



NEWS FROM THE FIELD

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Reflections

2017 – A YEAR IN REVIEW

Dear Friend of PROPEL,

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a very happy new year and hope that 2018 is a good year for you, the Caribbean and for the PROPEL project as it enters its final year of operations. We are currently developing our final annual work plan that will see programming wrap up in September 2018 and the final project wrap up by the 15th of December, 2018. It is therefore a critical year for the project as we aim to achieve as much as we can collectively with the partners, agencies, producers, women and youth that we work with through PROPEL.

Sustainability will be a main ambition this final year, as well as ensuring that we support as many women and youth producer/agripreneurs as we can before the project closes. This past year has been a year of mixed achievements, results and events. On the plus side, we have surpassed some key targets. PROPEL has:

- directly supported the production of more than CAD \$100 million in produce across the countries in which we operate;
- directly supported over 11,900 Caribbean producers (32% female; 23% youth);
- produced over 4,000 posters and crop manuals on produce quality standards that have been distributed across 7 countries in the Caribbean;
- launched the “Tings A Grow” radio program in Jamaica in collaboration with Farm Radio International (FRI), providing important messages and information across the country, and through facebook across the region; and
- continued collaboration with government ministries, agencies, private sector investors, consolidators, input-providers and supermarkets, as well as with producers, women and youth to further develop fresh produce markets of key crops.

This has also been a year of climate challenges. Weather has had a significant impact on programming in Jamaica (with double the normal annual rainfall), Guyana, St Lucia and Barbados. Of course, the most significant weather event for PROPEL was Hurricane Maria which struck Dominica on the 18th of September, 2017 with disastrous effect. It is not hard from this, to draw the conclusion that climate smart / climate resilient agriculture is an ever increasing priority for the Caribbean, one which PROPEL has been prioritizing with its programming over the past two years. I have just returned from a visit to Dominica and was able to see firsthand some of the recovery work that WUSC Caribbean, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Dominica Import Export Agency (DEXIA), the Dominica Youth Business Trust (DYBT) and of course, the farmers and people of Dominica, is supporting with the aid of donors and the Government of Canada. It was heartening to see, that out of the disaster and despair, green is emerging and people are stepping up and making strides to move forward. There is a long way yet to travel down the road to recovery, but the people of Dominica have impressed me with their determination and resiliency. This PROPEL bulletin is dedicated to a description of WUSC Caribbean’s response to the crisis in Dominica.

Doug Graham

DOMINICA EMERGENCY AGRICULTURAL RECOVERY (DEAR) PROGRAM

WUSC CARIBBEAN - HELPING DOMINICA TO BOUNCE BACK AFTER HURRICANE MARIA

“Close to three months after the hurricane, the situation is normalising throughout the country. Diverse foodstuffs have reappeared on the markets, shops are reopening, most public schools have reopened, and 30 out of 43 damaged water systems have been provisionally repaired. The curfew was lifted in Roseau on 8 December. Nevertheless, Dominica remains seriously impacted. Over 80 percent of houses still have inadequate roofing, many children have not yet returned to school, 90 per cent of the population still does not have electricity, and a sizeable portion of the population is highly vulnerable due to the loss of their main source of livelihoods.” UN Situation Analysis - December 13, 2017



Rosie Felix, a member of the North East Women's Group, receives her Elite 1 Canadian seeds from the DEAR program

When Hurricane Maria struck Dominica on September 18, 2017, it destroyed 100% of the crops in this island nation where fully one-quarter of the workforce depends on the agriculture sector. Immediately after the hurricane passed, WUSC Caribbean went into overdrive to find ways to help Dominica rebound from the devastation. After consulting with Dominica's Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, as well as PROPEL's partners and producers, WUSC Caribbean applied to the Canadian Government for support for a special project to help Dominican potato farmers rehabilitate the Irish potato crop in Dominica. This led to the creation of the **Dominica Emergency Agricultural Recovery (DEAR) program**. Global Affairs Canada, through Canada's Disaster Responsive Fund, provided EC \$350,000 to the program which is being managed by the PROPEL team from November 2017, when it was established, until April 2018.

Through DEAR, high quality Elite 3 potato seeds were purchased from Canada and shipped to Dominica in a 20 ft. container. The shipment arrived in early December and distribution of the seeds began. Equipment and tools, including two tillers, were also purchased and were delivered to the country's extension services to support the crop. Some of these vital inputs were handed over to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and to farmers in a ceremony to officially launch DEAR, held on December 19th in Dominica's capital city, Roseau, at the Garraway Hotel. The Ministry is very supportive of the WUSC Caribbean program and thanked the Government of Canada for the financial support. At the ceremony Ricky Brumant, the Director of Agriculture, highlighted the importance of donor partners, such as PROPEL, coming on board to support farmers in a time of such dire need.

