Evaluating the Brazilian Green Dwarf coconut variety under Guyanese conditions

Remembering a quintessential Caribbean Scientist, Herman Adams

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The first shipment of 1,000 Brazilian Green Dwarf seed nuts, arrived in Guyana in late October from the Tecnologia Na Produco De Coqueiros (COHIBRA), Brazil. Five hundred seed nuts each were distributed to The National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI), and Hope Coconut Industries Limited (Hope Farms), to evaluate the performance and productivity of the variety under local conditions. The Brazilian Green Dwarf is a widely popular water nut variety. On average a plant produces between 250 - 300 nuts per year under good conditions, with each nut potentially producing between 350 ml to 450 ml of water. An added advantage of this variety is its demonstrated tolerance to Lethal Yellowing. On arrival of the seednuts in Guyana, Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha noted “this variety can be a game changer for the industry.”

Having access to highly productive varieties like the Brazilian Green Dwarf, will ensure farmers and processors can satisfy the increasing local demand for coconut and coconut related products, as well as tap into lucrative foreign markets. The International Coconut Community (ICC), projects the global value of coconut water in 2025, will be approximately 11 billion USD. Furthermore, of all coconut products, coconut water is projected to experience a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 21.03%. Productive new varieties like the Brazilian Green Dwarf, presents profitable opportunities for processors and agripreneurs as well as open the doors for farmers into new markets.

The challenges to the Regional coconut industry have been well documented. Production in the Region has been constrained by a range of problems including limited access to quality planting material, senile trees, pests and diseases and genetic erosion. The introduction of superior genetic material enhances the genetic diversity of the crop and offers greater resiliency to future climate change. Moreover, and very importantly, it will help producers optimize production and satisfy demand.

This activity directly supports the Government of Guyana’s objective of broadening the genetic base of coconuts, by introducing new superior varieties to improve production.

CARDI and the International Trade Centre (ITC), are pleased to coordinate the assessment and introduction of this variety into Guyana under the EU/CARIFORUM financed Alliances for Coconut Industry Development, Expansion and Enhanced Support for the Caribbean (ACIDEES) project. Both agencies are especially grateful to the support provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, NAREI, Hope Farms, the National Plant Protection Organisation and COHIBRA.

The Institute eagerly anticipates the results of these evaluations. Once favourable seed gardens will be created to reproduce the variety. New superior varieties guarantee farmers earn higher incomes and improve their livelihoods.

Remembering a quintessential Caribbean Scientist, Herman Adams

We are saddened to report on the loss of CARDI stalwart, Mr Herman Adams who passed away on 15th November 2022 in his home country of Guyana.

Mr. Adams was CARDI’s foremost Plant Breeder and Geneticist, who is credited for the development of several hot pepper varieties such as the West Indies Red, Moruga Red, Scorpion, Hood and CARDI Green. Today, most of these varieties remain in high demand by farmers and processors across the Region. At one time the Scorpion pepper was the hottest variety available on the market, with a reading of more than 2 million Scoville heat units. Herman joined CARDI in 1980 as the Country Team Leader in Dominica. He subsequently worked in St Vincent and the Grenadines, Guyana and Barbados on major projects such as: the Small Farm Multiple Cropping Research Project, Increased production of Aroids and Arrowroot in the Eastern Caribbean and Low Fertility Soils in the Intermediate Savannahs. In the early 2000s he transferred to Trinidad and Tobago, where he primarily worked on hot pepper breeding and production, up until his retirement from the Institute in 2016. Herman also worked in Plant Genetic Resources Management and biodiversity conservation, and was the Regional Coordinator for the Caribbean Plant Genetic Resources Network (CAPGERNet).

Mr. Adams was a brilliant, humble and pleasant person. Professionally, Herman has left an indelible mark on the Region’s agriculture sector and will be remembered for the significant contribution he made to the development of the hot pepper industry. Personally, he will be remembered for; being a supportive friend, his captivating stories, wittiness and wicked sense of humour.

We thank him for his sterling contribution to the Institute and the Region.

