Over the last quarter of 2015, The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Jamaica, The Bahamas and Belize rewarded several key agricultural stakeholders with 70th anniversary commemorative medals. The recognition and awards were timely as it tied in with FAO’s 70th anniversary celebrations worldwide and the medals were presented to acknowledge and highlight the meaningful relationships forged between the FAO and these strategic partners.

Beginning with Jamaica on World Food Day (October 16, 2015), over 15 stakeholders across the three countries were recognized for their contribution to the FAO’s mandate of “Achieving Food Security for All”.

The medals also highlighted FAO’s global efforts to reach out to strategic partners in the field, reminding them about the longstanding partnership together.

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The presentations to key agriculture stakeholders continued in Bahamas and Belize in December 2015 where other partners in those countries were also recognized. The awardees by countries are:

**Jamaica**

- The Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries
- The Rural Agriculture Development Authority (RADA)
- Caribbean Agricultural Research & Development Institute (CARDI)
- Goat and Sheep Farmers' Association
- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
- Mrs. Zuleikha Budhan, former Principal Director, Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries

**Belize**

- The Ministry of Agriculture
- Caribbean Agricultural Research & Development Institute (CARDI)
- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
- Forestry Department
- Team from Ministry of Education and Health that implemented the School Nutrition Curriculum project

The 70th anniversary medals have been designed by renowned Italian sculptor, Mr. Francesco Bombardi. see additional photos below:

The IYP 2016 aims to heighten public awareness of the nutritional benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food production aimed towards food security and nutrition. The Year will create a unique opportunity to encourage connections throughout the food chain that would better utilize pulse-based proteins, further global production of pulses, better utilize crop rotations and address the challenges in the trade of pulses.

The objectives of the IYP 2016 are to:

- Raise awareness about the important role of pulses in sustainable food production and healthy diets and their contribution to food security and nutrition;
- Promote the value and utilization of pulses throughout the food system, their benefits for soil fertility and climate change and for combating malnutrition;
- Encourage connections throughout the food chain to further global production of pulses, foster enhanced research, better utilize crop rotations and address the challenges in the trade of pulses.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Bahamas Government signed a three-year Country Programming Framework (CPF) Agreement on December 6, 2015 that aims to assist The Bahamas in its national development objectives and priorities, which include food security commitments, that align with UN sustainable development goals.

Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources the Hon. V. Alfred Gray said: "The Food and Agriculture Organization has become a fixture in the National Development Agenda of The Bahamas. This deep development involvement is reflected in The Bahamas' Country Programming Framework, which is about to be ratified by the Government of the Bahamas and the FAO." The signing took place during a function organized by the Bahamas committee on FAO matters. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration the Hon. Fred Mitchell was also present.

Minister Gray continued: "The Country Programing Framework (CPF) identifies the priority areas, which will guide the FAO partnership and support with the Government of the Bahamas. The Framework was prepared in consultation with not only governmental agencies, but also non-government organizations and various stakeholders in the agriculture and marine resources sector and FAO technical professionals.

"The CPF has an implementation cycle starting in 2016 and ending 2019. It will cover three broad areas: Food and Nutrition Security and Safety; Climate Change and Sustainable Resource Management; and Poverty Elimination."

He added, with reference to Food and Nutrition Security and Safety, emphasis will be placed on the following areas: Improved food safety practices developed and implemented with the support of FAO, which will include food safety guidelines for schools, with the implementing partners being the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health.

Full article at source: http://bahamasnational.com/ gray signs food security agreement with FAO
While the world celebrated World Food Day on October 16, 2015, the FAO representation in Jamaica, The Bahamas and Belize joined in the celebrations with an interesting mix of national ceremonies; exhibitions; tree planting exercises; tools handover to schools and produce gift vouchers for charitable organizations. All these activities incorporated the theme “Social Protection and Agriculture: breaking the cycle of rural poverty”. Some celebrations incorporated materials around 2015 as International Year of Soils and still others tied into FAO’s 70th anniversary celebrations.

In Jamaica, World Food Day 2015 was celebrated with a National Ceremony and Exhibition in the Western end of the island at the Maud McLeod High School in Savannalamar.

In addition to the main ceremony which had remarks from government stakeholders including the Minister of Agriculture, FAO also recognized 6 key agriculture stakeholders by presenting them with 70th anniversary commemorative medals. Students from the primary (10-12 years) and secondary (12-15 years) levels who had participated in a competition on Social protection and Agriculture were also rewarded. The Agricultural departments of five (5) nearby schools also received farm tools to advance their agricultural programmes. Read more here.

