Unable to meet the growing demand for coconuts on the island, Barbados is moving full steam ahead to develop its industry. On 17 May 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture collaborated with the Barbados Society of Technologists in Agriculture and CARDI to host a stakeholders forum at the Savanna Hotel. Executive Director, Barton Clarke delivered the feature address which highlighted the frame within which Barbados should work to develop a sustainable and competitive industry. Clarke highlighted the need to start with the conduct of a very comprehensive baseline survey and the organisation of industry stakeholders into an innovation platform. Referring to the successful use of these platforms at the national level in the ongoing CARDI/ITC Regional project, Clarke said that innovation platforms fosters multi stakeholder collaboration which results in the realisation of strategic outcomes. Clarke noted that Barbados like all Caribbean islands are confronted with economies of scale and so encouraged them to forge partnership with players in the public and private sector especially the financial institutions. He urged the Ministry to develop the capacity of not just the farmers but the processors as well specifically highlighting the need to training in health and food safety standards. Clarke noted that Barbados must carve out a profitable, highly differentiated product. He urged them to move towards organic certification systems and challenged processors to think beyond the coconut water and coconut oil markets. He noted that there are viable prospects for developing the gastronomic and health and wellness tourism subsectors and the processing of coconut waste into a range of high quality bio friendly products.
Forging partnerships in Latin America

Barton Clarke (Executive Director, CARDI), Victor M. Villalobos (Director General, IICA), Barbara Wells (Director General, CIP), Javier Garcia (IICA Representative in Peru), and Kurt Manrique (International Specialist, IICA) after the signing of the agreement outside the famed Hubert Zandstra Biodiversity Complex. (Photo courtesy: IICA)

CARDI’s Executive Director, Barton Clarke joined Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture - IICA’s Director General, Dr. Victor Villalobos on a three day visit to Peru from 10-13 May 2017. During the visit he signed a tripartite agreement with IICA and International Potato Center (CIP) to jointly pool knowledge and experience on a variety of agricultural and environmental issues to benefit the Latin America and Caribbean region. The Letter of Agreement which was signed at the CIP Headquarters in Peru on 11 May 2017, will see all three agencies collaborating on the development of roots and tubers in particular sweet potatoes, in the Region.

Speaking after the signing Executive Director, Barton Clarke said that “each year, hurricanes impact at least one country in the Caribbean with devastating consequences. This joining together with IICA, which already has a presence throughout the continent, and with CIP which is not yet present in the region, will allow us to have access to a diversity of highly nutritious potatoes and sweet potato, resilient to climatic and soil changes, vital in any disaster situation”.

While in Peru, Clarke also held meetings with several key agencies working in the in the agricultural sector among them IICA Peru, The National Service of Agrarian Health (SENASA), Junta Nacional de café y cacao and the Peruvian Gastronomic Association (APEGA).

CARDI participates in the National Agriculture Trade Show, Belize

CARDI participated in Belize’s National Agriculture & Trade Show Grounds on 28-30 April 2017, in Belmopan. The Trade Show is one of the major events on Belize’s agricultural calendar and this year it was hosted under the theme #letsgetgrowing. The CARDI Belize office highlighted different aspects of the Institute’s work in cereals and grain legumes, coconuts, roots and tubers and climate change. Among the many attractions were the display of the machinery used in seed extraction and threshing of seeds, the sale of corn seeds (CY001) and an interactive kid’s corner. The latter offered kids the opportunity to learn more about the practical aspects of agriculture. Prior to Trade Show, CARDI was pleased to be associated with the judging of the Farmers’ of Year competition. CARDI staff member ,Martin Lindo, was on the judging panel. The winners in all three categories: Gary Canto (Male Farmer of the Year), Maria Flowers (Female Farmer of the Year) and Santiago Gutierrez (Junior Farmer of the Year) each received a cash prize and one year technical support courtesy, CARDI Belize.

Curious kids get hands on at the CARDI booth

Social and economic challenges stifling agricultural productivity in St Kitts and Nevis

CARDI Representative in St Kitts and Nevis, Kistian Flemming facilitated a climate change education and awareness workshop on 10 May 2017 at the Nevis Credit Union Conference Room. Participants included Ministry representatives, extension officers, farmers and entrepreneurs. Sessions were structured around the science of climate change and adaptation strategies for the sector in particular the practice of climate smart agriculture. While most were concerned about climate change and its damaging impacts on the sector, they said that a variety of social and economic ills were more of a priority in addressing declining agricultural productivity on the island. Participants said issues such as land tenure, poor access to credit facilities and increasing damage from monkeys, donkeys and wild pigs were more of an immediate concern to production. This event formed part of the part of Nevis’ Agricultural Awareness month of activities and was co-hosted by CARDI the GEF Small Grants Programme and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nevis.

Participants at the Climate Change awareness workshop jointly hosted by CARDI