Guyana looks to Brazil to improve coconut production
CARDI welcomes new Human Resources Manager
Efficient water management strategies for Antigua’s agriculture sector
Building capacity of research staff to detect Lethal Yellowing disease in coconuts
The coconut water industry in Guyana is booming! However, current production is insufficient in meeting the market demands. At the Agri-Investment Forum held earlier this year, the Government of Guyana, announced their intention to broaden the genetic base of coconuts, by introducing new superior varieties to improve production. To assist, CARDI under the EU/CARIFORUM financed Regional Coconut project (Coconut II) organized and participated in a visit to Tecnologia Na Produção De Coqueiros (COHIBRA)’s Coconut Seed Nut Farm in Brazil.

The purpose was to assess the feasibility of importing 1,000 seed nuts of the Brazilian Green Dwarf variety to Guyana, and to inspect COHIBRA’s production process - ensuring it satisfies Guyana’s plant quarantine requirements. Improving the supply of quality planting material in the Region, is a strategic objective of the Coconut II project.

It was agreed that 1,000 seed nuts would be imported into Guyana, due to similar growing conditions between both countries, and the variety’s ideal characteristics which includes its resistance to the Lethal Yellowing Disease. Following the quarantine period the seed nuts will be evaluated at the Hope Estate and at the National Agricultural and Research and Extension Institute (NAREI). Once evaluations are successful, farmers will be supplied with seed nuts for planting out. The agencies will continue to monitor the performance of these plants on farm.

CARDI’s Officer-in-Charge, Jhaman Kundun described this as an, “Exciting initiative since numerous studies have shown Guyana’s coconut industry is being impeded by old plantations (senile trees), and underperforming traditional varieties.” Higher yielding new varieties like the Brazilian Green Dwarf -a desirable water nut variety, will provide farmers with improved yields and higher incomes. Most importantly broadening the genetic base, improves the crop’s resilience to climate change.

COHIBRA is a research facility located in Fortaleza, specializing in the production of genetically superior coconut cultivars and coconut pollen – the latter primarily used in their hybridization programme. To date COHIBRA has supplied 2,000,000 seeds, and coconut seedlings for both hybrids and dwarves to the local and international markets.

Accompanying CARDI on this field visit were senior representatives from NAREI, Hope Coconut Industries Limited (Hope Estate) and the National Plant Protection Organisation.

CARDI is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Ansylla Quan Kep, to the position of Human Resources Manager, with effect from 09 May, 2022.

As the Human Resources Manager, Dr. Quan Kep will lead the development and implementation of the Institute’s, human resource strategic and annual operational plans, employee-oriented culture, and oversee industrial relations, compensation, benefits, and employee relations. A key responsibility of the new Human Resources Manager will be employee development. Dr. Quan Kep, will collaborate with management to formulate, and produce the Training and Development Policy and Procedures, for all levels of staff across member states.

Executive Director, Ansari Hosein notes that human resources is critical to the overall success of the Institute, and to ensure staff is well equipped to perform their duties, the continuous learning , and development of team members will be supported. Dr. Quan Kep has a particular passion for the identification of talent and the holistic development of an organisation’s human capital, and is adept at managing a wide range of human resource matters. She is forward-thinking, and highly effective at adapting to the evolving needs of organisations in relation to changing work trends, and labour market shifts in the creation of an even more agile and more productive workforce.

Prior to this appointment, Dr. Quan Kep, worked for over sixteen (16) years in Human Resources Management and Industrial Relations, in the Food and Beverage industry in Trinidad and Tobago. She is qualified in the areas of Mediation, Industrial Relations and Human Resources Management, and holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Mediation Studies UWI, St. Augustine and a Diploma in Industrial Labour Relations Practice from Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative studies. She is also the holder of a Masters in Management Studies – with specialization in Human Resource Management and a PhD in Business Administration from the University of West Indies, St Augustine.

The management and staff warmly welcome Dr. Quan Kep, to this new position and wish her the best on this new chapter of her professional journey.
Vice President Harris Launches the U.S.-Caribbean Partnership to Address the Climate Crisis 2030 (PACC 2030)

On June 9, Vice President Harris announced the U.S.-Caribbean Partnership to Address the Climate Crisis 2030 (PACC 2030). PACC 2030 is the Biden-Harris Administration's new initiative involving fresh commitments to — and integration of — climate adaptation and resilience and clean energy programs across the Caribbean region. PACC 2030 establishes a framework to elevate U.S. cooperation with Caribbean countries to support climate adaptation and strengthen energy security, while building the resilience of critical infrastructure and local economies to the climate crisis. This comprehensive, adaptive, and goal-oriented approach will support our Caribbean neighbours in addressing energy security and climate adaptation and resilience with the urgency these challenges demand.


Jamaican Turmeric destined to become one of the country’s prime export crops

FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries through its regulatory arm, Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (JACRA) will today start laying the groundwork for developing Jamaica’s Turmeric Industry known for growing one of the most pungent and potent ginger varieties in the world, Jamaica is seeking to develop the sister root, turmeric, as a prime export crop, by the end of 2021. Presently, almost 90% of the dried turmeric used in Jamaica is imported despite it being said that Jamaican turmeric contains strong characteristics in flavour, colour and curcumin content.


Local strawberries by October

Despite some teething challenges in setting up their infrastructure, Berrycove is confident that by the last quarter of 2022, strawberries and other crops previously not native to this country will be grown in Tobago.

