



## **BANANA**

**Increasing employment for farmers** by PO, GIS. Government of Saint Lucia, September 25, 2017  
<http://www.govt.lc/news/increasing-employment-for-farmers>

### **Full article**

THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AIMS TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT FOR UP TO 1600 FARMERS

The Ministry of Agriculture hopes to increase the number of farmers participating in the Banana Improvement Productivity Project.

The project currently has between 300 to 400 participating farmers with a goal to increase that number to 1200. For this reason, Project Manager Kerde Severin said facilitators are working to acquire additional lands that are suitable for banana production.

“When the project started, there were about 300 to 400 active banana farmers. We are hoping that by the end of the project, by year four, we would have increased that by another 1200,” he said. “We have made some progress in this regard, last month we settled four young entrepreneurs in the Mabouya Valley, allocating five acres to each of them. They have started working on land preparation, preparing the fields for planting, and in Marquis, we have targeted 50 acres and we’re hoping that 10 young persons can be settled on those lands.”

Officers are also considering renting private lands in Roseau and Forestierre. Alluvial plains are particularly desirable.

“There are vacant lands in Roseau, Mr. Severin said, “so we plan to bring all the owners of those lands together and dialogue with them because there are persons who are interested in renting those lands, a we are targeting all those alluvial plains which are ideal for banana production.”

By the end of the project, Mr. Severin said the banana industry should provide gainful employment for up to 1600 farmers.

**Quality training for agriculturists** by PO, GIS. Government of Saint Lucia , September 21, 2017  
<http://www.govt.lc/news/quality-training-for-agriculturists>

### **Full article**

AGRICULTURISTS ATTEND A SERIES OF TRAINING SESSIONS ON BANANA QUALITY STANDARDS IN PREPARATION FOR EXPORT LATER THIS YEAR.

Farmers and technical officers associated with the Ministry of Agriculture’s Banana Productivity Improvement Project, have undergone a series of training sessions.

Project Manager Mr. Kerde Severin, said the training sessions are key to providing a superior product.

“We are working very closely with the banana companies. Every week we meet with Winfresh, NFTO, and TQFC on a bi-weekly basis, and we discuss all the issues, the areas of collaboration, and the areas that need to be beefed up. We discuss how we can get farmers to be more productive, and how to improve the quality of the fruit shipped to the UK. One of the things we have agreed is to have what we call one common standard. So the quality of the fruit we produce for Massy Stores should be the same as what we ship to the UK; and the quality of the fruit we send to Barbados or Trinidad or Antigua should be the same, therefore there shouldn't be any difficulty for a farmer to transition from one market to the other.”

The sessions educate farmers and agriculture officers on maintaining a common standard that adheres to general market regulations, and also serves to certify farmers who meet those regulations.

“When the project started, the first thing we did as part of the orientation program for the officers was to bring in Winfresh and the certification body to train our staff so they can understand what the market requirements are. We do the same for farmers: before a farmer can be certified there is a process, and this is where our officers along with Winfresh representatives, and the team from the certification program come together to conduct this training.

“The sessions are ongoing thing and we're hoping that next year as we move into the second year of the project, that we can expand on some of the subject areas.”

The training sessions cover proper packaging practices, how to maintain the quality of the fruit, care for the fruit, and other aspects of post-harvest handling.

Along with quality standards training, the farmers liaise regularly with the extension officers in order to increase their production to the targeted 15 tons per acre.

## CITRUS GREENING DISEASE

**Citrus Greening.** Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries Facebook post, September 22 at 7:23am

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1172232042878352&id=280378942063671](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1172232042878352&id=280378942063671)

[https://www.facebook.com/Ministry-of-Agriculture-Land-and-Fisheries-280378942063671/?hc\\_ref=ARTjPv8X8BjtZJfwdi9WdAWYrQ7Zjqg8tWygvvIThmdJxnmjbqVA5Lg7hFhDzqNeJU](https://www.facebook.com/Ministry-of-Agriculture-Land-and-Fisheries-280378942063671/?hc_ref=ARTjPv8X8BjtZJfwdi9WdAWYrQ7Zjqg8tWygvvIThmdJxnmjbqVA5Lg7hFhDzqNeJU)

### Full article

[#HappeningNow](#) | [#MALF](#) | [#CitrusGreening](#) | Staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries and other key stakeholders - inclusive of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the University of the West Indies (UWI) and; the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) - meet to discuss the Citrus Greening Plan for Trinidad and Tobago at the Ministry's corporate headquarters in Chaguanas. The Plan aims at reducing: the level of aetiological / causative agents in the country; vector numbers and; the transmission of bacteria from vector to citrus.

