



## IICA-COLEAD CARIBBEAN AGRIFOOD BUSINESS SERIES

### 8 sessions with inspiring stories from Caribbean businesses and SMEs

In June 2021, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture ([IICA](#)) and the [COLEAD](#)<sup>1</sup> launched the Caribbean Agrifood Business Series aimed at showcasing innovations and successes of Caribbean farmer-led businesses and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The series is part of the IICA-COLEAD [collaboration](#) to develop a more sustainable and resilient agriculture sector in the Caribbean region.

The series looks at the contribution of entrepreneurs, farmers, agripreneurs and SMEs to business models which are economically, environmentally and socially viable. They share their best practices, innovations and technologies to support others to embrace the unprecedented opportunities offered by local, regional and export markets. The series focuses on various topics, including COVID-19 resilience, rebuilding tourism with increased linkages to agriculture, bioeconomy and green businesses, food safety and quality, improved production, trade, competitiveness, skills for entrepreneurship and successes from women-led businesses.

The Caribbean Agrifood Business Series also features the contributions of those who support an enabling environment for Caribbean agrifood businesses and SMEs to grow and expand, create jobs and impact rural communities. The insights from policy (Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), European Commission (Agriculture, Partnerships), EU Delegation to Barbados, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Caribbean Community (CARICOM) / CARIFORUM, UN Women), finance (EDFI AgriFI, Bamboo Capital Partners, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)) and support to business development (Caribbean Export Development Agency, Planeterra Foundation, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)) brought valuable networks and connections to the entrepreneurs.

The discussions of the first eight sessions focused on the following topics:

- [Post-COVID-19: Resilience building and new opportunities for Caribbean businesses](#) (session n°1)
- [Promoting Bioeconomy and Green Businesses in the Caribbean: opportunities for SMEs](#) (session n°2)
- [Post-COVID-19 recovery – Building stronger linkages between agriculture and tourism: the key role of SMEs and businesses](#) (session n°3)
- [Ensuring food quality and safety in the Caribbean: the key role of SMEs and businesses](#) (session n°4)
- [Agriculture Trade : opportunities for SMEs and businesses in export markets](#) (session n°5)
- [High-end market opportunities for Caribbean agrifood products](#) (session n°6)
- [Entrepreneurial skills needed for businesses to succeed and expand](#) (session °7)
- [Successes from Caribbean women-led businesses/SMEs in the agrifood sector](#) (session °8)

<sup>1</sup> [COLEACP becomes COLEAD](#) in January 2023 (Committee Linking Entrepreneurship Agriculture Development).



During these sessions, **31 inspiring entrepreneurs and farmers groups** presented their businesses to 1,900 participants from more than 70 countries on different continents. As the wide geographical coverage of the series includes non-English speaking countries, live interpretation in English, Spanish and French has been organised for all sessions starting from the second, and live interpretation in Portuguese from the eighth session.

The recordings of the sessions are available on [IICA's](#) and [COLEAD's](#) YouTube channels.

Find below a snapshot of featured entrepreneurs and farmers groups which we hope will inspire you!

#### Session n°1: Post-COVID-19: Resilience building and new opportunities for Caribbean businesses



**Dunstan Demille, Perishables Manager, [Massy Stores SLU Ltd](#), St. Lucia**

Massy Stores operates 47 retail locations in five markets in the Caribbean (Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago) with several formats including supercentres, supermarkets, pharmacies, express, gourmet, home and a mega warehouse club in St. Lucia.

In order to adapt to COVID-19 disruptions and challenges, Massy Stores put in place strict protocols and made a strong commitment to source from local farmers and support local manufacturers. This allowed farmers to scale up production and improved market access, as the retailer chain opened a plant for buyers and gave a premium for local products. The chain employed more staff and raised through various communication channels the visibility and product offer promoting eating local, contributing to the growth of St. Lucian operators and bringing targeted support to MSMEs.



