



NEWS RELEASE

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IDB support for the creation of a sustainable sugar Industry in northern Belize

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is pleased to announce that it has approved a US\$1.3M grant from the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) to finance a project that will support the development of a sustainable sugar industry in northern Belize. This three-year project will provide resources to create and implement a dedicated extension service for over 5,400 sugar cane farmers in northern Belize and to build a sustainable farming model that strengthens the capabilities of these farmers. The project will also support the integration of agricultural technology and the implementation of a centralized geographic information system which will enhance coordination and assist the industry's ability to strategically plan for the future.

This project will be implemented by the Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute (SIRDI) and will complement previous and ongoing support for Belize's sugar industry provided by the European Union, the Belize Sugar Industries Limited, La Inmaculada Credit Union Limited, the United Nations Development Program, and the sugar cane farmers' associations. The project also supports the Strategic Development Plan which is currently being developed by industry stakeholders and the Government of Belize as a comprehensive and cohesive roadmap to the long-term sustainability of this vital economic sector.

"Since 2000, the MIF has developed targeted interventions to support sustainable agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). To increase the impact on livelihoods and living conditions of the beneficiaries, the design of this capacity-building project included the active involvement of key supply chain stakeholders: farmers, leading firm, and finance providers."

-Yolanda Strachan, Multilateral Investment Fund

SIRDI's technical staff, composed of six field officers, will be complemented by 12 additional technicians who will work with 270 harvest group leaders and with the Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association (BSCFA), the Progressive Sugar Cane Producers Association (PSCPA), and the Corozal Sugar Cane Producers Association (CSCPA) to strengthen their organizational, managerial, and operational capacity.

Farmers and harvest group leaders will benefit from training aimed at increasing productivity and adapting best practices in sugar cane cultivation, data collection, and entrepreneurship.

“A ‘training of the trainers’ approach will be employed in order to promote knowledge transfer and to ensure that a high quality extension service continues to be delivered beyond the lifetime of the project.”

- Marcos Osorio, Executive Director, SIRD

Significantly, this project will support the operationalization of the Sugar Industry Management Information System (SIMIS) within SIRD, which will act as a centralized database for the 75,000+ acres of sugar cane presently under cultivation in order to improve the quality of data for monitoring, analysis, and informed decision-making by industry stakeholders. Once fully implemented, this system will be a critical tool for a viable and sustainable sugar industry.

“ This IDB support could not have come at a better time. The industry faces important market challenges. Assisting farmers to improve their yields will help them to reduce their cost and contribute to a more efficient and competitive industry.”

- Mac MacLachlan, Vice President, International Relations, ASR Group

About the Multilateral Investment Fund

The Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), a member of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Group, is funded by 39 countries and supports private sector-led development benefiting low-income populations and the poor—their businesses, their farms, and their households. The aim is to give them tools to boost their incomes: access to markets and the skills to compete in those markets, access to finance, and access to basic services, including green technology. A core MIF mission is to act as a development laboratory—experimenting, pioneering, and taking risks to build and support successful micro, small, and medium business models. More information can be found at www.fomin.org.

About the Inter-American Development Bank

The Inter-American Development Bank is devoted to improving lives. Established in 1959, the IDB is a leading source of long-term financing for economic, social and institutional development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The IDB also conducts cutting-edge research and provides policy advice, technical assistance and training to public and private sector clients throughout the region.