



IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

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Agriculture *in the* News



Issues Affecting Caribbean Agriculture

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Agri. Ministers discuss Agricultural Policies affecting the Caribbean Region. Guyana Department of Public Information, July 26, 2017 <http://gina.gov.gy/agri-ministers-discuss-agricultural-policies-affecting-the-caribbean-region/>

A high profile seminar on agricultural policies in the Caribbean was held at the Hotel Royal Torarica in Paramaribo, Suriname by the Environment, Rural Development, and Disaster Risk Management Division of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) on Tuesday, July 25, 2017.

The objective of the seminar which concluded on Tuesday was aimed at bringing together Agriculture Ministers and other key policymakers from Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, The Bahamas, and Trinidad and Tobago to discuss the interpretation of agricultural analyses that were conducted in recent years by the IDB and the respective governments.

For more information see page 12

Agriculture in the News is a weekly newsletter which provides a compilation of selected news articles on issues affecting agriculture in the Caribbean region. Articles from Newspapers, Online News Service Agencies, Newsletters and Press Releases are featured.

For copies of documents cited, visit the web address or source of the information provided.



IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

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SWEET POTATO

Investing in Caribbean sweet potatoes. Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), 20 July 2017

<http://www.cta.int/en/article/2017-07-20/investing-in-caribbean-sweet-potatoes.html>

Full article

CTA and the [Finance Alliance for Sustainable Trade](#) (FAST) have launched an investment guide for the sweet potato sector in Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) countries as part of a wider project to assist small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the region and help them obtain finance.

Traditional financial institutions in the Caribbean only invest a small percentage of their portfolio in the agricultural sector, yet there is an attractive enabling environment for investment in some countries. To raise awareness of the promising opportunities of sweet potato investment among investors, the guide provides information on the increasing demand for sweet potatoes worldwide, cycles of production and added value of growing sweet potatoes, and local governments' efforts to promote production. The guide also details the range of risks associated with investment in the region, and basic recommendations for how they could be addressed.

Global sweet potato markets are thriving and demand high market prices with potentially lucrative returns to stakeholders if high efficiency is obtained along the value chain. The European market for sweet potatoes is relatively small but growing considerably, suggesting an interesting market opportunity for CARIFORUM sweet potato agribusinesses. In addition to increasing worldwide demand, the guide also states that sweet potatoes are a good investment because the region has good export relationships with major consumers, and a tradition of growing the plant. A will from local governments to increase agricultural production, good climate conditions, and a soil quality that permits production of up to three crops per year, also showcases the favourable conditions for agriculture in the region, while common languages, a high financial institution presence, and strong credit information sharing all emphasise the ease of doing business in the Caribbean.

Caribbean governments want to diversify away from traditional sectors such as tourism, rum, bananas, and sugar, and diversification into sweet potato production takes advantage of Caribbean countries' structures for agriculture production and their already established trade relationships with global importers of sweet potatoes. If sweet potato output from local idle land were maximised through access to adequate resources and technology, it would provide a significant boost to the economies of the region. However, to capitalise on this growth, farmers need to obtain financing to improve production infrastructure and acquire inputs, ultimately expanding their production levels profitably. The guide particularly identifies the need for investment in cultivation and irrigation equipment, climate change adaptation technology, and to enable value chain integration. Farmers also need innovative financing mechanisms that take their production cycles into account, which will also benefit other members of the value chain, including those who provide input and machinery.

Ultimately, the aim of the guide is to promote responsible investment that benefits SMEs and helps the region access export markets. An investment can decide the future of a farm and the

family it supports, as well as modelling good practices for the broader community in which it is situated. It can also ensure that land is used in a way that is economically, environmentally and socially responsible.

FAST hopes to continue its partnership with CTA and create a lasting impact for agricultural SMEs in CARIFORUM countries by supporting them and by helping them gain access to financing to improve their businesses and livelihoods.

For more information on the sweet potato investment guide, please visit:
<http://www.cta.int/en/news/investing-in-caribbean-agriculture.html>

FRUIT

Nevis Fruit Festival set for August 4th. By Nevis Island Administration, 25 July 2017.
<http://www.nia.gov.kn/index.php/news-4/news-articles-3/3098-nevis-fruit-festival-set-for-august-4th>

Full article

NIA CHARLESTOWN NEVIS (JULY 25, 2017) -- Growing public interest and creativity of entrants in the ice cream and cake contests, are among the driving forces behind the Department of Agriculture's annual Fruit Festival.

