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Lead Story

PROPEL EMBRACES CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE IN ITS PROGRAMMING ACROSS THE REGION

The effects of climate change are most apparent to farmers in the region who have witnessed climbing temperatures and harsher weather conditions, including floods and extended periods of drought. Coupled with this, many farmers are also dealing with an increased number of crop-related pests and diseases and are therefore looking to adapt their practices in order to mitigate these threats, as well as improve their capacity to recover from disaster.

As part of its environmental management plan, PROPEL has introduced a variety of climate-smart agricultural practices and technologies to farming communities in Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, and St. Lucia. Governments across the region are taking note of climate-smart initiatives in view of the importance of agriculture to their food security and import substitution efforts, as well as in creating opportunities to raise incomes for persons living in rural communities.

As defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is an approach that helps to guide actions needed to transform and reorient agricultural systems to effectively support development and ensure food security in a changing climate. CSA aims to tackle three main objectives: sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and incomes; adapting and building resilience to climate change; and reducing and/or removing greenhouse gas emissions, where possible.

## “GROWING AGRICULTURE AND INCOMES IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE”

### PROPEL PARTICIPATES IN THE CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE (CSA) SYMPOSIUM



Hon. Karl Samuda, Minister of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAF) (second right) and various representatives of USAID in discussion with Alvin Murray, PROPEL's Regional Agriculture Coordinator (far right) at the recently concluded CSA Symposium in Kingston, Jamaica. Minister Samuda inspects the sweet potatoes grown with clean planting material provided through PROPEL

The CSA symposium was hosted by the USAID-funded Jamaica Rural Economy and Rural Ecosystems Adapting to Climate Change II project (Ja REEACH II) in conjunction with the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAF). PROPEL was a key sponsor, exhibitor and presenter at this two day event held in mid-September in Kingston, Jamaica. The symposium dealt with the major challenges being faced by the agricultural industry today, including the implications of climate change on the agricultural output and by extension, food security of Jamaica. In his presentation on “Disease-Free Planting Materials to Safeguard Food Security and Manage Climate-Driven Pests and Diseases”, Regional Agriculture Coordinator for PROPEL, Alvin Murray, disseminated major findings regarding ginger and sweet potato production in Jamaica, highlighting the need for farmers to consistently use clean planting materials in view of increased pests and disease. To achieve the levels of production necessary in Jamaica, he stressed the need for improved rainwater harvesting and irrigation, adequate timing of planting crops, and mechanization of production as possible ways forward towards increased food security in Jamaica. In order to implement the changes necessary for successful production of these crops, Mr. Murray also recommended that an increased focus be given to facilitating private investments in nurseries for enough planting material to produce 12 million ginger plants and 12 million sweet potato slips per annum.

In addition to improved agricultural practices, the symposium also highlighted the need for a market systems approach to agriculture in Jamaica that seeks to strengthen partnerships amongst the various stakeholders involved in the agricultural sector. From production to distribution, PROPEL's Deputy Project Director, Munish Persaud, highlighted the need for innovative collaborative models based on the participation of multiple actors, including the private sector, in the achievement of improved, sustainable, and resilient climate-smart agriculture in Jamaica. Canadian High Commissioner, Sylvain Fabi, in his speech emphasized,

*“We need to foster a new, smarter approach to food safety and security, in the context of adaptation and climate resilience within the agricultural sector”*

High Commissioner Fabi reiterated his support for PROPEL, underscoring the importance of improved agricultural practices and increased access to market systems as drivers of development.



Canadian High Commissioner, Sylvain Fabi speaking at the symposium

## PROPEL SIGNS MOU WITH HEALTH 2000 AGRO

WUSC Caribbean has signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a two year period with Health 2000 Agro (H2K) to cooperate on projects of mutual interest with special attention to improving environmental restoration and climate change initiatives. H2K is a Canadian private sector firm that has been operational in the region for some time, providing bio inputs to agriculture. The technology transfer provided by the cooperation between H2K and PROPEL is expected to help to create improved and more sustainable produce through PROPEL initiatives across the region.

