



St Kitts and Nevis take steps to substitute lettuce and sweet pepper imports

Government stakeholders agree on further developing the value chains for sweet peppers in St. Kitts and lettuce in Nevis with the aim of replacing imports of these produce.

June 29, 2023 - Bridgetown, Barbados – As the region works to reduce food imports over the next three years and to invest more in producing locally grown food, the Federation of St Kitts and Nevis sets its sights on developing two important crops.

The Government of the twin island state, through its Ministry of Agriculture, Marine Resources and Cooperatives, is working alongside the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to develop the lettuce and sweet pepper value chains over the next two years.

During a series of Value Chain Selection workshops, held virtually in April and May 2023, stakeholders met to analyse several commodities, including lettuce, sweet peppers, carrots, and cabbage, which were shortlisted for further analysis and consideration. The FAO then supported diverse stakeholders to examine each commodity and its potential for expansion to substitute imports to select two that would be further developed under a two-year project of FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme focused on promoting competitive, resilient, and sustainable national food systems and value chains.

Of the four, sweet peppers in St Kitts and lettuce in Nevis were selected as the commodities with the greatest potential for balancing demand with supply over the life of the project. Development of these value chains will bring together stakeholders from the private and public sectors including farmers, processors, exporters, and different government agencies to improve their coordination with each other and accelerate action in growing both sectors.

Mr Miguel Flemming, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry in St. Kitts, remarked that “St. Kitts and Nevis is pleased to continue to foster a strong working relationship with FAO. Our thrust in transforming the sector has recognized that value chain development for specific crops is important after a holistic assessment is done. This initiative is one of the many ways the Ministry will continue to introduce ways to develop the sector. The Project will identify and train value chain operators, such as farmers and processors, in new technologies to improve on their current practices. The Department of Agriculture technicians would also be trained to offer better services to farmers or any player along the value chain. The sweet pepper and lettuce value chains will foster competitiveness in terms of price and quality when compared with imports. As a result, the country should be able to see improvement in the quality and productivity of farmer's products, thus resulting in the reduction of sweet peppers and lettuce importation. Additional

benefits would also be an increase in farmer's revenue and the availability of fresh and wholesome products for the populace.”

The development of the lettuce and sweet pepper value chains will, in the long run, help in increasing the contribution of agriculture to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), whilst also contributing to the CARICOM 25 percent by 2025 Initiative to reduce the food importation bill.

Mr Huey Sargeant, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry - Nevis, remarked that “the Ministry of Agriculture on Nevis is happy to support and participate in this value chain exercise as it aligns with our stated goal of food sovereignty on the island of Nevis. We are pleased with the expected economic impact it would have on our country and farming community. Our Agriculture sector is poised to achieve certain technological and technical benefits from this implementation that can have applications outside of the chosen crops. The FAO has been a very supportive partner to us, and we value the continued partnership.”

Mr Juan Cheaz Pelaez, FAO Trade and Markets Officer for the Caribbean and Lead Technical Officer for the project remarked that “our aim is to improve the competitiveness and resilience of the agricultural sector of St Kitts and Nevis and to help the country in reducing its imports. The country's selection of these value chains is a first step in applying a comprehensive, market-driven approach that will help to strengthen the institutional capacity of the government, improve production, and promote effective coordination between the public and private sectors. This selection now allows us to move to the next phase.”

The selection of these value chains has now set into motion further analysis and assessment of the production of sweet pepper in St Kitts and lettuce in Nevis to identify some of the opportunities and constraints that exist and how they can be addressed. These discussions will take place over the coming weeks with the FAO Caribbean Value Chains Team and various public and private sector stakeholders, who will draft a preliminary Upgrading Strategy and Action Plan for each industry. The strategy and plan will later be validated and implemented over the next five years. The Strategy will feature key areas such as sustainability, climate change, nutrition, and gender and youth participation and will be implemented and led by a National Value Chains team that is to be established.

For more information, please contact:

Jefferson Jaikissoon
Agricultural Value Chain Development Specialist
jefferson.jaikissoon@fao.org

Chrishane Williams-James
FAO Communication Consultant, Value Chain Development
Chrishane.Williams@fao.org

