas as a member state of the Institute. The Bahamas, an associate member state of CARICOM, a net food importer is very keen to transform its agricultural sector. As a member state of the Institute they will benefit directly from a range of expertise needed to develop the sector. CARDI’s work in The Bahamas will primarily focus on the development of the roots and tubers and small ruminants industries and integrated pest management. Of immediate interest will be the control of the dreaded Black sigatoka disease in bananas and citrus greening.

Learning from Mexico’s coconut industry

Four regional industry specialists, representing different segments of the coconut value chain conducted a 3 day knowledge exchange visit to southern Mexico in April to learn about production and processing of coconut. All four beneficiaries will share the knowledge gleaned from this visit with stakeholders of the “Coconut Industry Development for the Caribbean” project through the National Stakeholder Platform. In Mexico the team viewed an exhibition showcasing a variety of value added coconut products and primary products made from the versatile coconut palm. They also visited a coconut water processing facility and interacted with artisans who are involved in the small scale production of value added products. The group also visited the Yucatan Center for Scientific Research (CICY) commercial micro propagation facility. CICY has already exported in vitro plantlets to St Lucia and will soon begin exporting to St Vincent and the Grenadines. Manuel Trujillo who led the team said they also had the opportunity to visit an organic farm which can be a good option to pursue for diversifying the regional market. The visit was facilitated by the National Institute for Forestry, Agricultural, and Animal Husbandry Research (INIFAP), International Trade Center (ITC) and CARDI.
Cross border investments in Regional Agriculture

CARDI’s Executive Director Barton Clarke recently accompanied a team headed by Guyana’s President David Granger and Barbados’ Prime Minister Freundel Stewart on a visit to Santa Fe Mega Farm. Located in North Rupununi Upper Takutu, Upper Essequibo (Region 9), the Santa Fe Mega Farm represents a major investment by prominent Barbadian investor Sir Kyffin Simpson in Guyana’s agricultural sector. The farm occupies 29,000 acres of which just over 9,000 acres are allocated to rice cultivation. The rice is exported while the cash crops and ground provisions cultivated are sold to neighbouring Lethem. Guyana is hopeful that the Santa Fe Mega model farm can be used to spur direct foreign investment in Guyana’s agriculture sector. President Granger said that they are also working to develop the declining livestock sector and an ecotourism industry in the Region.

Providing Technical Assistance in Value Chain Analysis

Over the last eighteen months CARDI has provided technical assistance to St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica under their Banana Accompanying Measures (BAM) Program. The focus of this assistance has been on undertaking value chain analysis for selected crop and livestock commodities, as well as, training staff of the Ministries of Agriculture and other stakeholders in how to conduct value chain analysis. It is expected that both activities will lay the foundation for developing competitive, sustainable industries in these countries. All these projects were undertaken in conjunction with our international partner VCM International of Canada. The Banana Accompanying Measures (BAM) are a support package for a number of banana-exporting countries from the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states. It is designed to foster competitiveness of the banana sector and promote economic diversification.

Making available sweet potato planting material in Antigua and Barbuda

A sweet potato ex-situ open field conservation plot has been established at CARDI’s Betty’s Hope Station in Antigua and Barbuda. The plot will be used for characterisation and maintenance of varieties and for conducting agronomic research. Using the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (IPBGR) descriptors for sweet potato the Antigua and Barbuda Unit was able to complete the morphological characterisation for all 67 accessions. Farmers on the island have been able to obtain planting material from the plot. Approximately 50,000 slips, capable of planting ten acres have been given out to farmers.