The company first announced the plan to grow the fruit almost exactly a year ago after Berrycove was formed following a joint venture between Anthony N Sabga Ltd, Island Growers Caribbean and Alquimi Renewables LLC. The company is currently setting up four greenhouses, of which two will be dedicated to growing strawberries, while the others seek to grow crops previously foreign to this nation.

https://www.guardian.co.tt/business/local-strawberries-by-october-6.2.1522101.fc0c92a9a2
Soil and water management is a priority area for CARDI Antigua and Barbuda. The island is one of the driest in the Caribbean, and with climate change, conditions are expected to worsen. According to Meteorologist, Dale Destin, “2021 was a near record breaking year with only 600.7 mm (23.65 inches) of rainfall recorded for Antigua. This was the lowest on record behind 2015 with 574.5 mm (22.62 inches). The rainfall deficit amounts to a whopping 556.00 mm (21.89 inches) or 48% of the usual year total.” Water is a critical resource for agricultural production, and plays an important role in food security. In Antigua and Barbuda, CARDI leads the promotion and demonstration of improved water management technologies, to sustain agricultural production, and improve productivity. At the institute’s field station in Betty’s Hope, a variety of mulching options – plastic, organic and biodegradable are demonstrated to stakeholders. Throughout the year these are highly effective in conserving valuable soil moisture and suppressing weeds, says CARDI Representative Paul Lucas.

In country, the Institute is the go to resource, for installing and training farmers in drip irrigation, and fertigation systems. In 2021, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) collaborated with CARDI, and the Ministry of Agriculture, to support 55 small farmers in rural communities boost local production, through improved irrigation technologies and planting materials. One recipient of a fully automated irrigation system from this initiative, Lescharles Joseph commented that, “With the installation of the irrigation system on farm, I can now improve the amount and quality of food I produce, as without water farming is nothing.”

In addition, several other low technology solutions to sustainably manage water are demonstrated to farmers to assist them in improving yields. These include use of shade houses, humidity bins, wick systems, retrofitted tables for seedling management, rain water harvesting, subsurface irrigation and cisterns. As a research station, work is ongoing to make drought tolerant varieties available to farmers. Currently farmers can access, planting materials for several forage grasses and seeds for hot pepper, corn, pumpkin, table squash and eggplant from the Institute’s seed bank.

Efficient water management a critical success factor for Antigua’s agriculture sector

Building capacity of research staff to detect Lethal Yellowing disease in coconuts

In September, 2022 the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) is scheduled to commence a detection survey for Lethal Yellowing disease in Trinidad and Tobago. Lethal Yellowing is listed as a notifiable disease in Trinidad and Tobago because of the largescale economic impact it can have on the coconut industry. The disease is caused by a phytoplasma, which is carried by the leaf hopper - Haplaxius crudus. It spreads rapidly and can kill 90% of coconut trees within 3 - 18 months.

 Ahead of the survey, CARDI and the International Trade Center (ITC) under the European Union (EU) /CARIFORUM supported, Alliances for Caribbean Coconuts II project, facilitated a sensitisation workshop, on the detection of Lethal Yellowing Disease for MALF’s staff. Facilitating the sessions, were Plant Pathologist, Dr. Wayne Myrie from the Coconut Industry Board, Jamaica and Dr. Brian Bahder, Assistant Professor from the University of Florida. CARDI Representative in Trinidad and Tobago, Fayaz Shah noted that these sessions were, “designed to improve the technical capacity of the Ministry’s staff, to effectively scout and identify the vector, identify symptoms and sample for the disease.”

During an in-field session Dr. Myrie noted some of the common disease symptoms are, premature nut fall, necrosis of the inflorescence, yellowing or browning of the leaves, and the classic telephone pole appearance of the trees as the disease progresses. However, he cautioned that drought related stress can mimic Lethal Yellowing symptoms and encouraged precise testing be done to confirm its presence. Staff were also trained in sampling of coconut trees, for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) analysis. PCR analysis of is one of the most common methods for phytoplasma detection and identification.

Meanwhile Dr. Bahder conducted in-field demonstrations, for scouting of leaf hoppers using a sputa. Ministry’s staff also received training on identifying the vector. Dr. Bahder noted that the adults feed on the underside of the leaf, and are easier to spot in the morning.

Pests and diseases are major hindrances to coconut production in the Caribbean, and CARDI and ITC continue to work with a network of experts to introduce integrated pest management strategies to keep pests populations below the economic threshold.
Guyana

A visiting team of researchers from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore paid a courtesy visit to the CARDI office to discuss Quinoa cultivation in Guyana. This initiative is being led by Felix Quinoa Farming Industry Inc.

Barbados

A-Z Information Jamaica Limited's consultants were on the ground in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Guyana collecting information for the study on “Value Chain Analysis of the Sweet Potato Industry in Selected CARICOM Countries.”

Cayman Islands

Spotlight on agriculture! Contestants in the Miss World Cayman Islands pageant received a guided tour of CARDI’s Field Station by Representative Dr. Annika Minnott.

Bahamas

CARDI Representative in the Bahamas, Dr. Shelley Bridgewater delivered a lecture on “Agricultural Economic Empowerment. Reducing Food Insecurity,” as part of the Distinguished Lecture Series hosted by The Department of Cooperatives and the Bahamas Cooperative League.

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