**Ravi Sankar, Managing Director, [RHS Marketing Limited](#), Trinidad & Tobago**

RHS Marketing Limited is a leading agro-processor based in Trinidad & Tobago which produces an extensive range of household-name products sold throughout the national grocery chains, independent shops, hotels, and restaurants. It has many brands: Karibbean Flavours (primary blend for seasoning and spices), Herreras (flavouring), Rajapuri (new brand focused on spices launched during COVID-19 times) or Kitchmixx. The company is present in 27 markets, across the U.S., the Caribbean islands, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Despite challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the company seized new opportunities as people had to prepare their meals at home, and spices sauces and seasonings were highly demanded in supermarkets. Among

others, RHS Marketing Limited used social media platforms to promote the products, expanded its production facility, engaged more farmers and invested in E-commerce sales.



**Aditya Persaud, Co-Founder, [Arya's Fresh Cut](#), Guyana**

Diana Persaud and her husband Aditya created Arya's Fresh Cut in 2015, an organic farming business based on the farm to doorstep concept. The company has a great awareness of food safety, quality, and increased need for convenience and efficient service, and so provides consumers with well packaged and high quality fresh crops. Arya's Fresh Cut line of produce includes pumpkins, tomatoes, cabbage (chopped), corilla (*Momordica charantia*) that is cut and cleaned, bell peppers, sweet peppers, wiri-wiri peppers, ochro (okra), eggplant and passion fruit. The company has today more than 30 employees.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Diana and Aditya conquered new markets by using different strategies, including home delivery and online services. Arya's Fresh Cut is today the Guyanese first online store providing very reliable and up to date information.



**Kerwin Craigwell, Co-Founder & Operation Manager, [Bwana Business Incorporated](#), Trinidad & Tobago**

Bwana Business Incorporated is an innovative and value-driven company which manufactures and distributes local, frozen food products without additives, flavouring nor preservative. The products are prepared from quality locally grown root crops, packaged in convenient Ziploc Pouch and reduce meal preparation time and waste (e.g. from peelings).

To cope with COVID-19 related challenges, Bwana Business Incorporated strengthened its online and social media presence with the launch of brand awareness campaigns and customer' preferences surveys. The company also increased its network of suppliers and invested in improved and value-added products to ensure steady and consistent production. By allocating financial resources strategically, negotiating raw material, packaging prices and flexible payment terms, the company managed to grow.



Danielle Thomson, Founder & CEO, [THERAPY](#), Jamaica

THERAPY is a company created in 2015 which produces balanced, nutrient-rich, vegan, sugar-free and preservative-free products. The plant-based foods are made from local organic fruit and vegetables grown by a network of Jamaican organic farmers. The company focuses on product development and innovation to respond to consumers' needs, lifestyle changes focused on health and wellbeing. THERAPY supports organic farmers and MSMEs, and sustainable farming, as well as raises awareness on the importance of growing organically and maintaining seasonal supply of the products.

The company constantly adapts to its business environment and so continuously expands. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, THERAPY closed its physical locations and focused only on online sales, having the team working remotely and promoting use of technology amongst employees. It adopted shopify experiences, followed metrics of sales to track progress, and uses social medias to link and interact with customers.

## Session n°2: Promoting Bioeconomy and Green Businesses in the Caribbean: opportunities for SMEs



Johanen Dujon, Founder & CEO, [Algas Organics](#), St Lucia

Algas Organics, is a family-owned company, founded in 2014, and the Caribbean's first indigenous agriculture biotechnology company. It converts sargassum seaweed which is invading the coast of Saint Lucia into world class, organic, crop nutrition and protection products for export to the Caribbean, Latin America, North America, and Europe. The business contributes to keep coastal areas clean by sustainably harvesting millions of pounds of sargassum seaweed for processing, rather than disposal. Piles of strong odorant seaweed accumulating along the coast negatively affect the aquatic environment, hamper the fishing industry and tourism.

The business development of Algas Organics is coupled with a social approach of employing marginalized women and youth and provide alternative livelihood opportunities for fishermen affected by sargassum.



**Gustavo Gandini, Organic Agricultural, Biodiversity & Environment Coordinator, [Banelino](#), Dominican Republic**

Banelino (Bananos Ecológicos de la Línea Noroeste) is the small producers' association of ecological bananas of the Northwest Line of the Dominican Republic, located in the Western Valley of the island. The association exists for over 22 years and represents 336 small producers, of whom 31% are women. Banelino fosters bioecology: from the weekly sold 35,000 boxes of bananas, 95% are organic and 90% is sold with the Fair Trade certification as it is an organisation certified by FLO International. The production is also GLOBALG.A.P certified.