Citrus Greening Disease also known as Citrus Huanglongbing (HLB) - caused by an insect spread bacterial infection -presents the greatest threat to the citrus industry in Trinidad and Tobago (1,200 acres). HLB has devastated millions of citrus orchards in Asia, America and the Caribbean, notably Jamaica and Belize. It reduces yields and compromises the flavor, color and the size of the citrus fruit before killing the citrus tree.

The meeting is being chaired by the Ministry's Chief Technical Officer, Dr. Simone Titus.

## SMALL RUMINANTS

**Farmers Happy For Hounslow Animal Research Centre** by Marlon Tingling Jamaica Information Service, September 30, 2017

<http://jis.gov.jm/farmers-happy-hounslow-animal-research-centre/>

### Full article

Farmers across western Jamaica, particularly in St. Elizabeth, are optimistic that the US\$5-million Hounslow Animal Research facility in the parish will go a far way in improving both the quality and quantity of the nation's small-ruminant stock.

The facility, which was officially opened in 2016, offers artificial insemination and embryo transfer services to farmers who are involved in goat and sheep rearing.

It was built jointly by the Agriculture Ministries of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, with support from Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), through funding from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Government of New Zealand, which also funded similar projects in six other Caribbean countries – St. Lucia, Guyana, Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, and Grenada.

In interviews with **JIS News**, the farmers said the centre is providing a vital service to the agricultural sector by adding new bloodlines to the goat and sheep industry, while rebuilding the animal stock.

Paul Walker, a goat farmer from Southfield, St. Elizabeth, says it will improve not only the quality of the stock but the numbers.

“As farmers we are always on the hunt for new bloodlines and species of goats and sheep as we seek to satisfy the growing demand for meat. We have heard that over 10,000 new hotel rooms are coming on stream in Jamaica within a short time, and I know that they will be needing goat and sheep meat to feed the guests. It is left up to us, the livestock farmers, and particularly those of us who are involved in the small ruminant sector, to satisfy the demand,” he adds.

Female farmer, Judith Grant, who hails from Accompong Town in St. Elizabeth, and who operates a farm with more than 30 heads of goat, tells **JIS News** that the research centre will literally breathe new blood and life into the small-ruminant sector.

Ms. Grant says although she is yet to benefit from the goat-revolving scheme, she is supportive of the centre, as farmers now have a source through which they can get much-needed support.

“The farmers have been silently calling for this kind of support, and now that it has materialised, their farm stock will improve leaps and bounds. I hope they are open to the training and guidance that they will receive, and once that is done, the prospects for the goat industry will surpass everyone’s dream,” she argues.

Another farmer, Seaton Pence, from the neighbouring parish of Westmoreland, says the research centre will also improve animal health, and support the traceability system that has been implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture.

“We will now be placed in a better position to trace our animals from the time of birth to the time the meat shows up on someone’s plate. We will now be producing animals that are of the highest quality, and with the traceability programme in place, we will be able to know where the animals came from in terms of their bloodline. I am very happy for the establishment of this facility and will make use of it myself, while encouraging other farmers to join the happy band,” he tells **JIS News**.

Meanwhile, the Hounslow Animal Research Centre is expected to play a major role in the education of agricultural science students in western Jamaica. A programme is already being worked out to include students from the nearby Newell High School, where the Ministry of Investment, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries adopted the institution’s agricultural science department.

Manager of the Hounslow centre, Audley Facey, who is also the Chief Livestock Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture, notes that more than 120 goats and 60 sheep have been distributed to farmers under a livestock distribution project at the facility.

Mr. Facey says the research centre will also assist farmers in not only developing new bloodlines of goat and sheep, but in controlling diseases.

He points out that the facility is equipped to do testing of samples taken from animals in order for the proper treatment to be recommended and given.

Mr. Facey notes that farmers are also being educated at the centre in areas such as animal husbandry, and, so far, more than 80 farmers have been trained.

It is estimated that approximately five million kilogrammes of chevon (goat meat) and just over two million kilogrammes of mutton (sheep meat) are consumed in Jamaica each year.

## PLANT BREEDING

**Researchers stumped by plants with multiple chromosomes plan new collaboration** by CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB), [Sep 26, 2017](http://www.rtb.cgiar.org/blog/2017/09/26/researchers-stumped-plants-multiple-chromosomes-plan-new-collaboration/)  
<http://www.rtb.cgiar.org/blog/2017/09/26/researchers-stumped-plants-multiple-chromosomes-plan-new-collaboration/>

### Full article

Some of the world's most beloved plants — coffee, bananas, potatoes, and roses, to name a few — could be made even better, but the complexity of their chromosomes either stumps or stifles scientists who study them.

“They’re polyploids, which means instead of having two sets of chromosomes like humans or corn or soybeans or peaches, they have four, six, eight or even more sets,” said Dr. David Byrne, professor of Rosa and Prunus breeding and genetics for Texas A&M AgriLife Research, College Station. “They are among the most important ornamental and food crops, but they are always a challenge when trying to develop better varieties.”

