

SWEET POTATO

Controlling the sweet potato weevil by Geraldine Bicette- Joseph, Government Information Service (GIS) of Saint Lucia, 19 June 2017.

<http://www.govt.lc/news/controlling-the-sweet-potato-weevil>

Full article

The Ministry of Agriculture has embarked on an island wide drive to heighten awareness to the sweet potato weevil.

Crop Protection Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture, Donald Joseph, said although the pests have been present in Saint Lucia for many years, the occurrence of many farmers moving away from traditional banana farming into the farming of crops has called for the ministry to be proactive in increasing awareness of the weevil and the damage that the bug can do if not controlled.

“It is an insect that has a complete life cycle: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. It takes about 33 days to complete its life cycle from egg to adult. Presently in Saint Lucia we have two species of the sweet potato weevil you have the *Cylas formicarius* which is more wide spread and you also have the West Indian Sweet Potato Weevil.

“An adult female can lay about 250 eggs in its lifetime and the most important stages of these pests are the larva stage and the adult stage. The adult usually feeds on the leaves and stems and sometimes the roots, but it is the larvae that causes the most damage in that it feeds on the tubas.”

Winston Elliot, Agricultural Officer within the Ministry of Agriculture added that it would be hard to extinguish the species, however measures have been taken to educate individuals on how best to control the pest.

“Eradication of the pest will be extremely difficult, so what we are trying to do is to implement controlled measures, which is why we have collaborated with the extension division and are working with farmers, island wide.”

The ministry has held group meetings with practical sessions demonstrating planting methods and the varied measures of control. Mr. Elliot said controlling the pest can result in vast reductions of the pest population.

PASSIONFRUIT

Crops' sweet bribes for ants help them bear fruit. The University of Edinburgh, 23 June 2017.
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/news/2017/crops-sweet-bribes-for-ants-help-them-bear-fruit>

Full article

Flowering crops such as beans and cotton offer their sweetest nectar to recruit colonizing ants.

This strategy balances their need for defense and to reproduce, research suggests.

So-called ant-plants carefully manage the amount and sweetness of nectar produced on their flowers and leaves, a study shows.

This enables them to attract ants – which aggressively deter herbivores – while also luring insects that will spread pollen.

Agricultural use

The findings could inform the commercial farming of produce from ant-plants, which also include pumpkins, courgettes, passionfruit and acacia honey.

Researchers from the University of Edinburgh studied the nectar secreted by a plant from the passionfruit family during flower and fruit development.

They sought to understand how such plants produce nectar on their flowers, fruits and leaves, to feed ants and pollinators.

Trade-off

Scientists were surprised to find that the greatest volume of sweetest nectar was produced surrounding flowers, to attract ants.

This may ensure that flowers, with their valuable pollen and potential fruits, are well defended from herbivores, while encouraging ants to stay away from the open flowers themselves.

Researchers had expected high secretions of nectar at buds and fruits to lure ants, but not at flowers, in order to avoid conflicts between ants and pollinators.

The study, published in *Biotropica*, was funded by the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

‘Offering sweet bribes in the form of nectar may be a strategy used by ant-plants to avoid conflict between ants and pollinators. This allows a trade-off in which plants are well defended by bodyguard ants, without these scaring away pollinators.’ - Nora Villamil-Buenrostro School of Biological Sciences

POST-HARVEST INNOVATION CLUSTER - Roots, tubers and bananas

Improving nutrition, incomes and employment through post-harvest innovations. Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research, 22 June 2017.

www.rtb.cgiar.org/blog/2017/06/22/improving-nutrition-incomes-employment-post-harvest-innovation/

Full article

“Post-harvest innovations can make important contributions to addressing the global challenge of malnutrition,” begins Busie Maziya-Dixon, leader of RTB’s cluster on Post-Harvest Innovation (CC4.1) and Food and Nutrition Scientist at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA).

“In collaboration with other flagships, the goal of our research is to contribute to improving diets and income and employment opportunities for at least one million households through post-harvest innovation and better utilization of nutritious roots, tubers and bananas by 2022,” she adds.

RTB is structured around five flagship projects, each of which is comprised of a number of research teams, known as ‘clusters’.

To launch the Post-Harvest Innovation cluster, more than 20 researchers from 11 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe came together in Entebbe, Uganda on 8-9 June 2017 to share experiences and develop a joint vision and research for development agenda that will guide their collaboration over the coming years.

The team will investigate the myriad technical, environmental, social and economic dimensions to fully understand the opportunities, scope and potential impacts of postharvest interventions. Shared post-harvest challenges for RTB crops, such as post-harvest losses and waste product management, will be approached from a cross-crop perspective. The cluster will also undertake research in post-harvest management, storage, and processing of banana, potato and yam and support research for cassava and sweet potato that is conducted in collaboration with other research teams.

“This cluster exemplifies why we need the RTB program in the first place,” says Simon Heck, leader of Flagship project 4 on ‘Nutritious foods and added value’, under which cluster CC4.1 is housed.

