Minister in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAF), Honourable Audley Shaw cuts the ribbon to open the refurbished seed facility at the Bodles Agriculture and Research Station on 23rd October, 2019. Looking on are Dr. Greg Robin (CARDI), Ms. Therese Turner-Jones (IDB) and Dr. Lisa Myers Morgan (MICAF).
The PPCR is a multimillion dollar grant-funded programme provided by the Climate Investment Fund (CIF) through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The PPCR was established to develop and improve the climate resilient capacities of various sectors across the Region. The programme is executed by the Mona Office of Research and Innovation (MORI). The project has four components and sub-Component 4 – Applied adaptation initiatives, facilitates agriculture activities. CARDI leads the implementation of Component 4.

The programme builds on the agricultural climate smart initiatives within Jamaica, by new initiatives or enhancing existing ones. Two actions that have been funded under the programme are: the refurbishing of the seed storage facility at the Bodles Agriculture Research Station operated by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAF) and the training of selected staff in Seed Science Technology.

HAND-OVER OF REFURBISHED SEED STORAGE FACILITY AT BODLES

The newly renovated and equipped 1,000 ft² (92.9 m²) seed facility was completed in March 2019. The facility was refurbished with funds from the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and CARDI previously provided equipment with funds from the EU / ACP under the Agricultural Policy Programme (APP) Project. The expanded facility is capable of housing true and vegetative seed.

The Minister of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Audley Shaw, officially opened the newly refurbished facility at the handing over ceremony on 23 October 2019. Also present were Ms Therese Turner-Jones, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Representative in Jamaica, Dr. Gregory Robin, CARDI Representative in Jamaica, Dr. Lisa Myers Morgan, Principal Research Director, Research & Development Division, MICAF, staff of the PPCR Project Management Unit, CARDI, and MICAF.

The facility will store climate resilient seed for Jamaica and CARICOM Member States. Seed multiplication for staple crops will be accelerated before the start of the hurricane season, to ensure the availability of adequate volumes in case of natural disasters.

SEED SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

To complement the upgrade of the seed facility at Bodles, staff from MICAF in Jamaica and other seed facilities across the Region attended a one-week training course on Seed Science and Technology at the Iowa State University.

The training was geared towards strengthening participants’ knowledge in a number of technical areas, such as:
- The use of seed equipment for seed enhancement and maintenance of seed quality
- Testing for resistance and stress tolerance through the use of germination and vigour test
- Understanding the significance of seed physiology
- Applying of precision agriculture to increase crop yields to feed the growing population

The technicians that participated in the training were Martin Lindo (CARDI-Belize); Rameshwar Raghunauth (NAREI-Guyana), Carla Douglas and Alex Sybron (MICAF-Jamaica) and Cameedra Ram, (CARDI-Trinidad and Tobago).
The Sam Motta Demonstration and Training Centre (SMDTC) was established in 2000, through collaborative agreement between the Alumina Partners of Jamaica (ALPART) and CARDI. The initial purpose of the Centre was to utilise reclaimed mined-out bauxite lands to produce forages which would be used to raise improved small ruminants (sheep & goats). The offspring of these animals would then be purchased by ALPART and distributed to relocated tenant farmers, to either start a small ruminant herd or improve existing ones. The SMDTC also provided an improved buck for stud service where farmers who were already rearing goats could take them for breeding. The service was an instant success with over 100 persons benefitting in the first year alone. To date the DTC has supplied breeding stock of the Boer, Nubian and Alpine breeds of goat and Dorper sheep to producers all over Jamaica.

The focus of the DTC changed gradually, as it not only served as a breeding station for small ruminants, but also as a demonstration site for an integrated production system on mined-out lands. The goat manure was converted into compost (pile and vermi-compost) and reintroduced to the soil for the production of forage. Mined-out soils are nutrient poor and the introduction of manure to the soil helps improve the soils productivity. CARDI was able to demonstrate that several vegetable crops (callaloo- amaranth, pak choi, cabbage, lettuce, cucumbers), root crops (sweet potato, carrots) and stem tuber (Irish potato) achieved a comparable yield to similar crops grown on unmined lands.

The SMDTC over the years, also served as a major training center for the dissemination of information related to the production and management of small ruminants. Students at different levels benefitted from field tours, field days and short term attachments.

Students from high schools (May Day, Porus, Winston Jones, Mile Gully) in the Parish of Manchester attested to the fact, that their CXC agricultural passes were enhanced through their attachments at the SMDTC. Many of these students moved on to tertiary institutions and pursue agricultural careers. The SMDTC has been popular with tertiary students seeking internship opportunities. Students from the Knox Community College and College of Agriculture, Science and Education (CASE) have received invaluable practical and theoretical training at the facility.

The SMDTC has also served as a demonstration site for value added product development. The milk from the on-site goat dairy has been made into cheese, soaps and lotions. Farmers and artisans were also trained in leathercraft.

With the imminent phenomenon of climate change, the SMDTC also provided demonstrations on mitigation measures. A mini weather station, a greenhouse, water harvesting methodologies with pond liner and catchment facilities are all present on the station. The SMDTC, while demonstrating productivity of soils after bauxite mining, will also continue to conduct research aimed at enhancing lives of people in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean.
First batch of seedlings distributed from new Knockalva coconut seedling nursery

The new coconut seedling nursery established under Phase 1 of the EU-funded project, Coconut Industry Development for the Caribbean, at the Knockalva Polytechnic College (KPC), produced its first batch of seedlings. Local collaborators on this initiative were; CARDI, Coconut Industry Board (CIB) and the KPC. Seedlings produced in this first batch can supply the expansion of an additional 30 acres (12 hectares) of coconut production on the island, which can yield an additional 2 million nuts per year after five years.

The nursery was established in the western part of the island to improve access to planting material for producers in the western parishes. Producers from four parishes (nine farmers including one female) received seedlings (between, 100-200 seedlings each with one farmer receiving 500 seedlings). The parishes to benefit are: St James (450 seedlings), Westmoreland (900 seedlings), Hanover (350 seedlings), and the central parish of St Catherine (150 seedlings).

Also under Phase 2, seedlings from this first batch will be used to establish two acres (0.8 hectares) of coconuts on the grounds of the KPC. This established planting will serve as a field school for students and coconut producers. They will be trained in good agriculture production practices. Training sessions will be facilitated by CIB and CARDI. Research activities will also be conducted in the field and nursery.