



PROMOTING AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN BELIZE

Sugar production has traditionally been the largest industry in the agricultural sector of Belize, particularly so in the northern districts of Orange Walk and Corozal, where small and medium-sized producers have played an important role in this industry. However, it is expected that as a result of the reform of the European Union (EU) sugar regime many small-scale farmers will leave sugar-cane production, mainly because of their inability to remain competitive. Against this background, the Government of Belize is supporting farmers in Northern Belize to diversify their production into market-driven non-sugar cane agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration (MAFFESD) sought assistance from FAO to enhance its capacity to facilitate the strengthening of onion, honey and sheep value chains, to increase productivity, quality and consistency of production, and improve farmers' linkages to markets.



WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

A foundation was laid for the institutionalization of the value chain approach within MAFFESD. The training of government senior staff and selected extension service managers, including from Northern Belize, resulted in a solid understanding within MAFFESD of how to apply value chain approaches. MAFFESD was provided with structured recommendations on how to set up and run National Value Chain Coordination Mechanisms for continued value chain work in the onion subsector, as well as other subsectors. The onion, honey and sheep value chains were strengthened through the establishment of respective Value Chain Coordination Committees, which brought together stakeholders with some regularity, improved the flow of information among farmers, buyers and support services, and increased the understanding of the importance of collaboration in the implementation plan of upgrading strategy to develop the respective subsectors. The Farmer Field School (FFS) methodology that was introduced was well received, and resulted in high adoption rates of good practices by farmers. The project organized training courses in marketing and post-harvest handling; and supported the promotion of end products in Belize.

IMPACT

The production and productivity of all three commodities increased, reportedly as high as a 29 percent increase in the yields of participating onion farmers. Overall, these various actions combined contributed to stronger and more efficient non-sugar agricultural value chains, which are providing alternative income opportunities for small-scale farmers in Northern Belize. In addition to a significant increase in yields, substantial improvements in the quality of produce were reported by many farmers. Finally, production costs were reduced as a result of higher productivity levels and lower post-harvest losses.

KEY FACTS

Contribution

EUR 1 000 000

Duration

January 2015 – September 2017

Resource Partners

European Union (EU)

Partners

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration (MAFFESD)

Beneficiaries

Small-scale farming families in the districts of Corozal and Orange Walk, Northern Belize; MAFFESD, particularly extension services, planning and programme officers responsible for implementing the Government's diversification policy; and key stakeholders who participate in and whose livelihoods are directly affected by the onion, sheep and honey value chains, including retailers, processors, input suppliers

ACTIVITIES

- Value chain management capacity was developed at the national level within MAFFESD and for stakeholders within each of the three value chains in Northern Belize. More than 50 ministry staff members and sector stakeholders were trained in the application of the value chain approach.
- A National Value Chain Coordination Unit was established in MAFFESD, and sector specific Value Chain Coordination Committees were established and operationalized for each of the three commodities – onion, honey and sheep.
- Onion production and post-harvest practices were improved through FFS demonstration plots, where 120 onion farmers and extension officers were trained in good agricultural and post-harvest practices, resulting directly in increased yields for participating farmers.
- Honey production in the two northern districts of the country was expanded and productivity was improved through FFS training activities and linkages developed with Belize Marketing Development and Corporation (BMDC) as a market outlet for locally produced honey.
- Sheep production and productivity were strengthened, with the addition of eight hectares of improved pasture and forage banks established in the project zone; 28 sheep farmers were trained, and the herd size increased through the purchase of 25 head of Katahdin sheep as nucleus breeding stock.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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Project Title

Promoting Agribusiness Development in Northern Belize

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