

ROOTS AND TUBERS

Agriculture Ministry Targets Self-Sufficiency in Irish Potato This Year by [Claudia Gardner](#). Jamaica Information Service, March 16, 2018
<http://jis.gov.jm/agriculture-ministry-targets-self-sufficiency-in-irish-potato-this-year/>

Full article

Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. J.C. Hutchinson says he is anticipating that Jamaica will achieve its goal of 100 per cent self-sufficiency in the production of table Irish potato this year.

He was speaking at the launch of the H&L Agro's Duwest soluble crop nutrition line at the Junction Guesthouse Auditorium in St. Elizabeth on Wednesday (March 14).

Mr. Hutchinson said entities such as H&L Agro have been a pillar of support in Jamaica's National Irish Potato Expansion programme, which is aimed at reducing imports of the crop.

The objective, he said, is to lower the island's food import bill, which now stands at over US\$800 million, and shore up food security.

"H&L Agro has been... working with our farmers to optimise their production through the use of proper agronomic practices, and I believe that, barring any unforeseen circumstances, we will achieve our goal this year," he said.

The Minister said partnerships between State and non-State entities, including input suppliers, have continued to contribute in a huge way to the growth of the agricultural sector, which he described as the "main driving force in the industrial development of this country".

"As a Government, we understand the critical role that partnerships play in moving the agricultural sector forward as we strive towards attaining economic growth. In fact, I believe that partnerships, whether it is between the various government agencies or the private and public sectors, are critical to the overall development of our country," he added.

Mr. Hutchinson noted that the Ministry is working towards increasing the production of Scotch bonnet pepper.

He also reiterated the need to increase production by placing greater emphasis on value-chain production, which will ensure that "no agricultural produce goes to waste".

"This means that we not only consume products in their primary state, but that we move along the value chain to produce items such as jams, jellies, juices, and use trash to be converted to fertiliser and feed," he said.

Effective marketing strategies for sweetpotato seed. CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB), 12 March 2018

<http://www.rtb.cgiar.org/blog/2018/03/12/effective-marketing-strategies-sweetpotato-seed/>

Full article

The second edition in this blog series for SeedSystem.org by scientists from the [International Potato Center](http://InternationalPotatoCenter.org) (CIP) and the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) explores effective marketing strategies for sweetpotato seed.

The sustainable production of Early Generation Seed (which includes pre-basic/foundation seed and basic seed) is one bottleneck to increasing the availability of new varieties for farmers. Under which conditions is it profitable to produce sweetpotato Early Generation Seed (EGS), and who is best placed to do it? Srinivasa Rajendran and Margaret McEwan, of CIP and RTB, are determining the cost of producing sweetpotato EGS as part of developing a sustainable business.

Here, Srinivasa and Margaret discuss ideas on effective marketing strategies for sweetpotato seed – which is bulky, perishable and costly to transport:

Effective seed marketing strategies are key to sustaining a profitable business. Some of the National Agricultural Research Institutes now use a differentiated pricing strategy depending on: firstly, the market segment they are targeting (e.g. institutional markets such as government programs or NGOs; or individual multipliers who are the next link in the seed chain); and secondly, whether orders are placed and paid for in advance. Institutional buyers are the major customers for sweetpotato EGS. However, they may then provide this seed free to multipliers, and/or provide demand-side subsidies so that farmers can receive free or discounted seed. This leads to market distortions. We would like to explore what type of push-and-pull strategies might be used to increase demand for quality EGS.

What experiences can readers share for successful marketing strategies, remembering that sweetpotato cuttings are bulky, perishable and costly to transport? Readers are invited to provide insight in the comments section below.

This research was undertaken as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB). Implementation was led by CIP. Funding support was provided by the SASHA2 project.

[Read the original post and reader comments on the SeedSystem.org website](#)

Can the sweetpotato Early Generation Seed business attract private players? CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB), 9 March 2018

<http://www.rtb.cgiar.org/blog/2018/03/09/can-sweetpotato-early-generation-seed-egs-business-attract-private-players/>

Full article

This is the first in a series of blogs for SeedSystem.org by scientists from the International Potato Center (CIP) and the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) discussing key issues in the sweetpotato seed system.

The sustainable production of Early Generation Seed (which includes pre-basic/foundation seed and basic seed) is one bottleneck to increasing the availability of new sweetpotato varieties for farmers. Only small quantities are needed and the unit production cost is high. Under which conditions is it profitable to produce sweetpotato Early Generation Seed, and who is best placed to do it?

Srini Rajendran and Margaret McEwan, of CIP and RTB, are working with National Agricultural Research Institutes in 11 sub-Saharan African countries to determine the cost of producing sweetpotato Early Generation Seed. This data has provided the basis to conduct financial analysis as part of developing a sustainable business. Read more about determining the costs of Early Generation Seed for sweetpotato [here](#).

Srini and Margaret discuss how we can improve our understanding of farmer demand for quality seed and improved varieties of sweetpotato:

Sweetpotato is a vegetatively reproduced crop, allowing the seed or planting material (vines) to be easily multiplied and recycled from season to season. This leads to an accumulation of diseases and pests causing yield reduction. Sweetpotato pre-basic seed is pathogen-tested and produced under screen house conditions to ensure quality. We know that the demand for quality pre-basic seed is dependent on the demand characteristics of different actors along the seed value chain to the end-user root producers. But understanding the demand for quality seed from male and female farmers is elusive.

When does a farmer become a recurrent buyer of quality seed? What are the implications for the sustainability and profitability of quality seed production at different steps in the seed value chain?

Readers are invited to provide insight in the comments section below.

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[Read the original post and reader comments on the SeedSystems.org website.](#)

Editor's Note: *SASHA Brief 07: Analysis of cost structure and pricing strategy for sweetpotato Early Generation Seed – examining experiences from Kenya and Ghana.* Authors: [Srinj Rajendran](#), [Margaret McEwan](#), [Florence Munguti](#), [MARIAN QUAIN](#) Publication Date: August 28, 2017 https://seedssystem.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SASHA_PBS-costprice-structure.pdf

Agriculturists rally against Taro Blight Disease by Ministry of Agriculture, Saint Lucia, March 8, 2018
<http://www.govt.lc/news/agriculturists-rally-against-taro-blight-disease>

Full article

THE FUNGAL DISEASE CAUSES DISCOLORATION AND SCARING TO THE LEAVES OF THE DASHEEN PLANT.

Dasheen producers from agricultural region eight met at the Inland Reception and Distribution Center in Odsan, recently, for a one-day workshop on the identification and management of the Taro Blight Disease in dasheen crops.