This year, the festival's 12th edition will be held at the D. R. Walwyn Plaza in the heart of Charlestown on August 04, 2017.

Eric Evelyn, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture says preparations are progressing smoothly for this year's event. The festival is known to highlight fruits on Nevis and their versatility.

For this year's ice cream competition, the base fruit ingredient must be local mangoes. Evelyn, listed some reasons why the Department selected mangoes for that contest.

"With the abundance of mangoes that we have on the island at present, we decided that that is the fruit that is the most abundant, very readily obtainable and it is something that all persons willing to take part in the ice cream competition will be able to get their hands on for free," he said.

In the case of the cake baking contest, competitors are free to incorporate any local fruit in their entries in the cheese cake, plain or light fruit and the heavy fruit categories. The use of local fruit will attract more points.

Evelyn noted that over the years, participants in both the contests seem to be getting more and more creative.

He urged persons wishing to enter any of the competitions to register with the Department of Agriculture during normal working hours.

Speaking of the prizes, Evelyn stated that they are in the process of securing an array of attractive prizes and trophies for all participants and the ultimate winners.

ORGANICS

Diaspora Agriculture Task Force Engages Local Farmers By Peta Gay Rowe Jamaica Information Service, July 25, 2017

<http://jis.gov.jm/diaspora-agriculture-task-force-engages-local-farmers/>

Full article

The Jamaica Diaspora Agriculture Task Force has been engaging Jamaican farmers in a number of initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable organic farming.

The initiatives, which are in line with the Government's economic growth agenda, are to ensure that local farmers are trained, and that appropriate technology and financing options are available to enable them to capitalise on the demand for organic foods in the United States.

In an interview with JIS News, member of the Jamaica Diaspora Advisory Board, West/Midwest Region, USA, Kimone Gooden, said that there are huge economic opportunities overseas for farmers of organic foods, "so if we help to develop the organic market in Jamaica, then that would be a direct financial impact to the industry."

Ms. Gooden, who is also the outgoing Head of the Agriculture Task Force, noted that approximately US\$80 billion is spent per year on organic foods and there are not enough producers to meet the demand.

"We wanted to add value to the Jamaican economy and we saw agriculture as a way to make this contribution. The Task Force involves people who love farming and see the value in farming, especially with the growing organic market in United States, so promoting organic, sustainable farming in Jamaica and getting these products in the States is a good investment," Ms. Gooden said.

She explained too that the Task Force will be creating an investment circle to ensure that in addition to their voluntary contributions, there is direct financial influence to the country.

"We will be launching the Jamaica Diaspora Agriculture Task Force investment circle at the Diaspora Conference in Kingston. Persons in the Diaspora who are interested in investing in farming enterprises will be pooling money to assist with agricultural projects," Miss Gooden said.

She informed that starting September 2017, farmers will be able to apply to the circle to get funding for their projects. "The investors will be evaluating the projects and the winning project will be awarded the money," she said.

She explained that if the farmer does not get the financial assistance in September, there will be other opportunities as the cycle will run every three months.

In addition to the investment circle, the Task Force will be connecting farmers to overseas market by creating a free website for farmers called 'yaad market'.

Ms. Gooden said farmers will be able to upload a list of their produce on the site, thereby enabling buyers from Jamaica and overseas to see what produce are available and put in their orders.

She further noted that the Task Force will be at the upcoming Denbigh Agricultural Show in Clarendon next month to help farmers to get on the Jamaica Diaspora Agriculture Task Force online initiative.

“In addition to helping the farmers find and access overseas markets and buyers to sell their produce using the online platform, we will be continuing the champion organic farmer competition and the training in organic farming techniques,” Ms. Gooden informed.

She noted that the Task Force has partnered with the Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS) and has been working on increasing the knowledge of farmers through training.

Through partnership with the JAS, the Task Force has been able to train several farmers in organic farming techniques, packaging (especially for international standards), trading procedures and quality control. She said these efforts should lead to an increase in the output to be exported.

Ms. Gooden explained that the Jamaica Diaspora Agriculture Task Force is a voluntary organisation and she is encouraging others to join.

“This is how we, the Diaspora, give back and this is our contribution to the country’s economic growth because all the profit goes back to the farmers, which means that it stays in the country,” she said.

