



The Blue-Green Digital Innovation Challenge launched in Grenada with USD \$30,000 at stake

18 May 2023 – St. George's Grenada – The Government of Grenada with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Sub-regional Office for the Caribbean, jointly launched the Blue-Green Digital Innovation Challenge on May 18, 2023. The initiative targets persons in the agro processing and agro tourism sectors in Grenada, who are eligible to be awarded up to a maximum of US \$30,000 to implement an innovative and/or digital solution into their Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs).

The Blue-Green initiative falls under the scope of the GEF-funded Climate Resilience Agriculture Project, which is designed to improve the resilience of agricultural systems. Known for its work with grassroot innovators, the UNDP Accelerator Lab in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean is also playing a critical role in supporting the Blue-Green Digital Innovation Challenge. There is a need for greater innovation in the sector at a community level and the call for proposals seeks to support local innovators that have great ideas but may not have the required funding or technical “know-how” to implement.

While entrepreneurs and MSMEs in agro processing and agro tourism spaces are invited to apply, individuals and entities within the Information Technology (IT) and digital space are also encouraged to submit their ideas for digital solutions that can be applied to agriculture-based operations.

Speaking at the launch, Mr Aaron Francois, Permanent Secretary in The Ministry of Agriculture, expressed his support for the project adding that, "It provides the opportunity for persons in the IT field to marry their expertise with entrepreneurs in the agriculture sector to find innovative solutions to some of the challenges they face". Senator, The Hon. Adrian Thomas, Minister of State for the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Fisheries & Cooperatives in Grenada, mirrored his sentiments. In his feature address, he expressed the expectations of the benefits to those working in the agriculture and food security sector. The challenge fund, he said, "Will significantly benefit our stakeholders and beneficiaries, not just through the grants that will be provided, but also with the substantial support that will be provided to ensure that initial ideas are fully evolved into practical and critical actions that you can implement to strengthen and grow your businesses."

Additionally, Dr. Mohammed Nagdee, UNDP Cluster Head for Sustainable Solutions, Energy and Climate Change, went on to laud the potential of Grenada's diverse agricultural sectors, from nutmeg to cocoa beans. "These sectors have the potential to do three things. Firstly, sustain Grenada's economy for generations to come. Secondly, to ensure environmental sustainability and finally, to promote food security. These are three critical components to where the agricultural sector, the agro

processors and the agro tourism industry really have an important role to play in Grenada's economy."

Leading the capacity building arm of the project, Fabrizio Bresciani – Senior Technical Officer for the Office of Innovation at the FAO expressed the organisation's desire to accelerate the digital transformation of agrifood systems while increasing productivity, managing and mitigating climate risks, and diversifying rural economies in a sustainable economic, social, and environmental manner.

"The invaluable support provided by the UNDP in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean underscores the importance of **multiagency efforts to drive innovation** and sustainable practices in the agricultural sector". He added, "Through this initiative, FAO aims to empower and enhance the capacities of innovators, specifically focusing on women and youth, enabling their valuable contributions towards the development and strengthening of **FAO's digital agriculture innovation hub** in the country".

All participants will benefit from the technical assistance and concept development even if not all concepts will be able to receive funding. Interested persons are encouraged to visit bit.ly/InnovateAgri for further details on the submission procedure before the deadline of June 19, 2023.

Developmental initiatives must continue to emphasize the need for regional resilience as the consequences of climate change become more pronounced in the area, advancing better infrastructure, and boosting livelihoods for historically vulnerable communities. In collaboration with governments and other stakeholders, UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean is still committed to promoting inclusive and sustainable development in the region. With the "Blue Economy for Green Islands" vision, UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean is committed to encouraging economic diversification, job development, and resilience. This intervention is a part of that work.

For media queries please contact:

Vermaran Extavour

Project Coordinator – FAO

Vermaran.extavour@fao.org

Kerricia Hobson

Project Coordinator – UNDP

kerricia.hobson@undp.org

Kenton Fletcher

Project Focal Point – Ministry of Agriculture

kenton.fletcher@moa.gov.gd

Joseph Noel

Project Focal Point – Ministry of Agriculture

joseph.noel@moa.gov.gd