

Ministers' Brief



Farmers in St Lucia are learning how ICTs and data can make their operations more productive and profitable

Bolstering agriculture production through the use of ICTs

CARDI St Lucia in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture hosted a workshop on 29 May 2019 on 'Market Intelligence as a Strategy to Better Manage Climate Change Risks'. Stakeholder agencies including the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Organisation of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Export St Lucia, Massy Stores, St Lucia Marketing Board and the St Lucia Hotel and Tourism Authority participated in a panel discussion following the opening ceremony. The discussion centered around the value of using ICTs in bolstering economic activity, crop production and information sharing within the sector.

Targeting farmers, extension and research officers and students the workshop demonstrated how ICTs can be used to inform decision making at the farm level. Participants saw first-hand how data sets on rainfall, tourist arrivals and festivals can be used to inform crop planning and scheduling and on-farm water management. Market issues and irrigation technology are two critical factors affecting farmers in St Lucia.

Crop scheduling is important so that the market is never in demand or over supplied. In countries such as St Lucia where small farmers dominate production it is best they operate as

groups to maximize yields to efficiently satisfy the demands of the market.

At the workshop participants were introduced to a web based tool to assist in scheduling production. CARDI Representative, Andrea Veira, noted that "training and use of ICT enabled tools will help farmers better respond to the markets so reducing wastage and increasing farmers' profitability".

This workshop is part of the Advancing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Solutions for Climate Smart Agricultural Practices Workshop funded by the Japan-CARICOM Friendship and Cooperation Fund.

Caribbean and Africa show off value chain alliances



Special edition chocolate made from Ghanaian cocoa and Caribbean coconuts

CARDI's strategic partner Alliances for Action has mobilised its partners from across the Atlantic to produce some special edition chocolate to showcase its value chain alliances at the ACP-EU Private Sector Development, Information, Knowledge-sharing and Networking Event for the Caribbean Region. This event was part of a series of regional meetings organized by the ACP Secretariat to share information on the ACP Private Sector Development (PSD) activities. The Caribbean meeting took place from 26-29 June in the Dominican Republic. Executive Director, Barton Clarke represented the Institute.

The West Africa-Caribbean delight was made with 100% dark chocolate originating from Ghana and sweet coconut flakes produced in St Lucia. The cocoa beans were sustainably produced and fairly sourced from smallholder women farmers of the Kuapa Kokoo Cooperative Cocoa Farmers and the Marketing Union Limited in Ghana. The coconut flakes were produced by JKLM in St Lucia in collaboration with the International Trade Center (ITC), CARDI and Alliances for Action partners. The Coconut Industry in the Caribbean Project was funded by the European Union and the ACP Secretariat. The project in Ghana is funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Today, dynamics in cocoa and coconut value-added markets offer tremendous opportunities to local agribusiness industries in the Caribbean and Ghana. Sustainable production models help increase farmers' resilience, diversification and profitability.

CARDI participates in the Annual Meeting of the Coordinating Group of Pesticides Control Boards of the Caribbean

Annika Minnot, CARDI Scientist represented the Institute at the 23rd meeting of the Coordinating Group of pesticides Control Boards of the Caribbean (CGPC) and the 4th meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) for the project: "Disposal of Obsolete Pesticides including POPs, Promotion of Alternatives and Strengthening Pesticides Management in the Caribbean". This is a FAO/ Global Environment Facility (GEF) project.

One of the most significant achievements of the project was the repackaging, safeguarding and exporting of 319 tonnes of obsolete pesticides and associated hazardous waste from participating countries for environmentally sound destruction in the United Kingdom. Under the project CARDI collected and analysed data on agro ecological or IPM practices and safer chemical and non chemical alternatives to those identified under Annex III in the Rotterdam Convention.

It is anticipated that the project will be extended to allow for the completion of empty container management programme for pesticides, remediation of pesticide contaminated sites in select locations, field testing of safer pesticide alternatives and the disposal of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in project countries.

At the CGPC meeting, member countries and input suppliers present, updated each other on the status of pesticide issues in their respective countries. The use of glyphosate and its derivative in member countries was one of the major discussion points and varied from continuation of imports to reduction of further imports until there is guidance on how to proceed. Other discussion points included access to laboratories for residue testing.

The meetings were held in Suriname from 10-14 June 2019.



Participants at the Annual Meeting of the Coordinating Group of Pesticides Control Boards of the Caribbean (Photo courtesy: FAO)

Adding value to cassava beyond the farm gate



Bakers being trained in Grenada on the art of making blended cassava bread

CARDI has gone beyond the farm gate to enhance the cassava value chain in Grenada. In 2015, the institute began producing mash - a key ingredient in the production of cassava blended breads. This initiative has been a part of a drive by regional agricultural stakeholders to promote cassava as a healthier starch alternative.

As consumers continue to demand healthier food products, CARDI has recorded a 27% increase in the sale of cassava mash from 2017 to 2018. The cassava was sourced from over 65 local farmers!

With an alternative market now available to farmers, cassava production has been on the increase. Many farmers have remarked that they are once again interested in growing cassava as they now have a ready market for their produce.

CARDI Grenada, continues to work with the Ministry of Agriculture and farmers to plan production cycles to ensure a year round supply of raw material, build capacity in cassava production and supply planting material.

These interventions are helping bakeries to have a guaranteed and regular supply of cassava to maintain their production cycle.

For 2018, the impact of the cassava bread venture on the Grenadian economy was estimated at approximately EC\$ 340,000. This was 10 times more than the impact created in 2015 when the programme started.