Demonstrating regenerative agriculture and resilient food production systems in the Bahamas

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Now available, instructional video series on coconut production

Nursery establishment and management training for Carriacou farmers
Demonstrating regenerative agriculture and resilient food production systems in the Bahamas

A contract between the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and the Department of Environmental Planning and Protection of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources for implementation of activities under Component 2 of the UNEP/GEF-7 project - 'Integrated landscape management for addressing land degradation, food security and climate resilience challenges in the Bahamas' was finalized in October 2023.

The objective of this 4 year project, valued at USD 20.8 million is to enhance climate resilient food production across productive agricultural landscapes through sound integrated landscape management and land degradation neutrality approaches.

Organized under 4 components, the project will be implemented in 7 islands in the Bahamian archipelago - Abaco, Andros, Cat Island, Eleuthera, Grand Bahama, Long Island and New Providence. These islands are home to the majority of the population and harbour significant natural and biological resources that underpin the economy. Unfortunately, the land management practices on these islands also contribute to the land degradation challenges the country faces.

CARDI will lead the implementation of activities under Component 2 - Demonstration of regenerative agriculture and resilient food production systems, practices and technologies. Here, the Institute will assess the effectiveness of sustainable land management (SLM) and regenerative climate smart agriculture (CSA) practices in the 7 islands and rehabilitate 10,000 ha of degraded areas through demonstration and implementation of restorative nature based solutions for uptake by farmers/stakeholders.

Bahamas is one of the most food dependent countries in CARICOM - importing approximately 96% of what they consume. In 2023, the country's food import bill was pegged at 1 billion dollars. Following COVID-19 the Government has made investments in agriculture to reduce its high food import bill. However, agriculture production is hampered by unsustainable practices, illegal squatting, unregulated mining activities and limited ground water reserves. Further, the damage caused by Hurricane Dorian in 2019 also led to the inundation of agriculture land by seawater and consequent heavy salinization, impacting long term productivity.

Interventions made under the project will contribute to improved livelihoods, well-being and improvements in the sustainability, productivity, health and resilience of productive ecosystems.

Supporting agriculture development in Barbuda

In November the CARDI Representative for Antigua and Barbuda, Junior Greene visited Barbuda and met with officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs (MAFBA) and the Barbuda Council. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the status of agriculture on the island and identify strategic areas for intervention by CARDI. MAFBA’s team was headed by Permanent Secretary Knacystar Nedd.

Both teams lamented that several issues are hampering agricultural production on the island. Chief among them were the general disinterest by youths and the poor morale of workers in the sector.

In consultation with MAFBA, dragon fruit, peanuts, watermelon and coconut were identified as priority crops for development. In the area of livestock, focus will be on the development of the value chains for sheep and goat.

In a separate meeting, the Barbuda Council which runs the internal affairs of the island highlighted the need to be identified to attract youth to the sector.

In summarizing Mr. Greene noted that in addition to the priorities identified by both MAFBA and the Barbuda Council, training of farmers in the areas of land management, crop selection and pesticide use are critical to guarantee the safe production of healthy food in an environmentally sustainable manner. Targeted interventions also need to be identified to attract youth to the sector. 

CARDI Representative Junior Greene (l) met with the Principal of the Mr Chesney George Secondary School, Mr Rexford Harry, during the visit to Barbuda.
The European Union to support enhancement of Agri Food systems in the Caribbean through new € 19 million programme

The European Union (EU) is providing €19 million to enhance the resilience and sustainability of food systems in the Caribbean, promoting food and nutrition security, particularly for groups in vulnerable situations. This is part of the EU’s larger €600 million effort to step up support to the most vulnerable African, Caribbean and Pacific countries hit by the global food crisis.

The EU-CARIFORUM Food Security Programme was launched on 21 November in Guyana in the presence of the Secretary General of CARICOM/CARIFORUM, Dr Carla N. Barnett, and the Honourable Zulfikar Mustapha, Minister for Agriculture of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, representing the President of the Republic of Guyana, lead head for Agriculture, Agricultural Diversification and Food Security in the CARICOM Quasi Cabinet. Under this Food Security programme, the EU and CARIFORUM will work hand in hand with their respective national partners to target some of the most pressing bottlenecks to achieving a sustainable solution to food and nutrition security in the Caribbean Region.

This includes sustainable and climate-smart production processes of locally produced food, efficient and reliable regional distribution mechanisms, healthy consumption patterns, and resilient social protection structures. The programme will also advance the CARICOM joint commitment to reduce the Caribbean’s food import bill by 25% by 2025 and the Food and Agriculture Systems Transformation (FAST) Strategy of the OECs.

Grenada launches spice replanting programme

The Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Grenada Cooperative Nutmeg Association, Grenada Cocoa Association and the Minor Spices Co-operative, invites all farmers to register their interest to participate in the spice replanting programme. The spices targeted are: nutmeg, cocoa, pimento, cinnamon, Bois Bande, Bay Leaf (boisden), clove, black pepper. Sapote, Tonka bean.

Registration forms can be obtained from Monday, 13 November at cocoa and nutmeg stations, agricultural district offices, Minor Spices at Laura and some popular shops. Approximately 150 farmers will be targeted under this phase of the project. They will be given assistance to clear new land for planting, labour to rehabilitate existing fields, and support with fertiliser for new plants.

CPDC to push for Caribbean debt relief and climate justice at COP 28

Increasing the eligibility and accessibility of Caribbean states to concessional and grant-based climate financing will be high on the list of topics the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) will be placing at the forefront of discussions at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) which will be held from November 30 to December 12 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, will see world leaders and climate activists gather to discuss and take action towards achieving the world’s collective climate goals as agreed under the Paris Agreement and Convention.