The Jamaica Diaspora Agriculture Task Force is one of several established by Jamaicans living abroad who want to give back to the country.

The ‘Jamaica 55 Diaspora Conference’, which is organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, is being held under the theme: ‘Partnering for Growth’. It is being staged over the period July 24 to 26 at the Jamaica Conference Centre.

Jamaica Must Develop Organic Agriculture Industry – J.C. Hutchinson By [Latonya Linton](#) Jamaica Information Service, July 14, 2017

<http://jis.gov.jm/jamaica-must-develop-organic-agriculture-industry-j-c-hutchinson/>

Full article

Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. J.C. Hutchinson, says Jamaica must “vigorously pursue” the development of its own organic agriculture sector.

He said the demand for organic produce continues to grow, with the global market estimated to value US\$80 billion in 2015.

“There are several proven benefits of organic farming, not least of which is the elimination of the use of synthetic inputs, fertilisers and pesticides. With the increasing consumer demand for organic produce, there can be no doubt that this is a pathway to the future,” he said.

The Minister made the call as he launched a range of organic fertiliser products at The Jamaica Pegasus hotel in New Kingston on Thursday (July 13).

Local company, Growers Choice Avery’s Organic has partnered with the KIMITEC Group from Spain for the distribution of the products in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean.

KIMITEC manufactures organic fertilisers, which help to boost soil structure and development of the plant’s root system, thereby improving crop quality and quantity.

Minister Hutchinson welcomed the introduction of the KIMITEC range of organic fertilisers in Jamaica.

He said the use of the products, coupled with the best farming practices, will go a far way in not only boosting farm productivity and profits, but also in improving the availability of safe and wholesome food to consumers.

He added it is his “fervent wish that the products will boost the production levels of farmers and, thereby, contribute to this Government’s commitment to ensure an agricultural industry that brings growth and prosperity to Jamaica”.

General Manager of Growers Choice Avery’s Organic Company, Prince Avery, noted that the fertilisers will stimulate the soil and increase farm yields.

“(Produce) are going to have a longer shelf life. It is something that will be good for everyone overall. Going organic is the right way to go,” he said.

He noted that the fertilisers are liquid-based, which will be ideal for local farmers, who are moving away from the granular products.

“You have a lot of farmers in Jamaica who are going liquid instead of using granular fertiliser, and they are able to cut back on cost when they go liquid,” Mr. Avery said.

AGRO-ENERGY

PCJ biofuels project reaches vehicular trials phase. Jamaica Observer, 21 June 2017

http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latestnews/PCJ_biofuels_project_reaches_vehicular_trials_phase?profile=1228

Full article

KINGSTON, Jamaica — The Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica (PCJ) has announced that the biodiesel research being conducted by the energy company in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, Bodles Agricultural Research Station and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) is now in the vehicular trials phase.

PCJ's Group General Manager, Winston Watson made the announcement while delivering the opening remarks at the Jamaica Alternative Energy Expo last Friday.

“Through our research, we found that the castor plant is feasible for the development of biodiesel and we have developed a B5 blend, which is now being used in vehicular trials,” said Watson.

“While we cannot divulge too much information about the results at this point in time, we are refining the formula based on feedback from the trials, which have been ongoing since December 2016. We are optimistic that once this phase of the research is completed our B5 blend of biofuels will be an affordable option for driving energy efficiency in the transportation sector,” he added.

The University of Technology, Jamaica will be moving forward with research on biofuels and other projects under a partnership agreement, which the PCJ signed with the tertiary institution earlier this year to promote research and development in renewable energy.

Through the incorporation of the PCJ's B5 blend, it is anticipated that about 97,000 barrels of imported oil will be displaced, amounting to savings of approximately J\$540 million annually on Jamaica's energy bills.

The project is also expected to give the local agricultural sector a boost, as a new market of crops will be in demand for farmers to supply.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate Change Resilience Training Workshop now on in Barbados. CCCCC, 25 July 2017

<https://caribbeanclimateblog.com/2017/07/25/climate-change-resilience-training-workshop-now-on-in-barbados/>

Full article

July 25, 2017: A national workshop to familiarize and train selected Barbadian government workers in the application and use of several tools and models to aid development and reduce the risks associated with Climate Change, will run from July 24 to August 4, 2017.