Taro Blight is a fungal disease which causes discoloration and scaring to the leaves of plant species from the dasheen family. The disease was first identified in Saint Lucia in 2007 and has affected the livelihood of dasheen producers ever since it was introduced.

The Taro Blight Disease workshop focused on various husbandry practices that could be used to minimize the spread of the disease. Organizers of the workshop also collaborated with the Agricultural Research and Development Division to reiterate the need for farmers to ensure safety when handling toxic chemicals.

CEREALS & GRAIN LEGUMES

Global grain research and food industry experts meet to address rising malnutrition by [Mike Listman](#).
[International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center](#) (CIMMYT), March 14, 2018
<http://www.cimmyt.org/global-grain-research-and-food-industry-experts-meet-to-address-rising-malnutrition/>

Full article

MEXICO CITY (CIMMYT) — Malnutrition is rising again and becoming more complex, according to the head of the world's leading public maize and wheat research center.

“After declining for nearly a decade to around 770 million, the number of hungry people has increased in the last two years to more than 850 million,” said Martin Kropff, director general of the [International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center](#) (CIMMYT), in the opening address of the [4th Latin American Cereals Conference](#).

“Those people suffer from calorie malnutrition and go to bed hungry at night, which is a terrible thing,” Kropff added. “But the diets of 2 billion persons worldwide lack essential micronutrients — Vitamin A, iron, or zinc — and this especially affects the health and development of children under 5 years old.”

Kropff noted that some 650 million people are obese, and the number is increasing. “All these nutrition issues are interconnected, and are driven by rising population, global conflicts, and — for obesity — increasing prosperity, in developed and emerging economies.”

“The solution? Good, healthy diets,” said Kropff, “which in turn depend on having enough food available, but also diverse crops and food types and consumer education on healthy eating.”

Held in Mexico City during 11-14 March and co-organized by CIMMYT and the [International Association for Cereal Science and Technology](#) (ICC), the 4th Latin American Cereals Conference has drawn more than 220 participants from 46 countries, including professionals in agricultural science and production, the food industry, regulatory agencies, and trade associations.

“We are dedicated to spreading information about cereal science and technology, processing, and the health benefits of cereals,” said Hamit Köksel, president of the ICC and professor at Hacettepe University, Turkey, to open the event. “Regarding the latter, we should increase our whole grain consumption.”

Köksel added that ICC has more than 10,000 subscribers in 85 countries.

Breeding micronutrient-dense cereals

One way to improve the nutrition and health of the poor who cannot afford dietary supplements or diverse foods is through “biofortification” of the staple crops that comprise much of their diets.

Drawing upon landraces and diverse other sources in maize and wheat’s genetic pools and applying innovative breeding, CIMMYT has developed high-yielding maize and wheat lines and varieties that feature enhanced levels of grain zinc and are being used in breeding programs worldwide.

“In the last four years, the national research programs of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan have released six zinc-biofortified wheat varieties derived from CIMMYT research,” said Hans Braun, director of the center’s global wheat program. “Zinc-Shakthi, an early-maturing wheat variety released in India in 2014 whose grain features 40 percent more zinc than conventional varieties, is already grown by more than 50,000 smallholder farmers in the Northeastern Gangetic Plains of India.”

CIMMYT is focusing on enhancing the levels of provitamin A and zinc in the maize germplasm adapted to sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Improved quality protein maize (QPM) varieties, whose grain features enhanced levels of two essential amino acids, lysine and

tryptophan, is another major biofortified maize that is grown worldwide, according to Prasanna Boddupalli, director of CIMMYT's global maize program.

"Quality protein maize varieties are grown by farmers on 1.2 million hectares in Africa, Asia, and Latin America," said Prasanna, in his presentation, adding that provitamin-A-enriched maize varieties have also been released in several countries in Africa, besides Asia.

A major partner in these efforts is [HarvestPlus](#), part of the [CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health](#) (A4NH), which supports the development and promotion of the biofortified crop varieties and related research.

"Biofortified crops have been released in 60 countries," said Wolfgang Pfeiffer, HarvestPlus global director for product development and commercialization, speaking at the conference. "The pressing need now is to 'mainstream' biofortification, making it a standard component of breeding programs and food systems."

Whole grains are good for you

A central issue on the conference agenda is promoting awareness about the importance of healthy diets and the role of whole grains.

"Participants will discuss the large body of published studies showing that whole grain foods, including processed ones, are associated with a significantly reduced risk of chronic diseases and obesity," said Carlos Guzmán, who leads wheat quality research at CIMMYT and helped organize the conference. "There is [a global movement](#) to promote the consumption of whole grains and the food industry worldwide is responding to rising consumer demand for whole grain products."

Guzmán also thanked the conference sponsors: Bimbo, Bastak Instruments, Brabender, Foss, Chopin Technologies, Perten, Stable Micro Systems Scientific Instruments, Cereal Partners Worldwide Nestlé and General Mills, Stern Ingredients-Mexico, World Grain, the CGIAR Research Program on Wheat, and Megazyme.

To learn more about the Latin American Cereals Conference and the International Gluten Workshop, [click here](http://cereals2018.cimmyt.org/).

Harvest time Nigeria! Aflasafe moves from research to nationwide commercialisation to protect food from deadly aflatoxin. Aflasafe, March 12, 2018

<https://aflasafe.com/2018/03/12/harvest-time-nigeria-aflasafe-moves-from-research-to-nationwide-commercialisation-to-protect-food-from-deadly-aflatoxin/>

Full article

Harvestfield Industries Ltd to exclusively manufacture and distribute Aflasafe™ in Nigeria

Ibadan, Nigeria, 12th March 2018 – Today, Africa’s most populous nation – Nigeria – takes a giant stride forward in the fight against aflatoxin in food. A formal Technology Transfer and Licensing Agreement (TTLA) will be signed between the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) – the developers of [Aflasafe](#) – and Harvestfield Industries Ltd, Nigeria. The company is IITA’s partner of choice for the manufacture and distribution of Aflasafe™, the name for the product customised for Nigeria, to protect maize and groundnuts from deadly aflatoxin. Media reports early this year reveal aflatoxin in Nigeria’s food has an [alarming death toll](#), on top of the crippling economic cost it exacts.

But a remedy is also at hand. “Aflasafe saves lives,” said Dr Kenton Dashiell, IITA’s Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery. “In the fight against [aflatoxin](#) in food, the private sector is extremely crucial in ensuring our market-ready product is available and accessible, thus reaching the farmers and markets we need it to reach.” Aflasafe is [a 100% natural local product](#).

