Achievements 2022

Jamaica

- The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) completed its work on the "Grow Castor" project funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which provided technical support to the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) Castor Bean Cluster. Based on the findings of the IICA 2021 Agronomy Audit of the JBU Castor Cluster yield gap, a new castor variety called KIKA, was introduced from Brazil and replicated. Performance yield trials were conducted at the Bodles Research Station of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MOAF) of Jamaica. The KIKA castor variety demonstrated tremendous potential for commercial castor production in Jamaica, with only a few days' differential in key crop phenological stages in clayey loam, loamy clay and sandy loam soils, which are the locally common soil types for castor production. A small plant stature of about 5ft tall, 1m2 space/plant for up to 4,000 plants/ac and a 100-day crop cycle had a yield potential of at least 1/2lb castor seeds/plant with a seed oil yield of 48%, which satisfies the demands of JBU castor farmers. A Castor Cropping Calendar App with training videos for farmers has been developed for the benefit of castor growers in the region.

- The project entitled "Improving Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing to Support the Management of Cadmium Levels in Cocoa in Latin America and the Caribbean for Export to the EU", launched in October, will build the capacity of the region's cocoa exporting countries to meet regulations on maximum cadmium levels in cocoa beans and products. Funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) of the European Union (EU), the project is being implemented by premier cocoa research and innovation centers in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago, and is managed in Jamaica. Over 140 individuals representing farmers, cocoa processors, chocolate manufacturers, universities, research entities, governments and international development organizations in the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe and Africa participated in the launch event. Stakeholders have expressed their interest in the harmonization of cadmium testing protocols for cocoa, training of technical and extension service providers, and strategies to minimize cadmium levels throughout the cocoa value chain.

- The Caribbean Bioeconomy Initiative continued with the completion of a Commercial Composting Business Plan (CCBP) with the Nature Preservation Foundation (NPF), which manages the 200-acre Hope Botanical Gardens (HBG) and Zoo for the MOAF. The HBG in the capital is the largest managed green space in Jamaica, generating approximately 7,477 kg of organic waste daily. IICA's CCBP proposes the transformation of the existing rudimentary composting site at HBG into a

sustainable commercial enterprise that will generate an eight-fold increase in the production and sale of quality compost. The sale of this compost will generate income to maintain the gardens and provide organic fertilizer to ensure that this lush green space remains a respite for hundreds of thousands of visitors and city dwellers annually. IICA also assisted the NPF in presenting the CCBP to the MOAF as part of its national campaign for organic fertilizer production, as an alternative to traditional fertilizers, given that prices have risen dramatically as a result of the Ukraine-Russia war.

- The development of a regional CARICOM standard for compost quality was initiated with the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) and 14 of its national Bureaus of Standards across the Caribbean, with the support of the Compost Council of Canada. The New Work Item Proposal (NWIP) for the regional standard for compost quality has been submitted to the CARICOM Secretariat and will facilitate the production and free trade of quality compost among member states in the CARICOM Single Market Economy.

- At the request of and in consultation with the ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries and Health and Wellness, the Institute developed a draft anti-microbial resistance (AMR) surveillance plan for the livestock sector in Jamaica. The document, entitled the Jamaica Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System for the Food and Agricultural Sector (JARMS), outlines protocols for monitoring antimicrobial use and development of resistance in priority animal production systems via a systematic, coordinated and continuous program to collect and test animal and meat samples at critical points in the food chain. Review and discussion of feedback on the proposed program has commenced with both ministries prior to finalizing the plan, which will allow for protecting Jamaica's livestock value chain.

- IICA continued to build the capacities of local stakeholders in agricultural health and food safety by developing an African swine fever sensitization video and coordinating the participation of local officials in meetings of the Codex Alimentarius and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH/OIE). At the initiative of IICA, training programs were delivered on topics such as good lab practices for the establishment of pesticide MRLs, as well as diagnostics, surveillance and management of plant parasitic nematodes. These actions have bolstered the country's participation in international dialogues and standard-setting processes for food safety and agricultural health; improved food safety coordination mechanisms; built the knowledge and skill base of local officials, particularly in emerging issues; and raised awareness of potential threats to enhance food safety and quality.