Ministers’ Brief

CARDI and UoB join forces to advance Belize’s food and agriculture sectors

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 geared towards the development of Belize’s food and agricultural sectors.

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’s Main Campus in Belmopan on 19 July, 2017. Present at the signing were CARDI Representative to Belize, Omaira Avila Rostant and UoB’s Central Farm Campus Administrator, Gordon Holder.

Following the signing Professor Sankat elaborated on the MoU saying that it will facilitate staff exchanges between the Institutions and give CARDI staff the opportunity to deliver training programmes at the certificate and associate diploma levels at it’s Central Farm Campus. Barton Clarke said that while this MoU is 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.
CARDI wraps up stakeholder consultations on Strategic Plan

During the months of July and August, CARDI hosted a series of Public Consultations on the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan. These consultations which were held in each member state provided all stakeholders the opportunity to understand CARDI’s work and to contribute to its relevance and effectiveness.

The Strategic Plan is the Institute’s five year road map for transforming regional agriculture into a modernised, competitive, innovative and resilient sector. To translate this vision into action, CARDI’s work will focus on the Strategic Programmes of: Value Chain Services, Policy and Advocacy, Institutional Strengthening and Partnerships and Strategic Alliances. Achieving the objectives of these programmes will enable the Institute to contribute, in the short term, to increases in food supply to the Region, and in the medium term, to the stability of the agricultural sector, food and nutrition security and reduction in hunger and poverty.

Executive Director, Barton Clarke noted that the turnout from the public, the private sector and other key stakeholders strongly signals the renewed interest in agriculture development across the Region.

The Strategic Plan will be presented to CARDI’s Board of Directors, on 5-6 September, 2017.

CARDI technician Bradbury Brown proudly shows off the successful use of pheromone traps, that farmers are using to control the sweet potato weevil.

Boosting agricultural productivity in Barbuda

Representatives from CARDI, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Barbuda Agricultural Council Committee, facilitated a 2 day workshop on “Production and Productivity for Cassava and Sweet Potato” for farmers on 26 and 27 July in Barbuda.

On Day 1, participants learnt about good agricultural practices, germplasm bank establishment and rapid multiplication techniques for sweet potato and cassava. This was supplemented by a hands-on training exercise, post lunch, facilitated by CARDI’s Bradbury Brown on the construction of pheromone traps for the control of sweet potato weevil and rapid multiplication techniques.

On Day 2, the team visited farmer’s fields, and was pleased to see that pheromone traps were already being used. A visit to the proposed site for a dam and reservoir that will service the highland farms belonging to the Barbudan council was also made. CARDI Representative Paul Lucas said that CARDI will provide technical assistance to the council in developing a 2 acres demonstration farm showcasing irrigated vegetable production. The Unit will also provide technical support in the design and setting up of the irrigation system for the agricultural field station.

Collectively all these activities are geared towards improving food production in Barbuda.

CARDI part of the Bahamas contingent at CFCS

Michele Singh, CARDI Representative to Bahamas was part of the Bahamas Agriculture and Marine Science Institute (BAMSI) contingent that participated in the 53rd Annual Caribbean Food Crops Society (CFCS) Meeting in Puerto Rico. The BAMSI/CARDI group of researchers, presented on recent developments in the drive to strengthen the country’s agricultural sector.

By treating nutritional deficiencies in sheep, the Institute reported an increase in the overall health of ewes, the flock and neonatal survival rates. The livestock unit at BAMSI serves as the country’s hub for research, breeding and development.

Other presentations focused on the crop management for bananas post-disaster crop management of bananas and the implementation of the Associated Farmers Program (AFP). The AFP targets qualified farmers to locally produce crops with the goal of reducing the high food import bill. Through the AFP the availability of local produce has been increased in Andros and Nassau. CARDI which opened it’s office in 2016 in the Bahamas provides technical assistance to BAMSI.

The CFCS was held from 16 to 22 July, in Puerto Rico under the theme “The Role of the Caribbean as a Research Hub to Advance Global Agriculture and Food Security”.

CARDI and BAMSI scientists collaborated to prepare and present joint research papers and posters at the CFCS meeting.