

GEF SGP Trinidad and Tobago

Issue 4 (Jan-Mar 2021)

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Welcome to Trinbago Talk!

The latest news on GEF SGP in sweet T&T



Picture 1: President of the Brasso Seco Morne La Croix Farmers Association, Jennessa De Ramos making lip balms from beeswax (Picture credit Jennessa De Ramos)

Happy 2021! This year, we continue to share with you information, project activities and achievements of our grantees in this, our quarterly newsletter. Join with us as we explore their hard work and positive contributions towards realizing national environmental targets and the SDGs. In these uncertain times, we all need some good news! Enjoy!

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THIS QUARTER'S TOP STORIES

Regional Apiculture and Biodiversity Project

Buzzing bee business in Brasso Seco

Improving climate change education and action within the Caribbean region

Green Innovation Challenge 2021

Regional Apiculture and Biodiversity Project



*Beekeepers at work
(courtesy Richard Matthias, St. Lucia).*

Apiculture has been a part of the culture and social fabric of the Caribbean and Samoa for hundreds of years. From the 16th to 19th centuries, beekeeping became an integral part of the plantations, however, with independence and modernisation, this tradition slowly began to fade into history. The lack of appreciation of pollinators, especially bees, has resulted in a depletion of populations in many countries. This presents an important opportunity for marrying conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, with sustainable livelihoods, thereby bringing benefit to people and the environment.

In 2019, The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP) St. Lucia developed a project to bring beekeeping to the forefront within the Southern Hemisphere, mostly in the Caribbean. They were successful in receiving a grant to implement an innovation programme, with South-South cooperation, in the field of Apiculture in seven participating countries namely St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Grenada, Samoa (South Pacific) and Trinidad and Tobago. This initiative will see the development of a south-south regional apiculture industry, with all participating countries benefiting from the competitive advantage brought about by collective efforts of production of hive and hive products.

The central thesis of this project concept is that Apiculture provides SIDS with options for sustainable enterprises development while strongly promoting the rehabilitation and conservation of the terrestrial biodiversity, protection of soils, reduction of turbidity rates in rivers and the coastal zone, and protection of coral reefs. This initiative hopes to couple conservation of at least one protected area, with sustainable livelihood opportunities that reduce the aforementioned threats and develop greater partnership amongst stakeholders within and amongst Caribbean countries.

The initiative will provide capacity development in apiculture to participants across the entire Caribbean. Due to COVID-19, the capacity development strategy has been adapted to a hybridized model which will see the development of the South's first online beekeeping course. This course will provide important knowledge on beekeeping, honey and hive products to enrollees. The capacity development will be supported by in-country mentors, who will support the online content with important field exercises. This course will be available to beekeepers and enthusiasts, even after the project is completed, at no cost to the user, so that they can develop and further their skills. This

course is being developed with the support and cooperation of a number of key stakeholders from across the region, including The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine; Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (St. Lucia); Ministry of Planning and Development, Trinidad and Tobago; the Bureau of Standards (St. Lucia) and the Ministry of Agriculture, St. Lucia.



Another important deliverable for this project is the development of a data and knowledge management system for apiculture. This will be achieved through the development of a South-South Beekeeping App, which will provide Caribbean and Pacific beekeepers with a cost effective, user-friendly portal to store important apiculture monitoring data for improving hive management.

The initiative will also provide beekeepers across the region with all the tools and equipment they would need to start-up or expand their operations in all seven countries. Each country will receive 120 hives as well as the tools, suits and other equipment to expand

the production of honey in each country.

*Picture 3: Beekeeper holding frame
(courtesy Richard Matthias, St. Lucia).*

With the long term in mind and the need for ongoing training in the future, this initiative will also fund the establishment of the Apiculture Research and Learning Institute (ARLI) to ensure that sound scientific research is continuous and there is a place with a high reputation for aspiring. Apiculturists from all participating countries and other countries, to be trained at the basic, intermediate and advanced levels. The ARLI will be located in the Makote Mangrove, on the east coast of St. Lucia, and will serve as a centre for research and innovation, especially in terms of hive value-added natural products.

GEF SGP envisions that, through the investment of training and resources from this initiative, that the Caribbean region can become a major competitor for honey and hive products on the international market. With rich forage year round, this initiative promises a sustainable supply of products internationally which, it is hoped will bring financial support and relief for the participating SIDS. With dwindling revenues due to lack of tourism, the development of the apiculture industry is an important, sustainable diversification avenue for the economies of these south countries, which are hard hit by COVID and other natural disasters.

GEF SGP Trinidad and Tobago is supporting this project by contributing to the online course and app development as well as providing representation of national interests on the Project Advisory and

Technical Committee (PATEC). The project has already begun the online course, which it hopes will be completed by May 20th, World Bee Day. The project has also begun development of the app, which was launched last year at the Association of Caribbean Beekeeping Organizations (ACBO) Regional Congress in November 2020. This year, 2021, promises to be a very exciting year for beekeeping across the region. Please look out for further updates in our subsequent newsletters.

