



For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

Strengthening the sweet potato value chain in the Caribbean

12th April, 2021

The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) through the financial support of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) is implementing a three year project to improve the production, processing and marketing of sweet potato in the Region. The CDB will provide USD 600,000.00 with CARDI providing counterpart funding to the value of USD 210,000. The project will be implemented in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The results of the project will be shared across the Region.

Sweet potato is an important local food source for Caribbean peoples and a priority research commodity for CARDI. However, in spite of the agronomic and value chain improvements, the regional industry is still beset with challenges. Regional production is lagging behind when compared to other regions of the world. Additionally, farmers and processors are not adequately equipped to meet the demands of the modern consumer and address product safety standards and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements for intra-regional trade. This situation prohibits them from accessing high-value food markets for fresh and processed products.

Using a market led approach, a value chain analysis will be conducted to analyse the gaps and identify opportunities for market linkages and investments. A complementary research component will identify and make available climate resilient varieties for production and processing. The aforementioned interventions will inform the development of a series of agriculture multimedia extension aids. Targeting farmers and other stakeholders along the sweet potato value chain, these aids will demonstrate best practices in sweet potato cultivation, processing and value added product development. The goal is to increase the production and consumption of sweet potato.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the region's food insecurity into the spotlight. According to Executive Director, Barton Clarke, the region's dependence on imported food to meet our daily subsistence is both worrying and unacceptable. Projects like this are an opportunity for Caribbean countries to make significant strides towards increasing their production of traditional commodities, placing them on the path to achieving food and nutrition security.

Our vision is to have a food secure region. We view this as a shared responsibility and CARDI remains committed to working with all stakeholders to improve the Region's self-sufficiency whilst, exploiting our full production potential in a sustainable manner, ended Clarke.



Photo courtesy: digitalfarmja

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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.