The workshop which is being held at the Cave Hill Campus, University of the West Indies (UWI), is organized under the USAID-funded Climate Change Adaptation Program (USAID CCAP) which aims to build resilience in the development initiatives of 10 countries in the Caribbean, as they tackle climate change induced challenges which are already being experienced.

Under the project the Caribbean Assessment Regional DROught (CARiDRO) tool; the Weather Generator, the Tropical Storm Model and accompanying web portal and data sets have been developed and are being introduced to help countries to enhance their development activities to reduce the risks to natural assets and populations, due to climate change.

The tools are open source online resources to provide locally relevant and unbiased climate change information that is specific to the Caribbean and relevant to the region's development. The integration of the tools into national policy agendas across the region is being spearheaded through regional and country workshops which are crucial to ensuring effective decision-making and improving climate knowledge and action.

The beneficiary countries are Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

The CCAP project was designed to build on both USAID's Eastern and Southern Caribbean Regional Development Cooperative Strategy, which addresses development challenges in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean, and the CCCCC's Regional Framework for Achieving Development Resilient to a Changing Climate and its associated Implementation Plan that were unanimously endorsed by Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads.

FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

A spotlight on the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. Bioversity International, 25 July 2017

<https://www.bioversityinternational.org/news/detail/a-spotlight-on-the-un-decade-of-action-on-nutrition/>

Full article

In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly announced a United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) – a timely call to action to eradicate hunger and end all forms of malnutrition. Following on from the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals and the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), national governments need to create the conditions necessary to feed and nourish the planet’s growing population.

As part of activities around the Nutrition Decade, the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) has published a special issue of UNSCN News. The publication features papers related to the Decade’s six action areas identified in the ICN2 Framework for Action: (1) sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets; (2) aligned health systems providing universal coverage of essential nutrition actions; (3) social protection and nutrition education; (4) trade and investment for improved nutrition; (5) safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages; and (6) strengthened governance and accountability for nutrition.

Bioversity International scientists from our Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems Initiative have co-authored two chapters in Action Area 1: sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets:

- [Creating sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets \(pages 15–22\)](#)

https://www.bioversityinternational.org/fileadmin/user_upload/about_us/news/publications/Action_Area_1_UNSCN_Herforth_News.pdf

- [Leveraging agrobiodiversity to create sustainable food systems for healthier diets \(pages 23–32\)](#).

https://www.bioversityinternational.org/fileadmin/user_upload/about_us/news/publications/Action_Area_1_Kennedy_UNSCN_News.pdf

At Bioversity International, we study how the diversification of the whole diet, using locally available vegetables, fruits, pulses, nuts and seeds, and animal source foods, across seasons, can provide missing nutrients. In particular, we investigate how a range of underutilized crops which have largely fallen off research-for-development agendas can provide nutritious alternatives within a diverse diet.

To find out more and download a free copy of the publication UNSCN News 42: [A Spotlight on the Nutrition Decade](#), [click here](#).

<https://www.unscn.org/en/resource-center/Unscn-news?idnews=1682>

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Significant Opportunities for Investment in Agriculture – Stanberry by Garfield Angus, Jamaica Information Service, July 28, 2017

<http://jis.gov.jm/significant-opportunities-investment-agriculture-stanberry/>

Full article

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Donovan Stanberry, is calling on members of the Diaspora to take advantage of the “tremendous” opportunities that exist for investment in agriculture.

Such investment, he noted, could boost production and food security, cutting the country’s food import bill, which amounts to almost US\$800 million annually.

“There is enormous opportunity for import substitution,” he pointed out.

Mr. Stanberry was addressing a plenary session of the Jamaica 55 Diaspora Conference at the Jamaica Conference Centre, downtown Kingston, on July 25.

He pointed to prospects in the cultivation of coffee and cocoa which, he noted, are in high demand around the world. Planting sugar cane for bioenergy is an area that holds promise, he noted further.

Mr. Stanberry told conference delegates that the production of food for the tourist sector is a significant area of opportunity.

He pointed out that only a “very small” percentage of food consumed by tourists is coming from local farmers. That is a captive market that we must exploit.”

The Permanent Secretary said the Government is committed to the development of the agriculture and has invested in the provision of irrigation systems for farming areas.