“Roots, tubers and bananas share several post-harvest challenges, such as their perishability, bulkiness, and comparatively narrow range of utilization. They also share an enormous potential for expanding and diversifying their use in new markets including in urban fresh food markets and in commercial processing. Progress in these areas can be greatly accelerated by researchers and private sector partners working together across different RTB crops that share similar challenges and opportunities,” he explains.

Participants came from IITA, the International Potato Center, Bioversity International, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture, Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement, Natural Resources Institute and government partners from Uganda and Nigeria, and included food scientists, breeders, market economists, agronomists, nutritionists and social scientists with ongoing research work on banana, cassava, potato, sweet potato, and yam.

The meeting also reviewed results and lessons from the RTB-ENDURE project in Uganda which concluded in December 2016. With financial support from the European Union through IFAD, RTB-ENDURE has provided an early, compelling example of collaboration between RTB partners for post-harvest innovation and several achievements are ready for scaling and will be integrated into the work of the post-harvest cluster team.

One particular example discussed in Entebbe illustrates the role this cluster already plays for the program and how technologies developed for one RTB crop can be extended to others. Sweet potato silage technology was successfully piloted as pig feed through Silage Business Centers in Uganda and will be expanded to utilize by-products and waste from other RTB crops, as demand for animal feed continues to grow.

This will increase overall productivity of RTB-based farming systems and contribute to nutrition and income goals, including for women who are the main owners and managers of smallholder livestock in many countries. Research under cluster CC4.1 aims to develop effective silage for different root, tuber and banana crop combinations and different types of livestock, as well as explore business models involving rural youth as specialized silage producers. This will be done in collaboration with researchers from the CGIAR Research Program on Livestock.

The Entebbe meeting emphasized the urgency, for the entire RTB program, to recognize the central importance and power of consumers and other end-users in today’s rapidly changing food systems. Cluster CC4.1 will seek to catalyze multi-disciplinary dialogue and collaboration around this central opportunity involving different RTB research teams and partners from universities and food industries. The goal is to enable innovations that harness the full potential of RTB crops

for future markets, and do so in a way that is sustainable, equitable, and contributes to meeting global nutrition and economic challenges.

Over the coming months, the cluster team will consult with partners and stakeholders in Uganda, Nigeria, Peru, and Vietnam to identify strategic opportunities in these countries where important RTB post-harvest research is under way, and to help finalize a global research agenda for RTB in this area.

CATTLE

UF scientists work to develop heat-resistant ‘cow of the future’. University of Florida, 23 June 2017. <http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/news/2017/06/23/uf-scientists-work-develop-heat-resistant-cow-future/>

Full article

University of Florida scientists are working to breed the “cow of the future” by studying the more heat-tolerant Brangus cow — a cross between an Angus and a Brahman.

Raluca Mateescu, an associate professor in the UF/IFAS department of animal sciences, is part of a team of UF/IFAS researchers that has received a three-year, \$733,000 federal grant for this research.

“The grant allows us to track down DNA segments from the two breeds and figure out which regions of the cow’s DNA are important to regulate body temperature,” Mateescu said.

More than half the cattle in the world live in hot and humid environments, including about 40 percent of beef cows in the United States, Mateescu said. By using genomic tools, researchers aim to produce an animal with superior ability to adapt to hot living conditions and produce top-quality beef.

Long-term, UF/IFAS researchers want to develop the knowledge and tools the cattle industry needs to increase tolerance to heat stress. At the same time, researchers hope to increase efficiency in production, reproduction and meat quality.

“This offers a powerful new approach to address the challenges of climate change and develop climate-smart productive cattle for a future, hotter world,” Mateescu said.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Special Issue of Agriculture for Development on Climate – Smart Agriculture. By Paul Harding, Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research, 23 June 2017.

<https://ccafs.cgiar.org/blog/special-issue-agriculture-development-climate-smart-agriculture#.WU0FL7pFyUk>

Full article

In 2016, the editors of *Agriculture for Development*, the journal of the Tropical Agriculture Association (TAA), invited Bruce Campbell and Dhanush Dinesh to guest edit a special issue on climate-smart agriculture. In consultation with the Coordinating Editor of the journal, they interacted with colleagues and partners at the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) to produce a broad-ranging selection of articles, news from the field, and book reviews. The special issue of the journal (*Ag4Dev30*) was published in May 2017. Read the special issue here, <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/81017>.

In their guest editorial, Campbell and Dinesh explain how agriculture and food systems stand at the nexus of three of the greatest challenges of the 21st century: overcoming food insecurity, coping with the impact of climate change, and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For these reasons, a major movement has arisen around ‘climate-smart agriculture (CSA)’, which is focused on the three pillars of productivity, adaptation and mitigation. The development of the CSA concept and its relationship with climate change and agricultural development is described in a new book entitled *Climate change and agricultural development: improving resilience through climate smart agriculture, agroecology and conservation*, edited by Udaya Sekhar Nagothu and reviewed in this special issue by Manyewu Mutamba.

