

# PRESS RELEASE

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*Towards Sustainable Development of  
Fisheries for the People of the Caribbean!*

## PFR-CRFM to showcase innovative work on Sargassum-derived plant-growth bio-stimulant at upcoming Caribbean Week of Agriculture



Representatives of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) recently visited a farm in Barbados where the bio-stimulant is being tested on plots of vegetables

(Photo: CRFM Secretariat)

Belize City, Friday, 4 October 2024 (CRFM)—The innovative work being done under the New Zealand-funded **Sargassum Products for Climate Resilience Project**, to develop a plant growth enhancer or bio-stimulant from Sargassum, will be showcased during the upcoming [Caribbean Week of Agriculture](#), to be held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The work being done under the project by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and the New Zealand Institute for Plant and Food Research (Plant & Food Research) fits well within the event theme, ***Climate Smart Agriculture for a Sustainable Future***.

Mr. Milton Haughton, Executive Director, Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism Secretariat, said that: *“The Sargassum Products for Climate Resilience Project has the potential to make a substantial impact towards the attainment of the CARICOM vision to reduce the region’s food import bill by 25% by 2025 (called ‘Vision 25 by 2025’). This is because a Sargassum-derived fertilizer produced within the Caribbean could ease the financial burden caused by the increasing costs for imported fertilizers. This, in turn, could boost agricultural production for farmers and producers by making their operations more cost-effective.*

Haughton added that, *“Using Sargassum in this way mitigates the impacts of the inundations, which include the release of methane—a powerful greenhouse gas which is emitted as the Sargassum decomposes in coastal waters. The Sargassum Products for Climate Resilience Project, therefore, helps the Caribbean to adapt and build resilience to climate change, which is one of the key factors fueling the Sargassum blooms.”*

The CRFM and Plant & Food Research (PFR) are working together to mitigate the environmental and economic impacts of Sargassum influxes in affected Caribbean countries through the creation of inclusive value chains for Sargassum.

Mrs. Sophie Jones-Williams, Program Manager - International Development, Plant & Food Research, New Zealand, said: *“Together with our partners in the Caribbean, we have worked hard to test the efficacy and safety of the bio-stimulant we are developing from Sargassum. Our trials and thorough testing for heavy metal contamination, has ensured confidence that the product we are developing will not only bring benefits through increased yields but also healthy, more resilient production systems.”*

Since its inception in 2020, the project has ensured that regional partners are involved in this initiative. The CRFM and PFR have been working in collaboration with researchers at the University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus in Barbados and Mona Campus in Jamaica) and the University of Belize; the Governments of Barbados, Belize, and Jamaica; as well as the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo (INTEC) of the Dominican Republic, and the private sector, to ensure that the project taps into the best expertise available in the region.

Based on the successful outcome of prior scientific studies and greenhouse trials for a Sargassum-derived liquid bio-stimulant, the partners commenced field trials earlier this year. In August 2024, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Security of Barbados, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and National Beautification, Green and Blue Economy, hosted a Sargassum Liquid Extract Field Day to showcase the progress being made with growing cucumbers using the Sargassum-derived bio-stimulant in ongoing field trials.

The CRFM and PFR are also working to engage institutional and private sector partners to commercialize and upscale production, based on the successful outcome of the testing and trial phases which are due to conclude by year-end.

During the upcoming Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA), the CRFM and PFR will partner to host the [Sargassum Seminar on Supporting Climate-Smart Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Agriculture through Product Innovation](#). The purpose of this hybrid event—to be held on Wednesday, 9 October 2024, at 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Atlantic Standard Time (AST), at University of West Indies, Open Campus, Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and online—is to showcase the innovative work being done to develop a fertilizer and compost from Sargassum seaweed using the principles of the circular economy and the precautionary approach, to ensure safety across the value chain.

In addition to Haughton of the CRFM and Jones-Williams of PFR, other event speakers include: David Mogollon - EU Head of Cooperation to Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, the Eastern Caribbean States, the OECS and CARICOM/CARIFORUM; Dr. Maren Headley - Programme Manager, Fisheries Management and Development, CRFM Secretariat; and Chadeene Beckles - Value Chain and Marketing Specialist, Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI).

This seminar is one of two events to be hosted by the CRFM and its partners during the upcoming Caribbean Week of Agriculture, with a focus on the theme, *Promoting Climate-Smart and Resilient Fisheries and Aquaculture for Food Sovereignty & Food Security, and a Sustainable & Profitable Future*. The CRFM will also host [the Caribbean Small Scale Fisheries & Aquaculture Forum](#) on Tuesday, 8 October 2024, at 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Atlantic Standard Time (AST), at the same venue. This Forum will provide a space for small-scale fishers to engage with CRFM, Member States representatives, other stakeholders, and partners on matters of key importance to the sector, surrounding the central themes of climate change, food security, and sustainable livelihoods.

The CRFM and PFR will also showcase the project at the CWA Tradeshow and Expo, which will be held at the Kingstown Cruiseship Terminal from 7 – 11 October 2024.

– ENDS –

**Link to register for the event:**

<https://forms.gle/VAEEYJ6DPw6rwVjF7>

**Link to access the project brochure:**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VkYyskYUmdovkmWaZIKgSALwom409IeW/view>

**Link to project webpage:**

[https://crfm.int/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=792&Itemid=499](https://crfm.int/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=792&Itemid=499)

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## ABOUT THE CRFM:

The [Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism](#) (CRFM) was officially inaugurated on 27 March 2003 in Belize City, Belize, where it is headquartered, following the signing of the Agreement Establishing the CRFM on 4 February 2002. It is an inter-governmental organization whose mission is to promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region.

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