Dominica and FAO
Partnering to build food security and resilience

FAO has a long history of cooperation with Dominica and has contributed significantly to sustainable development of the country’s food and agriculture sector. Over the years, the Organization has provided a range of technical, policy and capacity-building assistance, focusing mainly on food and nutrition security as well as disaster risk management, resilience and territorial development. Fostering partnerships and resource mobilization are another key feature of cooperation aimed at addressing Dominica’s food security and agricultural development challenges.

Matching FAO’s expertise to Dominica’s development priorities

FAO assistance in Dominica is shaped by the 2016-2019 Country Programming Framework, centred on three priority areas:

- **Food and nutrition security, agricultural health and food safety**, strengthening the national food safety systems by providing training to food inspectors in risk certification systems and strengthening for policy and legislative framework and ensuring the inclusion of gender perspectives in the implementation of food and nutrition security policy and to collaborating with women’s organizations and culture development partners for the implementation of nutritional education and awareness building.

- **Risk management, building resilience to climate change and ecological sustainability**, provide support for capacity building in the planning and agriculture disaster risk management and encouraging multi-stakeholder mechanisms which are broadly inclusive of gender and promote the participation in women organizations in climate change and disaster risk management decision-making.

- **Sustainable agricultural and rural development**, through support to a broad range of national development initiatives, particularly for national efforts to promote agriculture entrepreneurship among youth and other groups such as women and for the introduction of innovative agricultural, forestry, livestock and fisheries practices which can drive efficiency in production, not only for traditional, but also non-traditional crops.

Strengthening the small ruminant sector

Development of the small ruminant industry in the Caribbean is considered a priority by the Ministries of Agriculture and other stakeholders of the sector in a number of countries. Sheep and goats are particularly important, mainly because of their ability to utilize marginal land for grazing, including land that is poorly suited for human food production, and because of their ability to tolerate unfavourable climatic conditions. Although the number of sheep and goats is increasing across the region, a corresponding increase in productivity has not taken place. With this in mind, Dominica’s Ministry of Agriculture – together with counterparts in other Caribbean countries, requested FAO’s assistance for developing and strengthening its small ruminant industry.

As part of an FAO regional intervention, activities focused on capacity building for farmers involved in small ruminant production, as well as on measures to enhance production and productivity so as to increase the sector’s contribution to food and nutrition security.

Support focused on nutrition and feeding, including the use of local forage and by-products for small ruminant nutrition; pasture and fodder bank development and management; reproduction and breeding techniques; small ruminant shelters; preventative veterinary medicine and health care; record keeping; market development and the development of the small ruminant value chain overall. The project also strengthened the regional association of small ruminant farmers, contributing to longer-term and sustainable development of the sector. It also enhanced the participating countries’ capacities to address the multiple constraints facing small ruminant production, including some of the root causes of low productivity in the sector.

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Preparing food and nutrition security policy and action programmes

Agriculture is the mainstay of Dominica’s economy, and the impact of the global crisis on the country’s agriculture sector has been sharp and swift, leading to volatility in commodity export prices, declines in exports earnings, tourism and foreign investment, as well as in economic activity in general. This has had inevitable negative effects on employment and has aggravated the food and nutrition security situation, while exacerbating levels of poverty and inequity, above all in rural areas.

Reflecting the CPF priority area of food and nutrition security, FAO supported finalization of the national Food and Nutrition Security Policy and Action Plan, implementation of which began in 2015.

Dominica has also been a focus country for an FAO regional programme aimed at enhancing the capacity of CARICOM to address the root causes of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. This was achieved through efforts to ensure that food production, processing and distribution, marketing and trade and national agricultural services – including food safety – are adequate for providing safe, nutritious and affordable food at all times. The programme addressed the key dimensions of food security in the following ways:

- **Food availability** – promoting the sustainable production, processing, preparation, commercialization and consumption of safe, affordable, nutritious, high quality national food commodities/products.
- **Access to food supplies** – ensuring regular access of national households, especially the poor and vulnerable, to sufficient quantities of safe, affordable, quality food at all times, particularly in response to diverse socio-economic and natural shocks.
- **Use and nutritional adequacy of food** – improving the nutritional status of the population, particularly with respect to non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, hypertension and obesity.
- **Stability of food supplies** – improving the resilience of the communities and households to natural and socio-economic crises.

Building disaster risk management capacities

Owing both to its topography and its location in the hurricane belt, Dominica is recurrently threatened by severe natural hazards and disasters. Because of the very mountainous nature of the country, farming is mainly practiced on steep slopes. Crop losses from tropical storms are high, causing landslides and significant soil erosion as well as leaching of nutrients. This in turn results in low soil fertility and, consequently, low productivity. On-farm damage is often exacerbated by the incorrect application of conservation measures. Banana plantations are particularly affected by crop losses. Much of such damage to the agriculture as well as to other sectors could be reduced with the development and implementation of a cross-sectoral disaster risk mitigation and preparedness plan. Further benefits could be assured through training of extension staff, farmers and other land users, with a view to applying enhanced disaster risk mitigation and preparedness measures, including in forestry and fisheries. More appropriate tools for hazard and vulnerability mapping also need to be available in order to guide sustainable land-use planning interventions.

Under FAO’s Technical Cooperation Programme, a project to improve disaster risk management successfully enhanced the resilience of Dominica’s agriculture sector to natural disasters while contributing to the promotion of sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. In addition to the elaboration of a disaster risk management plan for the agriculture sector, key project activities included: developing a cross-sectoral disaster risk management plan for agriculture, fisheries and forestry; enhancing the capacity of extension services through training and disaster risk management good practice demonstrations.

**Concerted action after Erika**

Adding to the country’s drive to strengthen the resilience of Dominica’s agriculture sector to natural disasters, FAO assisted Dominica in the formulation of a National Agricultural and Food Systems Development Strategy (NAFSDS) after the tropical storm Erika struck the country in August 2015. The strategy aims to guide long-term implementation of the strategic vision for the agriculture sector.