In the first article, *The rise in Climate-Smart Agricultural strategies, policies, partnerships and investments across the globe*, Dinesh *et al* summaries key CSA efforts at global, regional and national levels. These include the growth in publications using the term ‘CSA’; global and regional alliances of national governments; regional and national strategies, policies and action plans; CSA concepts, programmes and projects; and investments in, and funding for, CSA. It is clear from this overview, that CSA really is one of the key ‘movements’ of our times. In *CSA-Plan: strategies to put CSA into practice*, Girvetz *et al* present guidance for operational planning and implementation of CSA. CSA-Plan frames actions into four components: situation analysis, targeting and prioritization, programme design, and monitoring and evaluation. Putting CSA into practice requires knowing what is climate-smart in different locations and what best suits the context. There are therefore often trade-offs between the three goals of CSA: productivity, adaptation/resilience, and mitigation. CSA-Plan has already been successfully applied in many countries and with various partners.

The third pillar of CSA focuses on mitigation. This is a challenge, particularly for developing countries, where food security and adaptation are the main priorities. In many countries, fertilizer

applications are below levels required for increased, sustainable production, and therefore need to increase. However, this usually leads to rises in GHG emissions. An article by Lini Wollenberg, entitled *The mitigation pillar of CSA – targets and options*, argues that agriculture in developing countries should be put on a low emissions development (LED) pathway. She justifies a mitigation target, for agriculture globally, of 1 gigatonne of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per year by 2030 to stay within a 2°C emissions budget of 6-8 gigatonnes CO₂e for agriculture generally. However, LED alone will not be sufficient to achieve this, so more ‘transformative actions’ will also be necessary. These include innovations such as methane inhibitors for dairy cows, and breeds of cattle and crops that reduce GHG emissions; policies such as more rigorous carbon pricing, taxes and subsidies; sequestering soil carbon; reducing deforestation; and decreasing food loss and waste.

In their article *Agricultural diversification as an adaptation strategy*, Noriega *et al* explain how agricultural biodiversity plays a key role in sustaining ecosystem services and adapting to climate change. However, the full potential of agricultural biodiversity is yet to be realized because it is context-specific, and is often dependent on appropriate enabling policies.

Loboguerrero *et al* highlight important contributions from outside the agricultural community in their paper *Climate services and insurance: scaling CSA*. Promoting CSA ‘at scale’ is a key challenge, yet climate services and insurance can provide tools to scale-up CSA by providing an enabling environment and protecting against the impact of climate extremes. In this context, climate services include the production, translation, transfer and use of climate knowledge and information to support climate-informed decision-making and climate-smart policy and planning. Index-based insurance, whereby payouts are based not on farmers’ actual losses, but on an objectively measured index that is correlated with losses, has overcome many obstacles associated with traditional crop insurance. This in turn has facilitated climate change adaptation and climate-resilient development goals.

Differentiation and inequality within communities can provide barriers that constrain women’s ability to adapt to climate change, thereby further widening the gender gap in agriculture. In their paper *Closing the gender gap in agriculture under climate change*, Nyasimi and Huyer demonstrate how gender-responsive climate-smart agricultural practices and technologies can provide opportunities to close the gender-gap, while at the same time adapting to climate change.

Van Etten *et al* argue that ‘big data’, including emerging techniques of machine-learning and citizen science, can help CSA to achieve scale and reach millions of farmers with options for tackling climate change. In their paper *How can the Data Revolution contribute to climate action in smallholder agriculture?* they describe and illustrate five data-related concepts linked to agricultural climate action: lean data, crowdsourcing, big data, ubiquitous computing, and information design.

A selection of Newsflashes and News from the Field articles illustrate some of the many CSA projects currently on-going around the world, including *Climate-Smart Agriculture across scales*

in Latin America, where Loboguerrero *et al* highlights how policy makers of Central America and Dominican Republic are producing a regional CSA Strategy, complemented by national efforts to promote and implement CSA, for example in the Nicaraguan coffee sector. At the local level, an approach for decision making in the context of climate change was developed in Colombia, which enables farmers to make decisions using climate forecasts, this approach is now being scaled up in Colombia's Nationally Determined Contribution.

Other examples of the scaling up of CSA are the climate-smart village approach, the Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP), and the VUNA project. Geoff Hawtin reports on climate change research in mountain areas; and Philip Thornton provides a salutary opinion piece on *Climate change and CSA in the current political climate*.

Finally, the TAA's 11th Hugh Bunting Memorial Lecture, entitled *Climate change and agriculture: risks and opportunities to food and farming systems in the tropics*, presented by Tim Wheeler, summarizes the challenge of global food production in the context of a growing population, over- and under-consumption of food, and a warming world. Impacts of climate change are presented, and some of the opportunities and responses are described.

CCCCC participates in the GCF Structured Dialogue with the Caribbean. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, Caribbean Climate The Region's Premier Climate Change Blog. 21 June 2017. <https://caribbeanclimateblog.com/2017/06/21/cccc-participates-in-the-gcf-structured-dialogue-with-the-caribbean/>

Full article

Members of Staff of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre are currently participating in the The Green Climate Fund's Structured Dialogue with the Caribbean held in Placencia, Belize, from June 19-22, 2017. The Structured Dialogue is organized in collaboration with the Government of Belize and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre with the intention to bring together key stakeholders to increase the involvement of Caribbean countries with the GCF.

