Agriculture in the News
Issues Affecting Caribbean Agriculture

20th to 26th April 2024 Issue, compiled by CARDI

HQ/002/24

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**Agricultural Initiatives - Montserrat**

CARDI Collaborates with Ministry of Agriculture to Support Agricultural Initiatives on Montserrat

Government of Montserrat

April 24, 2024 Montserrat


The Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and the Environment (MALHE) will be working in partnership with The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), to implement a number of agricultural development activities on island from May to December 2024.

CARDI, in keeping with the approved 2024 Work Plan for Montserrat, will be collaborating with MALHE to plan and implement initiatives covering livestock, crop production, agro-processing and the training programmes in support of the development of various agriculture value chains.

**Mechanised Cane Harvesting**

Almost 5,000 hectares converted for mechanised cane harvesting

Department of Public Information – Guyana

April 19, 2024


Close to 5,000 hectares of land have already been converted for mechanised cane harvesting, as part of the Guyana Sugar Corporation’s (GuySuCo) efforts to increase productivity.

To date, we have close to 5,000 hectares of land which have already been converted into mechanisation, where we are having harvesting machines cutting...These things are already in place to modernise GuySuCo,” Minister Mustapha pointed out.

Mechanised harvesting refers to the use of machinery or automated equipment to gather crops from fields. The approach replaces or supplements manual labour for a faster outcome.

**Corn and Soya Production**

Guyana can save almost US$60 million annually if corn, soya are grown twice per year

Department of Public information – Guyana

April 20, 2024


Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha has emphasised that Guyana stands to save almost US$60 million annually if corn and soya bean are grown twice per year.

“By the end of this year, we will move corn and soya production roughly to about 12,000 acres. If we do that two times per year, we will produce all the livestock feed and we will save approximately US$60 million annually. At the same time, we will be a net exporter,” he further divulged.

Minister Mustapha continued, “We are now going into large-scale production of corn and soya...We are hoping that, by the end of next year, we can cultivate 25,000 acres of corn and soya.”
Onions

Another 10-acre onion trial commences at NAREI
Department of Public Information – Guyana
April 21, 2024

Following promising results from the trial cultivation of onions, Guyana is well on its way to meeting local onion demands, as it intends to scale up the production at the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) at Mon Repos, East Coast Demerara.

In this vein, the government has already developed 10 acres of land for another trial in onion production.

During an assessment of the cultivation of high-value crops and the onion project in November 2023, President, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali emphasised the importance of strategically focusing on regional markets, anticipating lower import costs and a major boost to national food security.

Hot Peppers

25 shade houses established to cultivate hot peppers
Department of Public Information – Guyana
April 22, 2024

Twenty-five shade houses are currently under construction at the National Agriculture and Extension Institute (NAREI) in Mon Repos, East Coast Demerara.

These structures are designed to cultivate two types of hot peppers—bull nose and tiger teeth—for an already secured market in St. Lucia.

It is projected that each cycle of the 25 shade houses will accommodate approximately 11,250 plants, yielding over 75,000 pounds of pepper per cycle. This will result in an annual production of about 75 tonnes of fresh peppers.

Banana Industry

Banana industry booms with $3.5 Million boost in exports as sugar, citrus and marine sectors struggle
belizeBreaking News
April 22, 2024 By Zoila Palma Gonzalez

Data from the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) noted that traditional exports continue to struggle with sugar, citrus and marine products all down.

However, the SIB noted that bananas experienced a significant upturn of $3.5 million, surging from $2.7 million in February of last year to $6.1 million in February of this year, as exported quantities more than doubled for the month.

In addition, exports including wooden furniture and crude soybean oil saw a combined increase of $1.5 million, from $2.7 million in February 2023 to $4.3 million in February 2024.
Turning Banana Fibers Into A Booming Industry
Belize 7 News
April 25, 2024

For most of us, no matter where we live, a banana or plantain tree is always nearby. They are literally everywhere, and provide us with a multitude of benefits - from a quick and healthy snack, to leaves for our tamales, to a side dish for any meal.