Areas of cooperation will include:

- Promote sustainable soil management and soil regeneration as a means of environmental preservation and improvement.
- Promote the enhancement of gene and cell diversity within specific plant species.
- Promote the enhancement of plant diversity within farms.
- Enhance the presence of local fauna and predator prey relationships that are beneficial for restoring balance in the agro-ecosystem.
- Promote the uptake of integrated plant health technology which produces safer foods for consumption.
- Promote the uptake of integrated plant health technology which reduces the use of toxic inputs in the short term and modify their use in the long term.
- Promote carbon sequestration by restoring the ability of soils to function as a natural reservoir of carbon.
- Collaborate on the launching of a web-based application (an app) that promotes these initiatives.



(L-R) PROPEL Project Director, Doug Graham and Managing Director of H2K, Jai Sukul sign MOU Toronto, August 12, 2016

H2K agricultural input protocols (I-POPs) are already being used in onion trials in St. Lucia and Barbados. In Guyana, H2K trials and training with demonstration plots are being established for pineapples, plantains and vegetables, while in Jamaica trials have extended to potatoes, ginger and vegetables.

As part of the PROPEL drive to create sustainable linkages, the project has an environmental management plan to address major environmental concerns such as waste management, deforestation, soil degradation, land and water use and management, control/elimination of pests and diseases, the appropriate use of agro-chemicals and mitigation of natural disasters including drought, flooding and erosion of soils from heavy rains, storms and hurricanes. To achieve these ends, the project provides training and capacity development for stakeholders; provides professional linkages and technical collaboration; and facilitates knowledge sharing and transfer of good practice.

This September, Alvin Murray, the Regional Agriculture Coordinator travelled to India to receive training on H2K products and protocols, which he will use in training and implementation across the region.



PROPEL facilitates training of Extension Officers in Jamaica on nursery and greenhouse management linked to producing healthy, clean plant materials that are pest and climate resistant

## WUSC CARIBBEAN JAMAICA SIGNS MOU WITH SRC TO PRODUCE CLEAN PLANTING MATERIAL



(L-R) WUSC Caribbean Deputy Project Director Munish Persaud and Executive Director of SRC, Dr. Cliff Riley signing the MOU. Looking on are Alvin Murray, Regional Agriculture Coordinator for PROPEL and Communications Manager, SRC, Roselyn Fisher. Image capture from JIS online.

The Scientific Research Council (SRC) in Jamaica formalized its partnership with WUSC Caribbean for capacity building support to produce disease-free planting materials for potato, ginger, yam and sweet potato for farmers. “This project has transformed the way in which we produce Irish Potato in Jamaica” said Dr. Cliff Riley at the signing ceremony on May 17th at the agency’s Hope Gardens offices, in St. Andrew.

Deputy Project Director, Munish Persaud reported that he was pleased with the strides the project has achieved in Jamaica and suggested that this initiative would not only satisfy the needs of the country but create an opportunity for export to the region. Already the SRC has received an order for disease-free in vitro ginger plantlets from Dominica and they are in discussion with the Ministry of Agriculture and PROPEL in St. Lucia, on importing disease-free in vitro sweet potato plantlets.

A MOU was recently signed with Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) to build capacity within that

organization specifically to: improve and increase extension support to farmers through farmer field schools, demonstration plots, conventional training and traditional extension support; identification of market opportunities and increased market access based on PROPEL supported crops (Irish potatoes, sweet yams, sweet potatoes, onions, ginger, and greenhouse vegetables); development and dissemination of technical publication and other materials, limited to PROPEL supported crops; facilitating market linkages along crop related value chain in areas such as cold storage, processing and packaging; post-harvest technologies and handling; plant protection, including integrated pest management; access to credit and financial services for women and youths; and public relations relating to dissemination of technical information to farmers.

WUSC Caribbean also signed a MOU with the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture & Fisheries (MI-CAF) towards the development of a youth in agriculture policy.

## NEW GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA PROJECT TEAM LEADER TAKES UP POST IN BARBADOS

Jane Palmer recently joined the Global Affairs Canada team in Bridgetown, taking over Anne Gaudet’s role as Project Team Leader for the PROPEL Project. Jane is new to Barbados and the Caribbean. She spent the last 12 years working in Asia, starting on the Pakistan Program before being posted in Dhaka, Bangladesh and Jakarta, Indonesia. She looks forward to learning more about the Caribbean, and to meeting the members of the PROPEL team and stakeholders across the region.