“With a diploid, or species with only two sets, researchers have two choices per gene when introducing a trait to breed a better variety,” he explained. “With a polyploid, if it has four sets of chromosomes, you have four choices per gene, for example. So it’s that much more complicated with multiple sets when trying to interpret what’s going on within the plant.”

Byrne decided to bring together scientists from around the world, including from the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB), to ponder how to collaborate and compare findings with the hopes of accelerating work on these plants. With a \$47,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture-National Institute of Food and Agriculture, about 40 researchers will convene in San Diego in January 11-12 to begin the work.

“In RTB, we are developing genomic tools to analyse polyploid and highly heterozygous genomes which are typical of our crops (cassava is diploid, but highly heterozygous), in order to assist and enhance breeding programs,” added Dr. Michael Friedmann, Science Office with RTB.

RTB breeding programs target the improvement of root, tuber and banana crops across a range of areas including nutritional content, resistance to pests and diseases, better tolerance to heat and drought, along with traits valued by consumers, such as high dry matter content in sweetpotato and cassava.

“This work is very challenging, and we look forward to collaborating with this initiative. We have much to contribute to each other, as these various crops share similar problems, and the tools developed can be made widely applicable,” said Friedmann.

Byrne went on to explain that advances in DNA sequencing, for instance, can cut through the genetic code of diploid crops in rapid speed, but lag when yielding information and methods of analyzing data on polyploid crops.

Byrne said while researching the topic, he realized various scientists are studying the issues of polyploids on individual species but not working together for overall, common areas that could benefit all of the crops and hasten advances and improvements.

“In general, progress in a breeding program that is working with polyploids is slower than diploids to begin with, and then not having the genomic tools to accelerate the breeding just makes it worse. There may be a study in potatoes and another in chrysanthemums, but they are not working together,” he said. “And we have a lot of the same issues in all these crops. So the concept here is to bring them all together and agree to work together — to try to put our heads together to solve some of the basic problems we have.”

In addition to scientists currently working on polyploid crops, Byrne plans to include affiliated industries interested in the advancement of these crops. He expects a “white paper” produced from the January meeting to clearly identify gaps in techniques and understanding along with providing suggestions on what research is needed to solve these problems.

“Hopefully by the time we are done, we will have a work plan to develop a grant that will enable us to work on improving all the polyploid crops,” Byrne said.

Read the original article and find more information on [AgriLife Today website](#)

## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Focus On Climate Smart Agriculture** by Julie Carrington. Barbados Government Information Service, September 21, 2017

<http://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/focus-on-climate-smart-agriculture/>

### Full article

From September 14 to 15, technocrats, policy makers and agricultural planners put their collective heads together to come up with suggestions as to how best to strengthen innovation agriculture systems to withstand the effects of natural or man-made disasters.

The officials, drawn from countries across the region, participated in panel discussions and other interactive sessions while attending the **11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planners’ Forum on Agriculture – Innovation Systems for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development**, at the Hilton Barbados Resort.

During the opening ceremony, Programme Manager for Agriculture and Industry at the CARICOM Secretariat, Nisa Surujbally, reminded participants that Hurricane Irma, which swept through the region as a category five hurricane, highlighted the need for smarter agricultural planning.

“Hurricane Irma underscores even more, the need for Climate Smart Agriculture to be a main component of agricultural planning and national disaster preparedness plans. We have been working assiduously to mainstream climate change and disaster preparedness into the policy framework for the agricultural sector both nationally and regionally,” she pointed out.

Emphasising that it was not by accident that Climate Smart Agriculture was one of the items on the agenda for discussion, the CARICOM Programme Manager said she looked forward to “the

deliberations and the recommendations to our Ministers to build resilience through increased adoption of innovations in Climate Smart Agriculture”.

This year’s Planning Forum will also benefit from the expertise of participants from several Latin American countries who have been included for the first time. Ms. Surujbally said those attendees would “provide insights and information on the activities in their respective countries that propel the adoption of innovation systems for sustainable agriculture and rural development”.

Meanwhile, the Food and Agriculture Organization Deputy Sub-regional Coordinator for the Caribbean, Dr. Lystra Fletcher Paul, articulated the view that understanding how agriculture innovation systems (AIS) work requires an analysis of the actors and institutions that shape and contribute to innovation.

“Central to the AIS is the idea that the system involves much more than doing research and/or that research is the sole source of innovation, implying that without research, there is no innovation. It is the linkages, interactions, relationships, networking capacities, learning, sharing among the elements that contribute to determining how the system operates as well as its outcomes and impacts,” she underlined.

Chief Agriculture Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resources Management, Dr. Lennox Chandler, who spoke on behalf of Minister Dr. David Estwick, proffered the view that greater emphasis on placing innovation as a major talking point at conferences meant that there was greater acknowledgement of it in future development.

