

# PROJECT UPDATE

## “Implementation of Sustainable Farming Practices in Trinidad’s Northern Range Communities” (EcoAgriCulture)

May 2012

### A View from Project Management

The Cropper Foundation is pleased to update you on the progress of the EcoAgriCulture Project. There have been several developments since our last Update Bulletin in [October, 2011](#), and we are encouraged by your continued interest and support for this Project.

The EcoAgriCulture Project activities were scheduled to end on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2012; [see Results of the EcoAgriCulture Project on page 2](#). Upon successful completion of all project activities in March, the IDB granted an extension of the EcoAgriCulture Project to November 2012 to undertake a set of discrete but related activities, which are funded using project savings. [More on the extension on page 4](#).

The final EcoAgriCulture Project workshop was held on January 18<sup>th</sup> in Tunapuna, Trinidad. We had a very good turnout from a wide range of stakeholders, and we were especially pleased to have presentations from farmers on their experiences in farming and being a part of the Project. [More on the workshop on page 3](#).



#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

1. PROJECT RESULTS
2. FINAL ECOAGRICULTURE WORKSHOP
3. ECOAGRICULTURE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES
4. SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

The Maracas Valley Farmers Association is using funds from the FAO’s Telefood Funds for the establishment of a composting enterprise in the Maracas Valley. The composting initiative will supply compost to farmers in the Valley at a reduced cost, and will also be sold nationwide in order to generate funds to support agricultural production activities in the Maracas Valley. [More on the involvement of the EcoAgriCulture Project team in the composting business on page 4](#).



# Project Results

The main objective of the EcoAgriCulture Project was to develop a community-based model for sustainable hillside farming that could deliver greater economic gain to small-scale hillside farmers, while alleviating the environmental threats caused by current practices and sustaining the natural resource base of the Northern Range. Specifically the project aimed to:

1. Pilot a replicable model for protecting the ecosystem and alleviating negative downstream impacts within watershed communities through the introduction and adoption of sustainable agricultural practices by small-scale farmers in the Northern Range;
2. Support the social and economic development of participating farmers and their communities through the implementation of these alternative farming practices;
3. Communicate the approach and assist in the scaling up and replication of this model.



[Click to access Final Report](#)

This objective was quantitatively represented as “20% or more of farmers in the two farming communities implementing sustainable farming practices.”

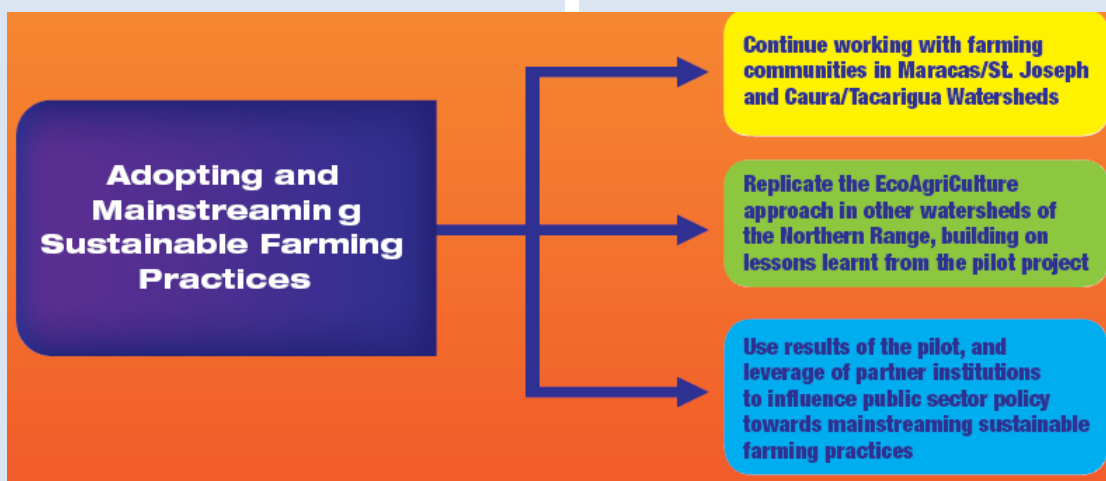
**Upon completion of the EcoAgriCulture project activities in March 2012, we are pleased to report that through the interventions by the EcoAgriCulture Project, 56% of the identified farmers in the Caura/Tacarigua area, and 67% of the identified farmers in the Maracas/ St. Joseph area are implementing sustainable farming practices.**

The success of the project was a result of the buy-in and sustained participation of farmers in the Maracas and Caura Valleys. As such, the model for sustainable hillside farming is largely based on the approaches used for raising the interest of farmers in the initiative, translating the benefits of implementing sustainable farming practices, and securing and sustaining farmer participation in the initiative. We identified several other enabling factors:

- Farmers in the target areas were aware of their responsibility within the High Nature Value landscape of the Northern Range and welcomed the initiative;
- There were many institutions to support the initiative;
- The approach to promoting the adopting of eco-friendly farming practices was welcomed by the Ministry of Food Production Extension Service officers for the two areas.