Participation of countries in the Caribbean region includes Ministers, senior government officials, including representatives of the GCF National Designated Authorities (NDAs) and Focal Points, Accredited Entities, Readiness delivery partners, civil society organizations, private sector representatives, GCF Board Members and Secretariat staff among others.

The four-day gathering provides an opportunity for countries and Accredited Entities to share their experiences in engaging with the Fund across key areas. It is also aimed at developing a

roadmap for countries in the region through identification of project opportunities in partnership with Accredited Entities, as well as mapping readiness and project preparation support needs that the GCF can provide. The CCCCC welcome this opportunity to engage with the countries and entities present at the meeting and look forward to collaborating on project preparation and implementation.

Dr. Donneil Cain, Project Development Specialist at the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre gave a brief overview of the CCCCC entity work programme development, which highlighted how the CCCCC develops their work programme; the process of the development of inputs into the work programme; addressing the challenges in developing the work programme; as well as identified ways in which the GCF could help support this process.

He highlighted that the Centre's work programme is guided by the priority of CARICOM countries as well as the Regional Framework and Implementation Plan, which outlines the strategic direction for the region's response to climate change risks. Projects are aligned with both national and regional strategies and plans. Climate modeling and information are also critical inputs into developing projects for our work programme. This important for building the climate change case.

Dr. Cain also identified that there are capacity constraints within the CCCCC but through coordination and collaboration, CCCCC is helping countries develop GCF ready programmes and projects. CCCCC acts as a conduit in the dissemination of relevant information to help this process and is committed to helping countries development priority programmes and projects.

The CCCCC is accredited for programmes/project value at between US\$10 million and US\$50 million; however, even when scaled, some of our adaptation projects would not fall within the range identified. Against this background, Dr. Cain suggested that Enhance Direct Access (EDA) facility, which is an on-granting facility, is important to delivering some adaptation initiatives in the region given their scope and scale.

On Wednesday, Dr. Mark Bynoe will expand to give details about CCCCC pipeline projects as well as identify project opportunities for the region.

The CCCCC expectations for the Structured Dialogue are:

1. Government and NDA will have a better understanding of the GCF processes and requirements for accessing funding from the GCF; and,
2. Enhanced collaboration between entities and countries to advance adaptation and mitigation projects in the region.

SOIL AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Soil pollution comes under scrutiny. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 23 June 2017.

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/897263/icode/>

Full article

Soil pollution, due mostly to human activities that leave excess chemicals in soils used to grow food, took centre stage at the 5th Global Soil Partnership (GSP) Plenary Assembly held at FAO headquarters this week.

Excess nitrogen and trace metals such as arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury can impair plant metabolism and cut crop productivity, ultimately putting pressure on arable land. When they enter the food chain, such pollutants also pose risks to food security, water resources, rural livelihoods and human health.

"Soil pollution is an emerging problem, but, because it comes in so many forms, the only way we can reduce knowledge gaps and promote sustainable soil management is to intensify global collaboration and build reliable scientific evidence," said Ronald Vargas, a FAO soils officer and Secretary of the GSP.

"Combating soil pollution and pursuing sustainable soil management is essential for addressing climate change," said Rattan Lal, President of the International Union of Soil Sciences, in his keynote address to the Plenary Assembly. Tackling human-caused problems through sustainable practices will mean "more change will happen between now and 2050 than during the 12 millennia since the onset of agriculture," he added.

"The GSP Plenary Assembly is a unique, neutral and multi-stakeholder platform to discuss global soil issues, to learn from good practices, and to deliberate on actions to secure healthy soils for an effective provision of ecosystem services and food for all," said Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General, Climate and Natural Resources. "Action at the country level is the new frontier."

The Plenary Assembly endorsed three new initiatives aimed at facilitating information exchange: the Global Soil Information System; the Global Network of Soil Laboratories, set up to coordinate and standardize measurement across countries; and the International Network of Black Soils, launched to increase knowledge about the world's most fertile agricultural soils, which are also known for their high carbon content.

Soil pollution under scrutiny

Around one-third of the world's soils are degraded, due mostly to unsustainable soil management practices. Tens of billions of tonnes of soil are lost to farming each year and one cause is soil pollution, which in some countries affects as much as one-fifth of all croplands.

The term soil pollution refers to the presence in soils of chemicals that are either out of place or at higher-than-normal concentrations. Such contamination may be produced by mining and industrial activity or by sewer and waste mismanagement.

In some cases, pollutants are spread over large areas by wind and rain. Agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides - and even antibiotics contained in animal manure - are also major potential pollutants and pose special challenges due to the fast-changing chemical formulas employed.

Soil pollution is an insidious risk because it is harder to observe than some other soil degradation processes, such as erosion. The hazards posed depend on how soil properties affect the behavior of chemicals and the speed with which they enter ecosystems.

The diversity of contaminants and soil types, and the ways they interact, make soil surveys to identify dangers difficult and expensive. GSP members endorsed the organization of a global symposium on soil contamination and pollution, to be held in April 2018, and supported global data networks for sharing information and harmonizing standards as a way of easing the burden.