Lamentably, despite the gravity and deathly toll of the problem, awareness of the [perils of aflatoxin in food](#) – as well as its solutions – is low in Nigeria, as in [many other countries afflicted by the scourge](#). Harvestfield has already taken this problem head-on. Last month, the company undertook a nationwide aflatoxin-awareness campaign, targeting all six geopolitical zones. They reached 54 communities across 28 states. The campaign helped Harvestfield refine its awareness-creation and marketing approach, and they plan a repeat campaign this month.

Harvestfield will sensitise farmers, millers, farm-produce aggregators, exporters and food processors on the dangers of aflatoxin, the solution Aflasafe offers and how it works, and – most importantly – demonstrate effective and responsible ways on using Aflasafe.

“Our vision is to be the leading solution-provider for agricultural farming systems in Nigeria and the West Africa sub-region,” said Mr Martins Aderemi Awofisayo, Managing Director, Harvestfield. “Aflasafe is in line with the ongoing effort by the Federal Government to ensure [zero rejection](#) of our exports, thereby earning extra foreign exchange through exports and economic diversification.”

This year alone, Harvestfield will produce and sell 1,500 metric tonnes of Aflasafe, enough to cover 150,000 hectares of maize and groundnuts. While Harvestfield is constructing its own Aflasafe factory at its manufacturing complex at Km 40, Lagos–Ibadan Expressway, Asese, Ogun State, the company will also sign a toll-manufacturing contract with IITA’s Business Incubation Platform for Aflasafe production. As part of this collaboration, IITA will gradually transfer technical know-how to Harvestfield, and provide business-development support. The agreement goes beyond pure sales: while the TTLA grants Harvestfield five-year exclusive manufacture and distribution, it is pegged to stipulated annual targets and requires effective product distribution to farmers.

This is the second Aflasafe licence that IITA will be granting to a private company, after [Senegal](#) last year, which too was pegged to performance.

“The partnership we are sealing today with Harvestfield is the result of a long process which [started in 2017](#),” said Mr Abdou Konlambigue, Managing Director of IITA’s [Aflasafe Technology Transfer and Commercialisation initiative \(ATTC\)](#). “It paves the way to ensuring sustainable availability and accessibility of Aflasafe throughout the country. We are committed to ensuring this partnership is a success in order to contribute to making food safe, and to improve the competitiveness of local produce in the regional and international markets,” he added.

The effects of aflatoxin on Africa’s [health](#) and [wealth](#) are immense. Aflatoxin causes an estimated 5–30% of liver cancer worldwide, the highest incidence being in Africa (30%). An invisible poison that you cannot see, taste or smell, aflatoxin suppresses the immune system and stunts child growth. Poisoning can begin [even before birth](#) through mother-to-baby transmission. Thereafter, many young children continue ingesting the toxin through bottle and breast milk – since aflatoxin gets passed on through our bodies from food to milk – and later through their earliest solid mouthfuls as they are weaned onto maize- or groundnut-based diets. It is an unforgiving and cumulative poison, piling up in our bodies as we continue to eat and drink contaminated foods. So dire is the problem that in some countries, studies show nearly all (more than 95%) of the children under five have aflatoxin in their bodies, indicating high aflatoxin exposure even at this early age.

Internally, approximately 40% of the produce in African markets exceeds the aflatoxin maxima allowed. Externally, Africa potentially loses up to USD 670 million annually in export opportunities. According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, Nigeria’s groundnut exports have tumbled to near zero, from a high of 291,000 tonnes in 1970 to a mere 1,983 tonnes in 2013. According to the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa, aflatoxin is the most highly probable cause of this massive economic loss.

Standing on solid science, Aflasafe is the fruit of more than a decade-and-a-half of dedicated publicly funded research by IITA and partners in and out of Africa.

The Nigerian product, Aflasafe™, was the pioneer in IITA’s suite of country-customised Aflasafe products for Africa. It was developed for Nigeria by IITA in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Research Service, University of Bonn (Germany) and University of Ibadan. Since its inception in Nigeria, Aflasafe has spread further afield in Africa. IITA’s Aflasafe research [currently straddles 16 African countries](#), of which ATTC is targeting 11 for commercialisation. Besides Nigeria and Senegal, others are Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda and Zambia. Aflasafe is a product of [IITA’s Business Incubation Platform](#) (BIP).

Aflasafe is the first product from BIP to the private sector, in a bid to assure access and to ensure sustainable availability of technologies and products from IITA research. Over the next two years, more IITA products will be commercialised in Nigeria through BIP to provide farmers with products which give them competitive advantage, or improve their livelihoods.

PLANT PEST AND DISEASE

Experts lay the ground for a global system to protect the world's most important crops by [Maria Eliza Villarino](#). International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), March 16, 2018
<http://blog.ciat.cgiar.org/experts-lay-the-ground-for-a-global-system-to-protect-the-worlds-most-important-crops/>

Full article

(CALI, COLOMBIA – March 15, 2018) — Experts from different regions and disciplines are proposing a global approach that will respond to existing and emerging crop diseases around the world.

During a meeting at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center in February, the experts — including pathologists, economists, geneticists, geographers, statisticians, and entomologists — developed a framework for a global surveillance system for crop diseases.

The system aims to reduce the global burden of crop diseases by informing, preparing, and enabling response plans for a food-secure future.

The need for a GSS for crop diseases

Throughout history, crop diseases have affected farmers, consumers, and societies.

In the mid-19th century, for example, a potato crop disease led to the Irish Potato Famine. Also known as the Great Famine, it led to about a million deaths in Ireland.

Different crop disease outbreaks constantly threaten global food security, according to experts. Studies estimate that crop diseases account for around 10 percent of farm production losses.

In 2015, for example, a cassava mosaic disease outbreak was reported in Southeast Asia; this viral disease has been affecting cassava farmers in Africa for almost a century.

Later in 2016, a fungal disease outbreak caused by a Brazilian strain emerged in Bangladesh. This significantly reduced the local wheat production that year.

The GSS building blocks

The global surveillance system for crop diseases will function through five interconnected networks:

Diagnostics network. This refers to the regional hubs where all the activities associated with the identification of diseases and pathogens are performed, by moving from traditional to technologically advanced techniques where routine high-resolution genotype data will be generated for each target pathogen in conjunction with expert labs. Diagnostics regional hubs will coordinate and link with additional expert nodes outside the core system. Regional hubs will link with both national research systems and national plant protection organizations.

Risk assessment network. This refers to regional hubs that will set priorities and focus attention on emerging issues for crop health by acquiring data from GSS, assimilating data in risk assessment models, and publishing risk assessment information via the communication network.

