



For Immediate Release

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **CARDI and CDB launches regional project aimed at strengthening the sweet potato value chain**

**2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021**

The Regional Sweet Potato Value Chain Enhancement and Technology Transfer project was today jointly launched by the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). The project is financed by the CDB to the tune of 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 with the results shared across the wider CARICOM Region.

Sweet potato is growing in prominence because of its short growth cycle, ability to adapt to a wide range of agro ecological zones and health and nutrition benefits. However, widespread production and utilization challenges have left regional production lagging behind when compared to other regions of the world. CARDI's Project Manager, Reginald Andall noted "That this project is designed to address the widespread challenges, producers and processors are facing in the Caribbean. The aim is unlock the potential of the sweet potato value chain to provide income and food security to the Caribbean people."

The project is organised under three components which involves market research, including value chain analysis to gauge levels of consumer demand, potential areas for investment and defining the existing gaps in the market. Field research will validate climate-resilient varieties and genotypes, including strains that are high yielding, drought tolerant, disease resistant, and suitable for processing. In addition several communication aids will be developed to demonstrate and share knowledge on best practices in sweet potato cultivation, processing and value addition. An integral component of the project is the provision of training on new technologies for farmers, agro-processors, and other stakeholders.

Division Chief, Social Sector Division at CDB, Deidre Clarendon said the project was a valuable part of wider efforts to increase food security in the Caribbean, pointing out that food import bills have more than doubled in CDB's Borrowing Member Countries over the past two decades.



“Increased production of local alternatives to traditional imports and value addition to provide healthy convenient options for consumers, can assist in reversing public health challenges and reduce the regional food import bill. Roots and tubers, such as sweet potato have been earmarked as areas deserving further investment and effort and we’re glad to provide that support,” she noted.

To address the Region’s growing food import bill, governments have identified roots and tubers as a priority commodity for commercialization. Consultants will be recruited to implement the project activities under the guidance of CARDI and the CDB.

The project directly supports CARICOM’s commitment of reducing the Region’s food import bill by 25% by 2025. In addition increasing the production and utilization of traditional commodities such as sweet potato will help in reversing the worrying trends of non-communicable diseases.

CARDI’s vision is to have a food secure region. Together with CDB the Institute will embrace a value chain approach to propel the sustainable competitive advantage of the Caribbean’s sweet potato industry.

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#### About CARDI

CARDI ([www.cardi.org](http://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.

