Ministers’ Brief

The demand for fresh and packaged coconut water across the region is rapidly increasing. However, there are growing concerns about the quality of coconut water sold by retailers to CARICOM consumers. Recent independent assessments of coconut water indicate the quality and safety of coconut water may indeed be compromised, impacting on public health and trade.

CARDI is working with the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) and other partners to revise and update the existing standards for coconut water quality. At a meeting hosted by CARDI and CROSQ, on 26th February, in Barbados, participants agreed that there is need to focus on food safety evaluation; recognition of testing facility compliance; chain of custody for samples; sampling regime; testing protocols, procedures and sampling; and the testing environment.

Executive Director of the Caribbean Agricultural and Research Development Institute (CARDI), Barton Clarke, said it was critical that such action is taken, if we are to attract investments to rebuild the coconut industry in the Caribbean.

Conformance to standards will satisfy consumer confidence in the products and also allow producers to penetrate the lucrative regional and international markets.

Updating regional coconut water safety standards

Updating coconut water quality and safety standards will positively impact on public health and trade
CARDI Barbados has an 
impressive showing at 
Agrofest 2018

CARDI Barbados showcased its work at the recently held Agrofest, the largest agricultural exhibition in the country.

CARDI promoted the utilisation of locally grown inputs such as cassava and sweet potato peels and mulberry leaves in feed formulations for small ruminants as a means of reducing the cost of production. The institute also took the opportunity to sensitise the public to the characteristics of different varieties of hot peppers and cassava, provided growing tips for hot peppers, corn, cassava, onions and sweet potato and demonstrated propagation of cassava using one and two node cuttings. Visitors to the booth received seed samples and were encouraged by CARDI staff to start a backyard garden.

Small ruminant enthusiasts were also interested in the molasses-urea feed block display and the process by which CARDI produces pelleted feed.

Teachers from The St. Michael School and the Alleyne School were so impressed with CARDI’s presentation that they requested visits to these schools to assist with the development of agricultural programmes for their students. An education officer of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation also invited CARDI for discussions on the development of outreach programmes for interested primary schools, fitting well within the theme for this year’s show – “Youth - Farming the Future.”

Agrofest was held from 23 to 25 February at Queen’s Park, Bridgetown, Barbados.

CARDI set to roll out a 
stock feed project

CARDI will soon begin developing just over 2,000 hectares of land in the Intermediate Savannahs of Region 10, Guyana. The land which has been granted by the Government of Guyana to CARDI will be used to produce forages, rice, corn and other crops, for processing into animal feed. The feed produced from this venture will cater to the needs of local farmers in the first instance and later exported to meet the needs of livestock farmers across the CARICOM.

Fuelled by increasing incomes and growing requests for healthier animal protein alternatives, farmers across the Region have been unable to satisfy the demand for small ruminant meat. Inadequate quantity and quality of forages especially during the dry season, has been identified as a major constraint to ruminant productivity.

This activity is consistent with the differentiated strategy CARDI is adopting to guide regional agriculture development across the Region. Guyana belongs to Group 1 countries where mega projects will be undertaken, with the aim of contributing to the regional demand for fresh and processed agricultural produce. This initiative is also closely aligned to Guyana’s plan of opening the Intermediate Savannahs to new investments in agriculture and agro processing. Minister of Agriculture, Noel Holder has in the past referred to The Intermediate Savannahs as Guyana’s new agricultural frontier.

French student completes 
CARDI internship

French student Tiana Rakotoson has completed a 5-month internship programme at CARDI’s Trinidad and Tobago Unit. Tiana, a second year student at Agrocampus Ouest in France, was involved in the establishment of stakeholder innovation platforms for sweet potato in Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat and Jamaica. Stakeholder platforms are part of CARDI’s Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) approach to developing commodity value chains. The AIS approach emphasises interaction and collaboration among the various actors along the value chain. This drives innovation, resulting in enhanced agricultural productivity, improved agricultural products and efficiency across value chains. Tiana was also involved in the preparation of several information products.

As part of his assessment, Tiana facilitated a staff seminar where he explained his work in CARDI and his experience working in the Caribbean. Student Internships are integral components of CARDI’s Global On The Job Training (OJT) Programme, which gives young professionals the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and provides mentorship, leadership and exposure.