President of the College of Agriculture, Science and Education (CASE), Dr. Derrick Deslandes, noted that Jamaica can be competitive in the growing of several crops, and what is needed is the confidence of the investing community.

“We believe that Jamaica can compete; we study prices, we look at Jamaica’s cost of production data...it is just a matter of convincing the right investors to invest in those critical areas that can move us forward,” he told the gathering.

Other speakers at the forum included head of Farm Up Jamaica, Neil Curtis, and Dr. Julius Garvey, son of Marcus Garvey, Jamaica’s first National Hero

Restaurant week is a showcase for indigenous foods and products. Government of St. Kitts & Nevis. St. Kitts & Nevis Information Services. News, 19 July 2017

<https://www.gov.kn/>

Full article

Basseterre, St. Kitts, July 19, 2017 (SKNIS): Eat local, buy local and showcase local cuisine is one of the aims of Restaurant Week being celebrated in St. Kitts and Nevis from July 19 to 30, 2017.

This is the third annual event to be organized by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, the Hotel and Tourism Association and other partners. A number of officials appeared on this week's edition of the government radio and television programme "Working for You" and emphasized the promotional message.

"We are trying to make sure that we eat local, we buy local, we get our local people to have their small backyard gardens as well. We want our restaurants and our hotels and so on to purchase local fruits and vegetables and make sure that a lot of the things they have on their menu are made from locally produced products that we have," said Carlene Henry-Morton, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism.

According to the Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) – a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and the European Union (EU) – "the hospitality trade in many small island countries is dominated by western menus, based on imported foodstuffs, bypassing local producers and agri-processors." It adds that the imported food is mostly processed, which poses increased health challenges such as obesity, hypertension and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) to consumers. Indigenous produce is a healthier alternative and in most cases is cheaper than the imported product.

This year's featured produce for Restaurant Week is yam. As such, a number of special dishes that include yam are available for discount prices at participating restaurants, while yam related products are also available for sale at reduced costs..

"We call it Restaurant Week, but a lot of the focus is on the eat local, buy local, consume local; that is the mandate," explained the permanent secretary.

Networking is also an important goal of Restaurant Week. A tasting event was held on Sunday (July 16) at the St. Kitts Marriott Resort that allowed for exchanges between persons from local eateries and others. A forum was also held for agri-processors where they were able to interact with each other.

"We try as much as possible to create the space for networking. Just on Sunday for example, I had one entrepreneur saying to me that they have met another entrepreneur and they have said to that entrepreneur 'listen, I am going to sell your goods at my outlet' because some persons may not have a physical space to sell from so that is the type of networking we are trying to facilitate and promote," Mrs. Morton-Henry stated.

The businessmen and women also interacted with representatives from some of the larger hotels on island and those under construction in a bid to increase the supply of local produce.

AGRI-BUSINESS

Grenada to host Agri-Business Expo 2017. Government of Grenada website, 24 July 2017
http://www.gov.gd/egov/news/2017/jul17/24_07_17/item_3/grenada-host-agri-business-expo-2017.html

Full article

ST. GEORGE, GRENADA, JULY 24, 2017: Grenada is preparing to host an Agri-business Expo which will serve as a vehicle for regional and international exposure of the country's products.

The Grenada Agri-business Expo 2017 will be from Thursday, September 28 to Sunday, October 1, 2017, at the Grenada Trade Centre, in Morne Rouge, St. George.

During the launch on Tuesday, July 18, Agriculture Minister, Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford, said while there is creativity in the agri-business sector, there is need for a professional brand.

She said, "What we'll be doing over the next few weeks is to get the training to these small businesses; get them in line in preparation for exhibiting their products, because some of them – you know – are still tying little bags and doing little things - they don't have proper labels.

The lab has not tested their stuff to see if it's - the shelf life – to know if it can stay on the shelf for a while. We don't want that, but we have to make sure that if that happens, they would not lose all their monies that they have put into the project."

The expo is the brainchild of the Agriculture Minister, who saw the latent potential of the sector and declared 2017 the year of agri-business, in Grenada. Alva Browne, from the Ministry of Agriculture, spoke of the expo's objectives.

"The main objective of the expo is to foster networking and linkages among producers, agro-processors, investors and suppliers, while displaying Grenada's current agro-products and providing an avenue where established products can be showcased and improved and new products developed.