Jane Palmer,  
Global Affairs Canada  
First Secretary (Development)  
Barbados and Eastern  
Caribbean

## EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WITH THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE TO SET THE FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCED COLLABORATION WITH GUYANA GOVERNMENT AGENCIES (GMC & NAREI)

Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the Ministry of Agriculture’s technical agencies, National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) and Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC), and WUSC Caribbean were signed on September 7th at the Ministry of Agriculture in Georgetown. The MOUs will enhance coordination and collaboration between WUSC Caribbean and the two agencies for future initiatives undertaken through PROPEL.

The MOU with GMC seeks to: facilitate information sharing on market information, including market opportunities among stakeholders; facilitate the transfer of information to producers, marketers and other stakeholders in the market system regarding improvement of quality standard requirements such as post-harvest handling, product development



Present at the signing event were (L-R) Joanna Robinson - Agronomist PROPEL, Ida Sealey Adams - Ag. G.M. GMC, Munish Persaud - Dep. Dir. PROPEL, Dr. Oudho Homenauth - CEO NAREI, George Jervis - P.S. Min. of Ag., Doug Graham – Dir. WUSC Caribbean, Romesh Kishum - WUSC Guyana Proj. Coord. Christa McMillin - Prg. Manager, WUSC Canada

and enhancement, transport and logistics challenges; promote opportunities for improved marketability of local produce; nurture and support opportunities for the improvement of products within the agriculture sector; and develop and promote initiatives to support strengthened service delivery to key stakeholders in the market system.

WUSC Caribbean and NAREI plan to strengthen their partnership with special emphasis on improving environmental restoration and climate change initiatives. Specific areas of co-operation may include: plant diversity within farms; uptake of integrated plant health technology; restore the ability of soil to function as a natural reservoir of carbon; and provision of extension support and research in climate-smart agriculture. The two agencies have worked together in the past to spread awareness and combat the black sigatoka disease that had plagued Guyanese plantain farms.



New WUSC Caribbean Offices located on 3rd floor of Lewis Building in Rockley

## WUSC CARIBBEAN OFFICE RELOCATION IN BARBADOS

At the beginning of September, WUSC Caribbean moved its headquarters to the 3rd Floor of Lewis Tower in Rockley, Christ Church. Project Director, Doug Graham, said the move is to an office that is better suited to the current needs of PROPEL and the size of the team based in Barbados. As part of the move, some office furniture was donated to a project partner, the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS).

The new office is centrally located, closer to key partners. **Please note the new telephone number is +1-246-427-9796.**

## BARBADOS- DOMINICA TRADE CONNECTION EXPLORED

Following up on the PROPEL OECS market survey and a report on “Developing the Dominica fresh produce sector through added value regional exports”, extensive consultations have been held between the Dominica Export Import Agency (DEXIA), the Ministry of Agriculture in Dominica, farmers, and high value market (HVM) buyers in Barbados. The report was able to match demand and supply of some key fresh produce items and suggested that weekly shipments of a 20ft container to Barbados would be competitive for Barbados, profitable for Dominica and promote regional trade links. DEXIA, which is a statutory corporation that acts as a medium through which local Dominican agricultural produce can be distributed/exported to local, regional and international markets was engaged by the project and linked with HVMs in Barbados. Discussions on quantities, pricing, packaging, forecasting, logistics and accountability are on-going.



DEXIA Packing & Handling Facility

42 farmers have been identified to participate in the program and PROPEL will support a supply chain and farmer relations officer at DEXIA for six months to nurture the program once it is up and running. To help provide these farmers with access to credit for this program, PROPEL has had discussions with the Agricultural Industrial and Development (AID) Bank in Dominica about creating low interest financing offers under its special loans program.

## VOLUNTEERS

### JOIN THE WUSC CARIBBEAN TEAM IN JAMAICA

Volunteers are the heart of WUSC’s international development efforts and central to our success in delivering meaningful results. WUSC harnesses the expertise of Canadian volunteers to enhance program delivery in over 15 countries – now including the five PROPEL countries. Since July, PROPEL has welcomed two volunteers to our Jamaica office.

**Emily Kydd**, our Regional Gender Equality and Youth Advisor, is from Langley, British Columbia, Canada. Emily holds a Bachelors degree in Pacific and Asian Studies from University of Victoria, and a Masters degree in Disaster Management from Royal Roads University. She has worked extensively in the International Development arena with institutions such as the Peace Corps Kyrgyzstan, The Salvation Army, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation. Emily is an avid traveller who loves to share her experiences through her travel blog, “See Her Travel”.



