

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (NARI) PRESS RELEASE ON MANGROVE PROJECT

To help enhance Guyana's defence against the sea, Government has launched a \$1Billion Sustainable Coastal Zone Protection Programme through Mangrove Management. Funded by the Government of Guyana and the European Union, the project will be executed through the National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI)

Under NARI, a Mangrove Action Committee (MAC) comprising of key stakeholders has been formed to oversee the project with environmentalist Annette Arjoon-Martins as the chairperson, together with key interlocutors from Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and others.

Agriculture Minister Robert Persaud said Government has placed high importance on protecting the coastline in a more cost-effective and sustainable manner than in the past and is committed to the maintenance and rehabilitation of sea defences to protect property and lives. In that context Minister Persaud has recently declared the black, red and white mangroves as protected species. Therefore it is now illegal to cut down mangrove trees anywhere in Guyana.

The overall objective of the project is to abate climate change and mitigate one of the most damaging impacts of global warming for Guyana, i.e. Sea Level Rise. This is predicted to be in the region of 16 inches during the first half of this century, compared with 4 to 8 inches during the whole of last century.

Guyana with its low-lying coastal plain and an under-resourced sea and river defence system is at exceptional risk. Breaches in our sea defences can be catastrophic, destroying livelihoods and property as well as rendering our agricultural land useless due to increased salinisation.

The project will develop a National Mangrove Management Action Plan and establish a Mangrove Code of Practice for future management of this valuable natural resource. The main activities of the project will be:

- Public awareness and education
- Research into the ecology of mangroves and mudbanks,
- Protection and rehabilitation of mangroves
- Monitoring and enforcement of forest legislation

The development of locally based expertise, competence and understanding of the issues, challenges and solutions that surround the complex question of mangrove sustainability is an expected outcome of the project.

In addition, the Sea and River Defence Unit in the Ministry of Communications and Works, will embark on a programme to re-establish groynes, which it is hoped will slow down the movement of mud shoals along the coast of Guyana, thereby stabilizing the very substrate in which mangroves flourish.

Mangroves are our country's natural sea defences and protect the coastline from erosion as their roots help to bind and stabilize the soil and play an important role in combating global warming through the sequestration of carbon.