The expo will also serve as a vehicle for regional and international exposure of Grenada's products," Browne said.

Additionally, the Grenada Agri-business Expo 2017 will include a Career Day for students, a Farmers Market and Health Fair.

AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Agri. Ministers discuss Agricultural Policies affecting the Caribbean Region. Guyana Department of Public Information, July 26, 2017

<http://gina.gov.gy/agri-ministers-discuss-agricultural-policies-affecting-the-caribbean-region/>

Full article

Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana, July 26, 2017 – A high profile seminar on agricultural policies in the Caribbean was held at the Hotel Royal Torarica in Paramaribo, Suriname by the Environment, Rural Development, and Disaster Risk Management Division of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) on Tuesday, July 25, 2017.

The objective of the seminar which concluded on Tuesday was aimed at bringing together Agriculture Ministers and other key policymakers from Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, The Bahamas, and Trinidad and Tobago to discuss the interpretation of agricultural analyses that were conducted in recent years by the IDB and the respective governments.

Additionally, discussions were held on the future of Agriculture within the region and working as a collective body to ensure continued development in the agriculture sector in the Caribbean and Latin America.

During the seminar, Agricultural Policy Experts presented results of these analyses, and related studies on the determinants of agricultural productivity, growth and the impact evaluations of country specific policies implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Agriculture Minister, Noel Holder stated that the seminar offered interesting dialogue on agricultural policies in the region and measures on how agricultural effectiveness and efficiency in the region can be further enhanced.

Minister Holder was accompanied by Agriculture Sector Development Unit (ASDU) Project Coordinator, Mr. Khemlall Alvin.

TRADE

OECS Agri-Export Initiative at the forefront of Regional Agricultural Ministers Meeting. OECS, July 27, 2017

<https://pressroom.oecs.org/oecs-agri-shipping-initiative-at-the-forefront-of-regional-agricultural-ministers-meeting#>

Full article

— Food standard certification, market analysis and agricultural technology are areas earmarked for growth in the region's burgeoning Agriculture Sector.

Recommendations to take the OECS Agri-Export Initiative to the next level were reviewed by regional agriculture stakeholders convened at the 4th Meeting of the OECS Council of Agricultural Ministers held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines on July 25th 2017.

The OECS shipping initiative aims to complement existing regional trade by positioning the sub region to capitalise on new opportunities and to better exploit underserved markets within the region and internationally.

Minister of Agriculture in St Vincent and the Grenadines Hon. Saboto Caesar said a key aspect of the way forward is to ensure that agriculture stakeholders participate at the highest levels.

"We expect the Private Sector to come on board to assist in moving commodities intra regionally."

"We have a very large food import bill in the intra region and careful analysis and study has to continue to determine where we are going to move goods," said Minister Caesar.

Minister Caesar also elaborated on the benefits of a trade arrangement between the government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines with neighbouring Grenada, with hope that a similar model can be replicated amongst OECS Member States.

"We benefit significantly each year from moving cattle between the islands, we want to ensure that the positives of this bilateral relationship are placed on a multilateral footing for the benefit of stakeholders in the agricultural sectors of the sub region," added Caesar.

OECS Director General, Dr. Didacus Jules said the Agri-Export Initiative has provided a focal point that will lead to the full implementation of the OECS Agriculture Plan of Action (APOA).

"Our food import bill in the OECS stands at half a billion US dollars and, if you think of it, the import substitution possibilities of that market are huge."

"Import substitution would mean foreign exchange savings for our countries; it would mean greater employment in rural areas, especially for young people and women; it is going to mean healthier lifestyles, because it is the imported foods that are producing the non communicable diseases," said Dr. Jules.

Dr. Jules also spoke on the initiative's priority to engage young people in agriculture through innovative projects and the use of new technology.

"Great effort has been placed on finding ways in which we can encourage and stimulate young farmers to get involved in the trade, so that we can create a new era of prosperity in this region," commented Dr. Jules.

Private Sector representative Mr. Jai Rampersad, General Manager of Bunny Imports and Exports Ltd, delivered a presentation to the Council of Agricultural Ministers which outlined key areas that need to be addressed if the sub region is to maximise the opportunities available through the Agri-Export Initiative.