Black soils

Although commonly referred to in national soil classifications, "black soils" are far from uniform. The new International Network of Black Soils defines them as containing at least 25 centimeters of humus and with soil organic carbon content above 2 percent; by this definition they cover about 916 million hectares, or 7 percent of the world's ice-free land surface.

Around one-quarter of black soils are the classic "Chernozem" type, with a humus layer of more than 1 metre; these are found in the breadbasket steppe regions of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and in the former prairies of North America.

The International Network of Black Soils will promote the conservation and long-term productivity of black soils by producing analytic reports and serving as a platform for knowledge sharing and technical cooperation.

TRADE

Agricultural Revolution Underway in the OECS. By OECS Media Release, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, 22 June 2017.

<https://pressroom.oecs.org/agricultural-revolution-underway-in-the-oecs#>

Full article

The Agriculture Sector in OECS Member States is on the brink of a new era in collaborative production for regional and international trade. A comprehensive grouping of regional agriculture stakeholders, which include Ministers, Manufacturers, Traders, representatives from the Bureau of Standards and the OECS Commission, are working together to ensure the success of the initiative.

The virtual OECS Agri-Export Working group began in June of 2016 and, only one year later, has seen many achievements due to the influence and reach of the agricultural stakeholders involved, paired with the technological nature of the ongoing online meeting, which facilitates speedy action and decision making.

Main achievements of the Agri-Export Initiative to date include:

- three refrigerated boats traversing the OECS and the wider Caribbean with agricultural produce and livestock;
- improvement of phytosanitary standards;
- change in production packaging from bags to boxes;
- forging new purchasing links with Trinidad and Tobago, Martinique, the United States and Canada;
- joint production to fulfill shipment quotas for international trade;
- development of an app to connect producers, traders, supermarkets and hotels virtually;
- identification of high value crops for each Member State with a view to increase production in these areas for regional and international trade; and
- Identification of designated Agriculture point persons in each OECS Member State to ensure quick implementation of projects and timely feedback.

Regional trade has been greatly facilitated with the service of the *MV Sea Rambler*, the *MVC American Liberty* and the *Iron Cat*, which export a range of fruits and vegetables from as far north as the British Virgin Islands to as far south as Trinidad and Tobago.

Minister for Agriculture in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Hon. Saboto Caesar, said that while regional trade is a priority as the OECS strives to lower its food import bill, it is also important that Member States aim to be self-sufficient.

“At all costs, we should try not to import goods which can be produced on the island – whether from the OECS or extra regionally.”

“National agricultural platforms need to step up and produce more. We should aim for self-sufficiency and collaborate to consolidate exports for extra regional trade,” Minister Caesar said.

Joint production for international markets is an area of great potential for regional integration and the continued development of OECS economies.

OECS Director General, Dr. Didacus Jules, said that the extensive achievements that the working group was able to cover in the space of a year was not only testament to inter-regional collaboration but the strong desire of the group to fulfill the economic aspirations of the OECS farming community with new commercial opportunities via the shipping initiative.

“Agricultural prosperity remains paramount to the OECS, not only in terms of economic advancement and reducing the unacceptably high food import bill but ideally we want to move to a stage where we, as a region, can produce a marketable surplus for export markets,” Dr. Jules said.

Farmers in Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines recently worked together to fulfill a shipment quota of dasheen to the United States, an order which Minister Caesar said would not have been possible without collaboration.

Since the start of the initiative, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has shipped 3,325 50lb boxes of dasheen to the United States; and Dominica, on its first shipment, successfully exported a 20ft container comprising 425 50lb boxes of dasheen.

Opportunities to increase extra regional trade have also recently been strengthened by the B767 cargo aircraft service to St. Vincent and the Grenadines which offers 220,000 lbs. of cargo space per week. The aircraft also services Grenada which, in addition to securing loaders for goods, plans to invest in refrigerated containers for cold storage.

Projections for agricultural production in the region are expected to show a marked increase as Member States prepare for smart production aimed at efficiency and competitiveness, and innovative stakeholder collaboration in the sub region continues.

MoA Hosts Seminar for U.S Import Regulation for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. Dominica Government Information Service (GIS), 20 June 2017.

<http://news.gov.dm/index.php/news/4426-moa-hosts-seminar-for-u-s-import-regulation-for-fresh-fruits-and-vegetables>

Full article

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has collaborated with the United States Division of Agriculture to hold a seminar on U.S Import Regulation for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, for agriculture stakeholders last Friday.

Director of Trade, Matthan Walter highlighted U.S. support to Dominica's efforts to provide a higher standard of living for its citizens. Dominica and the U.S. continue to work together in many areas including trade.

“In 2013, export trade with the US reached EC\$506,823.12, we exported approximately EC\$424,967.23 worth of dasheen for example. We continue to export sweet potatoes, sweet peppers, teabags, nutmeg, other cinnamon, ginger and pawpaw to name a few to the U.S. It's clear therefore that...our hard-working farmers in Dominica's benefit from exportation to this market.”

The Director of Trade further revealed that in 2012 the U.S. imported over nine million tons of fresh produce to include bananas, pineapples, avocado and mangoes from Dominica. These imports doubled in 2016.