Buzzing bee business in Brasso Seco

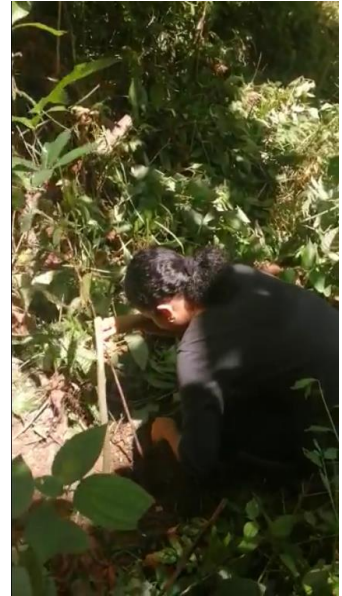
The Brasso Seco Morne La Croix Farmers Association (BSMLCFA) has an ongoing beekeeping project for the past three years and during this time has produced honey which it sells under the brand name “Honey Seco”. Members of this group manage a total of 330 hives, 40 of which belong to the organization. The group harvests a total of 1,650 gallons of honey annually.

Brasso Seco is located in a pristine forested area which produces honey of exquisite quality and has developed excellent farming models for example the Brasso Seco Chocolate Company and Honey Seco, our honey label.

The area has a high youth delinquency rate and low employment opportunities. It also suffers from high levels of deforestation as a result of unsustainable farming practices, especially christophene farming, as well as the heavy use of agrochemicals associated with monocropping.

Historically, the area has been affected by an increase in crime rate due to lack of opportunities for youths.

Also, because of the excellent honey production, there is an influx of beekeepers from outside the area who wish to set up apiaries, thereby pushing the limits of the carrying capacity of the area.



Picture 4: Jenessa De Ramos, President of the BSMLCFA, planting a tree

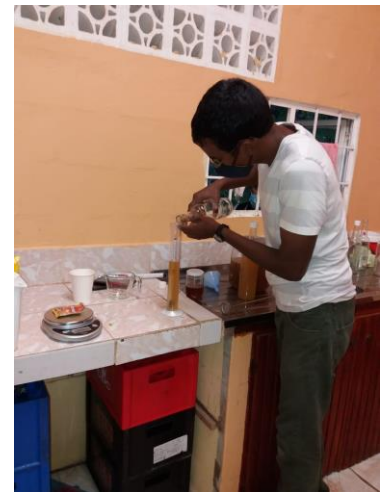
In 2019, the BSMLCFA applied for funding from GEF SGP with the overall goal of developing environmentally sustainable livelihoods through beekeeping. This goal would be achieved via the following:

1. Training of farmers in integrated agricultural practices to ensure that agricultural products were pesticide free.
2. They are also to plant 1000 trees in the Brasso Seco area, especially in those affected by slash and burn farming as well as landslides;
3. Training of farmers in proper hive management
4. Developing a fully equipped and fully functional queen rearing lab which will be used to breed new strains of highly productive queens;
5. Development of apitourism material and tours, and Development of value-added products from hives.



Picture 5: Farmers receiving training in Integrated Agriculture from Mr. Karl Fitzjames

So far, the project has been able to host one Integrated Agriculture Workshop and the farmers have also successfully planted 300 of the 1000 agroforestry trees specified in the project. Due to COVID-19, the Brasso Seco group could neither go to St. Lucia to receive their hive management training nor their trainer come to Trinidad, due to the border being closed. As such, the trainer began online training with the group, which helped shape the Caribbean region's first online beekeeping course. This course is currently being developed and will be beta-tested in St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago from April 2021.



The group has earmarked a suitable location for the establishment of their queen rearing lab and are awaiting approval to proceed with construction. They have also conducted a survey of beekeepers to gather their knowledge and understanding, as well as begun preparing content on apicultural tourism for dissemination. Finally, they have completed one mead-making

Picture 6: Javed Omardeen completed one mead-making

session and are planning more workshops *conducting training in value-added products, when local restrictions allow.*
mead making

Improving climate change education and action within the Caribbean region

From 2018 to present, Trinidad and Tobago ranked within the top four countries with the highest per capita production of carbon emissions in the world. As a country, we have recognized that power generation, transportation and industrial sectors are the major emitters of carbon emission.



Picture 7: Screenshot of online course

Project Zero Training

A schools-based greening programme designed to reduce carbon emissions and promote climate leadership.