Emily Kydd,  
Regional Gender Equality  
and Youth Advisor

**Lais Vieira**, our Regional Communications Advisor, is a Brazilian native and Canadian citizen from Toronto, Ontario. She holds a Specialized Honors Psychology B.Sc. from York University, and a post-graduate certificate in International Development from Humber College. Her vast experience in the communications field as a photographer and editor, as well as her previous management experience, are combined with her passion for project management and capacity-building in her current role. Some of her past non-profit experiences include volunteering with Companeros Inc, YMCA, Heart Tokushima and Photographers without Borders.

Some of her past non-profit experiences include volunteering with Companeros Inc, YMCA, Heart Tokushima and Photographers without Borders.



Lais Vieira,  
Regional Communications  
Advisor

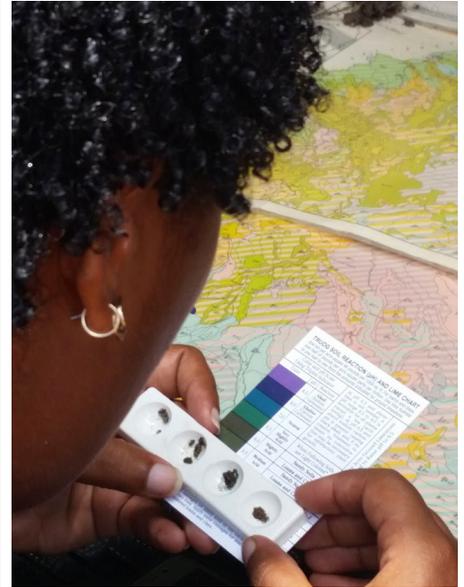
# TRAINING ON SOIL NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

## PROVIDED TO EXTENSION OFFICERS IN DOMINICA AND ST. LUCIA

In support of climate smart and good agricultural practice efforts, staff and extension agents of the Ministries of Agriculture in St. Lucia and Dominica are now better equipped to help farmers reduce the amount of fertilizer used in their fields. PROPEL conducted the sessions with extension officers in St. Lucia in August and Dominica in September.

Dr. Felix Jaria, Director of Agricultural Services from the St. Lucia Ministry of Agriculture and PROPEL's Agronomist, Julius Polius conducted the training sessions. Topics covered included: soil fertility and plant nutrient requirements, soil water relations, soil management, soil properties and soil organic matter. In addition, there were practical field exercises on:

- Determination of soil textural characteristics
- Measuring soil pH
- Soil sampling and handling techniques
- Reading soil maps
- Soil profile characteristics in relations to plant growth
- Using soil test kit
- Measuring field capacity – in-situ method



Extension Officer in St. Lucia trains on measuring soil pH

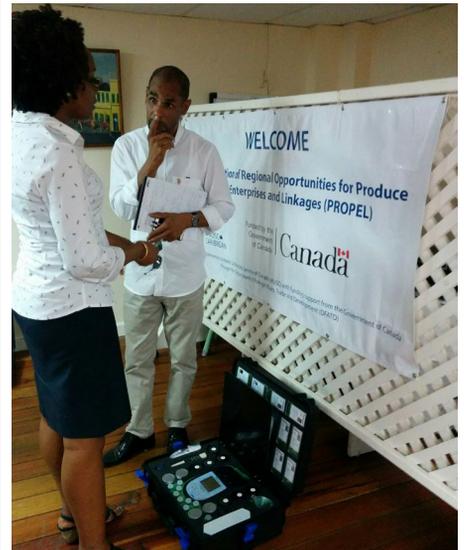
Similar training will soon be carried out with the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) in Guyana which has already received the soil testing equipment.



PROPEL's Nadia Anselm-Pacquette presents the certificate to an agricultural teacher from the Dominica State College

At the end of the two days, certificates were awarded to 28 participants in Dominica and 32 participants in St. Lucia in recognition of their enhanced ability to support producers.

In addition, equipment and soil testing kits were handed over to the Ministries of Agriculture in both territories. Mini field kits now are available for field staff to use in direct support of farmers. Soil samples that require additional analysis will be sent on to the ministry where the more comprehensive testing kit can now be used to advise farmers.