Data management network. This refers to the network that collects, filters, analyzes, stores, and disseminates all the data on both pathogens and their host which will be then used by the risk assessment network and the communication network to guide a timely response. Open source data are highly incentive; data that will be publicly available will be decided on a per country or regional basis.

Communication network. This refers to the effective communication of disease outbreak knowledge, connecting all components of GSS, from end to end internally to the system and externally to the public. The output of this building block will be the transfer of knowledge from actor to actor. Tangible components of the building block include standard operating procedures or guidance documents for the global surveillance system's staff, public-facing documents, and context-appropriate media, such as an app, radio, or word of mouth. The communication network will transfer knowledge timely, responsibly, and securely, providing guidance on how to respond.

Management network. This refers to the group of organizations, networks, institutions, and actors participating in the system and its governance for the coordinated, integrated and functional surveillance system that promotes global preparedness for crop disease outbreaks, lowering risk to food production systems. Its main activities include operating the networks and partners, administrating budget and executing fundraising for the sustainability of the system, and establishing policies and guidelines.

The next steps

The global surveillance system for crop diseases calls for building the capacity across regions and of national plant protection organizations, as well as creating regional hubs to coordinate the activities under the system.

The system seeks to bring together best practices on the different aspects of crop protection.

“Effective measures to control crop diseases already exist at a national and regional level in well-developed countries,” said Monica Carvajal, scientist at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and organizer of the meeting at the Bellagio Center. “What we need to do is gather those measures and adapt them to different regions and different crops, and implement new diagnostic technologies, especially in less developed countries with limited surveillance capacity to facilitate a prompt recovery response.”

Part of the plan is to release a white paper that spells out the vision, actors, and outcomes of the system.

The experts also proposed to pilot the system for some of the world's most important crops — potato, cassava, rice, beans, wheat, and maize. The pilot activity will focus on high-risk diseases, or those known to cause massive crop destruction, in various regions.

“The meeting built on multiple national, regional, and international initiatives and will have to be followed by wider stakeholder consultations,” Joe Tohme, director of the CIAT Agrobiodiversity

Research Area. “Creating a global surveillance system for crop diseases, though challenging, is urgently needed. It’s one of the best ways we can ensure that the world can have sufficient food now and in the future, especially as we face serious challenges, such as climate change.”

The experts plan to approach the Group of 20 countries and seek donor support for the system. They intend to convene anew to further refine its strategy.

Agriculture Ministry trains officers in pest and disease identification. Government of Trinidad and Tobago. News, 12 March 2018

<http://www.news.gov.tt/content/agriculture-ministry-trains-officers-pest-and-disease-identification#.Wqrep5cpCM8>

Full article

Optimal extension services can be more easily and effectively provided to stakeholders when frontline agricultural officers – who came into direct contact with our nation’s farmers – are trained and equipped in current, best practices. This, according to Agricultural Entomologist (Ag.) in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF), Ms. Roshni Ramsingh, was the thinking behind an in-house training programme on Pest and Disease Identification and Management, embarked upon by Ministry staff last week.

The three (3)-day training course – which took place at the Packing House of the National Marketing Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) in Piarcó and the Farmers Training Centre in Centeno from March 6, 8-9, 2018 – was facilitated by both Ms. Ramsingh and Agricultural Officer (MALF), Mr. Rishi Mohansingh – both of the Extension Training and Information Services (ETIS) Division. The sessions were aimed at impacting those frontline Extension Officers of both the Regional Administration North (RAN) and Regional Administration South (RAS) Divisions of MALF, by building on their existing knowledge of pests and diseases whilst honing skills in areas of diagnosis and management so as to enable them to successfully carry out field diagnosis as well as prognosis. They comprised a review of the main causes of plant health problems, concentrating mainly on current and potential pests and diseases (including giant African snail; sweet potato weevil; citrus greening and frosty pod) as well as environmental disorders and nutrition.

Mr. Mohansingh’s presentation on the Red Palm Mite and Ms. Ramsingh’s presentation on the Tomato Midge, wrapped up the training’s theoretical discourse on Friday 9th March, 2018, paving the way for the practical exercise which ensued. “We asked the trainees to bring samples of plants which they feel are diseased or have pest problems. So, based on the samples submitted we will now embark on a practical examination of them to determine just how well the trainees have learnt from the theory over the last two (2) days and whether or not they are currently in a position to give and / or administer sound management options,” Ms. Ramsingh said.

Each financial year, the Ministry’s ETIS Division would facilitate staff training - on a range of topics and areas - periodically and in response to internal requests made, based on specific needs. On

this note, Ms. Ramsingh added: “Once a request for training is submitted, we usually make available the necessary resources in order to address same.”

GENETICALLY-MODIFIED FOODS

Saint Lucia strengthens capacity for GMO regulation by Geraldine Bicette-Joseph, GIS. Government of Saint Lucia, March 14, 2018

<http://www.govt.lc/news/saint-lucia-strengthens-capacity-for-gmo-regulation>

Full article

THE FRAMEWORK ASSESSES THE SAFETY OF GENETICALLY-MODIFIED FOODS COMPARED TO NON-GMOS

The Department of Sustainable Development recently hosted a two-day training workshop on the development of Food and Feed Safety Assessments for GMOs currently in trade in Saint Lucia.

The activity is one of many being held to strengthen Saint Lucia’s capacity to regulate GMOs and safeguard human health and the environment from any adverse impacts resulting from GMO use.

Jannel Gabriel, Environmental Officer within the Department of Sustainable Development, said biosafety is one of the department’s main concerns.

“Saint Lucia is a party to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. We signed that protocol in 2005, and since then we have been developing a framework for biosafety in Saint Lucia. The framework will regulate the processes through which genetically modified organisms enter the country, or regulate those that are produced in the country or that are being exported out of the country. So the entire framework seeks to ensure that if a GMO is being used, that it is being done in a way that it is safe to human health and to the environment.”

Ms Gabriel explained that the workshop worked towards examining GMOs already on the global market.

“We have already developed a policy on biosafety. We developed legislation which will soon be enacted, but before that legislation comes in, while we are waiting on everything to be concluded, we are being proactive by looking at some of the GMO’s that may already be in trade. We are looking at genetically modified corn and genetically modified soy which have already been traded around the world for the past twenty years. It is quite probable that those are in Saint Lucia, so we will look at the safety of those foods compared to foods that are not genetically modified. We are looking specifically at the toxicity of those foods and their ability to cause an allergic reaction and also the nutritional content of these foods. Then we will be preparing a food safety assessment document that the public can read, understand and give comments on.”

The biosafety policy can be viewed at lc.bioclearinghouse.net, and on the Government of Saint Lucia's web portal, www.govt.lc.