In addition to the providing inputs, WUSC Caribbean hired Mr. Aaron Emmanuel to act as a Field Based Assistant to support the implementation of DEAR by helping to manage the distribution of seeds and equipment, facilitating the producers with the crop and marketing linkages, liaising with DEXIA, MOA, DYBT and PROPEL's Field Facilitator in Dominica and identifying appropriate interventions.

Mr. Felix Leslie, who heads up the Agriculture Extension services in Dominica, lauded the project for helping local farmers: *“One hundred families are receiving support and that is a tremendous help. Irish potato is a fast three-month cash crop that helps restart livelihoods quickly as well as supporting our food security.”* He added that *“the recovery project is showing Dominica the need to really take resilience and climate smart agriculture seriously.”* Mr. Leslie also stressed the importance of the capacity building and training that WUSC is providing to the Ministry, support that goes beyond the provision of equipment and inputs. *“This help is critical for success,”* he said. *“Through this collaboration, the anticipated acreage of Irish potato to be planted this year will increase from the 37 acres last year to 69 this year.”*



Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and WUSC listen to Mrs. Josephine Dechausay-Titre, board chair of the Dominica Youth Business Trust, at the launch.

DEAR PROGRAM

The DEAR program is providing:

- support for land clearing and preparation of fields previously used by farmers for potato production, including the provision of two tillers and chain saws to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries;
- essential tools to farmers in order to replace those lost during the hurricane, as well as agricultural inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides) for potato cultivation approved by the Ministry; and
- support in the form of technical training in collaboration with the Ministry's agriculture extension service teams.

In addition to the support from the Government of Canada, DEAR received support from the Canadian company McCain Foods Limited, which provided a discount on the cost of the potato seeds going to Dominica. The discount works out to a contribution of XCD \$5,600 from McCain's, a company with a stated philosophy of "combining financial performance with a social mission. Be Good. Do Good."



PROPEL Project Director Doug Graham hands over a chain saw to Director of Agriculture Ricky Brumant



McCain potato seeds arrive for Dominica's recovery program

Private Canadian donors have also given generously to WUSC for the DEAR project. "This additional support means we will now have more to spend on inputs or equipment for these devastated farmers," Project Director for PROPEL Doug Graham observed.

Dawn Francis, public relations officer of Central Universal Farmers Group and a beneficiary of DEAR was in attendance at the launch. She commented:

"I was so impressed with the support provided by the PROPEL team on the ground and following the storm. I was surprised to find Dianna (PROPEL Agricultural Extension Facilitator) came by to see how I was doing and to assess the damage the storm had on my farm. I have to thank the WUSC Caribbean team for caring so much about what had happened to us."



After the hurricane: Women of the Central Universal Farmers Group preparing land in the Corona area to make ready for the potato crop



Doug Graham signing the agreement with Dawn Francis, PRO, Central Universal Farmers Group (right) and Octavia Hunter, President of the Northeast Women Farmers Group (left).

At the DEAR launch, WUSC Caribbean also signed an agreement with two Dominican women's groups to provide support in rainwater catchment technology as well training in the use of organic methods to enhance soil quality.

The women's groups were also beneficiaries of potato seeds made available through the DEAR program.

PROPEL – NEW INITIATIVES TO ASSIST DOMINICA

WUSC CONTINUES SUPPORT OF DEXIA

As part of the DEAR launch event, WUSC Caribbean signed an agreement to provide XCD \$61,000 of PROPEL support to provide basic tools and equipment to the farmers who sell produce to Dominica Export Import Agency (DEXIA) for export. Gregoire Thomas, general manager of DEXIA, thanked PROPEL for the partnership and work done over the years in securing a distributor within the Barbados market, for the development of the Dominica brand, for support to staff at the multipurpose pack house and for capacity building through training. *“This further support of small tools and equipment by PROPEL are a means of supporting more than 260 DEXIA contracted framers to regain their production base, ultimately aimed at supplying the export markets,”* Mr. Thomas stated.



The PROPEL team and Dr. Ian Lambert, Government appointed consultant to DEXIA (centre right) on a site visit to DEXIA pack house

YOUTH BUSINESSES ALSO GETS A BOOST

PROPEL will also provide additional support to the Dominica Youth Business Trust (DYBT) to help youth in agribusiness to re-establish their businesses harmed by Hurricane Maria. *“This support by PROPEL will aim to provide key tools and equipment as well as raw materials to 12 entrepreneurs who have suffered losses in one form or the other through the impact of Hurricane Maria,”* said Mrs. Josephine Dechausay-Titre, DYBT board chair. She noted that this was not her organization’s first partnership with PROPEL as they had collaborated to launch the DYBT Strong campaign and PROPEL had supported them with the provision of a Canadian volunteer to work with the organization.



