

# **CARDI Collaborates with FAO to Offer Sweet Potato Flour to Grenada**

11 September 2020

**ST. GEORGE'S, GRENADA, SEPT. 11, 2020** – The Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI), has collaborated with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), in offering a solar energy drying project, geared at producing flour out of root crops.

At a cost of U.S. \$69,000, this initiative, which will be ran as a pilot project, ties in with Grenada's thrust in dealing with the effects of climate change on crop production.

The idea behind this project is to use solar energy in the processing of foods, with the hope that it can be adapted on a wide scale, thus reducing the impacts of climate change. The solar dryers can be used for all root crops but will specifically focus on Sweet Potato Flour for this project.

“The idea, initially, was to promote Cassava Flour, but then we decided to promote Sweet Potato Flour as the major one,” said CARDI Representative to Grenada, Reginald Andall. “Sweet Potato Flour is not really anything that is practiced in Grenada, as such. We have some degree of Cassava Flour but, nevertheless, the principle of solar drying in root crops for making of flour and food preservation is the whole idea.”

Andall said due to the challenges COVID-19 presented for food security in the country, there has been an increased interest for sweet potato planting materials. This, he said, dispels any concerns that there may not be enough sweet potatoes to support the initiative.

“What we have seen here at CARDI is a massive, massive increase by farmers and home gardeners in sweet potato production and this increase took place as a result of COVID-19. People has taken it into their own hands to try to increase their local

food production and this is the first year in many, many years that we have seen such a great demand upon us for sweet potato planting material,” he remarked.

The initiative was launched, virtually, two weeks ago and what follows next is the setting up of systems to get the project off the ground. The plan is to have two solar dryers housed with two root crop farming groups on the island.

“That farmers’ group will have to be decided upon by the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with ourselves and then we have to build the solar dryers,” he said.

Work will begin in October and will run until December, where he said, “We hope to have those things on the ground, so that we can implement and thus have that on-the-ground demonstration to farmers and processors of food and the public.”

“For it to be very effective, we have to do a lot of promotion work, because the use of Cassava Flour; the use of Sweet Potato Flour is really at its infancy in Grenada. So, drying of root crops for use in food preservation, that has to be promoted in a much greater degree, but the spin-off in the use of the solar dryers in the seaweed and fish drying culture, I think we are going to have a better impact there.”

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