The organisation produces its own bioferments and analyses the soil to determine which are its needs and provide optimised organic support. Banelino also uses cover and services plants to provide nutrients to the soil, protect it from erosion and offer habitats to insects. Its biodiversity approach results in the growth of bananas, coconut and cocoa on the same spot, as well as the farming of animals (chicken, cows, goats, bees etc.).



**Nigel Jordan, Co-Founder & CEO, [Twigs Naturals](#), Trinidad & Tobago**

Twigs Naturals manufacture locally grown convenient tea bags and seasonings sold in resalable packaging made from recyclable material. Twigs Naturals also produces blended oils for aromatherapy. The products are sourced from farmers and are prepared, blended and packaged by hand in the factory, and have a shelf life of 2 years. Twigs Naturals is the first Caribbean tea brand to be recognised internationally by winning two awards at the 2017 Global Tea Championship.

Twigs Naturals' products meet global international agricultural standards and requirements, such as the GLOBALG.A.P. and the Good Manufacturing Practice certifications, and are certified by US FDA PCQI. The company exports them to the USA and the UK, and is planning to export to Canada, Switzerland and West Africa.

**Session n°3: Post-COVID-19 recovery – Building stronger linkages between agriculture and tourism: the key role of SMEs and businesses**



**Shadel Nyack Compton, Managing Director, [Belmont Estate Group of Companies](#), Grenada**

Belmont Estate is a small agritourism business which produces cocoa, spices, particularly nutmeg, fruit, vegetables, herbs and goat cheese, among others. Most of the products can be tasted at Belmont Estate's Creole restaurant. Belmont Estate received in 2019 the award of 1 of the 50 best cocoa samples in the world by the Cocoa of Excellence. The agricultural estate does agritourism to integrate local culture, history, traditions and cuisine. It organises various interactive tours on its premises to showcase sustainable agriculture and tourism practices, the process from cocoa growing to chocolate making.

With the COVID-19 crisis, Belmont Estate developed solutions to keep connected with its customers and generate revenue. It worked on increasing its social media presence to continuously inform about its activities and developed virtual tours and experiences. It also developed two shopify experiences: Belmont Organics to shop its manufactured products and My Grenada Box to export Grenadian products to the US market for Christmas.



**Rachel Renie, Co-Founder & Managing Director, [D'Market Movers](#), Trinidad & Tobago**

D'Market Movers is an online distribution company established in 2009 specialised in the delivery of fresh produce throughout Trinidad & Tobago. D'Market Movers works closely with a network of about 250 farmers/artisans who supply various types of fresh produce and tries to create new opportunities for its local agripreneurs. Through its online sale platform, D'Market Movers can identify trends in consumption and demand to advise its suppliers about the fruit and vegetable which are highly demanded and the customers' expectations, enabling farmers to grow produce which meet the market demand and requirements.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the online shop has enabled customers to be supplied with fresh food while ensuring their security as they could stay at home. D'Market Movers recently launched a click and collect store to meet the customers' demand to go in store and be able to interact with staff, adapting the experience to the current health measures in place.



**Dane Saddler, Founder & Executive Chef, [Caribbean Villa Chefs](#)**

Caribbean Villa Chefs is a culinary company created in 2012 with the purpose to use and promote local ingredients and to work with local farmers in order to source and provide clients with the freshest and healthiest options available. Local ingredients are more easily available and cheaper than imported competitive products. Innovative and healthy dishes prepared with local ingredients by Caribbean Villa Chefs include lasagna with plantain or breadfruit as a pasta-substitute and pulled pork or chicken as a substitute of the traditionally used beef. Another creation is the breadfruit bowl prepared with locally available, cheap and nutritive breadfruit. By creating new dishes alike, chefs create a new market for local ingredients that would have been overlooked instead.

Chefs and farmers have faced numerous challenges with the COVID-19 crisis which caused major disruptions resulting from hotels and restaurants having to close or to reduce their seat capacity. Both chefs and farmers had to become creative to diversify from the tourist market and so to maintain an income.



