



For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

Restarting agriculture production in The Bahamas

25 May 2020, The Bahamas - In September 2019 Hurricane Dorian left a path of unimaginable destruction in the Bahamas. For more than 65 hours the slow moving category 5 Hurricane wreaked havoc to the northern islands – Abaco, Grand Bahama and the surrounding Cays. The impact was devastating. Thousands of residents were displaced, homes and buildings destroyed and lives and livelihoods lost.

In the immediate aftermath of the hurricane CARDI began working with all stakeholders to restore agricultural production on the islands. Working alongside the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources and the Rapid Needs Assessment Team (RNAT) coordinated by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Authority (CDEMA), CARDI assisted in assessing the damage to the agriculture sector. Minister Pintard advised that the damage to the sector was upwards of US 80 million.

Agricultural production on Abaco and Grand Bahama, regarded as the food baskets of the Bahamas were devastated. The vibrant fisheries and poultry sectors that the islands supported were obliterated. Assessments revealed almost total damage to the poultry industry, hydroponic and aquaculture farms. Livestock and vegetable farms were also hard hit by the monstrous storm. An estimated 60 000 ready to market broilers, sheep, goats and pigs were lost while three large scale farms and 200 small scale farmers were severely impacted.

Several challenges constrained the immediate restart to agricultural production on the islands chief among those were the lack of planting material and breeding stocking and salt water intrusion reported, CARDI Representative in the Bahamas Dr. Michele Singh.

Since January 2020, the Institute in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture IICA has been rolling out phase 1 of the Post Hurricane Dorian Agriculture project “Restoring Productive Capacity through Provision of seeds/seedlings, nursery infrastructure and other support mechanisms in the islands of Grand Bahama and Abaco.” Working in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture agricultural inputs ranging from planting material, potting soil and irrigation equipment have been provided to impacted farmers.

To date approximately 1,500 sweet potato slips from eight cultivars have already been distributed, some of which are about to be harvested. CARDI is focused on promoting the cultivation of root crops such as sweet potato as part of our climate resilient strategy. These below the ground crops remain intact after storms and can be a source of nutrient rich food for the population. Some of the USD

5,000 worth of vegetable seeds (tomato, sweet pepper, onion, hot peppers and squash) earmarked for distribution has been procured and distribution is set to continue over the next months.

In Abaco, pots soil and agrochemicals were presented to breadfruit growers. Farmers used these inputs to grow 500 bread fruit trees donated from The Trees that Feed Foundation (TTFF). These will replace those damaged by the hurricane. This initiative is aligned to the country's goal of boosting breadfruit production in the country.

In the coming weeks, pending the lifting of some of the restrictions imposed by the Government as a result of the COVID -19 pandemic two suspended climate smart livestock systems will be constructed on the Family Islands. Also approximately 4 acres of silvo pastures for Mulatto II, Mombassa and Cayman will be established and evaluated. To complement this activity CARDI will provide training to livestock farmers on pasture establishment and management. The increase utilization of nutrient rich forages will help reduce the dependence on imported concentrate for animal feed in the country.

CARDI and IICA are committed to fast tracking sustainable agriculture production in The Bahamas.

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For more information, please contact

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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 contribute to the sustainable development of the Caribbean by the co-generation, diffusion and application of knowledge, through agricultural research for development. The Institute's Headquarters is located at the University Campus, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.