The management and staff extend heartfelt condolences to his family and friends.
As I address the youth, in particular, this afternoon, I wonder how many of you would answer the questions ‘What do you want to do when you grow up? How do you want to make your living?’ by saying “farming”. How often in the career guidance workshops that are held at your schools, are you addressed by farmers, agri-technicians, agri-entrepreneurs, including agro-processors? I suspect that will not be too often!

Let us look at some basic facts. The average age of farmers in the Region is estimated to be between 50 years to 60 years, with not enough young farmers coming in to replace old farmers so as to sustain the Region’s agricultural sector. This is one of the things that we must change if the Region is to be food secure, and also strengthen its economic and trade prospects.

As it stands now in our Region, young people constitute a section of the society with the highest levels of unemployment and food insecurity. However, like the agriculture sector, the youth possess untapped potential. Their capacities for creative economic activity are not fully realized when opportunities are limited.

Facilitating youth participation in the agriculture sector will provide much needed employment opportunities and will also help to drive innovation and growth. And of course the resulting benefit to our individual countries and to our Community will also grow.


**CARICOM’s SG Message on the launch of the “I AM AGRICULTURE” CAMPAIGN**

Morocco to Ship 500 Tonnes of Fertilizers to St. Vincent in 2023

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines expect to welcome 500 tonnes of Moroccan fertilizers in 2023, according to Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves. The shipment reflects growing cooperation between Rabat and Kingstown in key sectors such as education, agriculture, and trade. The two countries are currently developing “a roadmap for relations over the next three to five years,” Gonsalves told local media on Thursday.

“Once we finalize this with the Moroccans, no farmer would be spending money on fertilizer next year,” the Prime Minister explained, adding that the shipment is in addition to 40,000 sacks of Venezuelan urea that are set to provide a “big boost” to national agriculture. A delegation of Moroccan officials visited St Vincent and the Grenadines this week to further cooperation with the south Caribbean nation. The trip included meetings with Gonsalves and members of the Cabinet.

The meetings reviewed Rabat-Kingstown cooperation in numerous sectors including agriculture and education.


**COP27 closes with deal on loss and damage: ‘A step towards justice’, says UN chief**

“This COP has taken an important step towards justice. I welcome the decision to establish a loss and damage fund and to operationalize it in the coming period,” UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in a video message issued from the conference venue in Egypt, underscoring that the voices of those on frontlines of the climate crisis must be heard.

The UN chief was referring to what ended up becoming the thorniest issue at this COP, shorthand for the annual Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Developing countries made strong and repeated appeals for the establishment of a loss and damage fund, to compensate the countries that are the most vulnerable to climate disasters, yet who have contributed little to the climate crisis.

“Clearly this will not be enough, but it is a much-needed political signal to rebuild broken trust,” he underscored, stressing that the UN system will support the effort every step of the way.


**Barbados based logistics hubs to support food security**

The supply and distribution of food and disaster relief items to Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states will soon be facilitated by two separately-managed regional logistics hubs, both based in Barbados. In a region in which extreme weather, US import dependency and regional barriers to trade are ongoing threats to food security, the two facilities will bring a promise of strengthened regional supply chains and logistics capacities as well as heightened intra-regional trade and efficient distribution of humanitarian assistance in the event of disaster.

https://today.caricom.org/2022/11/01/barbados-based-logistics-hubs-to-support-caribbean-food-security/
WUR and CARDI join forces to develop a research agenda for nature based systems

Three workshops aimed at developing a research agenda for resilient and nature inclusive systems on Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean, were hosted by Wageningen University and Research (WUR) and CARDI on 6 and 7 October, 2022 in Trinidad. The sessions which were held at the Sugar Cane Feeds Center (SFC) in Longdenville, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries’ County Victoria Office and Cascadia Hotel, targeted a wide cross section of representatives from the Agriculture sector. Participants included farmers, extension officers and representatives from research and development agencies and women and youth groups.

Resilience must be the bedrock on which the Region’s agriculture sector is repositioned. In his opening remarks, CARDI’s Executive Director, Ansari Hosein noted that “Biodiversity conservation and protection are critical to supporting food security and economic development in the Caribbean. Therefore, any resilience strategy must strike a balance between protecting nature (land and sea) and reversing ecosystem degradation.”