The workshop on the development of Food and Feed Safety Assessments for GMOs took place from March 5 to 6.

FOOD SECURITY

Opportunities and Challenges in Striving Towards Sustainable Food Systems by [A4NH](#). CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH), March 15, 2018

<http://a4nh.cgiar.org/2018/03/15/opportunities-and-challenges-in-striving-towards-sustainable-food-systems/>

Full article

Food systems are increasingly recognized as central for growing concerns about how to nourish our global population while providing sufficient income and employment, and respecting the capabilities of our planet. As discussions in development move away from considering individual value chains in isolation and towards a more holistic food systems approach, engaging with partners and those from other sectors is critical to ensure strategies are developed cohesively.

With this in mind, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), an A4NH Managing Partner, recently convened a dialogue with internal and external partners, following a several-day internal workshop to consider and define the organization's approach to food systems. The meeting, held in Nairobi, Kenya, drew together donors, other research organizations, UN agencies and voices representing the public and private sector. The half-day session was divided into several segments presenting views from CIAT, and a panel discussion with partners on food systems thinking.

CIAT's interest in focusing on food systems stems from the organization's desire to "stop thinking in a linear way, and look at systems that are complex, dynamic, and moving in different ways, and to understand and discuss the tradeoffs," commented Mark Lundy, CIAT's Theme Leader for Sustainable Food Systems, who opened the meeting.

Presentations from CIAT researchers addressed key issues in the food systems debate, as well as possible areas for CIAT work on sustainable food systems:

- Providing healthy choices: throughout the world, the issues of undernutrition, overweight, obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies plague billions of people, yet the food environment directs consumers towards cheap, ultra-processed, energy-dense foods. How do we create an environment that encourages healthy choices? Emphasis was placed

on starting with needs of vulnerable consumers and working backwards, in cooperation with the private sector, consumer associations, and policymakers, among others.

- Linking food systems to other systems: where are the connections between food systems and other considerations, including climate, urban planning, and migration? What policies already in place are having negative impacts, and how can that be corrected? For example, as countries grapple with issues like deforestation and land degradation, how do we ensure that underlying drivers coming from food systems changes and demands are addressed?
- Market systems: formal and informal markets have different circumstances. How do you create policy that takes both into account, and respects the sensitivities that arise with each? Researchers presented these questions in the context of the Kilimani Organic Market and the Nairobi City County Food Systems Strategy.

Conversations throughout the day emphasized the need for all sectors to understand the role of others, in order to identify where collaboration might be possible, as well as where gaps might exist. Participants also homed in on the importance of understanding the needs of stakeholders, and remaining focused on the consumer. “How do you balance the issue of basic access to stay alive with staying healthy?” asked Olufunso Somorin, Regional Environmental Economist, from the African Development Bank. “Food security is one of the ten entry points for our work on Urban-Rural Linkages. For sustainable food systems an integrated territorial approach is needed – across administrative boundaries and including all relevant stakeholders – from national to local government authorities and different sectors, development partners, civil society, academia and the private sector,” remarked Stephanie Loose from UN Habitat. Inge Brouwer, Associate Professor of Food and Nutrition Security at Wageningen University and Research, and Flagship Leader for A4NH’s Food Systems for Healthier Diets, noted, “We should provide insights to decision makers, and back it up with data. We must consider the tradeoffs and provide options. Research should be done with the stakeholders, not locked away.”

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER / CO-OPERATION

Caribbean Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Agriculture see potential for increased cooperation and technology transfer with Argentina and Brazil. Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), 15 March 2018

<http://www.iica.int/en/press/news/caribbean-ministers-and-deputy-ministers-agriculture-see-potential-increased-cooperation>

Full article

The delegation composed of leaders of 11 Caribbean countries exchanged experiences with members of the Agriculture Commission of the Senate of Argentina, in order to incorporate knowledge and innovation, especially in the field of technology applied to agricultural production.

Argentina, 15 March 2018 (IICA). Eleven Caribbean Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Agriculture today participated in a working session in Buenos Aires to share experiences with members of the

Agricultural Commission of the Argentine Senate. They expressed an interest in strengthening ties with this South American country in order to acquire knowledge and innovation, primarily in the use of applied technology in agricultural production.

Officials from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Guyana, Haiti, Surinam, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Christopher and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Haiti and St. Lucia, as well as high level representatives from CARICOM, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI) met in Argentina, as part of a mission led by Manuel Otero, Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), which also included the participation of Caio Rocha, Brazil's National Secretary of Food and Nutritional Security.

IICA indicated that the schedule also included a meeting in the Senate with President of the Agricultural Commission, Alfredo De Ángeli and a visit to the National Centre for Agricultural Research at the National Agricultural Technology Institute (INTA) to tour research facilities that specialize in Natural Resources, Climate and Water and Domestic Agriculture. They were accompanied by INTA's President, Juan Balbín, who made repeated reference to the institution's activities and its interaction with the private and academic sectors. Also on the agenda were meetings with the Minister of Agroindustry, Luis Miguel Etchevehere and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Daniel Riamondi.

The objective of IICA's mission, which included a working session in Brasilia, Brazil, prior to the Caribbean officials' arrival in Argentina, is to facilitate access to cooperation and technology by nations vulnerable to climate change and to address the issue of food security.

"We see this initiative as an important first step in strengthening cooperation between the countries of the Organization of Caribbean States (OECS), the governments of Argentina and Brazil and IICA. The initiative provides a platform through which we may enhance south-south cooperation and knowledge and skills sharing", said Beverly Best, OECS' head of Cooperation for Development and Resource Mobilization.

She stated further that "Brazil and Argentina have made significant strides in agricultural development and the inclusion of family farmers in this development. Most farmers in OECS countries are small farmers, and thus we consider this to be an excellent opportunity to collaborate and to learn about best practices that exist here and share advances made in agriculture."

The OECS is comprised of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Anguilla, Martinique and the British Virgin Islands, with a total population of 1.8 million inhabitants.

On the other hand, Desiree Field-Ridley, CARICOM's Officer in charge of Trade and Economic Integration, explained that "agriculture is one of our key sectors, but it has not grown as needed or expected, and therefore we are seeking some kind of assistance that will allow us to offer the necessary support to this activity. IICA's work is very important in this regard and we realize that we can cooperate with Brazil and Argentina. Agriculture should be the industry that attracts youth and investors and it should unite technology and investment."

The officer added that “CARICOM is a single market of fifteen countries, small countries, and therefore our objective is to work together as if we were one country. This will allow us to come together and to learn from Brazil and Argentina, and in so doing to advance.”

