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PRESS RELEASE | Notice of the ITC/CARDI Workshop

“Entomological Risk Mitigation Workshop for Small Coconut Producers”

Monday, 20 August 2018

Cara Suites, Claxton Bay, Trinidad and Tobago

In Trinidad and Tobago, there is now renewed interest in growing coconuts principally driven by the high demand for coconut water. Many farmers are establishing plots hoping for productive commercial harvests after two to three years and continuing for 20 to 50 years, depending on the variety. At present, it is common to see farmers establishing coconut plots with little attention being given to risk mitigation planning to safeguard their investment. It should however be appreciated that proactive planning is the best approach to dealing with the many risks which threaten plant and crop productivity.

A major risk faced by coconut farmers in Trinidad and Tobago is that of insect pests which can affect the plant directly or indirectly as vectors for disease causing organisms such as nematodes, mycoplasmas and viruses. In many cases, the effects of pest infestations can cause plant death (it is truly heart-breaking to lose a bearing coconut tree) usually after a period of severely reduced yields. Several of these pests are indigenous to areas outside the region but have established here principally through inadvertent introductions facilitated by increased global passenger travel and trade in agricultural products. To protect their investment, farmers therefore need to look beyond their farms when developing strategies to mitigate against these potential risks. They must now be aware of the coconut pests that exist in other parts of the world and take part in validated pest exclusion strategies to prevent these pests from reaching and establishing within their respective countries. All farmers, even farmers of small plots, have a critical role in safeguarding the productivity of our national agricultural sector by reducing the risks of transboundary movement of agricultural pests.

Coconut farmers in Trinidad and Tobago can learn how to reduce the risk of pest infestation in their fields and also how to integrate activities that support national pest exclusion and mitigation programmes by attending a one-day workshop on 20 August 2018 at Cara Suites, Claxton Bay. This information transfer session titled, ‘**Entomological Risk Mitigation Workshop for Small Coconut Producers**’ is one of a series of national risk management workshops being executed in 11 CARIFORUM countries by the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) partnering with the International Trade Centre (ITC), the European Union (EU) and the African Caribbean Pacific Group (ACP).

The information acquired from this workshop will position participants to better partner with governments and international agencies to develop risk mitigation strategies to protect their coconut farm operations.

