



Windward Islands Food Production and Trade Corridor set to go!

The Governments of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines give a resounding commitment to supporting and amplifying efforts to increase local production and export of agricultural produce.

February 6, 2022 - Bridgetown, Barbados – Over 50 stakeholders, government representatives and regional partners participated in the launch of a two-year regional cluster of projects on Promoting Windward Islands Food Production and Trade Corridor through National and Regional Value Chain Development, held virtually on February 3, 2023.

The cluster of projects, being carried out in the islands of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, are being implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the respective Governments.

During the launch, discussions centred on the need for creating a collaborative environment that encouraged the growth and profitability potential for several commodities by building resilient, competitive, and sustainable value chains in each country. Unwavering support from each country to achieve these outcomes, that would replace food imports and improve production to ensure greater export potential to domestic and foreign markets, was highly emphasized. This was met by strong agreement and commitment from the Ministers of Agriculture and regional partners on their crucial role in ensuring the success of the initiative that is already under implementation.

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Honourable Saboto Caesar, remarked that there was a need for a broad consolidated marketing platform, like the previous Windward Islands banana industry, to create the economies of scale and scope to move commodities collaboratively through the Islands to exporters and harness the opportunities in extra-regional markets. He added that the initiative being launched was the first step in rebuilding such a consolidated platform and network within the Windward Islands, with plans over time to expand this initiative to other OECS countries. Minister Caesar highlighted some of plans underway in St Vincent and the Grenadines to support these efforts. He concluded that while FAO will create an enabling environment for the development of these agricultural industries that will promote food security and nutrition security, it will be imperative for each government to take

onus of the initiative and find additional resources to support the development of their industries and exports.

Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Fisheries and Cooperatives of Grenada, Honourable Adrian Thomas, shared some of the plans and partnerships already underway to support the initiative. He added that Grenada welcomed the initiative that would also greatly benefit their farmers, especially with the country's renewed energy to rebuild the agriculture sector following the devastating impacts of Hurricane Ivan and the impacts of COVID-19. He emphasised the country's attention to root crop production and building agri-businesses to be better positioned to compete with processed imports and on the global markets. He concluded that Grenada was prepared to work with other Winward Island countries to transform the whole agricultural sector and increase exports.

Honourable Roland Royer, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Blue and Green Economy of the Commonwealth of Dominica endorsed the country's participation in the initiative and noted that Dominica was ready to continue efforts in developing its value chains.

The countries commended FAO on this visionary initiative that would be catalytic in its results, with the full cooperation of governments and partners.

Mr Stephen Fevrier, from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission confirmed the organization's full support for this timely and innovative initiative and congratulated the region on coming together on this important endeavour.

Similar remarks were shared by Mr Gregg Rawlins from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), who confirmed the agency's full commitment and support to the initiative and welcomed the commitment of the member countries. He highlighted that IICA was ready to engage in discussions that would lead to the alignment of its work with efforts under the cluster of projects.

The remarks from the governments and partners echoed the sentiments of FAO Sub-regional Coordinator, Dr Renata Clarke in ensuring that other regional projects and initiatives worked together to support the countries in boosting local production, creating jobs, supporting livelihoods, and increasing exports. She acknowledged the transformative impact that collaboration between the countries and regional partners such as IICA, the OECS Commission and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) could have on these efforts.

Over the coming weeks, individual rapid value chain assessments and upgrading strategies will be carried out among stakeholders in each country, with on the ground implementation to follow immediately.

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