Responding to CARICOM’s food security crisis

Agri news Round up

Supporting the commercialization of corn and soyabean in Belize

CARDI subsidiary providing agri-business solutions to the agriculture sector
Responding to CARICOM’s food security crisis

The Region’s food insecurity was the center of attention at the recently concluded Agri Investment Forum and Expo hosted by the Government of Guyana and the CARICOM Secretariat. The event was geared towards the promotion, engagement, and dialogue among key stakeholders along the agri-food value chain on how investment could be encouraged. Leaders agreed that increased investment in agriculture and food production is critical for reducing the almost US$6 billion regional food bill and achieving the 25% by 2025 food import reduction target.

Much of the data points to the fact that CARICOM is operating below its potential to feed itself – making it one of the most food dependent regions in the world. The global economic conditions precipitated by COVID-19 and the Russia/Ukraine conflict coupled with the impacts of climate change have compounded the debilitating impacts on primary production, rising food prices and disruptions to key supply chains. The findings of the fourth round of the CARICOM Caribbean COVID 19 Food Security and Livelihoods Impact survey reveal that 2.75 million people (39%) out of 7.1 million in the English-speaking Caribbean are food insecure.

Heads of Government that participated in the Forum resolved to achieve the CARICOM target of reducing the import bill by 25%, the following 4 areas must be urgently addressed.

Firstly, the Agriculture Plan proposed by Guyana’s President and Lead of Agriculture in the CARICOM Quasi-Cabinet, Dr. Irfaan Ali in March 2022 will be fast tracked. The Ministerial Task Force on Food Security will propose an implementation schedule for consideration at the next Heads of Government Meeting set for July in Suriname. The plan targets the commercialization of the following priority commodities: poultry, corn, soybeans and rice for feed production, meat (beef, pork and mutton), niche vegetables, herbs and spices, roots and tubers, fruits and coconut products.

Intra-regional trade and an inadequate sea and air transportation system continue to be major hindrances to industry development. Barbados’ Prime Minister, Mia Mottley together with the Quasi-Cabinet responsible for transport and agriculture will also table a proposal on the development of a sustainable transportation network at the next Heads of Government meeting. This proposal will be done in concert with the Caribbean private sector, international donor community and multilateral agencies.

Many regional leaders gathered in Guyana bemoaned the existence of trade barriers and in particular non-tariff barriers which inhibits intra-regional movement of agriculture produce. Prime Minister of Belize and Chairman of CARICOM, John Brizuela, in his remarks at the Opening Ceremony said “It is time to remove the technical trade barriers that most Caribbean countries impose on each other.”

Prime Minister Mia Mottley is responsible for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) in the Quasi-Cabinet setup and is tasked with leading the development of a proposal to present at the Special Meeting of Heads.

Lastly, it was agreed that priority would be given to empower women and youths so they can increase their contribution to the development of the agriculture sector. The CARICOM Secretariat has been authorized to commission a study to increase the participation of women and youth by at least 20% by 2025. Access to finance, contract farming and technology utilization are some of the areas that would be addressed in the proposal.

During the three-day Forum, CARDI also participated in several of the side events including the expo. Noting Guyana’s thrust to promote cross border investments the Institute took the opportunity to highlight its successful seed commercialization programme for soybean, hot peppers and corn. Corn and soybean in particular have been targeted to reduce the Region’s food import bill since they are imported as intermediate inputs in the manufacturing of animal feed.

On the second day, Executive Director, Ansari Hosein spoke on “Developing the Regional Coconut Industry” and gave some insights into the ongoing work under the European Union (EU)/CARIFORUM financed project currently being implemented by CARDI and the International Trade Center (ITC). Hosein noted that the coconut industry is expanding with regional production projected to move from more than 313,000 tonnes in 2010 to more than 726,000 tonnes in 2023. He noted while some successes have been achieved under the project there are still bottlenecks along the value chain that needs to be collectively addressed.

High on the agenda are the issues relating to poor agricultural practices, quality planting material and access to appropriate equipment, capital and trade barriers.