He added: “Without some attention being paid to innovation, we in the region will be going backwards at the speed of light and [I am pleased that] people are recognising that innovation is something that we have to pay attention to.”

He noted that with the world’s population now stood at 7.5 billion and set to rise to 11.2 billion by 2100, Dr. Chandler said it would take a 70 per cent increase in food production to adequately feed the population.

“It has been suggested among others, that there are two main ways to address the increasing demand for food. One is to increase the land under production and the other is by producing more food with smaller acreage. But for most countries in the world, option one is not a viable option and certainly not for Barbados. Barbados is a mere dot in the Atlantic Ocean and I do not know that we are going to increase any land size...So, we are not in a position to increase our land production so therefore, we have to turn to innovation so that we can produce more on less acreage,” he stressed.

The Chief Agriculture Officer said one of the challenges he encountered in trying to foster innovation in science and technology, and agriculture in particular, was the absence of a clearly defined agro innovation system. He argued that traditional methods of agricultural research and education would be inadequate in their ability to deliver new knowledge-based techniques and services to the farming community.

Explaining how an Agriculture Innovation System would work, Dr. Chandler stated: “Agriculture innovation systems exist where there are dynamic interaction among the stakeholders. The system would serve to define the specific roles and functions of each actor in the system and eliminate

duplication of effort and confusion. All efforts must be made to address the formulation of AI Systems across the region and there is no need to re-invent the wheel....There are numerous systems across the world that we can adopt to our specific environment.”

Those systems in use include the Cassava Innovation System in Ghana; the Medicinal Plants Innovation System in India; the innovation system for flowers in Kenya; and the Global Rice Innovation System.

He reminded the audience that innovation was a complex process and every attempt must be made to understand its complexity and harness its capability if the future development of the agriculture sector was to be realised.

Dr. Chandler further stated that outdated structures must be re-engineered and given greater flexibility and autonomy; and qualified knowledge workers must be hired, retained and retrained for the betterment of the sector

## **AGROBIODIVERSITY**

**New Study Reveals Agrobiodiversity Investments as Triple Win for Health, Environment and Food System Sustainability.** Bioversity International, 26 Sep 2017

<https://www.bioversityinternational.org/news/detail/new-study-reveals-agrobiodiversity-investments-as-triple-win-for-health-environment-and-food-system-sustainability/>

### **Full article**

ROME, ITALY (26 September 2017) – The first comprehensive scientific analysis of how agrobiodiversity can make our vulnerable food system more resilient, sustainable and nutritious has been carried out by leading agrobiodiversity research centre Bioversity International.

Released today, the 200-page guide provides solid evidence that investments in agrobiodiversity also play a critical yet overlooked role in tackling wider global targets such as reducing poverty and malnutrition, reversing environmental degradation and combatting climate change. It demonstrates that agrobiodiversity can be a more mainstream approach to sustainable development.

“Agrobiodiversity – the edible plant and animal species that feed each and every one of us – holds the key to future food security. But we are failing to protect it, and tap into its potential to transform our food system for the better,” comments Ann Tutwiler, Director General of Bioversity International.

Of the estimated 7,000 edible plant species, just 30 are used to feed the world. Tens of thousands of alternatives exist that can grow in difficult environments, have high nutrient content and have potential to increase their yields. However, almost 80 percent of land areas dedicated to cereals only grow wheat, maize and rice. Traditional crops and varieties represent just 2 percent of material stored in genebanks worldwide. Overreliance on too few varieties and species is leaving the food system unnecessarily exposed to shocks and stresses, as well as neglecting a high-impact solution to major health, environmental and food security challenges, according to the review.

“Until now, no single study has provided the evidence to showcase the extraordinary impact that investing in agrobiodiversity can have on improving food systems and advancing sustainable development at the same time. This new guide provides evidence on the practices that work for those ready to take action, and should convince more businesses and policymakers that agrobiodiversity is a triple-win investment” Tutwiler adds.

The guide details a range of affordable, nutrient-rich foods that can alleviate the burden of malnutrition affecting two billion people, such as the vitamin A-rich *To’o* banana and the darkina fish, which is high in iron and calcium. It highlights the potential for heat and drought tolerant traits to be found in traditional crop varieties, at a time when climate change is expected to reduce the yield of major crops like wheat by six percent with each degree Celsius increase. Furthermore, it argues that biodiversity-based practices such as intercropping trees with vegetables and rotating crops can significantly boost carbon and nitrogen content in the soil, to replenish the 33 percent of the world’s farmland that is degraded.