**William Thompson, Treasurer, Nevis Growers' Co-operative, St. Kitts & Nevis**

The Nevis Growers' Co-operative Ltd was established in 1991 following the Nevis Island government's willingness to develop a central unit to assist farmers, as a unified body of growers, with the storing and marketing of their products to enable sustainable livelihoods. Since its creation, the Nevis Growers' Co-operative has established a strong agrotourism linkage with its members supplying produce to a specific market-led system. It has nowadays over 40 farmers producing a variety of fruit and vegetables demanded by hotels and supermarkets. The cooperative uses the eco-friendly approach of mixed crops, blending tree crops with other fruit and vegetable crops, with minimal land preparation and increased crop diversity.

As part of its response to the economic upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, the Nevis Growers' Co-operative granted a 15,000 Eastern Caribbean dollars contribution to thirteen farmers to support them starting to produce again and so to supply supermarkets and hotels, as the restrictions were being lifted.

#### Session n°4: Ensuring food quality and safety in the Caribbean: the key role of SMEs and businesses



**Tania Lieuw-A-Soe, CEO, [SURIKIT N.V.](#), Suriname**

SURIVIT N.V. is a fruit and cassava processing company that produces high-quality products, such as flour, baby porridge, cassava pancakes mixes and cassava flakes, both for local and export markets. The company focuses on producing tasty and healthy food. It was created in 2020 by “Wi! Uma Fu Sranan” (meaning “We the women of Suriname”), the first women agricultural cooperative in Suriname which was established in 2013 to strengthen Suriname’s agricultural sector and to reduce poverty. Nowadays, the cooperative has 38 members.

SURIVIT N.V. is a pioneering social enterprise which educates and empowers women to learn all aspects of producing, value adding, food safety, product marketing and distribution. The company aims to contribute to sustainable food and nutrition security, economic growth, value chain development, promotion and employment opportunities in Suriname with the specific focus on rural women.



**Rita Hilton, Founder & Managing Director, [Carita Jamaica Ltd.](#), Jamaica**

Carita Jamaica Limited, formerly Incorporated Marketing Developments Limited, is a family-owned and operated company created in 1984 which distributes fresh Jamaican products. It has expanded its activities by processing locally grown crops sourced in its own fields and from farmers across Jamaica into frozen products, soups, and natural teas under the “Carita Premium” brand.

Carita Jamaica Limited aims to support local rural communities by offering them a sustainable income. It also promotes sustainable and healthy lifestyle, and works on ensuring that its production and exports meet local and international food safety and security standards and requirements.

Carita Jamaica Limited was named Best Import/Export Company at the ActionCOACH Regional 2018 Business Excellence Forum Award. It mainly exports to the US, Canada, the UK and diaspora markets, and is looking to expand to the EU, as well as to Caribbean markets.



**Theophilia Stoute, Founder & Managing Director, [O's Inc.](#), Barbados**

O's Inc. is an agro-processing company which produces all-natural, organic and gluten-free products, such as flours, pancakes mixes, porridges, coatings and oils. All the products are prepared with locally grown fruit and vegetables, such as cassava, breadfruit, sweet potato, plantain or coconut, without additives nor preservatives. The company supports a healthy lifestyle and a gluten-free diet with high-quality products at an affordable cost and proves that eating healthy doesn't mean eating bland.

O's products are currently available in supermarkets and convenient shops across Barbados and will be exported to other Caribbean islands in a near future. The company is still developing new formulas and products, and strives to source an eco-friendly packaging to guarantee the freshness and aroma of its products.

#### Session n°5: Agriculture Trade : opportunities for SMEs and businesses in export markets



**Roy Newell, Managing Director, [Tijule](#), Jamaica**

Tijule Company Limited is a family-owned agro-processing manufacturer located in Jamaica which processes a variety of Jamaican fruit and vegetables (e.g. ackee, callaloo, guava, banana, citrus, passion, ginger, pineapple, mangoes) into canned, bottled, baked and frozen products. Tijule's products are sold under three brands: Juliana, Nel's Old Time and Clarendon Blends. The company was founded in 1982 and started exporting its Juliana and Nel's Old Time products in 1984. Nowadays, 90% of the company's output of sauces, condiments, baked bannet (a traditional Jamaican cassava flatbread), etc. is sold to international markets (USA, Canada, Japan, Guam, Bahamas, Grenada and Jamaican diaspora). Clarendon Blends juices are sold on the local market since 2019.