The day wrapped with the planting of trees and a tour of the school’s garden followed by a tour of the varied exhibits from the Food and Agriculture sector.

For The Bahamas, World Food Day was celebrated with a national ceremony at Arawak Cay. This ceremony attracted in excess of 600 attendees including government and private agencies, NGO’s and schools. A major highlight from the event was the presentation of gift certificates to five Charitable Organizations who feed the less fortunate.

Each organization received $100 gift vouchers which are redeemable for local produce. The organizations selected were the Salvation Army, The Great Commissions Ministry, The Bilney Lane home for children, The Yellow Elder Senior Citizens Day Care and Hands for Hunger Organization.

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T he gift certificates were sponsored by The Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Corporation.

The Bahamas World Food Day event also had informational booths set up by The Department of Agriculture where information was shared around backyard farming. There were also displays from the Bahamas Agriculture and Marine Science Institute (BAMSI), The Produce Exchange, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Services and several local farmers.

During the week leading up to World Food Day, The Ministry of Education encouraged schools to highlight World Food Day and to this end several schools requested speakers to share information around same.

With the recent passage of Hurricane Joaquin, many schools also conducted food drives to assist the affected Islands.

A radio program geared at teachers, parents and students also focused on World Food Day, including an interview with the Bahamas’ National Correspondent.

In Belize, World Food Day was celebrated at Mopan Technical High School where twenty-one primary schools and high schools were invited.

Several industry stakeholders were also invited to mount exhibits including 18 cooperative groups, 10 UNDP-GEF groups and a total of 48 exhibitors ranging from Food and Agriculture to health and Human Development, women in business among others.

From L-R: Attendees at the World Food Day Event in Belize; FAO Representative, Dr. Jerome Thomas presents a student with a prize during the World Food Day event in Jamaica; Students participate in Bahamas’ World Food Day event.
The year 2015 has brought with it several changes and new developments. It saw us bidding the MDGs farewell and welcoming the new SDGs. It also saw the FAO Jamaica, Bahamas and Belize representation completing its initial Country Programming Framework process and continuing to implement projects that contribute to reducing hunger and malnutrition in the countries of the representation.

Towards the end of 2015, the representation closed several projects, while simultaneously giving focus to some of the projects launched in the year.

In Jamaica the long running Beet Army worm project reached the end of its cycle after having varied levels of successes and lessons learnt over its life span.

The Mango Value Chain Analysis & Market Access Strategy for Jamaica project saw the first stage report being completed with plans in place to create a Mango Industry Plan.

The Capacity building in resource assessment and management of the Jamaican sea cucumber fishery and potential for aquaculture development project which was launched in 2015 will be ongoing with a mission in January 2016.

In Bahamas, the Project to Strengthen Fisheries and Aquaculture Governance in the Bahamas continues into 2016. The most recent project inputs being a training session and the draft fisheries policy validation workshop.

For Belize, the project around Economic Diversification of MSME – Enterprises in Northern Belize with emphasis on onion production, Bee-keeping and sheep production has been making steady progress to date with a series of project related activities. Read more about this initiative on Page 7.

The project around Agro-processing and preservation of local fruits and vegetables has been closed while the project Cultivation of Organically Grown Vegetables and Reforestation of Farms is in its final stages.

The quarter ending December 2015 also saw work being done on CPF formulation in all three countries with the results matrix being endorsed or awaiting endorsement.

See the Representation’s additional Project Summaries below.

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<th>JAMAICA</th>
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<th>BAHAMAS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mango Value Chain Analysis &amp; Market Access Strategy in Jamaica</td>
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<td>Reduction of Post-Harvest Losses along the Food Chain in the CARICOM Sub-region</td>
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<td>Research on Improving Methods for Estimating Crop Area, Yield and Production under Mixed, Repeated and Continuous Cropping</td>
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Since its launch in the first quarter of 2015, the FAO’s project to promote Agribusiness development in Northern Belize has been making several strides. The project which targets more than 350 small-scale farming families in the districts of Corozal and Orange Walk (150 Onion Producers; 100 Beekeepers and 100 Sheep) seeks to reduce poverty and improve the livelihood opportunities for the rural population in Corozal and Orange Walk.

The project has been achieving its objectives via three main activities:

- Capacity building in the use of Value Chain Methodologies
- Improve Production, Post Harvest Practices and Marketing
- Farmer Field Schools and on farm demonstrations.

To date, there has been several workshops and on the ground activities. Below we share excerpts from a CTV Belize news feature on the project.

Over the past 15 years, assistance to Belize through the Food and Agriculture Organization, (FAO), has been delivered through approximately 85 interventions, including a focus on policy advice, advocacy and capacity building as well as emergency assistance and resource mobilization for the food and agriculture sector.

