

IICA Twinned its Annual Accountability Seminar with the Ministry of Agriculture Consultation

St. Johns, 12th May 2022 The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Delegation in Antigua and Barbuda, held its national accountability seminar. This seminar was twinned with the National Farmers Consultation held by the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs (MoAFBA).

Forty (40) representatives from agricultural related institutions in Antigua and Barbuda gathered at the Multipurpose Cultural Centre for the consultation held under the theme “*The Agriculture Sector 2022 and beyond “Greater Partnerships in Food Security”*”. The IICA Annual Accountability seminar was not conducted over the past two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions thereof. This seminar represented the first of a series of events organized by the Delegation as the Institute observes its 35th Anniversary in Antigua and Barbuda. The Accountability Seminar provides IICA with the opportunity to present its achievements for the preceding year (2019-2021), and the opportunity for its partners and beneficiaries to discuss and identify strategic actions and new demands for short to medium term actions.



Mr. Craig M. Thomas, IICA National Specialist in Delegation Antigua and Barbuda, in his opening remarks thanked the Ministry of Agriculture for giving IICA the opportunity to twin its seminar with its first National Agriculture Consultation and remarked “*The agriculture sector has many challenges which have plagued the growth of the sector causing it to have some major setbacks most noticeable the issue with the availability of water*”.

In his presentation, the National Specialists highlighted the results achieved by the Delegation under the institutes five main technical cooperation programmes – Bio-economy and Production Development, Territorial Development and Family Farming, Agriculture Health and Food Safety and Food Quality, Trade and Climate change Natural Resources and Management of Production Risk, and International Trade and Regional Integration.

This year’s presentation highlighted the results achieved by the delegation which included the piloted Crowdfunding Project, multiple grant projects through the Australian High Commission Direct Aid Program, as well as the CBF-EbA project which focused on the vetiver grass installation activities.

The featured speaker was the Hon. Samantha Marshall, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs. In her delivery, she commended IICA for its response during the Covid-19 pandemic and made special mention of the support towards the farmers in Barbuda during this period. The Minister stated that there was a noticeable increase in terms of growth within the agriculture production during the pandemic. If you look at previous years, and compare it with 2020-2021 there was an a higher contribution to the GDP by the agriculture sector. Minister Marshall aligned the support to the improved food and nutrition security as well as the stabilizing prices of agriculture commodities during these challenging periods. She also recognized the collaborating partners, CARDI and FAO for their continued support to the Ministry. The Minister indicated that while focus is often placed on physical hazards such as prolonged drought, there is a need to consider matters related to financial resilience. The Minister stated that “if we want to be resilient, we have to make reasoned and informed decisions that balance the interest between the people who produce food, the people who consume food and the people who meet the costs associated with establishing systems that strengthen resilience”.

The highlight of the session was the farmers engagement which was an open floor discussion where the stakeholders got the opportunity to making their contributions by describing their vision of the agricultural sector, identifying best practices/lessons learnt and recommending priority actions which could be promoted and adopted to reposition the sector in the wake of the serious challenges posed by COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and climate change and other related risk factors. The most common methods of conversation mentioned during the session was on “Climate Change- Innovative interventions for water harvesting/storage and the importance of forming producer groups.

Mr. Paul Lucas, the country representative of the Caribbean Agriculture Research Development Institute (CARDI) also presented the technical support which his institution has implemented during the pandemic which mainly focuses on soil and water conservation and the production of seeds (hot peppers, corn and pumpkin) for the producers. He emphasized on the strong working collaboration which exist between CARDI and IICA in Antigua and Barbuda as both institutions have worked closely on several projects.

Other technical officers in the Ministry of Agriculture which included the Permanent Secretary, Director and acting Chief Extension Officer within the Ministry of Agriculture participated, as well as other clients, stakeholders and organizations with whom IICA works in close collaboration. Proposed 2022-23 Work Plan for the IICA Delegation in Antigua and Barbuda was presented.

The event was chaired by Ms. Marcelle Freeland, Liason Officer/Acting Communication Supervisor within the Ministry of Agriculture.

About IICA

It is the international organization specialized in agriculture of the Inter-American System, whose mission is to stimulate, promote and support the efforts of its 34 Member States to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being through international technical cooperation of excellence.

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