CARDI is partnering with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) to control the devastating Giant African Snail (GAS) in Trinidad and Tobago. Since 2008, the GAS has been in Trinidad, but late last year, further spread of its population along the east west corridor, has been observed with many farmers continuing to report widespread destruction to agricultural crops. CARDI was able to secure the services of chief entomologist, Ian Gibbs from the Ministry of Agriculture, Barbados to assist the MALF, in its GAS Eradication Programme. Gibbs visited Trinidad from 29-31 March 2017 and held meetings with technical officers from the Ministry of Agriculture and CARDI. He shared with participants, the various control strategies implemented in Barbados and spoke of their efficacy.

Speaking with CARDI, Gibbs said that he is confident the population of GAS can be effectively managed once an integrated approach is adopted. He continued by saying in Barbados the use of chemicals, a vibrant public awareness campaign and a bounty system primarily lead by the community were responsible for the successful control of the GAS.

Ian Gibbs headed the technical team charged with the responsibility of controlling the GAS, soon after it was discovered in Barbados in 2000.
Strengthening coconut processor groups in St Lucia

A variety of value added products can be manufactured from the versatile coconut (Photo courtesy: Gracefoods)

CARDI in collaboration with the International Trade Centre (ITC) hosted a two day Regional Workshop on group strengthening for small scale processors working in Saint Lucia’s coconut industry. The workshop took place on April 6 and 7, 2017 at the Palm Haven Hotel, Rodney Bay, Gros Islet.

The overarching goal was to strengthen small scale processor groups so as to increase their competitiveness, ultimately leading to the development of an export oriented agri-processing sector. Trainers focused on introducing participants to various group development and strengthening activities. Particular emphasis was placed on characteristics of good groups and conflict resolution.

CARDI’s value chain expert Aziz Mohammed emphasised improved production and the development of value added products as two strategic interventions that can grow St Lucia’s coconut industry into an export oriented enterprise.

Executive Director, Barton Clarke said that CARDI is happy to be implementing training workshops like this across the Region to better organise processor groups, as this will lead to development of better quality value added coconut products as well as increase incomes and employment opportunities.

CARDI participates at the Tech Agri Expo

The Tech Agri Expo was hosted by the University of West Indies (UWI) Faculty of Food and Agriculture, from March 24-26 at the faculty grounds. The Expo was conceptualised to showcase agri-innovations, and products and services of entrepreneurs and organisations working in the sector in Trinidad and Tobago. Apart from display booths, exhibitors hosted live demonstrations and conducted short training sessions on a range of topics including hydroponics, agri-journalism, chocolate making and composting.

The CARDI booth hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago Unit showcased the Institute’s work in coconuts, hot pepper development, small ruminants and climate change. Hot pepper seed samples and a variety of literature were distributed to visitors over the three days.

Dr. Wayne Ganpat, Dean Faculty Science and Agriculture said that the overwhelming support and turnout to the exhibition by schools and the general public in particular is a good indication that people have a reignited interest in agriculture.

Hundreds of exhibitors participated at the Tech Agri Expo (Photo courtesy: ffatechagriexpo)

Caribbean placed on high alert for prolonged drought

Drip irrigation is a water saving strategy farmers can implement

Barbados based Caribbean Drought and Precipitation Monitoring Network (CDPMN) is warning Caribbean countries that the drought conditions experienced over the last few years are expected to continue. Countries in the western Caribbean/Greater Antilles have been placed on high alert for both short term and long term drought whilst the countries in the southern portion of the Eastern Caribbean can expect to experience long term drought conditions. To deal with water shortages several Caribbean countries have begun rationing the resource.

The socio-economic fallout from persistent droughts is tremendous. It affects agricultural productivity, increases animal mortality and food prices, threatens food and nutrition security and exacerbates poverty.

Rainfed agriculture is primarily practiced by small scale farmers in the Caribbean and so they remain highly vulnerable to the impacts of drought. Some on-farm water saving strategies that can be implemented include; use of drip irrigation, construction of water storage systems, scheduling of watering crops, mulching and composting and planting drought tolerant species.