CARICOM’s Member States are Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Christopher and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, and Trinidad and Tobago, with Anguilla, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos and the British Virgin Islands as Associate Members.

For the most part, the Ministers and Caribbean representatives were very impressed with the technologies for protected agriculture that were described during the visit, primarily for the production of vegetables, as well as waste reduction, which is especially critical in small countries, and they considered organic agriculture to be an opportunity.

Barton Clarke, Director General of CARDI, underscored the importance that public policy in Argentina and Brazil has played in developing an agricultural industry that is closely linked to world trade.

“This is an important lesson for us. We must invest in research and innovation. The countries of the Caribbean are small and we face problems such as unemployment, poverty and high energy costs. Agriculture plays a critical role in helping to overcome social and economic ills. We have to engender capacity building for research in the Caribbean and strategic research that can foster innovation and intellectual property. I thank IICA for facilitating this visit and cooperation among countries; through this we can strengthen ties and foster alliances”, concluded Clarke.

For his part, Alexis Jeffers, Minister of Agriculture of St. Kitts and Nevis, spoke of “the tremendous support that IICA has given to the Caribbean”, and stressed the need for greater cooperation to “eliminate poverty, educate the young, and mitigate the effects of climate change to enable our region to realize its full potential”.

Before returning home, the delegates will visit San Nicolás for Expoagro, which is the most important outdoor agricultural fair in Argentina, where they will take part in a tour that has been specially arranged by the Expoagro organizers.

Caribbean ministers of agriculture’s visit to Brazil will focus on access to technology, cooperation and trade diversification. Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), 8 March 2018
<http://www.iica.int/en/press/news/caribbean-ministers-agriculture%E2%80%99s-visit-brazil-will-focus-access-technology-cooperation>

Full article

Others taking part in the mission include senior representatives of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI).

Brasilia, 8 March 2018 (IICA). The ministers and deputy ministers of agriculture of various Caribbean countries will be arriving in Brazil on Monday, 12 March as part of a mission led by the

Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Manuel Otero. The main purpose of the visit is to facilitate access to new technologies and cooperation, and diversify the trade of nations that are vulnerable in terms of food security and the effects of climate change.

The ministers and deputy ministers of agriculture of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, The Bahamas, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Suriname will participate in the event “South-South Cooperation/Brazil-Caribbean” on Monday, 12 March at 15:00 hours at the IICA Delegation in Brasilia with their counterparts from the ministries of social development, Osmar Terra, and agriculture, livestock and supply, Blairo Maggi, and with the President of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA), Maurício Antonio Lopes.

Others taking part in the mission include senior representatives of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI).

The event will begin with presentations by the Brazilian ministers of state and the President of EMBRAPA. Otero will then provide details of “IICA’s New Technical Cooperation Model” and Brazil’s National Secretary for Food and Nutrition Security, Caio Rocha, will describe his country’s public policies for family farming and how they relate to food and nutrition security.

“This mission’s arrival in Brazil marks the fulfillment of a specific commitment I made at the start of my administration — that of making IICA an institution that serves as a bridge between countries, regions, international agencies and issues, developing a new solidarity within our continent. We are determined to ensure that the Americas cease to be the continent with the lowest levels of trade among its countries,” Otero said.

On Tuesday, 13 March, the second day of activities in Brasilia, the Caribbean ministers and representatives will visit a unit of EMBRAPA that operates a climate simulation chamber for the production of vegetables under different environmental conditions, and a station where organic fertilizer is produced. They will then attend a lecture on good vegetable production practices for family farming.

The officials will also visit the Federal District’s Wholesale Produce Market (CEASA), where they will learn about a food procurement program, an example of a public policy for the purchase, distribution and marketing of the agricultural production of family farmers.

The ministers’ activities in Brazil will conclude with meetings with the Minister of Social Development, the Director General of IICA and Brazilian parliamentary leaders heavily involved in the agriculture sector.

After their visit to Brazil, the Caribbean ministers will travel to Argentina.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Jamaicans Must See Agriculture as Primary Source of Income -Cole by [Ainsworth Morris](#). Jamaica Information Service, March 14, 2018
<http://jis.gov.jm/jamaicans-must-see-agriculture-as-primary-source-of-income-cole/>

Full article

Chief Technical Director, Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Courtney Cole, is calling on Jamaicans to change the culture of identifying agriculture as a vocation, to a primary source of income for the growth of the society.

Speaking at the Agricultural Information Forum hosted by Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO) at the Terra Nova All-Suite Hotel in St. Andrew on Tuesday (March 13), Mr. Cole said for years, Jamaicans have identified agriculture as being among the lower-class jobs and not the worthwhile investment that it can be.

“Agriculture can no longer be seen as a vocation for those with limited education and shallow pockets. It is a discipline that requires a scientific approach as well as a serious business mindset if one expects to make a meaningful return on investment,” Mr. Cole emphasised.

He said Jamaica’s economy benefits significantly from agriculture on an annual basis, and if more persons took agriculture as a serious business investment, then there would be a boom in the sector and the economy.

“Before the devastating rains of 2017, Jamaica’s agricultural sector, forestry and fisheries grew by 13.5 per cent. We can go back to those places, because we have the basic makings of getting back to those numbers, but we need all hands on deck; not just Government and the 220,000 small farmers but the private sector,” Mr. Cole said.

“When there’s growth in agriculture, the economy benefits directly. When things are down and agriculture is up, the economy is up also. The year, when it grew by 13.5 per cent the economy grew also. It is showing us how important agriculture is to the growth of the economy,” he added.

Mr. Cole said agriculture-based jobs should not be seen as low-level jobs, because this sector helps to build other sectors, such as manufacturing.

“Manufacturing is a big part of what agriculture feeds into, because we have provided the throughput that the value-adders and the processors need to fill their market demands. This vision [of changing the culture of identifying agriculture as a vocation, to a primary source of income for the growth of our society] is closely aligned to Jamaica’s Vision 2030, which sees Jamaica being the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business,” he said.

For her part, President of JAMPRO, Diane Edwards, supported Mr. Cole, arguing that his stance is one reason her organisation decided to host the forum and to promote investment projects in agriculture and generate interest among local investors.

“This is really critical to the country’s future. Agriculture accounts for seven per cent of GDP in Jamaica, so a lot of times the GDP in Jamaica sinks or swims relating to the movement of agriculture,” Ms. Edwards said.

“When you take into account value-added products, including agro processed goods, the contribution of the sector rises to 12 per cent of GDP. When agriculture grows, GDP grows, and this is something that we saw happen about three quarters ago when agriculture grew 28 per cent. So we know that agriculture can grow, and we believe the time for agriculture has arrived,” she said.

