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NEWS RELEASE

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**FAO provided urgent technical assistance for the agriculture sector (livestock, crops, fisheries and rural livelihoods) to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry and Labour in St. Vincent and the Grenadines**

**April 26, 2021, Bridgetown, Barbados** – As many persons and organizations prepared to usher in 2021 on Old Year’s Night, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), had commenced critical discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry and Labour in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in anticipation of the eruption of La Soufriere volcano.

The discussions led to the development of The Volcano Eruption Preparedness and Emergency Response Protocols for Agriculture through a multi-step consultation process with the different departments within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry and Labour, as well as development partners including the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO); SVG Meteorological Service; Ministry of Housing, Informal Human Settlement, Land and Surveys, and Physical Planning; Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI).

These protocols outlined key activities to be carried out to promote anticipatory action and enhance emergency preparedness and response capacities across the crop, livestock, fisheries and rural transformation sub-sectors. The protocols also included action points which supported the movement of privately-owned crop, livestock and fisheries livelihoods assets with the integration of COVID-19 safety protocols.

As the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Centre tracked and provided updated information on increased volcanic activity, the protocols were finalized on the 18th January 2021, endorsed by the Minister on the 3rd

March 2021 and put into effect on 4 weeks before the eventual and devastating explosive eruption of La Soufriere on Friday, April 9 2021.

Renata Clarke, FAO Sub-regional Coordinator stated, “We were pleased to work with the Ministry to ensure preparedness for the eruption of the volcano and our early start enabled to better mitigate the damage”. She added that St. Vincent and the Grenadines is primarily an agricultural based economy, so it was imperative to proactively protect as much crops and livestock as possible to ensure adequate food supply was available afterwards.

Clarke also stated that the Government of Belgium’s contribution to the Anticipatory Action window of FAO’s Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA), ensured that FAO was able to act quickly and release more than USD 100,000 to protect livestock keepers and their animals throughout a period where eruption risks remain high. This swift action resulted in significantly reducing the possibility of a food crisis for the livestock keepers, their families and communities.

Meanwhile, Roberto Sandoval, Emergency Focal Point and Disaster Risk Management Specialist at FAO explained that the majority of the anticipatory actions being supported by the project are those that have been identified during the planning process at the start of 2021 and range from hazard-specific structures to measures that safeguard the health and nutrition status of livestock.

“The project is expected to protect about 700 livestock through hazard-specific structures and shelters and maintain the nutrition status of about 2000 small ruminants and swine. These livestock will also receive treatments to keep them disease-free and healthy throughout the volcanic eruptions”, Sandoval stressed.

“A significant amount of work and planning went into the formulation of The Volcano Eruption Preparedness and Emergency Response Protocols for Agriculture and I applaud all the organizations for their tireless efforts and dedication which contributed to its success and implementation. Our combined efforts now are focused on the rebuilding of the agricultural sector in St. Vincent and the Grenadines which provides jobs and livelihoods for many persons”, Renata Clarke stated.

In expressing his gratitude to FAO, The Hon. Saboto Caesar, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Rural Transformation in St. Vincent and the Grenadines stated, “The agriculture stakeholders of St. Vincent and the Grenadines appreciates the global solidarity in our recovery efforts arranged and organized thus far through the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Our National Correspondent and Sub-regional Coordinator in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Barbados respectively, have done a remarkable job”.

**For more information:**

**Marquita Sugrim**

FAO National Communications Consultant

FAO Subregional Office for the Caribbean

E-mail: [marquitajuanne.sugrim@fao.org](mailto:marquitajuanne.sugrim@fao.org)