Dominica Director of Agriculture, Ricky Brumant, discussing the capacity of the soil testing kit with Taletha Laudat from the Ministry

## DEVELOPING A NATIONAL BRAND FOR DOMINICA'S FRESH PRODUCE

WUSC Caribbean is working with Dominica Export Import Agency (DEXIA) to improve packaging and branding of fresh produce for regional and international export. Windward Commodities has been contracted through PROPEL to provide technical assistance for this initiative. In an interview with Cable Broadcasting Network (CBN4) in Dominica on October 7th, Chris Docherty, Managing Director of Windward Commodities, explained,

*“We’re here today in order to work with the Ministry of Agriculture and DEXIA through the PROPEL program funded by the Canadian Government in order to help brand and sell Dominica’s fresh produce on the international market as an added value product.”*



Chris Docherty, M.D. Windward Commodities presents the concepts at a stakeholder meeting

Several design concepts have been developed under the initiative and consultations held with key stakeholders to ensure that the brand represents the messaging and image which resonates with the target markets to develop a specific identity and demand for Dominican fresh produce.



Farmers and government officials participate in discussions with Massy Stores. Image capture from St. Lucia Times Report Aug. 26th.

## HELPING TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE LINKAGES BETWEEN BUYERS AND PRODUCERS

### PROPEL PARTICIPATES IN MASSY, ST. LUCIA PLANTERS FORUM

The August 25th annual Massy farmers meeting under theme “Massy Stores committed to working with the farming community” saw over 100 farmers, government officials and stakeholders in attendance. Dunstan Demille, Perishables Manager at Massy Stores, cited that “the

relationship with the Massy Stores Farmers goes far beyond a regular buyer and seller one and promotes best practice in farming with the development of the Roots and Tubers Plus Programme, which is supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Caribbean Agricultural Research & Development Institute (CARDI) and with the Potato Programme in partnership with Promotion of Regional Opportunities for Produce through Enterprises and Linkages project, (PROPEL)”. Learn more at <https://stluciatimes.com/2016/08/26/massy-stores-meet-massy-farmers-annual-meeting>.



(L-R) PROPEL's Doug Graham and Canadian High Commissioner Pierre Giroux look on as MACORP's Hugh Griffith demonstrates the use of the simulator

## NEW AMSTERDAM TRAINING INSTITUTE - NATI RECEIVES MUCH NEEDED EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING

PROPEL has facilitated the linkage between NATI and MACORP for the development of a training program for lecturers in the agricultural machinery program. MACORP offered the GYD \$1 million training free of cost as part of their corporate social responsibility program and PROPEL supplied the accommodation, meals and travel costs of the trainer. In addition, the project provided the college with an air conditioner unit for the agriculture machinery training room to keep the room dust free and cool which will prolong the life of the three simulators.

A ceremony to commission the training room was hosted on September 9th, 2016 at NATI where the instructors who had successfully completed the training course were issued their certificates of competency from MACORP. The students attending the institution are looking forward to accessing the simulators as it will greatly enhance their learning through improved practical sessions led by the newly trained instructors. The aim is to increase the number of well-trained mechanics to support the agriculture sector in Guyana and to provide enhanced employment opportunities for youth trained by NATI.

## BARBADIAN AGRO-PROCESSOR PROVIDED TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Barbadian company, ARMAG Manufacturing Ltd. is receiving support from PROPEL to improve its share of the frozen sweet potato fry market. The company owns and operates over 900 acres of land at Sunbury and Colleton Plantations and opened its manufacturing facility to produce Sunbury Harvest frozen sweet potato fries in December 2013. ARMAG's brand, "Sunbury Harvest" is the only domestically produced sweet potato chip on the local market. Product quality is excellent and the health benefits are becoming better known. The potato chip market in Barbados was valued at US\$3.38m in 2015, 96% of which was imported, primarily from the US. ARMAG has been working to improve its brand and packaging design, expand its distribution network and obtain quality certification and greater recognition in a sector dominated by US brands. For PROPEL, this represents a clear opportunity to support a local agro-processor for local sourcing, domestic employment, reducing the potential of foreign exchange loss to imports and to capture value-added within regional markets.



Sunbury Harvest taste testing at Massy, Warrens, Barbados in early October

Through support from Windward Commodities, PROPEL has assisted ARMAG to improve the package design and undertake taste testing and a consumer survey before re-launching the product on the local market for the Christmas season.