[See more...](#)

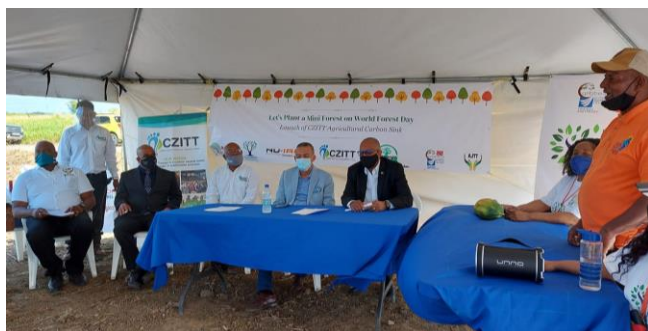
The Carbon Zero Institute of Trinidad and Tobago is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the singular purpose of Trinidad & Tobago becoming a Carbon Neutral country and a leader in sustainable practices.. Their mission is to positively contribute to changing this through research, engagement with stakeholders, advocacy, development of projects, support for initiatives which contribute to the overall objectives and recording of carbon offsets.

In 2020, the Carbon Zero Institute of Trinidad and Tobago launched Project Zero Initiative, a school-based greening intervention designed to prepare a generation for climate change action and leadership. CZITT initially selected St. Francois Girls' College (SFGC) for the first school-based greening exercise, based on an elimination process facilitated by the CZITT National Secondary School Climate Quiz.

On March 16, 2020, the very date that the project was to be formally launched, schools in Trinidad and Tobago were closed because of COVID-19 pandemic. School buildings have since been closed, with education now shifted to blended learning, which is a combination of packaged learning content and online learning. CZITT recognised the opportunity to redirect the project online and into student homes, for greater reach.

As such, the project will educate on climate change through the Caribbean's first online course in climate change. This course will consist of eight (8) online modules, covering a variety of topics related to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Most importantly, participants will be taught how to conduct their own carbon audit and develop and implement suitable energy efficiency plans to offset their carbon emission. CZITT will provide participants with opportunities to win carbon reducing

technologies, such as solar phone chargers., thereby popularizing the use of these technologies which reduce carbon emissions.



Participants will also learn about carbon offsetting through tree planting, and will be encouraged to plant trees as part of their carbon efficiency plans. In support of this, CZITT partnered with Exchange Farmers Association for International day of the Forests (21st March, 2021) and planted three hundred (300) mixed fruit and forest trees, in conjunction with Caribbean Philanthropic Alliance TT (Cariphil), Nu-Iron Unlimited and the Embassy of Jamaica. It is their

intention to plant one thousand (1000) trees for this project. *Picture 8: Tree Planting event in Exchange, Couva.*

This project therefore provides the country, and by extension the region, with important educational content as well as avenues of carbon offsetting which are within reach of the citizenry of our countries.

Green Innovation Challenge 2021



This year, 2021, marked a very exciting and interesting partnership between the United National Development Programme (UNDP) Accelerator Lab and GEF SGP. In February 2021, UNDP and GEF SGP put out a joint call for concepts which they entitled “Green Innovation Challenge”. This call for concept was the first joint call between the two UN agencies in

Trinidad and Tobago.

The call identified three (3) levels of funding:

1. **Planning** - a planning grant offered to NGOS to implement a pilot and has a maximum value of \$5,000USD.

2. **Enterprise** - an enterprise grant, offered to individuals or small to medium enterprises (SME), had a maximum value of \$10,000USD and may be provided towards developing and testing a minimally viable product (MVP)/sample/prototype or pilot launch of a solution, goods or service.

3. **Full grant** - a full grant, offered to NGOs, with a maximum value of \$50,000USD.

The call closed at the end of March and successfully received 75 applications, 46 of which qualified for funding under GEF SGP.



Many NGOs reached out for guidance in proposal writing and as such, GEF SGP continued its capacity development drive in 2021. At least five (5) NGOs, benefitted from project development and grant writing sessions facilitated by GEF SGP. Of these, four successfully submitted concepts for the call.

This year, GEF SGP's capacity development session expanded into leadership, strategic planning and the NPO Bill sessions. One such session was held for the Brasso Seco Morne La Croix Farmers' Association (BSMLCFA), where attendees were introduced to the former concepts as well as the new requirements of NGOs under the NPO Bill.

Picture 9: Capacity development in Leadership and Strategic Planning held in Brasso Seco

Following this session, (BSMLCFA) drafted their strategic plan, a first for the organization and they completed their registration and submitted their documents required under the NPO Bill.

The GEF SGP remains committed to the development of the country's environmental and community-based NGOs and will continue to provide free training and capacity building opportunities, to benefit communities across the country.



2021 began with great promise of project development and completion, despite the COVID-19 presence that still looms in the background. The recent call for proposals was an exciting new exercise since the partnership with UNDP increased the reach of the grants offered, with one grant being made available to individuals and small to medium enterprises (SMEs). This was much needed during COVID-19 and it brought greater depth and resonance to both our grants.