But if you look deeper at the fiber of the tree itself, there might just be a purse, a lamp shade, or a 6 foot carpet, waiting to jump out at you.

A group in Unitedville has managed to harness the untapped potential of these trees by processing the fibers and handcrafting them into beautiful products.

It's created a livelihood for a number of families and is slowly changing the aesthetic of high end resorts and businesses. Jomarie Lanza stopped by today to see how it gets done.

Three years ago when the banana fiber braiding craze hit the market, the owners and the artisans wouldn't have dreamed that some of their wildest creations could be hanging from the ceilings of banks and resorts, or filling up the gift shops of hotels.

Their unique industry has grown and along with it so has the demand for handmade products, and the curiosity of students, artists and anyone with a desire to learn how to work with the banana fiber.

Enhancing Vegetable Diversity - Latin America and Caribbean Region
CARDI held an Opening Ceremony yesterday in Belmopan for the Project Reporting of the 3rd Annual Workshop associated with the initiative titled "The LAC Vegetable Network"

Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, Enterprises
April 23, 2024

The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) held an Opening Ceremony yesterday in Belmopan for the Project Reporting of the 3rd Annual Workshop associated with the initiative titled "The LAC Vegetable Network: Enhancing vegetable diversity for more resilient livelihoods and healthier diets in the Latin America and Caribbean Region." This project is generously supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan.

This workshop has brought together experts, researchers, and stakeholders dedicated to advancing vegetable diversity and sustainable agriculture in our region. The event features key presentations and discussions highlighting the project's objectives and anticipated outcomes. The workshop sessions is currently taking place from April 23 to April 26, 2024.

Agricultural Agreements – Barbados
Barbados & China Sign Agricultural Agreements
Government Information Services – Barbados
April 22, 2024

Barbados and China signed three memorandums of understanding yesterday, which would allow for the provision of two tractors, technical expertise to grow rice, and the creation of systems for advance hydroponics management.
These agreements were signed by Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Nutritional Security, Indar Weir; Governor of Hunan Provincial People’s Government, Mao Weiming; Deputy Director-General, Hunan Provincial Department of Agricultural and Rural Affairs, Liu Qihua, at the Ministry of Agriculture, Graeme Hall, Christ Church.

The agreements are between the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMC), and Zoomlion Heavy Industry Science and Technology Co., Ltd.

**Solar-Powered Irrigation Systems**

*Revolutionizing Agriculture: Solar-Powered Irrigation Systems*

Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Agriculture

April 25, 2024 By: Shenequa Williams


In a bid to combat the challenges posed by Climate Change and to promote Sustainable Agricultural Practices, a ground-breaking initiative heralding the new era on farming techniques was launched on 23rd April.

Spearheaded by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), this project, “Addressing the Water Energy Food Nexus in Agriculture” (WEF Nexus Project) which is a subproject of the Mexico-CARICOM-FAO Resilient Caribbean Initiative, introduced solar-powered irrigation systems to farmers across four main beneficiary countries: Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Jamaica, and Barbados. The initiative aims to revolutionize farming practices, empowering farmers with innovative tools to enhance productivity while combatting the impacts of climate change.

The centerpiece of this initiative is the solar-powered irrigation system, ingeniously designed to harness the abundant energy of the sun to facilitate irrigation processes. Consisting of a bladder with a capacity of 5000 gallons or a tank with a capacity of 1000 gallons, coupled with solar panels and a solar-powered pump, this system represents a paradigm shift in agricultural irrigation. By utilizing renewable energy sources, farmers can significantly reduce their reliance on traditional energy grids, thereby minimizing carbon footprint and operating costs.

**International Day of Seeds**

*International Day of Seeds is celebrated globally on April 26th of each year*

Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Agriculture

April 24, 2021 By: Shenequa Williams


International Day of Seeds is celebrated globally on April 26th of each year. The purpose of this unique day is to increase public awareness of the value of seeds in agriculture, biodiversity, and food security. Since its founding in 2000 by the nonprofit organisation “Seed Savers Exchange,” the day has received international recognition, with organisations, farmers, and people taking part in a variety of activities to celebrate the importance of seeds.