## ONION STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE FORMED TO INCREASE ONION PRODUCTION IN BARBADOS

A stakeholders committee that includes Massy Stores & Distribution, Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA), Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS), Ministry of Agriculture, Barbados Agricultural Development Marketing Corporation (BADMC) and onion producers has met several times in the past three months to develop a coordinated market systems approach to improving the local onion crop in Barbados. They have finalized the purpose and structure for the committee



Stakeholders examining onions produced in the first onion trials in Barbados

and began farmer selection to provide support prior to planting, which is expected to begin at the end of October 2016. PROPEL will supply technical assistance and selected inputs such as fertilizer and pesticides to the selected

farmers in support of the pilot plots and is working with the committee to increase the quality and quantity of production of onions on the island.



PROPEL's Director, Doug Graham handing over computer equipment to BAS CEO James Paul, M.P. Micah Gittens looks on

## BARBADOS AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY - BAS TO TRACK FRESH PRODUCE PRODUCTION IN BARBADOS

Following a collaborative needs assessment, a consultant has been contracted to develop a database for the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS) to help improve forecasting the availability of fresh produce for high value markets (HVMs). This will help producers to understand the demand by buyers and to better schedule crop selection and planting to ensure buyers have access to fresh produce in a consistent manner. If local production can become more reliable, buyers will have greater confidence in local production and can reduce the amount of produce being sourced elsewhere. In turn, this should help the island meet more of its own fresh produce needs, reducing imports and saving foreign exchange reserves from leaving the country. Additionally, this will help farmers to find ready markets and stable prices for their produce. Through PROPEL, BAS has also received three computers to host and run the database and PROPEL will provide support for a specialist volunteer on a temporary basis to help BAS implement and manage the new system and to train BAS staff on its maintenance.



Thousands of visitors to Denbigh 2016 learned more about inclusive market systems through PROPEL's booth



## PARTNERING WITH GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

# WUSC CARIBBEAN DELIVERS AN IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY AT DENBIGH 2016

This year's PROPEL booth at Denbigh depicted our market systems approach as it brought together over 16 stakeholders including: Evergrow, Fersan, Agrograce, Potato and Onion Producers Association (POPA), Glastonbury Purveyors, Health 2000 Agro (H2K), the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAFA), Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), Scientific Research Council (SRC), Bureau of Standards, Bodles Research Station, St. Elizabeth Co-operative Credit Union, JP Tropical Foods, Perishables Jamaica, Mid-Island Packaging and Processing and the Jamaica Greenhouse Growers Association.

Visitors to the PROPEL booth at Denbigh saw climate-smart and good agriculture practices demonstrated. The two-day event held on July 30th-31st, attracted thousands of inter-

ested producers and agri-preneurs.

PROPEL Director Doug Graham (far right) presents the trophy for sustainable climate-smart displays to J.C. Hutchinson, Minister without portfolio MICAFA. Also present at the ceremony were (L-R) RADA's CEO (ac) Peter Thompson, RADA Chairperson Genille Attalla and Alvin Murray, Regional Agriculture Coordinator for PROPEL

ested producers and agri-preneurs.

In addition to mounting its own booth, PROPEL lent its support to 13 Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) Offices, who constructed parish displays on sustainable climate-smart agriculture. As part of an effort to encourage greater awareness and initiatives dealing with the environmental effects on agriculture, PROPEL provided two trophies at Denbigh to be handed out by RADA/MICAFA to the displays that were:

- 1) **Most practical and sustainable climate-smart agriculture display** (won by RADA St. Thomas).
- 2) **Most educational and innovative parish display** (won by RADA Clarendon).



## EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LINKAGES AND PARTNERSHIPS

### PROPEL PARTICIPATES IN GUY EXPO 2016

To enhance the PROPEL project's accessibility for women and youth, WUSC Caribbean participated in the annual 'Guy Expo' trade show which was held May 12th-15th at the National Exhibition Centre, Sophia in Georgetown.

Over the four days, the PROPEL team handed out over 250 brochures and engaged with hundreds of interested farmers, students and other market actors, including companies which showed a strong interest in collaborating with the project to provide soil analyses to producers and shipping agents, who transport fresh produce out of Guyana to countries within the region. Several Ministers of Government also visited the booth, with one Minister expressing enthusiasm about the possibilities of growing potatoes in Guyana. The team found that there was a lot of interest and awareness of the potato trials.



