Sweet potato value chain analysis commences

Regional plans to cut food imports by 25% by 2025

Agri-news Round-up

Vetiver grass - a green engineering solution

Region on high alert for African Swine Fever
The A-Z Information Jamaica Limited has been awarded the contract for the consultancy on “Value Chain Analysis and Development of Business Cases”. This consultancy is part of the wider Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) financed project – Regional Sweet Potato Value Chain Enhancement and Technology Transfer being implemented by the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI).

By conducting a value chain analysis and development of business cases, the consultants will develop recommendations for strengthening the regional sweet potato value chain, improve market linkages and highlight opportunities for investments in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Guyana. The results of this work will be shared across the wider CARICOM Region.

CARDI’s project manager, Reginald Andall notes that “Sweet potato has the potential to contribute to nutrition security, growth and economic prosperity across the Caribbean. We are hopeful that the recommendations generated will be adopted by farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) so they can profit from the increasing market opportunities for fresh produce and value-added products.”

Specifically, the consultancy seeks to understand the firms that operate within the sweet potato industry from input suppliers to end market buyers; the support markets that provide technical, business and financial services to the industry and the business environment in which the industry operates. Furthermore, constraints to competitiveness will be identified and recommendations provided to address same. Additionally, commercial and niche product markets and their requirements for entry will be identified. A market assessment to determine the demand for sweet potato and sweet potato value-added products, raw material production, food safety and trade requirements and strategies/recommendations for linking farmers and agro-processors (including women and youth) to markets will also be produced for each project country.

Through the business cases, the stakeholders will be furnished with relevant information to guide investment decision making.

Roots and tubers, particularly sweet potato, have been identified as a priority crop for development in CARICOM to reduce its food import bill. CARDI, through partnerships including the International Potato Centre (CIP), undertakes agronomic and value chain research to improve sweet potato production and processing. Some of the achievements to date have been the introduction of high yielding cultivars, agro-ecological zone trials, integrated pest management (IPM) studies, post-harvest handling studies, and standardization of the multiple varieties/accessions and the identification of drought-tolerant varieties.

Access to finance continues to be a major constraint to agricultural production and expansion in the Caribbean. At the meeting President Ali announced significant progress was made to access financing for agricultural activities through the CARICOM Sustainability Agriculture Credit Facility. These funds can be accessed by all CARICOM member states for development of priority crops, capital equipment for farming, feeder roads, bulk storage of crops, processing plants and shade houses among other activities. The facility provides funding for up to five years for repaying up to G$2B to Guyana and US$100M to all CARICOM member states, with interest rates as low as 2.5 per cent.

In his presentation, Dr. Ali highlighted that coffee, cocoa, spices, industrial hemp and palm oil are high value imports into CARICOM with the potential for development in the Region. Dr. Ali also noted that production needs to increase between 25% - 700% if food imports are to be reduced to meet the 2025 target. Commensurate with this will be the need for CARICOM member states to increase their expenditure to at least 5%. On average, CARICOM member states expend an estimated 2.1% of national expenditure on agriculture.

In his presentation Dr. Ali reiterated the critical need for improved connectivity to foster easier movement of cargo within the Region.

The recommendations presented were adopted by the meeting with CARICOM heads pledging full support to the plan.
Caribbean Food insecurity increases by 72%

A series of surveys administered by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in partnership with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has revealed that, in the English-speaking Caribbean, the estimated prevalence of severe food insecurity has increased by 72% since the onset of the pandemic and by 44% as compared to one year ago.


Agriculture in the Americas is one of the key solutions to mitigate climate change

The intensive use of soils to meet the growing demand for food, fiber and energy has resulted in soil carbon loss and increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For this reason, it is vital to implement sustainable soil carbon sequestration practices and well-targeted political agendas, which need to be scaled up in order to mitigate climate change and contribute to food security. A study developed by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and The Ohio State University Center for Carbon Management and Sequestration (C-MASC) entitled “Soil carbon sequestration through the adoption of sustainable management practices: Potential and opportunity for the Americas” summarizes information on the carbon sequestration potential of soils in the Americas.

Guyana to host agri investment forum, 19-21 May 2022

This event is geared towards the promotion, engagement and informed dialogue among key stakeholders along the agri-food value chain – policymakers, development partners, foreign and local private investors, farmers, distributors—on how investment could be encouraged. Stakeholders within the industry will be able to exhibit their products and services, network with others both directly and indirectly affected by the industry and acquire high level investment and marketing exposure.