Rampersad's presentation centered around:

- **food standard certification (GAP, HACCAP and securing organic certification);**
- **detailed analysis of markets for agricultural commodities;**
- **adoption of an aggregator model (a draft model was proposed for the consideration of the Council);**
- **greater adoption of technology (specifically those that can prolong produce shelf life); and**
- **establishment of a unified OECS brand.**

The OECS Council of Agriculture Ministers welcomed these suggestions and recommended further discussion on support systems to complement the new model, which include mechanisms to ensure information sharing and a review of the general approach to crop production in the sub region.

Minister Caesar expects to see outcomes of the meeting begin to materialise in the coming months.

To view full Communiqué of the 4th Meeting of the OECS Council of Ministers of Agriculture click [here](#).

https://cdn.prezly.com/14/16bca0730311e7aceebf790bb25c1b/Communiqu_4th-Meeting-of-the-OECS-Council-of-Ministers-of-Agriculture.pdf

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

CARDI and the University of Belize to collaborate on knowledge sharing, training and research activities in the agricultural sector. Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) Press Release, 19 July 2017

<http://www.cardi.org/blog/cardi-and-the-university-of-belize-to-collaborate-on-knowledge-sharing-training-and-research-activities-in-the-agricultural-sector/>

Full article

The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and the University of Belize (UoB) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate in the areas of knowledge sharing, training and capacity building, resource mobilisation and research activities geared towards the development Belize's agricultural sector.

The MoU was signed by CARDI's Executive Director, Barton Clarke and the President of the University of Belize, Professor Clement Sankat at the University of Belize, Main Campus in Belmopan. Present at the signing were CARDI Representative, Omaira Avila Rostant and UoB, Central Farm Campus Administrator, Gordon Holder.

Barton Clarke said that while this MoU is mutually beneficial to both parties, he is particularly pleased with the education and training opportunities available for mentoring and developing young talent. He said that this is crucial for the development of a modernised, competitive agricultural sector across the Region.

Following the signing, a Public Consultation, facilitated by Clarke on CARDI's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 was held at the Administrative and Technical Services Conference Room, National Agriculture & Trade Showgrounds in Belmopan. Participants included officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, farmers, and representatives of international, regional and local agencies. The Strategic Plan provides the guiding framework on how the Institute will achieve its strategic goal of contributing to food and nutrition security through the development of innovations that contribute to sustainable, climate resilient value chains. Clarke said these consultations will take place in each of the 14 CARDI member states and give all persons and organisations with an interest in agriculture the opportunity to understand CARDI's work and to contribute to its relevance and effectiveness. The received feedback will be used to finalise the Strategic Plan before it presented to the Board of Directors in September.

For more information, please contact

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YOUTH

Agriculture Minister hosts graduating students of Guayaguayare Secondary School. Trinidad and Tobago Government Information Service Limited (GISL), 17 July 2017

<http://www.news.gov.tt/content/agriculture-minister-hosts-graduating-students-guayaguayare-secondary-school#.WXESMumQyM9>

Full article

July 17, 2017: *'As Minister I took the decision that my work as a Minister will involve my community of Mayaro, Rio Claro and Biche as much as I could'* said Senator the Honourable Clarence Rambharat, Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries to the Graduating Class of 2017 of the Guayaguayare Secondary School. The Minister hosted the students on Tuesday 11th July, 2017 at the Orientation Centre, Royal Botanical Gardens, Port of Spain, sharing that this school was chosen since *'accessing opportunities are not always easy [for] persons in rural communities'*.

Minister Rambharat, in his brief Address, highlighted some of the work of the Ministry which positively impacts on the lives of young persons, including the Planting of Trees Programme launched at the Belmont Secondary School on the occasion of World Environment Day and the provision of agriculture based publications to Libraries across the country. Senator Rambharat

shared with the students that there is a need for us to *'take care of our health'* and that *'as you get into your careers [you need] to make it a point to allocate time for your families, faith and community, making sure that you are always fit for purpose'*.

Mr. Charles, Geography teacher said *'our visit here is certainly one that has opened up our eyes to some of the programmes that the graduates can get themselves involved in, [particularly as it pertains to] their career path or career choices'*.

The students of the Graduating Class of 2017 are Jabari Arneaud; Zenobia Braithwaite; Shinaad Briggs; Karla Chandler-Weste; Shaquille Charles; Tishari George; Allyssa Jardine; Teresa Kalloo; Jerbarie Merriquer; Stephen Quamina; Akim Ravello; Justin Rigues; Mitra Simpoopath; Kessie-Ann St. Adge; Tineile Sylvan; Lenelle Tang; and Dillon Ventour.