According to Jwala Rambarran, senior policy advisor at CPDC and who will attend COP 28 on the organisation’s behalf, COP 28 provides an excellent platform to highlight critical climate and debt issues facing the Caribbean, and to push for collaborations with other key international stakeholders.

“CPDC sees COP28 as an ideal opportunity to continue working collaboratively with international civil society organisations and other partners such as Debt Justice UK, Eurodad, and the Climate Emergency Collaboration Group to build a global campaign for debt and climate justice for Caribbean SIDS and other Global South developing countries,” he said.

Ministry of Natural Resources executes National Soil Survey

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise in collaboration with the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) with funding from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) technical support from the Food Agricultural Orgaization (FAO) and the University of the West Indies (UWI St. Augustine), is executing a National Soil Survey in Belize.

The National Soil Survey is one of the items under the project ‘Caribbean Small Island Developing States (CSIDS) Multi-Country Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Sustainable Food Systems: Phase I (CSIDS SOILCARE Phase I)’. The objective of the CSIDS SOILCARE Phase I project is to strengthen Caribbean SIDS with the necessary tools for adopting policies, measures, and best practices and support the review of legal and institutional frameworks to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and Climate Resilience. The project is being implemented over the next four years in eight participating countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia.

Over three hundred and fifty (350) samples will be analysed by the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, and the results will be used to update national soil information and data, as a basis for strengthening land and degradation neutrality (LDN) and sustainable land (SLM) and soil management (SSM) practices.
Now available instructional video series on coconut production

Three instructional videos have been produced under the European Union/CARIFORUM financed Regional Coconut Project for stakeholders. Targeting coconut farmers/nursery producers, these videos demonstrate best practices for mother palm identification, seed nut selection and nursery establishment. The information is specifically curated to address the challenge of available quality coconut planting material in the Region.

The first video is a 2 part series on ‘How to identify mother palms and select seed nut.’ Produced in collaboration with the Coconut Industry Board (CIB) in Jamaica, Plant Breeder/Botanist, Chantelle Campbell-McTaggert discusses the selection criteria for mother palms in the first video.

In the follow up video, Mrs Campbell-McTaggert highlights the best practices for selecting seed nuts for propagation in the nursery. Mrs Campbell-McTaggert specifically addresses best practices for reaping, transporting and selecting the best quality seed nuts for the nursery.

The third video in the series – ‘How to establish a coconut nursery’ was produced in collaboration with CIB and CARDI. Ms Sanya Steen (CIB) and Dionne Clarke-Harris (CARDI) take viewers through the steps for establishing a coconut nursery and setting the seed nuts. Some of the areas highlighted, are the site selection for the nursery and the placement of the seed nuts. Mrs Clarke Harris noted that based on data, placing seed nuts diagonally in the nursery gives the highest germination rates. Additionally Ms Steen notes that it is critical to get the seed nuts into the nursery as soon as possible after collecting as one of the keys is to prevent them from drying out.

All three videos are available for viewing on CARDI’s YouTube channel.

Nursery establishment and management training for Carriacou farmers

The Climate-Smart Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Program (SAEP), in collaboration with the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government, conducted a workshop on nursery management on 14 November 2023 at NaDMA’s Emergency Operational Center in Belair. Mr Reginald Andall and Reuben Raymond from CARDI’s office in Grenada facilitated the technical and practical sessions on nursery establishment and management.

More than 20 farmers attended the session. Among the topics covered were Best practices in Nursery management including the proper conditions to stimulate good seedling germination (growing media, seeds, fertilizer application, moisture control including watering), pest and disease control and production cost computation. In addition a practical demonstration of mixing the medium and the sowing of seeds into trays were done. The hands-on activities focused on ensuring that nurseries are equipped to sustain and nurture plants effectively, in order to promote optimal growth.

Mr Andall acknowledged that “nursery management is a critical part of the agriculture food supply chain. Producing healthy, robust planting material will contribute to the success of crops.”

A Business session also exposed participants to nursery production and marketing of plants through a commercial lens.

The Climate Smart Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Programme (SAEP) is a six (6) year Programme (2018–2024) funded by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Government of Grenada. It is part of the Rural Development Unit of the Ministry of Finance. It is focused on assisting beneficiaries improve their livelihoods through skills training, investments in agriculture, teaching Climate Smart Practices and providing Business Skills Training and Technical services to Rural Enterprises in the rural communities throughout the state of Grenada.
St Vincent and the Grenadines

CARDI's Representative in St Vincent and the Grenadines, Donawa Jackson facilitated a training seminar for Extension staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Transformation, Forestry & Fisheries - SVG on Agronomy Guidelines for Aroids. The training was conducted on 8 November 2023.

Guyana

Ongoing agro-ecological zone trial using the 5 most preferred commercial sweet potato varieties in Guyana. The goal is to determine the best adapted sweet potato variety for each agro ecological zone so farmers can optimize production. This research is being conducted by CARDI and the Department of Food Production, UWI St Augustine under the CDB financed Regional Sweet Potato project.

Antigua and Barbuda

CARDI's Representative, Junior Greene facilitated a one day training on ‘Understanding the role/importance of bio stimulants in increasing sweet potato and cassava yields’ at the Institute's field station in Betty’s Hope. Participants also gained insights into cucumber production.

Colombia

Omaira Avila Rostant, CARDI Representative in Belize, joined 20 other participants from the Americas for a one week training on ‘New technologies in plant breeding with a focus on rice’ in Colombia. The training was financed by Alliance of Bioversity International, International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and University of Colorado.