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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise Signs MOU with Japan International Cooperation Agency

Belmopan. December 16, 2021. 3:30 p.m.

Hon. Jose Abelardo Mai, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, today signed a memorandum of understanding with Mrs. Michiyo Hashiguchi, resident coordinator for Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), on the Development of Agriculture Cooperatives and the Improvement of Management Capacity.

The aim of the project is to increase onion and potato productivity and quality and extend storage capacity for four additional months after the harvest. This will increase the income generated by farmers and in turn help Belize in maintaining its food security status and decrease its food importation bill.

In his remarks, Minister Mai stated that the signing is another achievement of the Plan Belize manifesto, which depicts and addresses the commitment government has to ensure food sovereignty. He also said that the project meets the ministry's mandate to reduce food loss and waste by improving storage and logistics facilities, and investing in the development of new products from by-products and waste at the local levels by value adding and using processing technologies.

Mrs. Michiyo Hashiguchi gave an overview of the project development. She stated that the project, which costs a total of \$186,000 with Government of Belize supporting 15 percent in technical assistance, will be implemented before the start of the harvesting season. Four 40-foot cold storage units will be procured for farmers in the districts of Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize and Cayo. Training will be provided for farmers.

Present at the event were other personnel from the ministry and Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute.

Ends

For more information, please contact:

Mr. Luis Pook

Communication Officer

822-2241