More recently, resilience building and expansion of market access have become important features of cooperation. FAO’s support continues to be instrumental today, particularly in view of the country’s commitment to achieving food security and rural development.

With that comes what FAO calls the Value Chain Approach in Northern Belize. It is a project whereby all producers, input suppliers, processors and consumers are involved from producing, selling and eating. In layman terms “from the farm to the fork”.

This approach or analysis looks carefully at each one involved in the project in order to pinpoint any problems which can reduce efficiency or profits. According to Dr. Ludwick Palacio, National Consultant, when it comes to the sheep value chain, the approach is geared towards three different areas which are Onions, Honey and Sheep.

Pineda who gave FAO’s consultant Ludwig Palacio a detailed look at his life as a sheep farmer recounted several challenges that farmers have to overcome to be sustainable.

Fidel Pineda, a man of his late fifties into early sixties rises early to attend to his flock of sheep, checking that the same number is there as the night before. He knows them by colors, size, shape, mannerisms, and even their unique personalities. Pineda’s farm is located in a village just outside of the town of Corozal, what would have been a viable sugar cane plantation only a few years ago.

Pineda is one of 100 sheep farmers who are a part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation’s (FAO) project to promote Agribusiness development in Northern Belize. The project is a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture in Belize, with Funding by the European Union and also targets 150 Onion Producers and 100 Beekeepers.

Launched since January 2015, the project aims to reduce poverty and improve the livelihood opportunities for the rural population in Corozal and Orange Walk.

Pineda who gave FAO’s consultant Ludwig Palacio a detailed look at his life as a sheep farmer recounted several challenges that farmers have to overcome to be sustainable.

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Bahamas’ Department of Marine Resources in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) hosted a final consultation with stakeholders to validate a draft Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy for The country. Government agencies, NGO’s, sector representatives and other participants reviewed and validated the draft Policy, which will now be presented to the Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources and Cabinet for approval early next year.

The development of the Policy is part of a larger cooperative project between the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Over 100 people have participated in the consultation process to develop the Policy and its associated Strategic Plan. Meetings and discussions have been held over the course of the past year in New Providence and across the Family Islands.

Mr Cephas Cooper, Under Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources, opened the stakeholder meeting and thanked FAO as well as DMR for their efforts to develop this Policy. He highlighted the role of fisheries in the culture and economy of the Bahamas and reaffirmed the government’s commitment to develop the sector. Sustainable fishing can be a long-term source of employment, food security and nutrition to the people of the Bahamas.

Mr Carlos Fuentevilla, Fisheries Officer for FAO, highlighted the importance of having a fisheries and aquaculture policy that allows all the stakeholders in the sector to work together with the same goals and objectives.

He noted that a Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy along with a related strategic plan for its implementation that has been agreed by stakeholders is crucial for the sustainable development of the sector.

With the validation of the National Policy for Fisheries and Aquaculture, the next step is for this document to be presented to the Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources for his endorsement and for further discussion and approval in Cabinet.

The FAO-Bahamas cooperative project seeks to improve and develop the fisheries and aquaculture sector. It includes the development of the Policy and a strategic plan to drive its implementation, as well as a new fisheries data collection and statistics system and an assessment of the feasibility and requirements to spur aquaculture production in The Bahamas.

Mr Carlos Fuentevilla, Fisheries Officer for FAO, highlighted the importance of having a fisheries and aquaculture policy that allows all the stakeholders in the sector to work together with the same goals and objectives.

He noted that a Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy along with a related strategic plan for its implementation that has been agreed by stakeholders is crucial for the sustainable development of the sector.
Challenges faced by Sheep Farmers

One such challenge as Pineda highlighted is his experiences with lending institutions - the high interest rates, his friends losing their farms, machinery, their lands, houses and the financial and asset losses from failed projects. As a long term farmer, he believes that there has to be a better way. While he is not against credit, he believed that this must be made more affordable and accessible but along with education for the farmers.

Pineda also noted that farmers need to be more organized to meet market demands. This, he believed, can only be achieved when farmers are educated with producers learning from the best practitioners.

From his end, he has plans to visit a commercial sheep farmer in a nearby country to see how production is done and also to buy improved breeds to add to his stock.