The Expo attracted over 300 exhibitors, CARDI highlighted its commercial seed production programme while the Institute’s subsidiary the Caribbean Agricultural Commercial Services Hub (CACH) focused on the work they are doing to develop the Ebini - Integrated Agribusiness Project. Over ten coconut agro processors from across the Region were also supported to attend the Expo to showcase their product range and business models. Support was provided under the Alliances for Caribbean Coconuts II funded by the European Union and CARIFORUM.
Regional Agri-news
Roundup

Guyana, Trinidad ink agreement to boost cooperation

Mutual cooperation between Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago is expected to be significantly increased following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The MoU seeks to address non-tariff barriers, areas of trade and investment, agriculture and food security, security, energy, infrastructure, education, tourism, sports and culture, with the aim of developing a strategic partnership for the mutual benefit of the two countries and the wider community.

The agreement was signed at State House by Guyana’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hugh Todd, and Trinidad and Tobago’s Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, Dr. Amery Browne.

https://guyanachronicle.com/2022/05/23/guyana-trinidad-ink-agreement-to-boost-cooperation/

High food prices in the Caribbean are affecting people’s ability to afford a nutritious diet

Ninety-three percent of respondents of the 4th Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security & Livelihoods Impact Survey reported higher prices for food compared to 59% in April 2020.

The ongoing crisis in #Ukraine is expected to create an even deeper impact on the cost of basic goods and services in the #Caribbean.


Mexico’s removal of tariffs to positively impact Belize’s agriculture sector

Mexico’s removal of tariffs will have a tremendous economic impact on Belize’s agro-productive sector, said Jose Abelardo Mai, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security, and Enterprise (MAFSE).

The Minister continued by saying “that means a lot for the future of Belize as an agriculture-based country. It means that we have access to a 123-million-people market. It means that we can produce and export black beans, we can produce and export soybeans and soybean products, we can produce and export cattle free of tariffs.”

This is being cited as a historic agreement which will immediately provide a boost in our productive sector which now has real and ready access to a huge market which has previously been difficult to access,” said the Government of Belize Press Office.


A global vision to spice up Jamaica’s agricultural exports

The world has changed radically since the 1970s, and we need innovative and agile policies to manoeuvre established trading blocs to carve out niche and value-added agro-processing markets for ourselves.

No country has ever created true wealth for its people without access to export markets in goods and services. Jamaica will never create true wealth for our three million people by producing for our three million people. Our Jamaican market is too small, and it’s time to take the risk and produce for 15, 20, 25, or 30 million people.

https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/a-global-vision-to-spice-up-jamaicas-agricultural-exports/
CARDI positioned to support the commercialization of corn and soybean

Corn and soybeans are among the "big ticket" commodities imported into CARICOM. They are the major energy and protein sources respectively used in the manufacture of poultry and other animal feed. As the Region moves towards reducing its burgeoning USD 6 billion food import bill, corn and soybean are being targeted for import substitution. At the opening of the Agri Investment Forum in Guyana, on May 19, President of Guyana Irfaan Ali announced that his Government is aiming to move its current production of corn and soybean from 4,300MT to 35,000 MT by 2025.

Executive Director, Ansari Hosein notes that "CARDI has a long history of working with both commodities and is well positioned to produce and supply quality seeds and offer technical support to stakeholders to develop the value chains of corn and soybean." Belize is the center of CARDI’s work and over the years the Institute has also developed and strengthened its capacity to conduct seed analysis for all corn and soybean varieties. It is a popular choice among farmers because of its good yields and drought tolerant characteristics. The CARDI YC001 is a suitable substitute for local varieties cultivated by small farmers. On average it matures in 110 days and yields are approximately 3,700 kg/ha under optimal conditions.

Currently CARDI produces 2 non genetically modified (GMO) soybean varieties the, CARDI S-88, 3296. These varieties are desired by farmers as they show drought tolerance and are suitable for mechanical harvesting. Both varieties are not easily lodged, their pods have high clearance from the ground and take a long time from maturity to pod shattering. On average they mature between 103-120 days and yields are between 1,440 kg/ha and 2,200 kg/ha.

Evaluation trials are ongoing for both corn and soybean in Belize so that new high yielding, disease-resistant varieties can be made available to farmers.

As the Region charts its course towards reducing its food dependency investing in corn and soybean production are ‘low hanging fruits’ that can contribute significantly to reducing the food import bill as well as support the development of several agro based industries.

The CARDI YC001 corn is a yellow, open pollinated variety. It is a popular choice among farmers because of its good yields and drought tolerant characteristics. The CARDI YC001 is a suitable substitute for local varieties cultivated by small farmers. On average it matures in 110 days and yields are approximately 3,700 kg/ha under optimal conditions.