The students toured the office of the Minister at St Clair where they enjoyed a private one-on-one session with the Minister, then they were treated to lunch. The students were chaperoned by two of their teachers – Mr. Gregory Charles and Ms. Lily Williams. Following the luncheon, the students received a guided tour of the Royal Botanical Gardens and the Emperor Valley Zoo.

They all received fruit hampers courtesy the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Company Limited; and chocolates courtesy the Cocoa Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited. The two A-Students - Lenelle Tang and Tishari George - received a phone, courtesy bmobile.

EXTENSION SERVICES

GRDB Officer Recognized for the first ever Extension Officer of Excellence in the Caribbean.

Guyana Department of Public Information, July 27, 2017

<http://gina.gov.gy/grdb-officer-recognized-for-the-first-ever-extension-officer-of-excellence-in-the-caribbean/>

Full article

The Caribbean Agricultural Extension Providers Network (CAEPNET) has recognized the works of Guyana Rice Development Board's (GRDB) Extension Officer, Rishal Ramsarran as the Extension Officer of Excellence within the Caribbean. The recognition was made by Dr. Norma Samuel at the recently held annual Caribbean Food Crops meeting.

Rishal Ramsarran, who is well known in farming communities across Region 4, possesses a passion for agriculture, sighting his love for the field as a result of being born into a successful farming family. He is passionate about helping farmers and as a result, he has given exemplary service as an extension officer for thirteen years and works with five hundred and forty-seven farmers spanning eight thousand, nine hundred and fifty acres of rice fields.

He has successfully applied the Farmers' Field School Methodology in offering his services to over five hundred farmers within his assigned area, resulting in yields increasing from twenty-eight bags to sixty-five bags of paddy per acre. The methodologies that were used to channel the information to the farmers are; the Farmers' Field School (FFS), method demonstration, regular field visits, farmers' field days, exchange visits, end of season reviews and other awareness programmes. These approaches have proven to be very effective in building relationships and promoting technologies among farmers.

Ramsarran stated that persuading farmers to adapt to new methods was not an easy task. He encountered challenges from the initial field schools that were hosted in his assigned area. The reaction of farmers after he explained the purpose of FFS was not welcoming'. Such comments did not deter him but rather, Ramsarran saw it as a challenge to prove his capabilities in the field. He realized that this was an opportunity to get farmers more interested in the FFS.

"The GRDB allotted a plot to conduct a demonstration where farmers of the FFS will attend training sessions to assess the crop and make comparisons with theirs. Through this method, I gained the respect of the farmers because I was able to interact with them on a weekly basis and at the same time allow them to exchange their views among themselves." Ramsarran said.

The areas that he oversees holds the records for the highest individual yield of paddy in the country of 65 bags per acre and the highest average yield of forty six bags per acre.

He noted that his aim as an extension officer is to assist all rice farmers in Region 4 to achieve an average yield of sixty (60) bags per acre. This, he added, will make them more competitive with other rice producing countries. It augurs well for income generation for Guyana as a country while aiding in the fight to alleviate poverty, especially in rural rice farming communities.

This achievement by the farmers has made a significantly positive impact on both their incomes and livelihoods and has resulted in many farmers having more disposable income to improve and upgrade their farms while enjoying a better quality of life.

CAPENET will present the 'Extension Officer of Excellence' Award to Mr. Ramsarran at a later date. The Board of Directors, Management and staff extends congratulations Mr. Ramsarran on his achievement and wishes him success in all his future endeavors.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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>

September

Caribbean Wellness Day

Date: 9 September 2017

Description: Theme: "A Brighter Future for our Youth". Focus is on youth ages 15-29

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

Agribusiness Expo 2017

Date: 28 September- 1 October 2017

Location: Grenada

Description: Hosted by Ministry of Agriculture, Grenada. Theme: "Agribusiness generating wealth, wellness and employment"

Website: <http://www.gov.gd/>

October

World Food Day

Date: 16 October 2017

Description: Theme is “Change the future of migration. Invest in food security and rural development”.

Website: <http://www.fao.org/world-food-day/2017/home/en/>

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/>

December

CARDI Day

Date: 5 December 2017

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>