Entitled *Mainstreaming Agrobiodiversity in Sustainable Food Systems*, the scientific review is rich with data, case studies and suggested indicators to track progress on four key issues:

- **HEALTHY DIETS:** The nutritional value underutilized crops and animal species can offer global diets. For example, 15g of powder made from local fish in Bangladesh can meet the full daily requirement of vitamin B12, and half the recommended daily requirement of zinc for children aged 6-23 months.
- **PRODUCTION:** How agrobiodiversity significantly enhances sustainability on farms. For example, intercropping coffee trees with vegetables in hilly areas led to a 64% reduction in soil erosion, and no decrease in coffee yield. Cropping systems with high agricultural biodiversity from crop rotations, displayed increased soil carbon by 28%–112% and nitrogen by 18%–58% compared with those with low agricultural biodiversity.
- **SEED SYSTEMS:** The impact seed systems rich with diversity can have on improving food security, reducing vulnerability to climate change and reducing poverty. For example, one local variety of durum wheat used by farmers in Ethiopia was found to perform 60% better than the best commercially available seed. Two local varieties of durum wheat have now been approved for commercial release following a review of their potential to grow in dry, marginal areas.
- **CONSERVATION:** How conserving plant and animal resources contributes to greater food security and more resilient farming systems. For example, farmers in Peru are being contracted to grow a neglected race of quinoa to produce a new brand of quinoa milk, in order to reduce their reliance on the limited varieties being grown for the global market.

“Agricultural biodiversity represents a revolutionary approach to food systems and nutrition and is progressively taking shape as a critical resource to help all countries achieve several of the Sustainable Development Goals,” comments Pierfrancesco Sacco, Italian permanent representative to the FAO.

The guide lays the foundation for an Agrobiodiversity Index, a tool under development to help companies and countries to compare multiple strategies for investing in resilient and sustainable supply chains and product lines, through interventions in agrobiodiversity. Leading

agribusinesses such as Syngenta and Sainsbury's, as well as countries such as Italy, Peru and Ethiopia have expressed interest in using the index, which is expected to launch in late 2018.

“The world is changing. Global warming, extreme weather and volatile prices are making it harder for farmers and growers to produce the foods our customers love,” comments Beth Hart, Head of Agriculture at Sainsbury's. “Which is why we are committed to working with our suppliers, farmers and growers in the UK and around the world to optimize the health benefits, address the impact and biodiversity of these products and secure a sustainable supply. We believe that participating in the development of the Agrobiodiversity Index will help us achieve this goal.”

## AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

**Major Agricultural Development on the horizon for the Rupununi – as Agri Minister wraps up extensive outreach.** Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana, September 30, 2017  
<http://agriculture.gov.gy/2017/09/30/4406/>

### Full article

With government making positive strides to move Guyana's agriculture base inland, Agriculture Minister, Noel Holder concluded a three-day outreach to the Rupununi where he visited a number of communities and villages to advise the region on issues faced in agriculture and what the Agriculture Ministry, and by extension Government, has planned to boost agricultural development in the region.

During the outreach, Minister Holder met with a number of regional representatives, Toshaos and residents to discuss the works already being undertaken, planned projects and other initiatives that the ministry has outlined for the region.

Some of the projects that have commenced are the construction of water catchment structures, poultry and livestock development initiatives as well as crop development and marketing. The Ministry is also set to construct an agricultural station at Pirara which will involve demonstration plots, herds of cattle, poultry rearing, orchards and seed stock.

The Pirara Research station will also boast a huge water catchment area that will provide irrigation all year round.

### **Water Catchment in the Rupununi**

With the Intermediate and Rupununi Savannas historically experiencing extended dry seasons which result in drought like conditions, the Ministry of Agriculture has embarked on constructing a number of water catchment reservoirs across the Region. The project, which is being undertaken by the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) under the directive of the subject minister, will entail the construction of reservoirs across both North and South Rupununi.

During the outreach, Minister Holder visited catchment structures that have been strategically constructed in Nappi, Masara, Aranaputa, Bina Hill, and Annai to assess the state of the projects. Expressing satisfaction at the progress made thus far, Minister Holder indicated that the reservoirs are essential for sustainable agriculture to be practiced in the region.

“Because of the worsening effects of climate change, which have resulted in extreme temperatures, water resources are becoming limited. With this in mind, the ministry has commenced the construction of several reservoirs in the region. With the construction of these reservoirs, residents will be able to practice sustainable agriculture even during the extensive dry season. Usually, agriculture would be difficult to practice during this period as water availability becomes extremely limited. These catchment areas are being constructed strategically to function as a source of water for livestock, crops and aquaculture.” Minister Holder said.

While meeting with the Regional Chairman and several Regional Councillors of the Region 9 RDC, Minister Holder, however pointed out that it will be equally important for the relevant authorities to enforce land management around these reservoirs or irresponsible occupancy around the structures may occur. This, he added, will be the responsibility of the Regional Council as they will be in charge of ensuring the residents utilize the water resources responsibly as the maintenance of protocols will be very important. The regional council, the minister added, needs to meet with all residents to establish operational protocols for these catchment areas.