The event also focused on the Government’s commitment to supporting the growth of the sector and demonstrated how private-sector companies are successfully employing innovative approaches such as anchor farms/contract farming to grow their businesses.

The forum also addressed other related matters, including financing options for agricultural activities; traditional and non-traditional crop opportunities; land availability and suitability issues; marketing of agricultural products locally and overseas; and government initiatives and programmes to support agriculture, such as agro parks and the Rural Agricultural Development Authority’s (RADA) support to farmers.

JAMPRO Targets Investors at Agricultural Information Forum by [Kadian Brown](#). Jamaica Information Service, March 12, 2018

<http://jis.gov.jm/jampro-targets-investors-at-agricultural-information-forum/>

Full article

The Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO) will be hosting an Agricultural Information Forum on Tuesday (March 13), aimed at promoting investments in that sector.

The event, to be held at the Terra Nova All Suite Hotel in St. Andrew, is targeted at persons, who have a deep interest in the agricultural industry and those with projects and are seeking investors.

It will address matters including financing options for agricultural activities; traditional and non-traditional crop opportunities; land availability and suitability issues; marketing of agriculture products locally and overseas; and government initiatives and programmes to support agriculture such as the agro parks.

Speaking with JIS NEWS, Manager for Sales and Promotion at JAMPRO, Marlene Porter, noted that the forum will engage persons operating in the sector, companies that are looking for

investment prospects, or persons who have land and capital and are seeking areas in the sector where they can invest.

“So, if you own property and want to identify a partner, this is a good opportunity. You can also use it as a medium to talk to financial institutions present to explore funding...so we are looking for persons, who are serious about doing business in Jamaica,” Mrs. Porter informed.

She said that there will be presentations from government agencies and private sector partners, who are integral to the development of the agricultural sector.

Key participating entities are the Agro-Investment Corporation (AIC), which will provide information about the various programmes being undertaken such as the agro parks; Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) will highlight the technical and marketing support being provided to farmers and the incentives available; and the Tourism Linkages Network will show how agriculture can respond to the demands of manufacturing, tourism and other related sectors.

The Development Bank of Jamaica, National People’s Co-operative Bank of Jamaica and other financial institutions will provide information about the financing of agri-business ventures and general financial support available to investors in this industry.

Mrs. Porter said that JAMPRO will be sharing information on its efforts in promoting exports and the investment opportunities available in the local and international marketplace.

“It promises to be a very comprehensive programme and at the end of the day, we are seeking to engage persons to take a more serious look at this sector as the demand is there on the local and overseas markets,” she noted.

The forum will also demonstrate how private sector companies are successfully employing innovative approaches such as anchor farms/contract farming to grow their businesses.

Coming out of the forum, JAMPRO is looking to identify investment projects to package, promote and present to local and overseas investors.

“Agriculture is such a significant sector that has important implications for Jamaica in the area of gross domestic product (GDP), employment, rural development, and development of women and young people. We want our local investors to come out and look at the opportunities that exist, engage and network with the people, who are there and see how together we can build some of the ideas into huge prospects and projects for the country,” Mrs. Porter urged.

“So, we are saying things are happening in the sector and we are ready, set and let’s go!” she added.

The forum will last from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

AGRICULTURE / TOURISM LINKAGES

Tourism Interests Urged to Invest in Agriculture by Garwin Davis. Jamaica Information Service, March 14, 2018

<http://jis.gov.jm/tourism-interests-urged-to-invest-in-agriculture/>

Full article

Chairman of the Tourism Linkages Council, Adam Stewart, is calling on hoteliers and other tourism interests, to invest in the local agriculture sector, noting that this is a sure-fire way of enhancing the country's economic development.

He notes that "for too long, we have been ignoring the obvious linkage between two of Jamaica's most important sectors – agriculture and tourism – and the benefits to be had in getting them to work in sync with each other".

"I am today calling on and encouraging all of corporate Jamaica, all of the other hotel brands, locally and foreign-owned, to pay attention to the farmers. Pay attention to the farmers, who have a role to play in the growth that the industry is experiencing today. Their (the farmers) success is Jamaica's success, which is the industry's success," he argues.

Mr. Stewart, who is also Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Sandals Resorts International, was speaking to JIS News against the background of the company's investment in an Irish potato pilot project.

Sandals has made upfront purchase of over \$3 million worth of Irish potato seeds for local farmers, which equates to 1,300 bags, capable of planting 40 to 50 acres. The provision is expected to yield 700,000 pounds of potatoes to supply the Sandals chain.

While five farmers will benefit in this initial phase, the objective is to expand the programme, so that farmers will be the sole providers of Irish potatoes to the entire Sandals group, which comprise 11 resorts in Jamaica.

"The main aim is for Sandals to be 100 per cent supplied with Jamaica-grown Irish potato, with no further reason to import. This is a long-term sustainable programme," Mr. Stewart says.

"It is about growing locally, buying locally, and putting these micro and small farmers into business with a guarantee buy-back programme," he notes.

"What we are doing here at a starting place should yield some \$25 million worth of business to these farmers and move us further and further away from import substitution," Mr. Stewart adds.

The Sandals CEO says that while the focus is on Irish potatoes, there are other opportunities with onions, yams, turnips, etc. "Ours is a pilot project, which will guide us on the way forward," he notes.

He tells JIS News that the objective is to enable agriculture to maximise its full potential, noting that there is no better way than to consummate the marriage with tourism.

“This is not just to prove to ourselves but for us to show the country how corporate Jamaica can get involved,” Mr. Stewart says.

The Sandals initiative is being strongly supported and praised by Minister of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Karl Samuda.

“We need the private sector to provide the capital, the working capital, to give our farmers that much-needed push, so in this regard, I must commend the efforts we have been seeing from the Sandals hotel chain,” Mr. Samuda says.

“They are pumping millions into the farming of Irish potatoes to supply their needs. Now, very soon, they will be coming off the grid as far as Irish potato needs are concerned, because they are now financing the development of the crop to satisfy the Sandals chain,” he notes.

Mr. Samuda says it is mind-boggling to think of the prospects for agriculture and, by extension, the economic fortunes of Jamaica, if the Sandals model should be emulated by others.

“Imagine if we had the capital to apply that model across the country. Imagine if we had that model applied in a more intense way. We could produce Irish potatoes of the highest quality where, instead of importing it from the Netherlands and other places, we could now be cultivating it for both the domestic and overseas markets. We could be producing excessive amounts where we could store it and then export it; make by-products of it,” he argues.

Mr. Samuda adds that the opportunities in agriculture are limitless and that when combined with tourism, “we have the potential to solve all of our problems while giving our people the quality of life that they deserve”.