PROPEL Team in discussion with visitors to the booth at Guy Expo



## DESPITE SETBACKS

### GUYANA POTATO TRIALS PROVE ENCOURAGING

The government channel, National Communications Network (NCN) featured the potato trials which PROPEL had carried out with NAREI and a group of selected farmers in Guyana. The feature, sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture, aired on "Farmers Connection" on April 24th and spoke enthusiastically about the prospects of the trial and the opportunity for commercial production of potatoes in Guyana.

Just after the airing of this program, Guyana experienced a week of unseasonable heavy rainfall which



Waterlogged potato fields

left the fields waterlogged for three days and jeopardized the trial. Tuberation tests were carried out immediately after and they showed that the crop had been successful up to that point. Despite this setback, NAREI and the PROPEL team in Guyana remain confident that potatoes can be grown successfully in Guyana.

The project intends to support further trials set to start in mid-December/January. Changes in weather patterns, such as this, underscores the importance of climate-smart agricultural practices in the region.

Canadian High Commissioner Pierre Giroux (right) assisting on one of the potato farms. Image capture Stabroek News





Jamaican women participating in a focus group

## JAMAICA TEAM CONSULT WITH WOMEN AND YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

PROPEL recognizes that youth and women play an integral part in the food security and agri-economy of the region. The project aims to reach 11,500 producers, and as youth and gender equity are two of PROPEL's crosscutting themes, it seeks to ensure that at least 33% of these producers are women and 10% are youth (ages 18- 35). Both women and men have benefitted from participation in extension services and research, and have received support to adopt and adapt new innovative technology.

Youth are integral to the sustainable development of our world, especially so in food security. Therefore the PROPEL project has teamed up with technical colleges and institutions to build the capacity of learning, as well as working directly with youth producers to ensure they are given the most opportunities to succeed. While more men have benefitted directly from PROPEL this past year, PROPEL continues to seek out women producers and agri-preneurs, as well as youth of both genders, to engage through the project as part of its management ethos and as a deliberate strategy to meet its gender objectives.

In Jamaica, the participation of women in the PROPEL project is trending at 25%, which has prompted the team to carry out a series of focus groups targeted specifically at women and youth. In the month of September, a total of 105 participants were engaged in 9 focus group discussions (23% youth and 72% women). These were conducted in the parishes of St. Thomas, St. Mary, St. Ann, Hanover and St. Elizabeth in collaboration

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## KEY FINDINGS

Some of the dominant themes that emerged from the women's focus groups were:

- Lack of awareness of services for women in agriculture
- Women producers perceive themselves as being left out of the agriculture sector, or the 'old boys club'
- Women feel they do not have enough access to support or resources and therefore will not risk entering the agriculture sector or cannot expand what they do currently
- Women are unaware of the advantages they can achieve by becoming a career producer in the high value market system
- Unfair wages and lower prices for produce are offered to most women

Results from the youth focus groups were:

- Lack of access to land and other inputs
- Need for training in the business aspects of agriculture
- Youth have limited access to current market information
- Youth have other sources of income, they do not see agriculture as providing a full-time, sustainable income
- Need for improved extension services and technical training

Both groups suggested:

- Difficulty securing reliable farm labor
- Difficulty with accessing credit and financing
- Insufficient knowledge of market systems
- Lack of formal buying contracts with HVMs

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Youth focus group in Jamaica

with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS), Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA) and Jamaica 4-H Clubs.

The objective of the focus groups was to gather relevant information which impact youth and women producers in agriculture to help the project use key findings to inform future program strategies.

Some of the areas covered in the discussions included:

- Access to training and marketing information
- Suitable communication strategies
- Access to inputs and support through extension services
- Challenges faced in agriculture production
- Motivations for starting agricultural production

Youth focus group participants in St. Lucia



- Factors to consider when reaching youth and women
- Ability to scale up
- Inequalities between male and female producers
- Recommendations for improving PROPEL's impact with the target group

A youth focus group was also conducted in early October in St.

Lucia to advise the Barbados and OECS team for suitable programming for the upcoming year. The findings of this qualitative research in Jamaica and St. Lucia, combined with the youth study conducted in Guyana in 2015, will serve to inform future strategies for the project in order to reach and engage youth and where appropriate, strengthen gender roles in a manner that enhances gender equality.

**EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT**  
**LENORIA FEARON**  
**AGRI-BUSINESS AND**  
**MARKETING COORDINATOR,**  
**JAMAICA**

Lenoria Fearon is a highly qualified Agriculture professional, having completed post graduate studies in Plant Production and Protection, and Logistics and Supply Chain Management. She holds professional membership with the Jamaica Association of Sugar Technologists (JAST), and The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT), UK.