Acknowledging the role of the council and other regional authorities, Regional Chairman of Region Nine, Mr. Bryan Allicock, assured that management control systems have commenced as it relates to areas around these catchment areas.

“We have commenced development systems on how to control and manage these areas around the catchment structures. We will be establishing buffer zones where certain activities like squatting and the construction of housing and other permanent structures are prohibited. I understand our role in regional development and our plan of action for that looks at what central government as well as the regional administration are doing and we integrate those measures into our plan.” Mr. Allicock said.

Resident NDIA Engineer, Abraham Realine indicated that the Reservoirs will be used for a host of agricultural purposes.

“When we commenced construction of these catchment structures, the initial plan was for them to service crops and cattle during the dry periods. However, plans to introduce aquaculture has been expressed by the residents of the various communities in which the excavation of the catchment areas were executed. Indigenous species of fish are expected to be added to some of the ponds.” Mr. Realine said.

Conservation International’s Technical Coordinator in the Region, Mr. Rene Edwards indicated that his organization is committed to working with the ministry to ensure the region realises development in a sustainable way.

“We understand the need for development, so we have partnered with the community and the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure that all the initiatives take into account the need to preserve the environment and its natural flora and fauna.” Edwards said.

Minister Holder reiterated that such initiatives will allow development at different levels and this project is just a start to the major plans his ministry has for the region.

“We want to replicate this system of water catchment across the savannahs so that we would encourage much better land usage. With water harvesting we would have a water storage system to provide irrigation and persons would be able to access water for agriculture. Appropriate methods of irrigation will have to be decided – perhaps drip irrigation or other case specific methods will have to be determined.” Minister Holder said.

Expressing their satisfaction on behalf of their communities were the Toshias of Masara, Mr. Leon Moses, Mr. Mark George of Annai, and Chairman of the Aranaputa Community Mr Aiden Jacobus.

At Masara, toshao Moses said the establishment of the reservoirs has opened up a whole new range of exciting possibilities for the community of just over 400 persons. “Our community earns its income from the environment. Fishing is a lucrative business for the fishermen who sell their catch to neighbouring villages and people who visit. Cash crop farming is another income generator but for many months of the year, this is a lost cause as no water is available for irrigation.” the Toshao added that he is now excited that the rearing of cattle and the establishment of grass pastures are now possible through the establishment of the catchment areas.

Chairman of the Pakaraima Valley Community of Aranaputa, Mr, Aden Jacobus was loud in his praise of the support his community, of just over 600 residents, has received from the Ministry of Agriculture. This, he said, has come in many forms – with the establishment of huge catchment area being the latest intervention.

“Our community is heavily into beef production, and with a year round supply of water we can now establish pastures and grow our herds. Our youths are very interested in getting involved in agriculture and with the incentives and assistance being provided directly by Government and indirectly through the Ministry of Indigenous People’s Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture, the future looks very bright for them.” Jacobus added.

Across at Annai, Toshao Mark George was also confident that the establishment of the catchment areas in his community as well others across the region was the catalyst needed to jump start agricultural pursuits in the region. He looks forward to the continued support of the ministry of Agriculture in the provision of technical guidance as the community sets out on its journey to prosperity through agriculture.

### **Resuscitating Guyana’s Livestock Industry**

Guyana remains free of a number of diseases like foot and mouth disease that negatively affected the cattle industry. As such, the Ministry of Agriculture is making several steps to resuscitate the cattle industry. Given the massive amounts of land available, the Rupununi and Intermediate Savannahs are expected to be key players for this to be achieved. Steps are being taken to rebuild Guyana’s beef and dairy herds and to take advantage of the large international market for ‘Grass Fed’ beef.

Minister Holder met with members of the Region Nine Livestock Committee and explained plans to resuscitate the cattle industry.

## Livestock

“In the past, the Rupununi was the cattle capitol of Guyana. We plan to get the country’s cattle industry going and we acknowledge the role this region will play in that plan. Initial steps have been taken to get the ball rolling with funding for several projects being acquired through loans granted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).” Minister Holder said.

Chairman of the Region Nine Livestock Committee, Kenneth Forde commended the Minister for his ministry’s input into cattle development for the region thus far, while highlighting some of the steps the region taken to aid the cause.

“At the community level we are trying increase the herd in the region. Our first step was the acquisition of breeding bulls. The Guyana Livestock Development Authority has played a major role in assisting us with our plans. We have regular visits from officers who give technical advice where necessary. However, we are seeking technological development in this regard.”

Project Coordinator for the Sustainable Agricultural Development Program, Mr. Khemlall Alvin indicated that the project entails three aspects that will have a tremendous impact on the region.

