



Jamaica



Significant Achievements 2023

- The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) conducted a rapid assessment of soil health to inform decision making on issues contributing to declining cocoa and coffee productivity across the agro-ecological zones in Jamaica and to recommend appropriate solutions. The project was funded by the International Trade Centre, with technical assistance from the Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (JACRA) and the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA). The assessment involved collecting soil samples from 74 cocoa and 31 coffee farms, and conducting laboratory analyses, focusing on soil health indicators, organic matter, cation exchange capacity, pH and macro and micro-nutrient levels. Overall, the average soil health of the 105 samples was found to be below optimum, with coffee farms rating low and cocoa farms rating medium. As such, recommended solutions comprised a range of actions to boost productivity and improve soil health, including:
 - *Use of compost to improve soil nutrient and biology,*
 - *Liming to increase soil pH for increased macronutrient availability and,*
 - *Use of special blends of fertilizer with selected micronutrients to improve the soils of cocoa farms.*
- Over three hundred individuals from across the Caribbean successfully completed an online course in Rural Tourism for the Caribbean. IICA presented the course on the Institute's e-learning platform, which enabled self-paced learning to explore rural tourism options and opportunities. The course also outlined the stages of planning and execution of rural tourism enterprises. The targeted cohort were entrepreneurs, government employees and individuals involved in or interested in farming, food and hospitality, nature, culture and heritage enterprises. The course received highly positive feedback, with approximately 94% of course participants rating the course as either "Excellent" or "Very Good".
- The project "Improving Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing to Support Management of Cadmium (Cd) Levels in Cocoa in Latin America and the Caribbean", funded by the STDF and the 11th EDF, began full execution in 2023, when all the National Project Implementing Agencies (NPIAs) in Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago signed agreements with IICA, paving the way for consensus building to execute project activities. Project partners have now agreed on the first set of nine recommendations to mitigate cadmium levels in the cocoa value chain for incorporation into national cocoa sector plans. The NPIAs also commenced root cause analysis of cadmium level contamination in hot spots to provide country and location-specific solutions. Additionally, three countries completed laboratory standardization proficiency tests to detect cadmium in soil and tissue, while the fourth country is participating in the proficiency tests. The project has hosted three "Cadmium Talks" webinars to facilitate information dissemination on cadmium in cocoa. Project activities culminated with the midterm workshop, which included a study tour and project visibility event.
- The Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) and IICA released a zinc biofortified rice variety,

designated GRDBIICA-17, which became the first biofortified staple crop developed in the Caribbean. Zinc fortification is important, as this micronutrient cannot be stored by the human body and is required each day for over 300 metabolic processes. The GRDB, through support from IICA and its CARICOM Biofortification Network, released the new variety after conducting trials over six growing seasons, culminating with farmers in all rice producing regions in Guyana. In Belize, 80 bean breeding lines were tested against nine check varieties and three CIAT checks. The CARICOM Biofortification Network, in collaboration with partners CARDI and the Ministry of Food Agriculture and Immigration, identified 14 candidate red and small black bean varieties with mineral content that has double the iron and 44% higher zinc content than the beans currently available on the local market. These lines show immense potential to provide the targeted 15% to 20% of the estimated average requirement (EAR) for daily iron intake.

- IICA conducted an assessment of agricultural post-harvest facilities and the potential of the cultivation of millet for animal feed. IICA signed a contract with the World Bank, as part of the latter's regional analytical work to strengthen food security in the Caribbean. The assessments, done in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining (MOAFM), identified policy and investment recommendations for the Government and development partners related to the agricultural supply chain and alternative livestock feed. The post-harvest facilities

assessment focused on MOAFM priority crops onions and white potato and reviewed the policy framework, production landscape, marketing arrangements, production and investment constraints, and post-harvest infrastructure, with a view to providing recommendations to strengthen agricultural supply logistics and propose investment opportunities. Against the background of the increased importation cost of animal feed and supply chain disruptions caused by wars, the introduction and production of millet as an alternative animal feed for Jamaica was assessed, specifically the benefits of cultivating millet vs corn for feed, possible sources for introduction, identification of available lands for production and interested partners and recommendations to develop local millet production.

- The food safety system in Jamaica benefited from participation in a series of meetings of the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission, as IICA supported the attendance of local officials in Codex Committee meetings on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems, Food Labelling, Methods of Analysis and Sampling and Pesticides Residues. Participation in these meetings enabled representatives of the national Codex apparatus to engage in international dialogue on food safety matters of strategic interest to the country. The capacity of local agricultural health administrators to prepare for and manage pest and disease threats was also bolstered through IICA's continued capacity building in African swine fever preparedness and organization of a Nematology Study Tour in the USA for selected officials.