Lenoria has over 12 years of working knowledge, training, and experience in agriculture and environment management, having worked in agronomy, forest law enforcement, research and development, agriculture management, credit coordination and management, business development, and in extension services that included harvesting coordination, logistics, and management of supply chain for produce to meet market demands.



**MEET SOME OF THE HARDWORKING**  
**MEMBERS OF THE PROPEL TEAM**



Angela Arthur-Isaac  
 Project Accountant  
 Barbados & OECS



Marina Taitt  
 Administrative Assistant  
 Barbados



Oneica O. Dennis  
 Project Accountant  
 Guyana



Turkessa Bonnett  
 Administrative Assistant  
 & Clerk  
 Guyana



Ruthlyn Nicholson  
 Project Accountant  
 Jamaica



Damion Campbell  
 Gender Equality and  
 Youth Programme  
 Officer  
 Jamaica



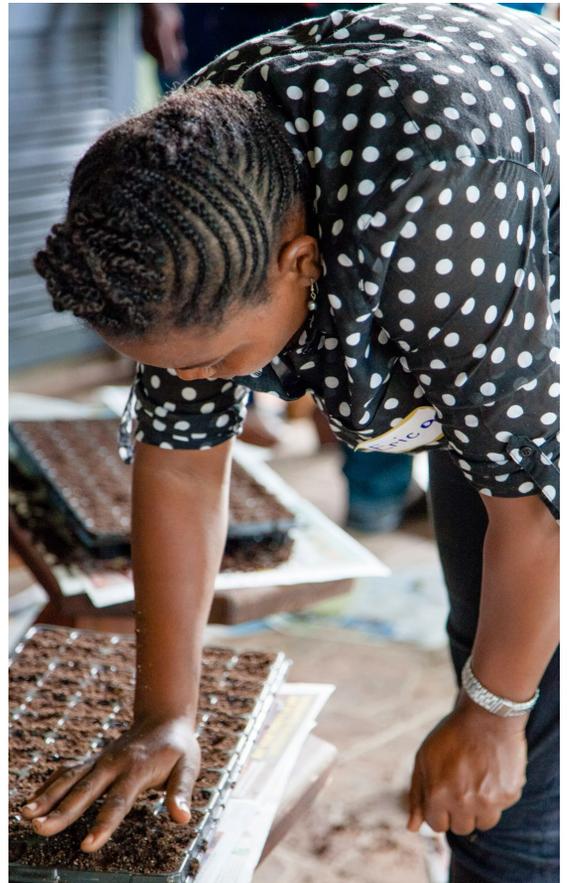
Terrence Samuels  
 Agricultural Extension  
 Facilitator  
 Jamaica



Schera Findlatter-Stewart  
 Administrative Assistant  
 Jamaica

## PROPEL FORWARD PLANNING

- Internal progress review and planning sessions to be held in all countries in November, 2016.
- Potato trials in Guyana and Barbados.
- Onion trials in Jamaica, St. Lucia, Barbados and Guyana.
- Sweet Potato and Ginger trials on-going in Jamaica.
- H2K environmentally sustainable agriculture input trials on various crops in Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and St. Lucia.
- Soil Testing Lab to be handed over to the Guyana National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) along with training on the use of the equipment.
- PROPEL staff to receive Gender training.
- Jamaica Youth Study to be completed.
- WUSC is recruiting for 5 new volunteer positions to support PROPEL programs across the region.
- Assessment on the potential for production of Sweet Potatoes for the trade with the UK market to be carried out in the OECS.
- Multi Stakeholder Meeting with Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC) “Creating connections for the development of the non-traditional agricultural sector” to create a network for present and prospective farmers, agro-processors and exporters to interact and form linkages with individuals and agencies along the value chain in the nontraditional agriculture sector. The meeting will be held in Georgetown on November 2nd.



**World University Service of Canada (WUSC)** is a leading Canadian non-profit organization in international development, committed to building a more equitable and sustainable world. We work with a unique and powerful network of post-secondary institutions, private-sector partners and volunteers to improve education, employment and empowerment opportunities for youth, women, refugees and other marginalized people around the world. To learn more about WUSC and to support our work, visit us online at [www.wusc.ca](http://www.wusc.ca).

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