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For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

CARDI and CDB to host black Sigatoka disease Training Workshops

The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) in collaboration with the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) will be hosting a series of workshops on the “Integrated Disease Management of black Sigatoka disease (BSD)” from August to October 2015. These training workshops are seeking to strengthen the capacity of BSD management teams in both the Ministry of Agriculture and banana and plantain organisations, extension officers and farmers. Plant pathologist, Dr. Robert Power from Suriname will facilitate these workshops (see schedule below) in Dominica, Guyana, St Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

A combination of classroom, laboratory and field sessions will be utilised to deliver a dynamic programme to participants. It will focus on phyto-pathological cycle of the disease, epidemiology, integrated disease management, climatic forecasting methods and measuring disease intensity with a view towards developing and sustaining robust detection, monitoring and management strategies.

BSD is a fungal borne disease which is a main constraint to banana and plantain production. Approximately, 97% of all banana and plantain varieties grown in the Caribbean are susceptible to BSD. It was first detected in the Region in 1991 and by 2012 it was recorded in all the banana and plantain producing countries in the Caribbean, where it has been responsible for a drastic decline in production. BSD reduces the leaf surface area of the plants which in turn affects their photosynthetic ability, consequently leading to a reduction in the size and weight of the fruit and bunches by as much as 35-50%, early and uneven ripening of the fruits and poor ratooning of the stools.

This capacity building workshop is one of three actions taking place under the CARDI/CDB funded project "Development of an Integrated Disease Management Programme for Black Sigatoka Disease" in Guyana, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia. The other two are the development of an integrated disease management (IDM) plan for BSD and the introduction and evaluation of BSD tolerant

varieties. It is envisioned that these three actions will work together synergistically to significantly improve disease management, resulting in higher yields for farmers. Bananas are an important commodity for the Region's small farmers as it is a source of employment, income and food security. Banana and plantain exports also account for approximately one third of the export earnings from the Windward Islands.

| Dates | Country |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 3-14 August 2015 | St. Lucia |
| 24 August – 4 September 2015 | St Vincent and the Grenadines |
| 14-25 September 2015 | Guyana |
| 5-16 October 2015 | Dominica |

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About CARDI

CARDI (www.cardi.org) was established in 1974 to serve the agricultural research and development needs of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). CARDI is positioned to enhance the socio-economic well-being of the Caribbean people through research for development that improves the competitiveness and sustainability of regional agriculture. The Institute's Headquarters is located at the University Campus, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.

About CDB

The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), is a regional financial institution which was established by an Agreement signed on October 18, 1969, in Kingston, Jamaica, and entered into force on January 26, 1970. The Bank came into existence for the purpose of contributing to the harmonious economic growth and development of the member countries in the Caribbean and promoting economic cooperation and integration among them, having special and urgent regard to the needs of the less developed members of the region (Article 1 of the Agreement establishing CDB). In the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, the CDB is recognised as an Associate Institution of CARICOM.

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