In order to be able to supply export markets, Tijule invested in Certified International Food Safety Systems and operates in a fully food safety-accredited facility.



**Daphne Miaoulis, Managing Director, [Abaco Neem](#), Bahamas**

Abaco Neem Limited is the only certified organic farm in the Bahamas and was founded in 1993 by Nick Miaoulis to contribute to the healthcare of The Bahamas. The company processes all parts of the neem tree (roots, bark, gum, leaves, flowers, fruit, seed kernels and seed oil) into over 23 different neem health and beauty products, as well as products for home, garden and agriculture. Over the past ten years, the production of Abaco Neem Limited has grown in popularity within the Bahamas and in the Caribbean, North America and Europe, partly resulting from the company's intensive use of the internet and social media avenues to promote its products. Abaco Neem Limited's products are of consistent high quality and manufactured in a clean facility which meets the international export standards.



**Roderick St. Clair, Managing Director, [Grenada Co-operative Nutmeg Association](#), Grenada**

The Grenada Co-operative Nutmeg Association (GCNA) was founded in 1947 by Act of Parliament in order to safeguard and promote the interests of the Grenadian nutmeg industry. It has the sole authority on the purchase, processing and sale of nutmeg in Grenada. Nowadays, the GCNA has a membership of approximately 3,375 farmers (the membership was of more than 7,000 farmers prior to Hurricane Ivan of 2004). The GCNA product range includes nutmeg in bulk (including black seeds / shines and mace), as well as value added products made from all parts of the nutmeg. The nutmeg pod is processed into various sauces, drinks, seasonings and pickles; the mace into oil; the nutmeg itself is used to produce nutmeg spice teas, seasonings and oil; and the nutmeg shell can be used, among other, as an organic medium to grow seeds and plants.

The GCNA exports its quality products worldwide (USA, Canada, Caribbean, Argentina, EU, UK, Israel, India) and is one of the island's economic pillars.

## Session n°6: High-end market opportunities for Caribbean agrifood products



**Umeeda Switlo, Co-Founder and CEO, [Naledo Foods and Beverages Inc](#), Belize**

Naledo is a B-Corp certified social enterprise founded in 2015, with a vision to produce quality, healthy products while benefiting the environment and communities they partner with. Naledo's brand, "Truly Turmeric" makes a variety of products, including the world's first wildcrafted, whole root turmeric paste. Their method of direct trade with producers makes it possible that their growers earn over six times the Fair Trade price for their turmeric. Naledo's products can be found in retail stores in Belize, Canada and the United States, as well as through several online channels for customers worldwide. Naledo and Truly Turmeric have been granted numerous awards for their innovation, taste and their contribution to rural development. Naledo has also been recognized by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for Best Practices in Strengthening Youth Rural Employment in the Caribbean.



**Elizabeth Montano, Director, [Montanos' Chocolate Company Limited](#), Trinidad and Tobago**

Montanos Chocolate Company is a three-generational family owned and operated company, founded in 2018. Their primary product is Machel Montano 60% Dark Chocolate. This chocolate bar is handmade, all natural and allergen free and is promoted as the healthy, vegan choice for chocolate. Montanos' mission is to contribute to the successful revitalization of Trinidad and Tobago's cocoa industry by leading their country and the Caribbean into a global cocoa revolution. Their vision is to be the leading environmentally sustainable chocolate and cocoa producer in the Caribbean, while developing a sustainable cocoa industry and securing employment for the local community's youth, women and cocoa farmers. The company's investment in rural development is exemplified through their work with the Alliance of Rural Communities, which involves a dedication to transforming cocoa producing communities and building connections between cocoa producers and consumers.



**Dr. Polina Araujo, CEO, [Cosmos 2000](#), Dominican Republic**

Cosmos 2000 International was founded in the year 2000 from the desire to expand the products of the Dominican Republic throughout the Caribbean and beyond. Today, the company specializes in the export of the highest quality fresh fruit and vegetables, and their mission is to satisfy the requirements of their direct and final consumers. With over 20 years of market experience, Cosmos has acquired a deep knowledge of the fruit and vegetable business. By working directly with farmers in the Dominican Republic and purchasing products directly from plantations, Cosmos 2000 is able to match any demand or requirement from customers. Cosmos 2000 supports the rural economy through their business model and operations, they provide advice to producers on planting projects, and they support the establishment of cooperatives.