Read more >>> https://goinvest.gov.gy/agri-investment-forum-expo/

600+ CARDI publications now available for download

The CARDI Virtual Library is a key digital resource of CARDI publications on:
- Root crops
- Cereals and Grain Legumes
- Hot peppers
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Sheep and Goats
- Climate Change, Protected Agriculture, Natural Resource Management


Belize secures US$25 million from the World Bank for climate resilient agriculture

The World Bank’s Board of Executive Directors has approved financing of US$25 million for the Belize Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Project, which will aim to increase food production capacity and the adoption of climate-smart agricultural approaches among project beneficiaries. The project will provide over 7,000 farmers with weather data and technical information to help improve yields for crops and livestock and facilitate better planning. The project will also provide grants to over 3,700 small farmers, enabling them to adopt climate-smart practices to improve the sustainability of their farms.

Vetiver grass - a green engineering solution in Antigua and Barbuda

In Antigua and Barbuda, Vetiver grass is being used to ameliorate and rehabilitate the Cooks Landfill, which borders one of the country’s largest mangrove swamps. This activity is taking place under the “Strengthening Coastal and Marine Climate Resilience through Upland and Coastal Ecosystem-Based Adaptation and Community Engagement” project currently being implemented by the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

In mid-2021 Vetiver cuttings were imported from Dominica under the project. Following the plants arrival and quarantine, CARDI Antigua and Barbuda Unit provided technical assistance to the project partners to establish and maintain 2 propagation nurseries in Bendals and the Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Center.

CARDI provided technical guidance to the project partners on the grass’ agronomy, fertilizer regime, soil and water management and weed control strategies. CARDI has a track record of working with grasses and so the Unit’s assistance in the establishment and maintenance of these nurseries have been important to the success of this project, says CARDI Representative Paul Lucas. CARDI will also establish and maintain a museum plot at its field station in Betty’s Hope. These nurseries will supply the planting material to establish hedgerows along the perimeter of the landfill. The hedge will control soil erosion and leaching of toxic chemicals - both of which are hazards to biodiversity in the area.

Another component of the project is a training programme for persons to use Vetiver grass for handicrafts. Targeting women and youths this programme aims to stimulate the development of a sustainable green business and promote sustainable livelihoods.

The project is supported under the CBF Eba Facility, financed by the Government of Germany, German Development Bank (KfW) with resources from the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

Region on high alert for African Swine Fever

The African Swine Fever (ASF) is a virus, often fatal, which affects both domestic and wild pigs. The disease, though harmless to humans, is highly transmissible between infected pigs and food made from infected pigs and can survive months in the environment.

ASF is an extremely contagious viral disease with high mortality rates in domestic and wild pigs. There has been a recent emergence of ASF in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In the last year, Dominica shipped over 2,600t of pig meat to Caribbean nations, a vast 60% increase from the previous year. With the presence of the disease in the country, 60,000 pigs were slaughtered.

The disease, if not combated, will have a horrendous impact on the pig industry and the livelihood of those involved in its production. As pork meat is one of the primary sources of animal proteins, the disease poses a threat to the sustainability of the global food supply chain and is a serious problem to food security in the region. This disruption may also lead to dietary changes in the population which can also increase food import bills.

Symptoms of ASF vary from acute to chronic depending upon the virus strain and immune status of infected pigs.

In chronic cases, mortality rates range from 95-100% in 4 to 20 days prior to infection. In less virulent strains, 30-70% chances of mortality. Signs of infection vary from fever, loss of appetite, depression, haemorrhage, reduced growth, skin lesions and swelling.

With no vaccine or treatment available to fight the disease, prevention relies heavily on biosecurity measures and the collaboration of all stakeholders involved in the industry. Biosecurity is crucial to both commercial and small scale pig production for preventing the introduction and effectively controlling the spread of ASF. Basic biosecurity at the farm level includes segregation, disinfection and cleaning.

Properly securing farms and supplies as well as controlling the movement of persons on farms can limit the opportunities for disease spread. All persons and materials should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected to remove any traces of the virus still present. Report signs of infection to the relevant authorities and persons must be mindful of the purchase and importation of live pigs and their by-products.
From the field

Jamaica

CARDI Representative in Jamaica, Dionne Clarke – Harris was delighted to welcome the new Manager of the Coconut Industry Board (CIB) Mr. Shaun Cameron to CARDI. CARDI and CIB are key partners in the implementation of the EU/CARIFORUM Regional Coconut Industry project.

Belize

CARDI Representative in Belize, Ms. Omaira Avila Rostant participated in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise’s Annual General Meeting. At the meeting CARDI presented its accomplishments and work plan.

Dominica

Farmers in Dominica have expressed satisfaction with the high yields they obtained from the Spunta variety of white potato. The Government of Dominica is keen to expand the production of white potato as part of its food security, export and climate resilience strategies.

Guyana

A CARDI team headed by Executive Director, Ansari Hosein paid a courtesy call to the President of Guyana, Dr. Irfaan Ali and Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha on 21 April, 2022. Discussions focused generally on regional agriculture development and specifically on CARDI led agriculture initiatives in Guyana.

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