CARDI signs host country agreement with The Bahamas

On December 9, 2019, CARDI’s Executive Director, Barton Clarke paid a courtesy call to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to sign the Host Country Agreement (HCA) between CARDI and the Bahamas. The Honourable Marvin H Dames, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs signed on behalf of the government of The Bahamas.

The HCA follows the Instrument of Accession which was signed on June 20, 2016 establishing an office for CARDI in the Bahamas. The HCA expands the ability of the Institute to service the needs of the Bahamian agricultural sector.

Minister Dames extended appreciation to CARDI for the work the Institute has been doing to develop and strengthen the country’s agricultural sector. He noted the work being done by CARDI is helping The Bahamas to feed itself and reduce its high food import bill.

Clarke remarked that CARDI will continue to assist the Bahamas with a research and development service. The Institute’s work will focus on developing strategic value chains and resilience focused initiatives.

Some other notable achievements of the Institute in the Bahamas, has been the training of Agricultural Science teachers in small ruminant production, the launch of a school garden project, the introduction and evaluation of improved sweet potato varieties, the development of the Cascarilla industry and the training of stakeholders in value added product development. CARDI has also been instrumental in kick starting agricultural production following the passage of Hurricane Dorian last September.

Witnessing the signing were the Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources, the Honourable Michael Pintard, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peter Deveaux-Isaacs, High Commissioner to CARICOM, H.E. Reuben Rahming and CARDI Representative in the Bahamas, Dr. Michele Singh.
In Barbados, CARDI and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) are collaborating on a project to increase the utilization of fish based silage as a feed source for livestock.

It is estimated that over 5,000 kg of fish byproducts (skins, heads and guts) are produced daily in Barbados, the majority of which make its way to the landfill.

Silage making is a promising option which can be used as a substitute for imported feed/supplements. It is an efficient and affordable way of converting fish waste into a safe, nutrient source for livestock and other agriculture applications.

CARDI is working with stakeholders to develop suitable formulations and evaluate them on the growth performance of selected livestock species. Locally available materials such as molasses and Sargassum seaweed are also being used in the formulations.

With most of corn and soybean imported into the Region being used to produce animal feed - silage making will reduce the import bill while opening up entrepreneurial opportunities for young people.

A preliminary workshop held in Barbados last year, through a partnership between the Government of Argentina, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy, the Blue Green Initiative, FAO and CARDI, demonstrated an economically viable small scale initiative.

CARDI and FAO are now working on perfecting the formulations. After completing the evaluations plans will be made to scale up the operations and share knowledge and experiences with other Caribbean islands.

2020 is the International Year of Plant Health

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). Yearlong activities will put the focus on the importance of protecting plant health and how it can end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment and boost economic development.

Today, plant health is under threat from a multitude of factors foremost among them being climate change and increasing travel – both have escalated the spread and establishment of new plant pests and diseases.

The United Nations (UN) estimates that over 40% of food crops are lost due to plant pests and diseases annually. The introduction and subsequent establishment of pests and diseases not only impact food and nutrition security but directly affects the livelihoods of millions of farmers.

CARDI has been a key stakeholder, collaborating with multiple agencies to help manage the incursions of agricultural pests and diseases across the Region. Through partnerships, CARDI has been able to develop strategies to control the devastating coffee berry borer in Jamaica and the
sugarcane moth borer in Barbados. Through the promotion of IPM Strategies, CARDI under the USAID funded IPM/CRSP Program was able to reduce the pests interceptions from 38% to 2.5% over a ten year period for Amaranth/Callaloo. This enabled Callaloo produced in Jamaica to be reinstated on the Pre Clearance List saving thousands of dollars in pre clearance fees annually. In the OECS, CARDI has been instrumental in controlling the devastating impact of the sweet potato weevil and more recently the Black Sigatoka Disease (BSD). In the early 2000s CARDI also contributed to the resuscitation of regional trade in fresh produce disrupted by the Pink Mealybug.

As we join the global community in celebrating the IYPH, CARDI looks forward to sharing with you impacts of our work across the Region on protecting plant health.

The use of exclusion cages were effective in protecting Callaloo from pests in Jamaica

**Region warned for drought conditions**

The Barbados based Caribbean Drought Precipitation Monitoring Network (CDPMN) has placed countries on alert for possible drought like conditions during the dry season. Based on the varying patterns of rainfall observed during December, the CDPMN is advising that the impacts of the dry season will play out differently across the Region. Citizens are being urged to monitor water levels and adopt water conservation practices during this period.

Surface, soil wetness and stream and river flow is expected to decrease across much of the region by the end of March 2020, especially across The ABC Islands, Barbados, Guadeloupe, and eastern Puerto Rico.

January to March may be drier than normal across Belize, The Bahamas and Guyana as rainfall totals and the number of wet days decrease.

According to the CarisAM Bulletin (January 2020 Issue) by the end of the 2020 dry season drought conditions could be a challenge in farming especially where water supply is sourced from larger reservoirs, large rivers or groundwater, affecting much of Belize, The Cayman Islands, central Cuba, central and southern Dominican Republic, St. Kitts and Nevis, Barbados, Grenada, The ABC Islands and Trinidad and Tobago.

Farmers are encouraged to have an alternate source of water especially for the peak of the dry season (February – April). Water conservation techniques such as mulching and drip irrigation should be practiced. Farmers are encouraged to irrigate in the early morning – where the evaporation rate will be lowest. Use of drought tolerant varieties and providing ample shade and water for livestock are also recommended.