FAO’s Intervention

Similar to the issues lamented by Pineda, several Belizean Sheep farmers face this and other issues which affect them from production to marketing. The FAO’s Economic Diversification of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Northern Belize project therefore aims to assist farmers with these and many other issues. These issues will be addressed through key project activities including: Capacity building in the use of Value Chain Methodologies; Improving Production, Post-Harvest Practices and Marketing, Farmer Field Schools and on farm demonstrations. It is hoped that through this project successful outcomes will include:

- Increased employment opportunities and Improved livelihoods for over 350 small scale farm families;
- Increased Production of onion, honey and sheep by removing key production constraints;
- Increased Profitability and greater revenues for rural producers of the 3 commodities;
- Increased Value Chain Efficiency and Improved technical skills for Extension Officers and Enhanced extension services to farmers.

For Sheep farmers like Pineda, often their hope and commitment to the cause is what keeps them going. As Pineda so quietly demonstrated on the farm with his flock he learns patience, determination, precision, love and kindness. Pineda genuinely enjoys spending time watching the sheep as they graze while he ponders and imagines a bigger flock to meet the growing demand for mutton in Belize. With the support of the FAO project he is confident that there will be some positive steps.

Read Ludwig Palacio’s full account of the very insightful day in the life of a sheep farmer at http://intranet.fao.org/fao_communications/from_the_field/detail/c/28001/

Also see more about the promoting Agribusiness in Belize project:

1. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K2tXZo8Bk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K2tXZo8Bk) 9:00 onwards
2. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUTHGSwrtNs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUTHGSwrtNs) from 32.45
On November 16, 2015, the FAO hosted a Cassava Farmer-Buyer linkages workshop in Manchester, Jamaica. The purpose of the National workshop was to review the findings of the assessment of the situation in the cassava sub-sector in Jamaica and to discuss and agree on an action plan to improve cassava supplies from farmers to the Consumer.

With a mix of presentations and group activities led by Ms. Vermaran Extavour, FAO’s Regional Project Coordinator, Mrs. Keeley Holder, FAO Consultant and Dr. Chadwick Anderson (UWI), the session brought together farmers and buyers in a single space to highlight some of the challenges faced, opportunities and avenues for continued partnerships.

The workshop was a follow-up activity to the five-day Regional training workshop on Promoting Cassava Farmer to Market Linkages through Contract Farming in the Caribbean that took place in Barbados from 19 to 23 October 2015 and had a diverse group of attendees including: Current and potential cassava farmers, Current and potential/interested buyers of cassava, primarily first processors, Cassava extension/Technical advisors and Marketing officers dealing with roots and tubers.

The three day seminar on Food and nutrition during the first 1000 days of life was hosted Nov 23-25 in Kingston, Jamaica under the framework of the South-South Cooperation Project UNFA/SLC/002/UND: “Developing a Model of Food and Nutrition Education for the Prevention of Malnutrition in the First 1000 Critical Days of Life, based on the Chilean Experience”.

The seminar is the final stage of a project that began in 2014, organized by the FAO and supported by various Chilean institutions in order to facilitate information sharing about their experiences. The goal is to strengthen technical, institutional and human skills in Jamaica and Guyana by using the tools of reflection and critical analysis surrounding the national policies on childhood nutrition taking the Chilean experience as a guide.

An evaluation for each country (Jamaica & Guyana) was carried out during the first phase of the project that examined the food and nutrition situation of the country. A diagnostic assessment was also given to healthcare teams in order to measure their education and knowledge about food and nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life. The results of the assessment were presented at national coordination workshops in Jamaica & Guyana in April 2015 followed by a technical Tour in Chile from the 7th-9th of October 2015. With the input of Chilean technical professionals The three day seminar was used to strengthen public policy for implementing measures in terms of cooperation, establish communication channels and strategies to facilitate future collaboration and achieve continuity for the initiatives that have been commenced.
Top Row: FAO Representative Dr. Jerome Thomas collects the long service award on behalf of the organization at the Rural Agricultural Development Authority’s 25th anniversary banquet on December 10, 2015 in Kingston, Jamaica. At right, he and other long service awardees are greeted by the evening’s guest speaker.

Second row: Bahamas’ National Correspondent, Delreese Grant makes remarks during a stakeholder luncheon in the Bahamas. At right, exhibitors at the Belize World Food Day event.

Third row: Highlights from the United Nations Day 70th anniversary exposition hosted by Jamaica’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign trade.
Strategic Objectives

To meet the demands posed by major global trends in agricultural development and challenges faced by member nations, FAO has identified key priorities on which it is best placed to intervene:

1. Help eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition
2. Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable
3. Reduce rural poverty
4. Enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems
5. Increase the resilience of livelihoods to disasters

FAO Vision

A world free of hunger and malnutrition where food and agriculture contributes to improving the living standards of all especially the poor in an economical, social and environmentally sustainable manner.

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For more information on the countries of the representation, visit the links below:
Jamaica via FAO.org
The Bahamas via FAO.org
Belize via FAO.org

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