CARDI subsidiary providing agri-business solutions to the agriculture sector

The Caribbean Agricultural Commercial Services Hub (CACSH) was established in 2016 as the commercial arm of the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI). Based in Trinidad and Tobago the company delivers agri-business solutions to the public and private sectors across the Caribbean. CACSH is registered in 4 CARICOM territories and is working to expand its presence. Among the major objectives of CACSH are the provision of technical and business advisory support services and the marketing selected agriculture inputs and commodities.

In high demand are the hot pepper seeds produced by CARDI-Moruga Red, Moruga Yellow, Scotch Bonnet and West Indies Red. According to CACSH’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Maurice Wilson, “The regional hot pepper industry is a lucrative one with demand for fresh and value added products rising. CARDI and CACSH are working together to meet the demand and capitalise on these opportunities.”

Ebini, located in the Upper Berbice River, has been earmarked for development as the ‘new agriculture frontier’ by the Government of Guyana. This is the site for the 5,000 acres Ebini Integrated Agribusiness Project, developed and managed by CACSH. The project is designed to demonstrate a commercially viable integrated food production system for a selected range of food and agricultural products.

Presently, a variety of annual and perennial crops identified in the Regional Plan to reduce food imports by 25% by 2025 are part of the Project’s production schedule. Emphasis has been placed on cultivating high valued crops such as coconuts, sournop, passion fruit and short term vegetables. Approximately 500 acres of land is under different stages of development.

The company has secured agreements with local agro processors to transform some of the fruits into juice blends and pulps. They have also identified markets for exotic fruits and vegetables in Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. These commodities will be produced by CARDI and under a satellite farm system, sourced from farms in the Upper Berbice River.

CACSH is keen to demonstrate the value of vertical integration. “We need farmers and processors to re-orient their thinking away from just producing raw materials. They need to get into value added product development and enjoy greater revenue streams along the value chain while generating local employment,” concluded Wilson.

CACSH is also looking to introduce large scale corn and soybean production in Ebini using CARDI produced seeds and technological packages. This activity is closely aligned to the Government of Guyana’s goal of reducing the importation of corn and soybean for the manufacturing of animal feed by ramping up commercial production.

CACSH’s activities in Guyana and across the wider Caribbean are based on financial and environmental sustainability. The company’s aim is to attract investors to accelerate the development of the regional agriculture sector.

In the Regional Plan to reduce food imports by 25% by 2025 are part of the Project’s production schedule. Emphasis has been placed on cultivating high valued crops such as coconuts, sournop, passion fruit and short term vegetables. Approximately 500 acres of land is under different stages of development.

The company has secured agreements with local agro processors to transform some of the fruits into juice blends and pulps. They have also identified markets for exotic fruits and vegetables in Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. These commodities will be produced by CARDI and under a satellite farm system, sourced from farms in the Upper Berbice River.

CACSH is keen to demonstrate the value of vertical integration. “We need farmers and processors to re-orient their thinking away from just producing raw materials. They need to get into value added product development and enjoy greater revenue streams along the value chain while generating local employment,” concluded Wilson.

CACSH is also looking to introduce large scale corn and soybean production in Ebini using CARDI produced seeds and technological packages. This activity is closely aligned to the Government of Guyana’s goal of reducing the importation of corn and soybean for the manufacturing of animal feed by ramping up commercial production.

CACSH’s activities in Guyana and across the wider Caribbean are based on financial and environmental sustainability. The company’s aim is to attract investors to accelerate the development of the regional agriculture sector.
Congratulations to Belize's Farmers' of the Year – Orlando Ek (Male Farmer of the Year), Norma Figueroa (Female Farmer of the Year) and Darwin Orellana (Youth Farmer of the Year). CARDI was happy to sponsor corn, beans and hot pepper seeds as part of their prize package.

Over 10 coconut agro processors from across the Caribbean were supported under the EU/CARIFORUM Alliances for Caribbean Coconuts to participate in the Agri-Investment Forum and Expo.

Highlighting some of the outputs under the EU/CARIFORUM Alliances for Caribbean Coconuts project in the CARDI booth at the Agrofest Exhibition 2022.

Congratulations to Rajay Reid the Caribbean's top Agriculture Science student for 2021! Here he is receiving his award from CARDI Representative in Jamaica, Dionne Clarke-Harris. Looking on is his former teacher Mrs. Janet White-Taylor.