He urged stakeholders to take advantage of the opportunities which these statistics present.

“We feel that when we are asked to make efforts to meet regional and international standards that the government entities requesting this are putting unnecessary pressures on the farmers and hucksters or trying to create hardships in their business. I want to tell you today that we live in a new dispensation and time is changing. Therefore, if standards are not met and regulations put in place by our trading partners not adhered to these training opportunities will be distant and non-accessible.”

Representing the USDA in Trinidad, Head of Dominica's Plant Protection and Quarantine Unit, Ryan Anselm, said that the USDA in collaborating with its partners have put in place programmes and provided funding as well as technical assistance to prevent entry of invasive species to the U.S.

“Understanding the need for safeguarding the regions plant health resources we have established in collaboration with UWI a regional plant quarantine course which has sought to train 200 quarantine officers of the Caribbean. The programme has also trained 200 laboratory technicians in pest identification and diagnosis. Through the initiative of CAFSA and the USDA, FAO and

IICA, the region has set to train plant health officials in pest risk analysis which is important when we speak of trade facilitation.”

Through the OECS three Pest Risk Analysis Units will be established in Grenada St. Vincent and Dominica.

Barbra Spangler of the United States Department of Agriculture is in Dominica facilitating the seminar.

“I will be explaining some of the tools that we hope producers in the industry can use here to mitigate pests before they come to us and what happens if we do find a pest in the shipment and how we handle that.”

“Dominica has been doing very well. We get what we call non-compliance reports which tells us when we find something when it arrives on our coast that is not correct, it could be the paperwork but it could be a pest that we have to take action on. The Caribbean has come a long way in finding out and stopping those things from happening. Some countries have more to do than others, however ... the more trade problems you have it's not bad because that means probably the more trade you're doing. We would like to eliminate those problems when it comes to plant health but trade problems mean more trade so it's kind of a trade-off.”

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

On the fields – Agriculture Minister visits affected farmers in Tabaquite, Moruga, Debe, Woodland, Orange Grove, Felicity and Rio Claro. Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, Media Release, 22 June 2017

<http://www.agriculture.gov.tt/main-media/latest-news/769-on-the-fields-agriculture-minister-visits-affected-farmers-in-tabaquite-moruga-debe-woodland-orange-grove-felicity-and-rio-claro.html>

Full article

Hundreds of thousands of dollars in agricultural produce were submerged by flood waters, arising from the passing of Tropical Storm Bret on Monday 19th June, 2017. The Agriculture, Land and Fisheries Minister was out for a day's journey, to Tabaquite, Moruga, Debe and Woodland, to see first-hand some of the hardest hit areas on Wednesday 21st June, 2017. He also visited the Orange Grove, Felicity, Rio Claro areas on Tuesday 20th June, 2017.

Senator Rambharat spoke personally to the farmers affected and shared with them that *'the whole idea of going around the country, is that as a policy maker I can see for myself and I can*

understand what we have to do – if it is for a long term or a one-off – on the issue of compensation’. He noted that ‘the main issue is the loss of crops which were nearing the end of their productive cycle; the loss of new plants and seedlings; and a factor that little attention is paid to, the deluge of mud, rubbish and bamboo/tree parts left in the fields. These are also farmers farming along a watercourse, and farming on lands that they do not have leases for. Further, the Minister noted that ‘farmers deal with expected rainfall as part of their practices. We are dealing with weather where fields are deluged with water that cannot drain off quickly. There are measures in place to deal with water; but some levels of rainfall cannot be handled in low level areas.’

Despite stating that the extent of the damages was a ‘discouraging’ one, Minister Rambharat stated that he knows that the farmers are ‘very resilient’. He also encouraged all farmers to contact their Extension Officers at the Country Offices.

The Minister also shared that in light of the flood damage across the country, specific actions were taken, including:

- that ADB's Field Officers and other staff identify borrowers affected by the Tropical Storm and, as far as possible, make arrangements with these borrowers to assist them as they recover;
- that the Permanent Secretary arrange to have the requisite staff set up from next Tuesday at locations close to affected farmers, to receive requests for assistance, and that these requests be considered on a priority basis having regard to existing policy and available resources; and
- that immediately all Ministry staff and physical resources in all divisions be utilized to assist communities across the country, particularly farmers and fisherfolk.

Some of the farmers on hand to speak directly to the Minister were Mr. Andy Badal, Mr. Hadyn Frederick and Mr. Elvis Ramlal. Accompanying the Minister on this tour were staff of the County Offices, Regional Administration South, Regional Administration North, Forestry, Engineering Divisions.

More agricultural products should be supplied to supermarkets. By Cara L. Foster The Barbados Advocate, 23 June 2017.

<https://www.barbadosadvocate.com/news/more-agricultural-products-should-be-supplied-supermarkets>

Full article

James Paul, Chief Executive Officer of the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS,) expressed that it is his wish to see more local agricultural products supplied to supermarkets.

His comments came during the opening ceremony of a BAS and CTA training seminar titled “Good Agricultural Practices”, which was held at the Radisson Aquatica Resort yesterday morning. Paul revealed that yesterday’s workshop was the first of ten seminars that they expected to host.