**Udo Karg, CEO, [Suvveb NV](#), Suriname**

Suvveb NV was founded in 1990, and the company has three processing divisions: fresh tuna processing, fresh/frozen fish processing and dried fish and shrimp processing. Suvveb NV sells their products on local markets as well as exporting to the Caribbean, Europe, the United States and Asia. Suvveb NV has adapted European Union (EU) standards as their own standards for delivering quality and healthy products, as they have learned that an access to EU markets ensures a high level of standards that will open the company up to nearly any market globally. In 2016, Suvveb NV expanded its production facility via a collaboration with the fishing company Marisa Fisheries NV, and together they established Ocean Delight in 2020. Suvveb NV works in close cooperation with the Suriname government to contribute to the fishery management plan, to ensure sustainable natural resource management.



**Theresa Marryshow, Founder and President, Grenada Network of Rural Women Producers (Grenrop), Grenada**

Formed in 2002, Grenrop currently is comprised of 80% women and 20% youth who are involved in farming, agro-processing, art & craft, catering and eco-tourism. The aim of Grenrop is to help its members become empowered and improve their farming methods, post harvesting techniques and ultimately, their livelihoods through training, projects, networking, and cultural and agricultural exchanges. The Network's members supply a wide variety of high quality produce and a range of agro-processed products to its buyers that include the top hotels and restaurants in Grenada, major supermarkets and the general public. Grenrop encourages its farmers to cultivate organic as much as possible, and also trains them in various agroprocessing skills to prepare new products for the hotels.

**Session°7: Entrepreneurial skills needed for businesses to succeed and expand**



**Norman Mc Donald, Chairperson, [Linstead Market](http://www.linsteadmarketja.com), Jamaica**

Linstead Market, owned by Canco Ltd., is a Jamaican brand of high quality products such as ackees (canned), calaloo and breadfruit slices, as well as Jamaican soups, jams, jelly, chutney prepared with locally grown products (red peas, Gungo peas, sorrel, guava, pineapple etc). The company started its operations in 1986 and began manufacturing under their own brand in 1992.

Canco Ltd. is one of the first two Jamaican companies to legally gain access to the US market for their main product, canned ackees, thanks to its successful implementation of the HACCP system. In 2000, it established a North American distribution company, Treasure Trading Inc., to ensure consistent supply of their products especially to the Jamaican and African Diaspora. Canco Ltd. also took control of its local sales and distribution which led to increased distributors and local sales. In 2012, the company started to use its distribution network for other companies as a service provider.

Canco Ltd. has been the recipient of many awards and has received international recognition for its impact in areas of the economy, its work in the community and in the protection of the environment.



**Kenneth Van Gom, Co-Founder and CEO, [Gom Food Industries Ltd](#), Suriname**

Established in 1996, Gom Food Industries Ltd. is a family-owned company producing high quality products for both local and export markets. Under the brand name Sishado, the company produces 9 different sauces and marinades, based on family recipes and containing a mix of Amazonian, Caribbean and Asian ingredients. The company has managed to become the market leader in Suriname, whilst expanding to different parts of the world supplying 10 markets in total.

Gom Food Industries Ltd. has always invested in marketing and developed market entry strategies and promotions. It also participates regularly in workshops, seminars and trade fairs, and invests in research and development (R&D) to continuously improve its product liability and customer loyalty.

Several certifications (such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), HACCP, ISO, HSEQ (Health, Safety, Environment, Quality)) attest the quality management and assurance of the company. In 2022, it won the Manufacturing Award for Quality, presented by the Suriname Standards Bureau.



**Gillian Goddard, Co-Founder and Co-Director, [Alliance of Rural Communities of Trinidad and Tobago \(ACTT\)](#), Trinidad and Tobago**

The Alliance of Rural Communities (ARC), founded in 2014, is a Caribbean rural network of cocoa growing/chocolate producing communities. It is a self-funded, systems change network using cocoa and chocolate to support rural communities throughout the Caribbean to play an expanded role in their national affairs and to move towards solid financial inclusion in regional economics.