At the sessions participants were asked to identify some of the challenges impacting the sector, and actions to mitigate against them. Some of the challenges identified included: poor water management, climate change, praedial larceny, education and training, lack of youth involvement, land tenure, high input costs and poor infrastructure.

As a follow up to these workshops WUR’s Regional Manager for Latin America & The Caribbean Ria Hulsman, accompanied CARDI staff on a site visit to Nariva/Mayaro, to understand the impact of salt water intrusion in the Kernahan area on cucurbitaceous crops such as watermelon, honeydew and cantaloupe. They also visited a cassava farmer in Rio Claro to discuss trials to improve yields.

Ms Hulsman subsequently visited CARDI Headquarters, and met with a team to discuss development of joint project proposals to address some of the aforementioned challenges. At the core of these proposals will be actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems, to effectively support human well-being and biodiversity benefits. Some of the areas being targeted are Regenerative Agriculture, Soil and Water Management and Precision Agriculture.

CARDI and Jamaica 4H Clubs encourage youths to pursue careers in Agriculture

Youth involvement and engagement are critical success factors for the future development of the Regional Agriculture sector. Under the current Strategic Plan, youth and gender is one of the Institute’s key cross cutting areas. To this end the CARDI continues to pursue opportunities to directly engage with youth and promote the value and importance of agriculture towards improving lives and livelihoods.

In Jamaica, CARDI participated in 2 expos hosted by the Jamaica 4-H Clubs, on the 14 and 30 November, in the parishes of Portland and Kingston & St Andrew respectively. The Jamaica 4-H Clubs’ expos, endorsed their mission, ‘to empower youth in agriculture and related areas using adaptive technologies to create wealth while contributing to national development.’ They were hosted under the theme “Grow Smart, Eat Smart: Youth Responding to Food Security.”

The organizers used a hybrid approach to host the events. CARDI Jamaica Representative, Dionne Clarke-Harris, gave a virtual presentation, entitled ‘Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute- Role and Careers in Agriculture’ in Portland. While on the second day, in St Andrew, a display booth was mounted to showcase the work on the Institute in Jamaica and across the wider Caribbean.

Recognizing the importance of youth in the sector Governor General of Jamaica, Sir Patrick Allen’s message to commemorate Farmers’ Month 2022 stated, ‘We must continue to create new initiatives and opportunities to encourage young people to join the sector. Their energy, enthusiasm and technological knowledge will help in achieving the goal of food security and sustainable economic development.’

The Jamaica 4-H Clubs was established in 1940 and is committed to developing outstanding leaders with marketable skills. Its core function is to provide training to persons between the ages of 5 to 25 in agriculture, home economics, social skills, entrepreneurship, environmental awareness and healthy lifestyle. The institution also teaches its members agricultural and environmental practices and contributes to the Jamaican National School Feeding Programme.
Remembering Dr. Charles Douglas who worked at CARDF from 1986 to the mid 1990s. Employed as an Agricultural Economist, he supported the Institute’s planning activities, prepared project proposals and oversaw project monitoring and evaluation. The management and staff extend condolences to his family.

Farmer Kenroy Bacchus’ dasheen crop is being harvested for export to the United Kingdom. The varieties grown - Samoa and IND 512 were introduced by CARDF under the EU supported project “Adapting clonally propagated crops to climatic and commercial change.”

Congratulations to coconut farmer/processor Michael Swaby who copped the 1st prize for the ‘World’s Best Innovative Coconut Farmer’ at the Cocotech Conference in Malaysia. Mr. Swaby beat out 21 other farmers from coconut producing countries across the world. He is one of the lead farmers for Phase II of the Regional Coconut Project.

CARDF’s Executive Director, Mr Ansari Hosein and CARDF’s Office in Charge – Guyana, Jhaman Kundun represented the Institute at the 50th International Cocotech Conference and Exhibition in Malaysia. CARDF is a member of the International Coconut Community.

SPOTLIGHT From the field