“The Sustainable Development Agricultural Development Program, which is being funded by the IDB, will see the Agriculture Sector Development Unit (ASDU) of the Ministry facilitating three major projects that will have a great impact on the region. There will be a country wide agriculture census to document the number of cattle, crops, aquaculture, etc. in the country. With this data in hand, government will be able to better strategize when it comes to what is needed to boost agriculture in Guyana. Additionally, the project involves the construction of catchment areas around the region and the construction of an abattoir. The abattoir will be built in accordance with European design and standards.” Mr. Alvin said.

Minister Holder pointed out that Guyana not having an abattoir that is of international standards has hampered the industry and acquiring such a facility has always been on the front burner as it relates to resuscitating the industry.

### **‘Black Giant’ project to augment Rupununi Poultry**

Earlier this year, the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) officially launched its Hinterland Development Black Giant Poultry Programme which saw the handing over of one hundred (100) Black Giant chickens along with the requisite start-up feed and other supplies to hinterland schools and groups, coastal schools and organisations representing the first phase of the project.

In region 9, black giant chickens were given to the Bina Hill technical institute for research and development, where the students are involved in the care and management of the birds. Since receiving the birds and chickens, they have grown considerable and have started laying. The black giant project was also extended to residents of Surama.

During his three day outreach to across region 9, Minister Holder visited the Bina Hill Institute and interacted with the administrators of the project as well as the students there. He also visited several persons in Surama Village who benefited from the program, and got a first-hand look at their successes at maintaining and further increasing their flock. He indicated that the main

objective of the initiative was to assist in making the hinterland regions less reliant on the Coast for their food supplies

“We know the struggle and the cost of having to access food supplies from the Coast. With the introduction of this program, the regions is expected to become self-sufficient as it relates to poultry. The Black Giant is a large dual purpose chicken, which has the ability to produce up to 200 eggs annually and about 4.5 kilograms of meat. These birds have the ability to graze and forage as well as eating leftovers from the kitchen and still produce reasonably well. Given these qualities the Black Giant was seen well suited to hinterland region.” Minister Holder said.

Emily Allicock, one of the residents who benefited from the Black Giant Initiative indicated she has been able to see positive returns since acquiring the birds.

“The chickens are growing quickly. I already have some laying and I am receiving a lot of support from GLDA. From the beginning they were helpful with advising me on how to construct the pens and proper management and sanitation for the birds.” Ms. Allicock said.

Another poultry farmer, Mr. Trevor Thompson indicated that he is having successes in his current venture and has plans to acquire some of the Black Giants as he sees the successes other farmers are having with the birds.

### **Youth development and Agro-Processing**

Minister Holder also visited the cassava processing facility at Wowetta where he was given a tour of the facility and an overview of its operations.

Wowetta Community Development Officer, Priscilla Torres indicated that the facility has been a major source of income for members of the Wowetta Women’s Agro-processing Association.

with Ms. Grace Albert, Operations Manager for the factory

“Even though the facility has not been commissioned it is functioning. We are doing well and the Guyana Marketing Corporation has been extremely helpful in assisting us with getting our products on the market. Currently, our main product is farine, because it is a part of the Region’s Disaster Preparedness Strategy. We also produce cassava bread. We are hoping to expand our facility so that we can produce other products like cassareep and cassava flour. However, there is a need for technical support such as testing our products to determine its suitability for international markets and better packaging material.” Ms. Torres said

Minister Holder commended the group and committed to continued support through the New GMC in acquiring markets and seeking out the technical support that is needed to get the products on the international markets.

The Hinterland Employment Youth Service is a program that was designed to equip hinterland youths with skills in agriculture so that they can gain a career in agriculture. Earlier, during his visit to Aranaputa, Minister Holder spoke with a number of participants of the program and offered assistance through the ministry’s agencies in the form of technical advice and support in several areas.

Adon Jacobus, Chairman of Annai, indicated that the program has been playing a major role in preparing youths for a career in agriculture.

“Currently the program runs for 12 months and has 23 participants. Since its commencement in August, the participants have been working on several projects that are expected to assist them in the future. At the end of the program, the participants are expected to have developed a business plan and will be given some amount of funding to start their business.” Mr. Jackovis said.

Minister Holder was accompanied on his region 9 outreach by the CEO of NDIA, Mr. Fredrick Flatts, Chief Hydromet Officer, Dr. Garvin Cummings, Chief Fisheries Officer, Mr. Denzil Roberts, Director of the Agriculture Sector Development Unit (ASDU), Mr. George Jervis, Project Coordinator within the ASDU, Mr. Khemlall Alvin and other resident officers of the Guyana Livestock Authority and the NDIA.