Handing over a blender to a DYBT youth agro-processor



McMara Joseph, DYBT Business Development Officer and Nadia Pacquette-Anselm, PROPEL Barbados & OECS Coordinator, inspect an agro-processor’s branded Garden of Eden products.

WUSC DOMINICA APPEAL

DONATE

In addition to these initiatives, WUSC has launched an appeal to solicit donations to help restore the agriculture sector in Dominica. To donate to this worthy cause, please go to the WUSC website <https://wusc.ca/special-appeal/>

SHERMA GREGOIRE “HEAVEN SCENT”

Sherma started her business 10 years ago as a small home-based enterprise, grew it to the point that she needed more space, and moved to a small production centre in the AID Bank industrial site. There, she produces her scented soap and natural products, such as massage oils and facial scrubs. Sherma built up her award-winning business with hard work and perseverance. Before the storm, she had four full time employees, was marketing produce through supermarkets and hotels island-wide, and had started to penetrate some regional markets.

Then the hurricane struck. As was the case with all other Dominicans, Sherma rode out the storm at home and when she was able, went to see how her workshop had fared. She was pleased to find that other than a bit of flooding and water damage, the business was in good condition.

Then the looters came. Her front door was smashed. She lost most of her stock that was ready to go to market, her raw materials, and most of the equipment needed for processing that she had procured over the years. Did you know you need special insurance to cover looting? Sherma now does.



Enterprising Sherma Gregorie in her office in better times



With most supermarkets still closed after three months and hotels out of commission, she also lost most of her market. Further, because agriculture was decimated, her supply chain for raw material, at least temporarily, dried up.

Despite all that, with what remained at the workshop, Sherma has started producing what she can with what she has, knowing the market will come back over time and indeed more supermarkets are starting to open across the island.

The DYBT, with financial support provided through PROPEL, is therefore very pleased to be able to help Sherma get back on her feet and to get her business going again, by providing funds so she can replace some of her key tools, including a packaging machine, moulds, an Industrial stove as well as raw materials moulds and other equipment lost in the looting.

An award-winning agri-preneur, Sherma has ambitions to get back to work, producing more than she had been prior to the hurricane and to expand the access of 'Heaven Scent' products to more countries around the region.

We wish her a quick recovery and continued success and know that her entrepreneurial spirit will carry her to greater things.

LINVOR AMBO “ALORZEE™ – CHOCO DOMINIQUE™”.

Linvor is a young man with a mission and a vision. It all started because his grandfather had cocoa trees on his farm. Linvor liked hot chocolate and he was not satisfied with the products on the market. He did some research and started experimenting at home. As people began to clamour for his hot chocolate, he realized that he was on to something. He had a product he could sell and his entrepreneurial spirit took over.

Slowly, from a home-based business, Linvor worked to improve his products, developed packaging (in English but also in French, to target the nearby French speaking island markets) and grew his business over three years, adding two employees along the way.

He invested as well. He built a basic but solid (and, we now know, hurricane-proof) production facility beside his family home. He expanded his equipment as his production and market share increased. He was on track and looking to expand his market both in-country and regionally. He had four farmers selling him their cocoa beans and he was planning on buying from even more farmers. Then came Hurricane Maria.

Linvor was less directly affected than many by the hurricane, mainly due to his foresight in building such a solid structure to house his business. Because he lived away from a major town and built the production unit in his back yard, looting was not an issue. However, he too saw his business suffer. His order of new packaging had just arrived in the country and was in the port waiting for clearance when Maria struck. Water damage ruined the vast majority of the packaging. None of his cocoa suppliers are in a position to provide him with more cocoa beans for another year and his supplies are dwindling. There is no electricity and it may not return until May, 2018, so he has had to buy and run a generator to continue his limited production. This adds to his costs and takes away from funds he had planned to invest elsewhere in the business.

But as an ambitious young entrepreneur, Linvor has not stood still. He has reordered packaging, and worked with DEXIA to find a new source of cocoa from Grenada until the local production is back on line. He is aiming to further expand his regional market, but he has to provide a nutritional analysis and enhance his labelling to meet export/import requirements in many of the new markets he is targeting. Support for this is being provided in collaboration with DYBT. It seems very likely that before long, Linvor will be expanding his market, his production and demand for cocoa from local farmers in Dominica.



Linvor Ambo, Cocoa Agri-preneur



In collaboration with the Dominica Youth Business Trust (DYBT), WUSC Caribbean is mobilizing PROPEL resources to support at least 12 ambitious young entrepreneurs like Sherma and Linvor, whose agri-businesses have been impacted by hurricane Maria.



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