He acknowledged that farmers generally had problems increasing their supply and maintaining an increased supply of product and explained that the reason for having these workshops was strictly to assist them in their problem areas.

“What we are trying to do is emphasize the best practices in the industry. There is a problem in terms of consistency from farmers in maintaining this level of consistency that supermarkets need,” he said.

He explained that addressing these consistency and quantity issues that farmers had was important, as he believed that the farmers had the ability to supply the markets with products, which would decrease the food import bill.

“We have to earn foreign exchange. As you are well aware, the country is importing too much of what it eats and we have the capacity in this country to produce those products. There’s nothing, except a few rare products that we cannot produce,” he said.

Paul announced that the BAS would be making a selection of particular farms in which they planned to demonstrate the things taught in the training seminars. He described this selection process as making an investment in the future of agriculture.

Additionally, the CEO expressed that he also wished to see an increase in the production of commodities. He noted that he understood that they could not get these products increased unless the farmers were adequately trained on good agricultural practices and noted that at the end of the ten workshops, participants would be thoroughly trained in every aspect.

FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

Public purchases from family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean: A strategic tool to aid in the eradication of hunger. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 19 June 2017.

<http://www.fao.org/in-action/program-brazil-fao/news/ver/en/c/896810/>

Full article

Public purchase programmes create a virtuous circle between family farming, local markets, government assistance programmes and consumers; providing benefits for all.

This is indicated in the study, published in English and entitled: "Public Purchases from Family Farming, and Food and Nutrition Security in Latin America and the Caribbean," by the regional project to support strategies of Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) and poverty reduction in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The document presents the lessons learned and successful experiences in various countries of the region, which have demonstrated the effectiveness of this public policy, thus providing valuable information to the countries.

Public purchase programmes also encourage better eating habits, create new markets for family farming, and promote public policy coordination.

"It is an innovate tool that is producing optimal results in the fight against hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean," stated Emma Siliprandi, Regional Coordinator of the project.

Siliprandi explains that the decision was made by the project to have the study translated into English, considering that these programmes of public purchases from family farming can also be an important tool for Caribbean countries in terms of food and nutrition security, as well as the inclusion of Caribbean farmers in institutional purchases. "On the other hand, FAO has received requests from other regions of the world that are interested in learning about these experiences in Latin America."

The book points out that such purchase programmes allow for increased social participation, diversified food production, increased income and improvements in quality of life for small farmers.

In addition, these programmes improve the diversity and quality of fresh food consumed by the most vulnerable populations, by providing healthy food to children participating in school feeding programmes, public hospitals and similar institutions

Public purchase programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean

The book, produced within the framework of the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Program, provides a broad view of the contributions of purchases to family farming as an efficient public policy for development.

At present, Brazil and Uruguay have public purchase laws in place for family farming, while other countries, such as Paraguay, have legal decrees regulating such purchases. Furthermore, there are currently several initiatives to create legislation for School Feeding and Family Farming, which include the topic of public purchases.

Brazil features two programmes of public purchases from family farming: the Food Purchase Program (PAA), which has been operational since 2003, and the purchase programme linked to the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), in force since 2009. In its first decade, the PAA alone assisted more than one million family farmers, who were "able to sell 3.6 million tonnes of food products."

A way to reduce costs

Public purchases from family farming could entail a reduction in the cost of food rations acquired by the governments for their respective social assistance and school feeding programmes, thanks to lower transportation costs.

In 2014, a pilot project was carried out in Paraguay, where school feeding coverage increased from 4,500 to 7,000 rations - using the same budget - simply by purchasing from family farmers.

Why purchase from family farming?

The study analyzes the structural aspects of supply and demand, along with institutional elements, agreements, legislation and management models, which guarantee the efficiency, equity and transparency of these programmes.

In addition, it presents ten lessons learned from the experiences currently underway in Latin America and the Caribbean, which serve as guidelines for other countries aiming to create or improve their respective public purchase programmes.

1. These purchases serve as a mechanism to strengthen and guarantee the human right to adequate food.
2. They are a policy to improve assistance to those most vulnerable.
3. Support local development and strengthen the "short circuits" (local markets) in commercialization.
4. Contribute to the formation of healthy eating habits.
5. Allow for the opening of new markets for family farming.

6. Fairer legal and regulatory frameworks of purchases.
7. Promote public policy coordination.
8. They contribute to greater social participation.
9. Increase the visibility of family farming in society.
10. They contribute to the diversification of food production.

AGRICULTURE-TOURISM

Government to ‘Stimulate’ Bahamian Entrepreneurship in Tourism; Create Agriculture-Tourism Linkages. Bahamas Information Services Press Release, June 15, 2017. [All News, Press Releases >](#)
<http://www.bahamas.gov.bs>

Full article

NASSAU, The Bahamas – The Government of The Bahamas must increase its commitment to encourage and support the development of home-grown businesses in tandem with direct foreign investment, Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Hubert Alexander Minnis said Thursday (June 15, 2017).

Prime Minister Minnis said a key economic objective of his Government is the development of an incentive framework for entrepreneurship.

