FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ARE FARMERS STILL “PLANTING BY THE MOON” IN THE CARIBBEAN?

CARIBBEAN FARMERS TO SHARE THEIR “TRADITIONAL PRACTICES” WITH AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS AT UPCOMING CONSULTATION

Trinidad and Tobago, July 22nd, 2016 – Some old time farmers insist that planting in accordance with the phases of the moon results in bigger, tastier crops, and that may be true. However, farming isn’t what it used to be.

“It is clear that a lot of the practices that we see now in small holder agriculture were not there ten to twenty years ago”, says Dr. Lyle Barbara Graham of farming in the Caribbean. Dr. Graham has been tasked with gathering information from around the Region on traditional and innovative farming practices as part of an initiative under the Intra-ACP Agricultural Policy Programme (APP) funded by the European Union (EU) under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF).

“Understanding traditional (farming) practices is meant to allow us to see what farmers are doing so that we can understand appropriate improvements”, says Dr. Graham. Not only that but these practices may be useful for sharing, amalgamating, publishing and streamlining. “We can improve the transfer of knowledge from farmer to farmer and within institutions for the purpose of increasing levels of production, hence addressing food security and poverty issues, as well as creating more environmentally friendly practices”, she says.

Growing cassava in Guyana. (Photo: Canbean Associates Inc.)

Regional stakeholders in agriculture, including farmers, will meet in Trinidad and Tobago from July 25th to 27th for a Regional Consultation on Traditional Farmer Knowledge and Innovative Practices as part of the APP being implemented by CARDI under Component Two.
Sessions will include experiences from the field in small farming systems, defining 3-4 traditional knowledge thematic areas and good practices and the scope of the regional support programme for action, role of youth and women in agriculture and the transfer of knowledge and the role of traditional knowledge transfer on resilient farming systems.

The initiative to gather traditional and innovation farming practices reaches further than just cataloging and sharing information. Agriculture has changed significantly in the Caribbean in the last 20 years, much in part due to mechanization, the use of agri-chemicals and climate change.

Climate change is now becoming the largest determinant of agricultural practices with significant impacts on water availability, a change in planting seasons due to a shift in rainy peaks and different diseases and pests all due to a change in climate. These factors then affect land use and prep, the use of chemicals and shipments to market.

“We need to understand how climate change is benefitting or influencing traditional practices”, Dr. Graham says. “We need to get a better feel for what is happening in terms of how farmers are responding and adapting to climate change in order to allow them to maintain production levels but ensure that what is being done is safe for the soil and environment, and for people’s health.”

Field and shade house farming in St. Lucia. (Photo: Canbean Associates Inc.)

For More Information on this consultation, please contact Richard Rampersaud, Technical Coordinator, C2 APP, CARDI, by email at rrampersaud@cardi.org.