

**Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry,
Fisheries, Rural Transformation,
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NEWS RELEASE: IICA's Representative in the Eastern Caribbean States Visits St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture's (IICA) Representative in the Eastern Caribbean States, Mr. Gregg Rawlins, visited St. Vincent and the Grenadines from May 23rd - 27th, 2022.

The visit was aimed at strengthening existing relationships with stakeholders in the agricultural sector and exploring additional opportunities for technical cooperation that would redound to the benefit of the sector and rural communities.

Mr. Rawlins, in an interview with the Communications Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, said that IICA recognizes the importance of continuing to support member states in achieving food security through the development of a sustainable, competitive and resilient agricultural sector which is even more important now, in light of the recent rapid price increase of energy products, food products and agricultural inputs. He indicated that IICA believes in adopting a soil and water centric approach to agricultural interventions that includes the use of appropriate technologies to combat the effects of climate change particularly; the use of irrigation, mulching, increased use of composting and bio-chemicals designed to improve soil health and hence improve the growth and development of plants.

The Representative noted that IICA is developing a new agricultural strategy that will provide a framework for improved coordination within the OECS sub-region to address the issue of strengthening food systems, to achieve greater food security and to ensure that the agricultural sector plays a multifunctional role in the development of economies in the sub-region. He noted that the discussions he had during his visit were fruitful in shedding light on issues that the Institute needed to address especially in the areas of soil health, water management on farms and other issues aimed at building resilience of farmers to climate change impacts.

He pointed to two ongoing projects that IICA is undertaking in multiple countries which are aimed at encouraging adaption and mitigation measures for climate change and building resilience among farming populations. The first of these is titled ***Strengthening the foundation for a climate responsive agricultural sector in the Caribbean*** (also referred to as the CARICOM AG Ready Project) which is aimed at strengthening the foundation on which the region's agriculture sector prioritizes investments for resilience and enhance conditions for improved

reporting on greenhouse gas emissions in specified agricultural value chains. This project is being implemented in nine CARICOM countries including St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The second is titled, *Strengthening Coastal and Marine Climate Resilience through Community Engagement and Ecosystem Based Adaptation Solutions in Upland Rural Watersheds*. This project aims to facilitate development, and effective adoption and use of cost-effective, nature-based integrated soil management approaches within project communities to address climate risks and bring socio-economic livelihood benefits, thereby reducing pressure on marine and coastal systems. It is being implemented in three countries including Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica.

These projects are complemented by other initiatives aimed at promoting the development of waste management on farms, supporting ICT development for Extension Services and supporting the development of farmers' cooperatives through collaborative initiatives for vegetable production.

Mr. Rawlings expressed gratitude to the senior officials within the Ministry of Agriculture for their assistance and support in the execution of IICA's technical cooperation work. He also commended the Ministry for leading the agricultural sector by providing the policy and regulatory framework and support services to farmers that have contributed to the establishment of a robust sector.

IICA is a hemispheric organization whose mission is "to encourage, promote and support its Member States in their efforts to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being," which the Institute states it will achieve "through international technical cooperation of excellence.