The theme for International Day of Seeds 2024 is “Preserving Indigenous Seed Varieties.” This theme highlights the crucial role that indigenous seeds play in maintaining biodiversity, adapting to climate change, and ensuring food sovereignty.
One of the major development challenges in today's rapidly expanding agricultural value chains is connecting small farmers to increasingly competitive markets. The format of Productive Alliances between small farmers, the public sector, and the private sector is a type of partnership that holds great promise in this regard.

This was the message that resonated from a workshop hosted this month by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) that brought together experts, practitioners, and policymakers, serving as a platform for exchange and dialogue to discuss the enormous potential of Productive Alliances (PA) and what might be best practices.

Increasing evidence suggests that the PA approach can lead to increased productivity, market integration, sales, and smallholder farmer income. Building on success stories in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa, the intent is to be able, in the future, to replicate the model in other areas.

Reduce the Need for Antimicrobials on Farms

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) today announced the launch of a new action-oriented, country-focused initiative to reduce the need for antimicrobials on farms, amid the growing threat posed by Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) in the food and agriculture sector, impacting terrestrial and aquatic animal health, plants and the environment and causing significant economic losses to farmers across the globe.

“The persistent use of antimicrobials in livestock production is concerning for human health, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability,” FAO Director-General QU Dongyu said in a video message announcing the launch of the initiative Reduce the Need for Antimicrobials on Farms for Sustainable Agrifood Systems Transformation (RENOFARM).

Unleashing the Blue Economy of the Caribbean (UBEC) Project

A project called Unleashing the Blue Economy of the Caribbean (UBEC) has been launched with promises of significant economic benefits.

UBEC Project Manager, Shermaine Clauzel, said the project will incorporate the tourism, agriculture, and waste management sectors with an aim toward preservation and sustainable development.

“Our island, like others in the Caribbean, has traditionally depended on the extractive use of coastal and marine resources for economic growth. The key difference between the blue economy approach
and other traditional approaches is the provision of greater support to those entities responsible for development by focusing on preservation in tandem with progress—in a nutshell sustainable development,” she said. “For this reason the blue economy approach integrates key elements that support sustainability and utilize innovation where possible.”

**Sustainable Coffee Growing**

CIRAD

April 19, 2024


Measurement of green coffee’s carbon footprint has traditionally varied, as is often the case for any agricultural lifecycle assessment. The Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee (ISIC) commissioned the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) to review current methodologies for green coffee, revealing a more precise picture of how to measure the environmental impact of the raw material used in one of the world’s most popular drinks.

Cécile Chéron-Bessou, lead CIRAD researcher on the review, explains: “Life cycle-based assessments are complex and based on numerous simplifications and choices. A key principle for these assessments is therefore absolute transparency around the exact choices and assumptions made as part of modelling. We hope our review will serve as a robust tool for transparent and sound measurement of green coffee’s carbon footprint—helping farmers and researchers to support good practices for sustainable coffee growing”.

**Gender and Climate Change**

Accelerating climate action by learning from gender mainstreaming

CGIAR

April 22, 2024


In a new paper, Greener through gender: What climate mainstreaming can learn from gender mainstreaming, a team of scientists led by Steven Lam from the International Livestock Research Institute delves into the intersection of gender and climate considerations in global development efforts.

Published in early April 2024, the study explores how insights from gender mainstreaming efforts within the United Nations, which preceded climate mainstreaming, can help to accelerate climate mainstreaming.

**Low-methane forages**

Methane is a big deal for climate change, but forages can help us reduce emissions

Alliance Bioversity & CIAT

April 22, 2024


An innovative project partnership led by three CGIAR Centers and their Genebanks aims to discover, develop and deploy low-methane forages in the Global South. The project seeks to mitigate climate change while ensuring food and nutrition security and livelihoods of millions of farmers, by screening thousands of forage accessions for natural compounds that can reduce methane emissions when fed to animals.
Methane (CH4) is an often-overlooked greenhouse gas (GHG) that is much more powerful than carbon dioxide (CO2) at trapping heat. Methane is 86 times more potent than CO2 over 20 years, and 28 times more potent over 100 years. It is responsible for 30% of global warming. What’s more, although CH4 is a short-lived GHG, increasing emissions could make global warming even worse.