**Good news for agriculture sector** by GIS, Government of Saint Lucia, September 28, 2017  
<http://www.govt.lc/news/good-news-for-agriculture-sector>

#### **Full article**

##### **GOVERNMENT DISCUSSES PLANS FOR INSURANCE AND PENSION PROGRAMS.**

Agriculture officials are currently in discussions over an insurance and pension scheme, as part of the new program for agriculture.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Cooperatives, Natural Resources and Physical Planning, Hon. Ezekiel Joseph, said that given global adverse weather conditions due to climate change, an insurance program for farmers is critical to the stabilization of the agriculture sector.

“With the reality of climate change and the frequency with which we experience drought, hurricanes, and tropical storms, this is even more important now,” he said. “We had an insurance program just for bananas, but we are reviewing this and we are looking at an insurance policy that will cover agriculture—including fisheries and livestock.”

Farmers have also been calling on the ministry to put the issue of a pension plan back on the table. This, he said, is being very seriously considered.

“We are looking at options. One of the options is the NIC,” he said.

Meanwhile, things are looking up for the vital banana industry and for agriculture on the whole, he said. Banana exports to the French territories will begin in November, as productivity in the sector continues to show improvement.

“When you compare this period to last years, there has been an increase in production. We have seen at least forty farmers reintroduced to the export market. These farmers had either abandoned their fields or were looking at the regional market.”

At present, there are a number of town hall meetings taking place across the island to educate farmers about the new program for agriculture, and to get them to appreciate the need for maintaining consistency of quality.

**Government to Launch Revolving Loan Scheme for Selected Crops** by Garfield Angus. Jamaica Information Service, September 21, 2017  
<http://jis.gov.jm/government-launch-revolving-loan-scheme-selected-crops/>

### **Full article**

In another two weeks, the Government will be launching a revolving loan scheme for farmers across the island for selected crops.

Under the arrangement, registered farmers with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), will access the support through their local farm organisations, which will oversee the repayment of the loans.

Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. J.C. Hutchinson, said the initiative has support from several private-sector partners, and funds will only be loaned for crops that have available markets.

Addressing farmers in Douglas Castle, St. Ann, on September 19, the Minister said that RADA will assist farmers with land preparation.

The function, dubbed ‘Salute to Farmers’, was organised by St. Jago Farm and Hardware Supplies (SJFHS) to honour farmers for exemplary service in agriculture.

Mr. Hutchinson said markets are “guaranteed” for the crops that will be grown under the programme.

Some 96 farmers in the area received agricultural inputs from SJFHS, including a spraying machine.

Meanwhile, Executive member of the Douglas Castle Production and Marketing Organisation, Bishop Paul Black, said recently they implemented a revolving loan programme with a 98 per cent success rate.

He called on potential beneficiaries of the new scheme to be honest, so that the system works for the farmers.

Several farmers welcomed the help that they received from SJFHS, as it will help to boost production, given the loss from the recent floods.

For his part, Managing Director of SJFHS, O’Brien Johnson, said his company will be taking the programme to St. Thomas and St. Elizabeth.

He argued that farming needs all the support it can possible get, and the farmers should use the items wisely.

“This is intended to motivate them, and for them to recognise that they are doing something good,” Mr. Johnson said.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

September

### **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/>

### **Strengthening developing-country seed systems and markets. Policy trade-offs, unintended consequences, and operational realities. Webinar**

**Date:** October 25, 2017, 10:00 AM EST

**Description:** Presenter: David Spielman, Senior Research Fellow, Environment and Production Technology Division, IFPRI

This webinar explores novel approaches to strengthening seed systems and markets, including policies related to varietal release procedures, quality assurance, access to early generation seed, input subsidy programs, among several others. It draws on examples from a range of crops cultivated in countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Zambia from which we generate insights on, inter alia, where private sector seed distribution models are working well, where regulations facilitate quicker varietal release and more rapid turnover, and where quality assurance mechanisms provide effective oversight without inhibiting incentives to produce and distribute quality seed.

**Website:** <http://pim.cgiar.org/2017/09/29/webinar-strengthening-developing-country-seed-systems-and-markets-policy-trade-offs-unintended-consequences-and-operational-realities/>

November

### **Third Conference of the World Banana Forum**

**Date:** 8 - 9 November 2017

**Location:** Geneva, Switzerland

**Description:** Will focus on global collaboration, gender, business and technical issues in banana production and trade. The conference will benefit everyone who has an interest in the banana sector - from producer and consumer organizations to governments, retailers, traders, NGOs and research institutions.

**Website:** <http://www.fao.org/world-banana-forum/wbf3/wbf3/en/>

### **Organic World Congress (OWC)**

**Date:** 9-11 November, 2017

**Location:** India

**Description:** Theme of the 19th OWC is '*An Organic World through an Organic India.*'

**Website:** <https://owc.ifoam.bio/2017>

**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>