Ministers’ Brief

On 18 September, 2017 Dominica took a direct hit from category 5 Hurricane Maria. Its’ devastating winds, heavy rains and storm surges caused widespread damage across the island with total destruction reported in some communities. Homes, commercial buildings, roads, communications infrastructure and agriculture were all severely damaged and in many cases, completely obliterated.

CARDI Representative to St Vincent and the Grenadines, Greg Linton travelled to Dominica and began preliminary assessment of the damage to the sector. Linton met with Dr. Reginald Thomas of the Livestock Development and Veterinary Unit who highlighted the devastating damage to the livestock and poultry subsectors. Poultry houses across the island were either completely destroyed or severely damaged with massive loss of life of birds recorded. Sheep, pigs and goats were lost due to floods and their housing structures severely damaged. The banana industry and tree crops were also totally destroyed.

CARDI has started mobilising resources across the Member States to immediately respond following initial relief efforts. In the short term, the Institute will work with stakeholders on the ground to kick-start the production of commercially important commodities while our long term response will be focused on building a resilient agriculture sector through the promotion and adoption of climate smart practices and technologies. Read more on CARDI’s short term long term responses @ http://bit.ly/2yhWHOL
Reshaping Bahamas’ agriculture sector

CARDI’s Executive Director delivered the keynote address at the Agriculture session of the Bahamas Diplomatic Week, hosted by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on October 16, 2017.

During his address Clarke highlighted that under the new Strategic Plan 2018-2022, the Institute will focus on value chain services, institutional strengthening, policy and advocacy, partnerships and strategic alliances.

A differentiated strategy will guide the implementation of activities across all CARDI member states. According to Clarke, this will enable the Institute to implement activities that better meet the needs of stakeholders in country. For the Bahamas, CARDI will focus on intensive crop and livestock systems emphasizing the development of climate resilience and intellectual property. Leveraging the strength of the tourist industry, agri-tourism and agri business development will be a major thrust of CARDI’s work on the islands. Organic agriculture, gastronomic tourism, value added product development, food safety systems and the generation of market studies to inform industry development will be important components of these programmes. Partnerships and Policy and Advocacy are central to the success of the sector and so CARDI will continue to intensify its efforts to build partnerships that will directly benefit agriculture.

To build an innovative, resilient, competitive Bahamian agricultural sector, Clarke highlighted the need for agriculture to be viewed as a business and a catalyst for youth involvement by leveraging information and communication technologies, investment and political will.

Rebuilding Barbuda’s agriculture sector

CARDI team members Paul Lucas and Bradbury Brown were part of a mission consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs (MALFBA), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the media and private sector to assess the damage caused by hurricane Irma to Barbuda’s agriculture sector. The team visited the ravaged island on 28 September and focused their efforts on the Sir McChesney George Secondary School Agriculture Science Program, the Highlands Agriculture District, Sand Ground Station and Local Producer Cooperatives.

They reported significant infrastructural damage, widespread loss of poultry, livestock and farming tools. In some areas the team reported the total destruction of cultivated crops and planting material.

CARDI’s effort to rebuild the sector will be complementary to the vision articulated by the Honourable, Arthur Nibbs, Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs at the 71st Special Ministerial Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) on Agriculture, held on 6th October, 2017 at the CARICOM Secretariat.

Minister Nibbs in his statement said a “Green island concept” will be adopted to rebuild the sector focusing on improving resilience and confronting the challenges of food insecurity. The programmes and activities will pivot on alternative energy, organic agriculture, protected agriculture, small ruminant development, agro-processing, construction of smart greenhouses and the expansion of the honey and fisheries industries among other areas.

Partnering for the development of the banana sector

CARDI facilitated the weaning and hardening of over 4,000 tissue cultured banana plantlets for private farmer George Purcell at the Antigua and Barbuda Unit. This activity was supervised by experienced technician, Delvin Batchelor at the Unit’s weaning and hardening facility in Betty’s Hope.

The fragile plantlets were weaned in a humidity chamber and gradually exposed to the external environment. They were then transplanted into containers and placed in the shade house. Critical success factors at this stage were: regulating shade, watering, good hygiene and the maintenance of an optimal temperature range. As a result of CARDI’s intervention an over 90% success rate was recorded.

The use of tissue culture material is advantageous as it is free of pest and diseases, has a faster, more uniform growth rate, and a large quantity of plants can be obtained in a short period of time. The latter is particularly important as it allows farmers to transition to commercial operation. CARDI Representative Mr. Paul Lucas has reiterated that such activities are particularly beneficial to the farmers and to the development of the agricultural sector in Antigua and Barbuda.