This framework will facilitate local and international access to capital; the formation of joint ventures among private interests; improvement of business advisory and cultivation of tools to stimulate Bahamian entrepreneurship in tourism.

The Minnis Administration will also implement a plan that will achieve the long, sought after goal of creating linkages between agriculture and tourism to “effect significant reduction in the food import bill of hotels and restaurants.”

That Plan will enable the Bahamas Agricultural Marine Science Institute (BAMSI) to focus efforts on the production of select, quality products for both local and export markets.

The Minnis Administration will also privatize the Produce Exchange and will provide land, supplies, equipment and business services to Bahamian farmers to support the industry.

Tax incentives and concessions will be introduced to encourage Bahamian farmers and farming cooperatives throughout the country to promote sustained production and packaging initiatives and to ensure the continuous supply of quality products.

“We must boost local ownership in the tourism industry to promote sustainability and improve the livelihoods of Bahamians,” Dr. Minnis said during an address at the Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association’s Board of Directors and Membership Meeting.

“By example, are there Bahamians interested in providing airline services to The Bahamas? What about Bahamians who may be able to design computer software for the many aspects of the tourism product?”

“We must think boldly and widely about how Bahamians can own, or be involved in, the multiple dimensions of tourism,” Prime Minister Minnis added.

The Prime Minister said tourism is the platform from which the country can boost and launch a network of inter-related businesses.

“Your organization encompasses a myriad of products including multinational resorts, boutique hotels and fishing lodges, water sports operations and ground transportation companies. As diverse as you are, you all share the common goal of increasing your bottom line and growing your businesses.

“This then, must be one of the driving forces behind the master strategic plan which – in collaboration with the private sector – my Administration will roll out during this term in office.

“The Bahamas has always been a country that has welcomed foreign investment, but the experience of Baha Mar has taught us a great lesson.”

Prime Minister Minnis said a common lament facing the country is that its economy is not diversified enough. “We are confronted with the challenge of growing an economy that has been stagnant for several years. We are in a climate of unprecedented competition in the global and regional marketplace,” Prime Minister Minnis said.

“While diversification is needed, there is extraordinary diversification that can still be gained within tourism,” Prime Minister Minnis added.

The Prime Minister said his Administration has a number of plans designed to drive the economy through tourism-related initiatives.

Among them, is the introduction of legislation to make it attractive for international filmmakers to produce cinematic productions at a fraction of the cost comparable to other leading offshore film locations.

Prime Minister Minnis said there are also new hospitality products such as vacation rental homes “which are today operating outside of the regulatory environment in our country.”

“Such products will have to be registered with the Ministry of Tourism and appropriate taxation will be applied to level the playing field and ensure their contribution to the public purse,” the Prime Minister continued, “through registration, we can ensure that they meet our standards for safety and quality.”

The Prime Minister said another critical success factor in tourism is the more affordable delivery of goods and services, especially in the areas of food production, distribution and service.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June

Animal Quantitative Genetics and Genomics annual training workshop

Date: 19–30 June 2017

Location: Biosciences eastern and central Africa-International Livestock Research Institute (BecA-ILRI) Hub

Description: The training is strengthening the capacity of researchers in Africa to apply an in-depth understanding of livestock genetics to the design of livestock breeding programmes.

Website: <http://hub.africabiosciences.org/blog/scientists-applying-genomic-intelligence-to-sustainable-livestock-development-in-africa-at-the-beca-ilri-hub/>

July

Caribbean Food Crops Society (CFCS) Annual Meeting

Date: July 16-22, 2017

Location: Puerto Rico

Description: The theme for the meeting is: The Role of the Caribbean as a Research Hub to Advance Global Agriculture and Food Security.

Website: <http://cfcs.eea.uprm.edu/article/annual-meeting-cfcs-puerto-rico-july-16-22-2017-call-submission-presentations-deadline-extend>

August

Denbigh Show, Jamaica

Date: August 5-7

Location: Denbigh Showground, May Pen, Clarendon,

Theme: ‘Grow What You Eat... Eat What You Grow: A Salute to Our Farmers, Nation Builders’.

Website: <http://www.jas.gov.jm/Denbigh.html>

32nd West Indies Agricultural Economics Conference 2017

Date: 6-11 August 2017

Location: Georgetown, Guyana

Description: Theme: Food & Nutrition Security: the pathway to sustainable agricultural development in the Caribbean. Organised by Caribbean Agro-Economic Society

Website: <http://www.caestt.com/home/32nd%20W.I.A.EConference.php>

November

TropAg2017

Date: 20-22 November, 2017

Location: Brisbane, Australia

Description: Theme is “high impact science to nourish the world”, reflecting the critical role of science, technology and innovation to the many challenges facing tropical and sub-tropical agriculture and food production globally.

Website: <http://tropagconference.org/>

2018

October 2018

18th International Triennial Symposium of the ISTRC (International Society for Tropical Root Crops) will be in Cali, Colombia from 22nd to 26th October 2018.

<http://www.istrc.org/194-18th-international-triennial-symposium-of-the-international-society-for-tropical-root-crops-istrc-cali-colombia-from-22nd-to-26th-october-2018>