The ARC supports and develops financially independent, community owned chocolate businesses and affiliated projects using rural resources, labor and creativity. The products created are branded, marketed and distributed in collaboration with ARC, leading to much higher margins within the community than they would have realized by selling the raw materials. Ensuring the inclusion of all generations, ARC also trains community youth in conservation and nature guiding.



**Don Fletcher, Founder and Managing Director, [BareFruit Juices](#), Trinidad and Tobago**

Meico Ltd. (Manufacturing Export Import Company Ltd.), located in Freeport, Trinidad, manufactures healthy fresh fruit drinks using exotic West Indian fruit grown locally and regionally under the brand BareFruit. Founded in 2005, the processing company produces fruit drinks for the domestic market, with plans to diversify both the product and the market.

With 90% of their fruit derived from local farms around Trinidad and Tobago, Meico Ltd. promotes and supports the local agricultural sector. It has developed strong relationships and trust with the farming communities of Trinidad and Tobago and other suppliers, key features to become a successful company. Visiting international trade fairs to be exposed to new processing and packaging technologies and to build networks have also contributed to expanding the company. By having a clear understanding of its product's value proposition and unique selling advantage, Meico Ltd. continuously delivers products that meet its customers' expectations.

**Session°8: Successes from Caribbean women-led businesses/SMEs in the agrifood sector**



**Jeanette Marcelle, Founder and CEO, [Handmade by Jeanette Co.](#), Trinidad and Tobago**

Handmade by Jeanette Co. (HBJ) is a chef-owned and operated agri-processing food company making artisan products including granola, unique sauces and spice rubs. The company is supporting small famers in the community by making their products using 75% locally sourced indigenous ingredients. Driven by innovation, HBJ creates shelf stable products that are rich in nutrients. Featured in some of the top gourmet shops in Trinidad, the company caters to health-conscious individuals, vegans and millennial customers. Jeanette strives to follow business practices that are beneficial to the environment, including those that reduce waste in the agriculture sector.



**Anastasha Elliot, Co-Founder and CEO, [Sugar Town Organics](#), St. Kitts and Nevis**

Sugar Town Organics, founded in 2010 by a mother-daughter duo, is an agri-based social enterprise that offers authentic and healthy Caribbean cosmetics and tasty vegan food products. The company is creating sustainable value through eco-conscious practices to craft their unique products. Sugar Town Organics offers four product lines, including Marapa (luxury skincare), Flauriel (processed food), Yaphene (hair and body products) and Baba's Lullaby (nutrient rich baby skin products). The company is innovating to transform indigenous ingredients and offer their customers products that infuse Caribbean traditions and culture. Sugar Town Organics has its own mini farm where herbs and spices are grown, and it works with local farmers who supply other raw materials. Sugar Town Organics' products are sold locally and exported throughout the Caribbean, United States, European Union, United Kingdom and Taiwan.



**Shondel Abby Alexander, Founder and Owner, [Abby's Exotic Blends](#), St. Lucia**

Abby's Exotic Blends Ltd is an award winning agro-processing company producing a variety of unique, tasty and nourishing products from locally grown ingredients. The company offers a wide range of vegetable chips made of plantain, banana, sweet potato, breadfruit and dasheen. Its product range also includes alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages made from coffee, banana, sea moss, peanut and rum punch. The company meets all industry quality standards and aims to incorporate environmentally friendly practices in its production cycle to limit wastage and preserve energy consumption, all while ensuring the best tasting products.

Abby's Exotic Blends products can be found on the local market in Saint Lucia, and are also exported to neighbouring islands.



**Noelia Ruiz, Founder and CEO, [Empresas Noelia Ruiz Srl](#), Dominican Republic**

Noelia Ruiz SRL is a family business founded in 2014 that produces and markets high quality honey products under the brand Miel Noelia. Its main objective is to create value added, innovative and healthy honey-based products for the benefit and sustainability of beekeepers' livelihoods. The company is dedicated to the conservation of the environment and is driven by the aim of developing beekeeping as a prosperous and essential economic activity. It supports beekeeping producers in three provinces of the Dominican Republic, where it provides training and workshops for them and supports the social and economic inclusion of women beekeepers.