The project was not without its share of challenges and these mainly involved identifying all of the persons engaged in farming activities in the two target areas, and inexorable delays due to national elections in 2010 and an extremely dry and prolonged dry season in 2010.

In moving forward, we envision a long-term partnership with the Maracas and Caura farming communities and others through a three-pronged approach for implementation:



# Final EcoAgriCulture Workshop

The final stakeholders' workshop for EcoAgriCulture, was held on Wednesday 18th January 2012 at the Auzonville Conference Centre in Tunapuna, Trinidad. The workshop was attended by fifty-three persons with representatives from the Maracas Valley and Caura communities, farming organisations, government ministries and agencies, the private sector, research institutions and civil society organisations.

The workshop was held to bring together stakeholders, as well as to share and discuss the main findings and results of the project. The specific objectives were to:

1. Share the results of the project with a focus on the approach, opportunities, and challenges of the implementation exercise;
2. Provide an opportunity for stakeholders to share ideas on the approach used for implementing sustainable farming practices in this project, and to discuss modifications or alternatives to this approach;
3. Provide an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss research and capacity-building needs for mainstreaming adoption of sustainable farming practices;
4. Share information on follow-up initiatives of the EcoAgriCulture project.

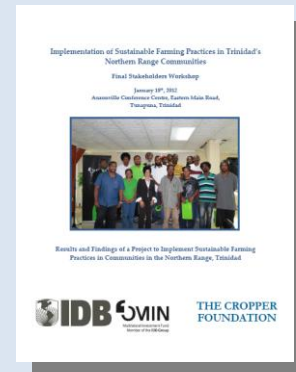
[Presentations made at the workshop can be accessed from the EcoAgriCulture Project website; click here.](#)

Some of the key issues highlighted in the workshop included:

- The challenges of securing land tenure
- There was a call from farmers and other stakeholders for more activities and projects that are designed in collaboration with farmers and implemented through partnership arrangements involving farmers and communities
- Development of markets for organically-farmed produce and product certification
- Better information sharing arrangements between research institutions, Extension services of the Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs, and farmers

- There was a call for more case studies and evidence based research on the implementation of sustainable farming practices
- The need to increase the political profile of agriculture.

[More on these issues is included in the workshop report.](#)



[Click to access report](#)

We were very pleased to have had the farmers' participation in the workshop, and have captured their presentations at the workshop as short video clips.



[Click image to access video clip](#)

# EcoAgriCulture Project Extension

Specific activities have been designed for the eight month extension of the EcoAgriCulture project.

## Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

We are undertaking an M&E exercise to evaluate the impact of our interventions and the farm practices introduced/modified. The objective of the exercise is to better understand the critical factors that affect the implementation and adoption of the farming practices that were introduced to farmers by the EcoAgriCulture project team. The M&E framework is designed to assess progress in implementation, and provide the entry-point for elucidating the opportunities, barriers and challenges that are associated with adopting SFPs at the small farm level. Such information can point to where support is needed most by farmers, and is useful for the design of systems of support for mainstreaming the use of SFPs by farmers in T&T.

## Technical support

### Composting Workshop Series

- A workshop series has been designed to support farmers in the establishment of the composting business. The workshop series will cover the technicalities of composting; business management; roles and responsibilities and conflict resolution.

### The farm as a business workshop series

- We will be engaging and involving the farmers in a short workshop series that is based on facilitated discussions and reflective learning (approach borrowed from an FAO concept) for business management of the farm. The workshop series will cover decision-making; risk-mitigation; record-keeping; knowing the market; and group farming.

### Case Studies

- We are responding to a call for case studies on the benefits/ challenges and processes involved in transitioning to SFPs, for which we have sufficient material to respond. 5 - 7 case studies will be produced in participation with farmers, and will focus on different aspects of the transition.

We are trialing new approaches to case studies such as picture books and short video clips.

## Support to the Ministry of Food Production

We continue to support the MFP in their mandate to promote food security. Within the extension period we will focus on:

- Working with the MFP Extension Services to better support farmers;
- Training of Extension officers in the use of the High Nature Value Index;
- Sharing of information and findings from the M&E exercise;
- Providing support to the MFP strategic planning process.

## Schedule of Activities

### May to October 2012:

- Implement monitoring and evaluation exercise with farmers;
- Composting workshop series;
- Farm as a Business workshop series;
- Case study documentation.



For more information on the EcoAgriCulture Project, The Cropper Foundation or any of the Project Partners, visit

[www.thecropperfoundation.org](http://www.thecropperfoundation.org)  
<http://tcf sustainablefarming.weebly.com/>

Or contact us at: The Cropper Foundation

Building 7, Fernandes Industrial Centre  
Laventille, Trinidad

(T) +1 868 626-2628; (F) +1 868 626-2564

(E) [mrawlins@thecropperfoundation.org](mailto:mrawlins@thecropperfoundation.org)

**The Cropper Foundation acknowledges the financial support of the EcoAgriCulture Project by the Inter-American Development Bank Grant ATN/ME-11488-TT**