**Low emission cattle**

**No bull: How creating less-gassy cows could help fight climate change**

Samuel Jeremic

Curtin University

April 23, 2024


A Curtin University study has revealed breeding less-flatulent cows and restoring agricultural land could significantly reduce rising methane emission levels, which play a considerable role in climate change.

The food system, including grazing animals such as cows, generates major sources of methane mainly due to cattle digestion, manure decomposition and land use for grazing.

To look for solutions, researchers from the Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute analysed 27 academic publications and identified dozens of potential strategies to reduce methane emissions from Australia’s beef and dairy sectors.

Study lead Merideth Kelliher said the fastest way to lower methane emissions would be to convert farmland into wetlands and forests, however there was a lot of scope for improvement by altering the operations of the dairy and beef sectors.

“For example, changing what breeding objectives include can permanently reduce methane production,” Ms Kelliher said.

“Studies have found low emission cattle have inheritable genetic traits which can significantly reduce methane production if included in national breeding objectives.

**Events**

**MAY 2024**

ICTforAg 2024, May 28-30th

[https://www.ictforag.com/](https://www.ictforag.com/)

Localizing impact through inclusion, inspiration, and innovation.

Mark your calendars, pack your bags, and prepare to embark on an unforgettable journey as ICTforAg 2024 unfolds from May 28-30th across five vibrant locations (+ online).

**AUGUST 2024**

Jamaica: Denbigh Agricultural Industrial Food Show, 4-6 August 2024

**IICA host Making Climate Action Self-Financing Through Viable EbA/NbS Livelihood & Green Business Discussion via zoom**

In celebration of World International Mother Earth Day (IMED) on Monday, April 22, 2024, the Caribbean Climate Responsive Agriculture Forum (CCRAF) is excited to be collaborating with the IICA Trinidad and Tobago Delegation to bring you an inspiring and practical session on *Making Climate Action Self-Financing Through Viable EbA/NbS Livelihood & Green Business* to discuss the real and relative costs of community-based green livelihoods and businesses as viable tools to drive, mainstream, and sustain nature-based and ecosystem-based adaptation and geoengineering solutions for climate action.

**This session seeks to provide:**

1. Greater clarity on the real and relative costs of offering vetiver-based geoengineering services for soil erosion control/slope stabilization and the readiness of the market (national and regional) to embrace this alternative, i.e., are EbA/NbS approaches effective/efficient/realistic in the absence of short-term external projects.
2. Scoping of opportunities and strategies to improve the positioning and outlook for competitive EbA/NbS livelihoods and businesses, i.e., exploring the real & comparative costs and financial/time investments needed to move these interventions from project budgets to private business

*Please share among your networks. We look forward to your participation.*

**Title:** Making Climate Action Self-Financing Through Viable EbA/NbS Livelihood & Green Business  
**Time:** 08:00 Belize, 09:00 Jamaica, 10:00 EST, 11:00 Suriname  
**Location:** Virtual via ZOOM  
**Registration:** [https://iica.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAkc-yoqz8qG9M3AgvKABPAWkp2XQ65iyyO#/registration](https://iica.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAkc-yoqz8qG9M3AgvKABPAWkp2XQ65iyyO#/registration)

**National Agriculture and Trade Show – Belize**  
Belize Breaking News  
April 26, 27 and 28  
The first major national gathering of 2024 is roughly 48 hours away, and this weekend all eyes turn inward to Belmopan and the National Showgrounds for the 53rd National Agriculture and Trade Show.

Official ceremonies start as per usual on Friday afternoon with the sashing of the Farmers of the Year – Senior Farmer of the Year Nandy Esban Aldana of the Corozal District; Female Farmer of the Year Sarah Chub of the Belize District; and Junior Farmer of the Year Maura Esther Escobar of the Cayo District.