A CARDI team headed by Executive Director, Barton Clarke paid a virtual courtesy call to the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture, Guyana the Honourable Zulfikar Mustapha, on 28 August 2020. Accompanying the Executive Director, were the Chairman, CARDI Board of Directors, Ignatius Jean and CARDI Representative in Guyana, Jhaman Kundun.

In his opening remarks, Clarke congratulated the Minister on his appointment and pledged CARDI's ongoing support to the development of Guyana's agriculture sector. Clarke gave an update on CARDI's work in Guyana and provided the Minister with an overview of the Institute's governance structure, highlighting the critical role the President of Guyana currently has as the Head for Agriculture, Agricultural Diversification and Food Security in the Quasi-CARICOM arrangement.

In the wide ranging discussion, the CARDI team also reiterated the need for private sector engagement and Guyana's role in attracting cross border investments. Clarke noted that putting the large tracts of land in Guyana, Belize and Suriname to productive use can help meet the Region's target of reducing food imports by 25%, by 2025 (25 in 5 plan).

Minister Mustapha, thanked CARDI for the work and investments in Guyana’s agriculture sector and noted there is more to get done. To this end, he said that he will be calling on the Institute to provide technical assistance and training and capacity development in several areas. The Minister remarked that Caribbean farmers are quite capable of feeding the Region, however there is need to provide them with the right marketing and policy support. He continued that the harmonization of intra-regional trading protocols and trade liberalization can assist the Region’s small economies to become more resilient and improve their bargaining power on the world stage. He vouched to support this at the policy level.

In Guyana, CARDI is currently implementing Phase II of the EU/CARIFORUM Regional Coconut Development Project. Over the next 5 years, CARDI and the International Trade Center (ITC) will be working in the areas such as production improvement, waste management and the establishment of a Coconut Industry Board. In addition, CARDI, through the Institute’s subsidiary - The Caribbean Agricultural Commercial Services Hub Limited (CACSH), is developing a 5,000 acre commercial farm in the Upper Berbice River, Ebini. Featuring a range of high value crops such as coconuts, hot peppers, passion fruit and soursop, the project is expected to prompt the development of the community through improved employment, contract farming and technical as well as business advisory services.
Introducing Nutmoss a locally produced potting mix

Unused stockpiles of decomposing nutmeg shells have been given a new lease on life by the Grenada Cooperative Association (GCNA). Collected shells have been ground up, mixed with peat moss and packaged as a potting media for use by farmers, nursery operators and home gardeners. The GCNA has branded it as Nutmoss Potting Mix.

CARDI Grenada tested several concentrations of the mixes ranging from the pure 100% media, to those combined with peat moss at ratios of 75%, 50% and 25% respectively, as a potting media. In collaboration with the GCNA, the results were demonstrated on the use and effectiveness of the mix to agriculture retail stores, nursery operators and home gardeners, on 23 July, 2020 at the CARDI Field Station, Westerhall, St David.

Across the board the results were excellent! Not only were the seedlings healthy but, the root balls were also well developed and vigorous. According to Reginald Andall, CARDI Representative in Grenada and Agronomist “this potting mix is very easy and it fits very well in one’s vegetable seeding production. It has tremendous potential for the agriculture sector, not just in Grenada but around the Caribbean, as it can be easily exported.”

Agronomist Ronald O’Neale, explained that for every thousand pounds of nutmegs that is processed by the GCNA, 300 pounds of nutmeg shells are generated. The positive results of these mixes as an alternative potting media in nursery production presents an agripreneurial opportunity and the creation of a potential spin off industry. The GCNA hopes this mix can be commercialized in the near future, so reducing the dependence on imported potting media.