For his part, Manchester farmer, Leon Roberts, says the support he is receiving from Sandals could not have come at a better time and will serve to boost production.

“I am a young farmer, who simply lacked the resources to realise my dreams. I have the land space and I am willing to put in the work. With this assistance there is no telling how far I can go,” he says.

Dwight Peterkin, another Manchester farmer, says he sees the project as an opportunity “to make something of my life”.

“I am a potato farmer and I just didn’t have the kind of market to give me the drive to do more with all this land space. With this kind of opportunity, we can even get more people to come out and farm, especially with the knowledge that we will now be supplying all the Sandal hotels,” he says.

GENDER

Using gender research to increase the adoption of agricultural technology. International Potato Center (CIP), March 15, 2018

https://cipotato.org/press_room/blogs/using-gender-research-increasing-adoption-agricultural-technology/

Full article

Vivian Polar, Gender, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist with the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tuber and Bananas, shares insights on the importance of considering gender when developing agriculture technology.

Do men and women approach agriculture differently?

Men and women approach agriculture differently. Each one of them looks at farming based on their constraints and their strengths, and the context in which they work. Their technology needs differ from one another.

What do you mean when you say agriculture technology is not gender neutral?

When you say that technology is not gender neutral, you are letting people know that whatever they are designing regarding technology may limit men or women's access to that technology. For example, you may be designing equipment for harvest or for shredding and what you have in mind is the shredding process, but you haven't thought of who is going to use that technology. You haven't thought of how strong or tall that person is or if they will be carrying a baby on their back. Will they be doing this on a small scale for household consumption, or will they be doing this on a large scale? People think of the technology first, in general, that tends to benefit men more than women.

What are the drawbacks of not taking a gender-sensitive approach to technology development?

If you just think about what the technology does or what the variety does, you are thinking of the final product, but you are not thinking of the user. The benefits of a gender-sensitive technology design is that you are more inclusive. You are not just developing a product for a specific use, but for a specific user— this helps to target a particular type of inequality, which in this case, is limited access to technology.

What is something that most people don't consider about gender when they're developing new technologies?

One example that comes to mind is a mechanized potato selection tool. It sorted potato by size. It did the job well. As the prototype was developed, the designers overlooked the fact that women were the ones in charge of the selection process. Field trials gathered input from male farmers,

and specific adaptations were chosen based on that all male participation. Adaptions were made but were made with the wrong end user in mind. As a result, the female farmers failed to adopt this new selection tool because it was too high for them and required them to lift bags that were too heavy. It was difficult for the women to operate. They wanted something that was manual.

Can you give us an example of how men and women might approach agriculture technology differently?

Many times women are in charge of crops for home consumption, while men will adopt crops for income generation. That specific difference will determine what type of technology men and women will adopt. For example for home consumption, women prefer less labor intensive technology with fewer inputs. Efficiency might not be their top priority, but perhaps the culinary traits might be. In the case of men, when they are targeting a market product of the same crop, they're going to think about the efficiency and higher yields, and not necessarily other traits.

What would you like others to know about the role of gender in agriculture?

What I would like people to know is that we need not be afraid of addressing gender concerns in agriculture. We need to look at it as an opportunity to increase the uptake of our technology development.

I see so many researchers developing with great care technology products to reduce hunger and to address food insecurity. If we could only enhance that development process to target the other half of the world population, we would increase the adoption of that technology.

What recommendations do you have for other researchers looking at gender in agriculture?

My recommendation is to make it easy and accessible for farmers. I would also like to encourage young female researchers. We need to be part of this development process. A complimentary space of men and women working together will make for better technology products that benefit both male and female farmers.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March

techAGRI Expo 2018 by Faculty of Food & Agriculture, UWI St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago

Date: 22/03/2018 - 25/03/2018

Location: Trinidad and Tobago

Information: <https://www.facebook.com/ffatechagriexpo/>

April

Caribbean NCD Forum: Supporting national and regional advocacy in the Caribbean in the lead up to the 3rd UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs in 2018

Date: 23-25 April 2018

Location: Kingston Jamaica

Description: Hosted by The Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC), World Diabetes Foundation, PAHO and CARPHA

The aim of this forum is to mobilise regional civil society organisations (CSOs) and other key stakeholders to ensure that Caribbean civil society is fully engaged in the 2018 UN High Level Meeting on NCDs. The Caribbean NCD Forum will provide a unique opportunity for CSOs in the Region to take stock of progress achieved in NCD prevention and control since the UN High level Meeting on NCDs, 2011, and the UN NCD Review Meeting, 2014, and share regional successes and lessons learned in NCD policy and programmes with a view to accelerating action leading up to and beyond the 2018 HLM.

<https://www.healthycaribbean.org/hcc-to-host-caribbean-ncd-forum/>

National Agriculture and Trade Show 2018, Belize

Date: 27-29 April 2018

Location: Belmopan, Belize

Information: <https://www.facebook.com/natsbelize/>

May

St Kitts & Nevis Landcare Workshop, May 2018

Hosted by Australian Landcare International / CARDI/ University of Wolverhampton

Date: Nevis: 18 May 2018; St Kitts: 22-25 May 2018

Information: <http://www.cardi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/St.-Kitts-and-Nevis-Landcare-Workshop-Poster.jpg>

July

54th Annual Meeting of the Caribbean Food Crops Society

Date: 8-13 July, 2018

Location: Belize City, Belize

Description: Theme “Multi-functionality of Agriculture in the Caribbean Basin in Countries with Predominant Tourist Industries”

Hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration.

Call for Abstracts: Please fill out the submission form available on our website and submit by May 11, 2018 to: Ina I. Sanchez, MSc | Coordinator – Research & Innovation. Phone: (501) 623-0771, Email:

ina.sanchez@agriculture.gov.bz . Research, Development and Innovation Center, Ministry of Agriculture, FFESD&I, Central Farm, Cayo, BELIZE
<https://www.facebook.com/CARIBBEAN.FOOD.CROPS.SOCIETY/>
<http://cfcs.eea.uprm.edu/>

30th International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE) hosted by International Association of Agricultural Economists (IAAE)

Date: July 28 - August 2, 2018.

Location: Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Theme: “New Landscapes and New Mandates for Agriculture”

Website: <http://www.icae2018.com/Default.aspx>

October

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>

November

2018 International Annual Meeting, "Enhancing Productivity in a Changing Climate," of The American Society of Agronomy, the Crop Science Society of America, and the Canadian Society of Agronomy

Date: 4-7 November, 2018

Location: Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Website: <https://www.acsmeetings.org/>