Ministers’ Brief

Jamaica

Contributing to the growth and expansion of the small ruminant industry

CARDI has been working with several partners to develop Jamaica’s small ruminant industry. The country has directly benefited from projects CARDI has co-implemented with partners like Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and European Union (EU), in the areas of forage improvement, productivity, training and capacity building and breed improvement.

Under the ongoing MFAT small ruminant project, activities will continue to build on the above mentioned areas but will also focus on improving animal genetics by using Artificial Insemination (AI) and Multi-Ovulation Embryo Transfer (MOET). In keeping with Jamaica’s vision to diversify outputs from the sector, activities will also be geared towards the development of value added products such as leathercraft, dairy products and cosmetics.

Under the CARDI/New Zealand project over 25 technicians were trained in AI and ET. The Hounslow Sheep and Goat housing and feed storage facilities were also upgraded. A ground breaking initiative of the project was the development of two mobile applications. The CARDI SR-Market brings buyers and sellers together in order to facilitate the sharing of information on the availability of live animals, meat, and farm inputs including small equipment, machinery and vet-medical supplies, which can then be traded offline by those participating in this virtual market.

The CARDI SR-Learn is an e-learning Moodle based platform which will be used for training and information sharing. The mobile application offers another level of functionality by delivering the training and information resources to stakeholders on their mobile devices. CARDI is working with HEART/NTA to develop a blended certification course for farmers and technicians in small ruminant production and management.

The information generated from these projects continue to be disseminated to stakeholders via a range of publications.
Supporting the expansion of the coconut industry

After several setbacks experienced in the 1980s, the coconut industry is making a comeback in the Region. Jamaica is one of 11 countries currently benefiting from the Regional 4 year project “Coconut Industry Development for the Caribbean” being executed by CARDI in partnership with the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the European Union (EU).

Under the project, a National stakeholder platform (NSP) was established to ensure the project activities address the needs of the various stakeholders along the coconut value chain. A key output has been the development of a Road Map which identifies the priority areas for developing the industry in Jamaica. Industry stakeholders have prioritized the following areas as critical to the expansion of the industry; the development of a business model, improved access to financing, increased availability of high quality planting material, improved farming practices and access to extension services and good manufacturing practices for processors.

Another key output under the project was the mapping and characterisation of coconut plantations across the island which allowed for the analysis of spatial patterns and issues related to coconut production in Jamaica.

Farmers and other stakeholders in Jamaica have benefited from training workshops on a range of topics including the Production of Quality Planting Material and Coconut Production technology.

To improve the availability and quality of seed nuts available to farmers, two nursery sites have been earmarked in (i) Hanover (to be established) and (ii) St Mary (for refurbishment). The Hanover nursery will also improve access of western farmers to nuts as currently most nurseries are in the east of the island.

Pests and diseases continue to be a major issue impacting productivity. CARDI is working to establish two IPM study plots in St Mary and St Elizabeth to evaluate approaches to the management of coconut Lethal Yellowing, Coconut mite and Ambrosia beetle so that we can inform growers on how to better to tackle these threats.

Providing support to cassava small farmers

The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) continues to provide training to the Bright River Farmer Cooperative in all aspects of cassava production, harvesting and post-harvest handling. In a workshop held on 18 July 2017 at the St. Mathews Anglican Church Hall in Santa Cruz, 45 farmers were trained. CARDI Representative, Dr. Gregory Robin made a power point presentation to the Cooperative members entitled: Cassava Production for Small Farmers. The workshop was organized by the Bright River Cooperative and additional specialist support was provided by Fersan on soil fertility and AG-CHEM Plant Limited, on the chemicals used to manage pest and diseases in cassava production.

The sessions were very interactive and feed-back from the farmers was positive. The farmers indicated that their knowledge in cassava production was enhanced and that they were now better prepared to provide Red Stripe Brewery with sustained supplies of cassava for starch production.

CARDI working to develop Jamaica’s castor bean industry

Three symposiums were held across Jamaica on Castor Bean production

CARDI and the Ministry Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAf) at Bodles were commissioned by the Petroleum Cooperation of Jamaica (PCI) to conduct research on Jamaica’s Castor Bean Industry. Over the period 2011 to 2015, CARDI evaluated 5 varieties of Castor Bean at the Sam Motta Demonstration and Training Centre (SMDTC) and Bodles, Agricultural Research Station. From the results, the Nordestina variety out of Brazil yielded well at both locations with a recorded oil content of over 40%. Based on this the variety was selected for commercial production over the imported Chinese variety Zibo 8 and the local large and local small varieties.

As a follow-up to the Grow Castor Project, which was launched in March 2017, CARDI partnered with Dr. Judith Johnson, Community Development Specialist & Social Entrepreneur / Jamaica Baptist Mission Agency (JBUMA) and Manager of the Castor Project, to develop a program for training RADA Extension Officers in Castor Bean Production.

Two symposiums were conducted to sensitize and train RADA Extension Officers, processors and farmers at the Golf View Hotel, in Mandeville, Manchester and at Hibiscus Lodge, Ocho Rios, St Ann; on the 17 and 24 May 2017 respectively. A third symposium targeting the Jamaica Castor Industry Association was held on 30 May 2017, at the JAMPRO Building, in Kingston. At the symposiums...
CARDI presented on its experiences with Castor Bean while specialist agencies Fersan and HIPRO presented on fertility and pest and disease control respectively. Thirty-seven (37) extension officers, 3 farmers and 2 processors benefitted from these trainings. The feedback received, will be used to update and finalise the technological pack on Castor Bean production.

**Improving the resilience of Jamaica’s agricultural sector**

Jamaica’s agricultural sector is set to benefit from the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR) which is being funded by Climate Investment Funds. Under the four components of the project, the Region will improve the acquisition and management of climate data and scale up innovative climate resilient initiatives in various sectors. As part of the agriculture component Jamaica will directly benefit from the establishment of a 1,800ft² weaning and hardening facility which will house disease free plantlets of economically important root crops. The facility will be built so it can be deconstructed in the event of a hurricane or the occurrence of strong winds. Resources will also be allocated to the continued refurbishment of the seed storage facility at Bodles.

**Increasing the availability of hot pepper seeds to Jamaican farmers**

The CARDI Antigua & Barbuda and Belize Units continue to supply hot pepper seeds for the West Indies Red, Scotch Bonnet, Moruga Red and Scorpion varieties to Jamaica. Collectively over 100lbs of seeds which could plant 1744 acres of pepper and can be converted to 17,440,000 lbs. (7,900 metric tonnes) of hot pepper mash with an FOB Jamaica value of US$13,000,000.00 were supplied by the Units over a 5 year period.

Under the recently concluded European funded, Agricultural Policy Programme (APP), CARDI supplied a seed extractor, germination chamber and other pieces of equipment to bolster the Seed Production Facility at Bodies Research Station in St. Catherine.

The Unit will continue to work with the Research station under the PPCR Project to expand and upgrade the facility. The overarching goal of these interventions would assist in maintaining seed viability at optimal levels.