Dominica Farmers' Forum

Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

Dominica's second Farmer's Forum meeting was held at the Cabrits Terminal, Pourtsmouth, Dominica on December 10th, 2012..

II. REPRESENTATION

This meeting was attended by personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture, The Dominica Meteorological Service, Agricultural Extension Officers, representatives from the CAMI project as well as farmers from within the community.

III. WELCOME

In his welcome remarks, Mr. Trotter (Ministry of Agriculture) reported that he is hoping that there will be another phase of the CAMI project since weather is an important aspect of any enterprise. He also stated that meteorological stations are being erected to monitor climate. The CAMI (National) monthly bulletin is currently in circulation among the farming community as it gives an overview of weather of the past month and projections for the future.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

The CAMI Project – Shontelle Stoute, Technical Assistant (CAMI Project)

The CAMI project is funded by the European Union's ACP Science and Technology Programme. It is a partnership between CIMH, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and ten meteorological services.

The objective of the project is

> *To increase and sustain agricultural productivity at the farm level in the Caribbean region through improved applications of weather and climate information using an integrated and coordinated approach.*

The interpretation and use of rainy season prediction, pest and disease forecasting, newsletters and farmers forums are some of the activities within the project.

At present the project is undertaking its second round of farmer's forums bringing more information on irrigation requirements and crop modelling.

Brief on Black Sigatoka Disease - Mr. Joseph, Ministry Of Agriculture

Black sigatoka, a vibrant category 5 leaf spot disease is one which does not affect humans but can pose serious threat to the agricultural industry (plantain and banana). It is spread by wind, rain, movement of infected plant material, contaminated fruit shipment and packaging material and human beings.

The effects of the black sigatoka disease include:

- Decreased fruit yield and quality
- Frequent fungicide applications thus increasing costs of production
- Loss of cultivation
- Altering of production pattern
- Decline in export and possible local production
- Significant decreases in income and the national Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Joseph outlined the proper methods for controlling the disease and urges farmers to be vigilant and to play their part in controlling this destructive disease. During the discussion it was indicated that the CAMI project is working on developing a weather driven model to aid in forecasting Black Sigatoka

Seasonal Forecasts – Adrian Trotman, Project Coordinator

Mr. Trotman indicated that a forum of regional meteorologists and climatologist, since February 2012 have been producing 3-moth seasonal forecast, which were produced solely by CIMH prior to this. He also indicated that information is provided for up to six months in advance. Similar information is made available for temperature.

Mr. Trotman also showed how seasonal forecasts produced by CIMH can be related to the 2009-2010 drought scenarios. The seasonal forecast (3 or 6 months) indicates the probability of receiving above normal, normal and below normal rainfall for the forecast periods. A three-month precipitation outlook map is available and updated monthly. It can be obtained online from www.cimh.edu.bb.

Climate Change and Agriculture – Shontelle Stoute, Technical Assistant (CAMI Project)

In a presentation on Climate Change and Agriculture, Mrs. Stoute showed results for two stations in Dominica with respect to trends and crop yields. A significant increase in temperature is being forecasted by the end of the century as well as an increase in the number of very warm days and

nights, which are already being statistically observed from the historical data. There is no clear evidence of decreasing rainfall observed as suggested by global climate models.

V. OPEN DISCUSSION – CIMH

Farmer's Working Groups

In an effort to obtain information on the type of information available from the Meteorological Service as well as the desired means of communication and dissemination of that information and any other types of information required, several questions were asked. Below are the responses to questions.

1. Have the regional or national CAMI bulletin been available to you? How useful was it?
   i. Some said no they have never seen it.
   ii. Some said yes they've seen it and it was useful to them.

   Suggestions;

   - The extension officers are aware of the amount of farmers in their districts and should provide these numbers to the responsible people to get adequate number of bulletins each month.
   - The bulletin should be placed in the news papers in order to get it around.
   - It should be promoted to bring awareness to people and what it entails.
   - It should be made part of the extension officers' job to make farmers know what's available.
   - Have the extension officers distribute the bulletins rather than the different organizations being used presently.
   - The use of email
   - Discussions and meetings should be held with farmers.
   - There should be a back and forth communication by the extension officer.

2. What else would you like to see in the bulletin?

   Suggestions;

   - Good and bad times for planting certain crops.
   - What type of fungicide or insecticides to use and when.

3. Should extension service officer have a basic training in Agro-Meteorology?
   i. Yes.

   Suggestion;

   - In return these officers would train the farmers.

4. How do you propose to go about having alerts by cell phone for times of bad weather?

   Suggestions;

   - All organizations need to come to play in getting these alerts out. It needs to be a national thing.

   Other means of communication;

   - Word of mouth
   - Text
   - Be each other's keeper
   - Form small groups among the farmers as to create some sense of communication and networking.
   - Have farmers on different disaster committees or council as to have faster relay of information to the farming community.

5. How about a cell App that provides alerts?
   I. Some farmers said yes

6. Would you like to have a farmer's forum with your Met. Service at the beginning of dry and wet / hurricane seasons.
   I. Yes

Suggestion;

- To have a forum with Met, policy makers, farmers and extension officers.
- More forums during the year about 4 and to extend it out to all farmers not just a selected few.
- More resources are needed as to get the information out there to the farmers.
- Farmers should contribute towards the resources required.

7. How about a radio/ TV program.
   i. Yes, that would be very good.

Recognition was made of the Met. Service for the bulletins. The information was found to be very useful and is in correspondence with what is actually going on. It can aid in the conservation of food and resources.