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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Agriculture and JICA Partnership Empowers Local Pitahaya Farmers

Orange Walk. February 22, 2024.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Enterprise, in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), took a significant step towards bolstering Belize's pitahaya industry by distributing pitahaya cuttings to small-scale farmers in the Orange Walk and Cayo districts.

Mr. Barry Palacio, National Fruit Tree Coordinator at the ministry, and Mr. Yoshikazu Tachihara, Resident Representative of the JICA Belize Office, attended the distribution, which took place on February 9 and 14. The activity is a part of the "Advisory Services on with/Post COVID-19 Agricultural Value Chain Improvement in Belize," a collaborative project (the JICA Project) initiated in February 2023. A total of 59 pitahaya farmers received sixteen pitahaya cuttings each. The aim is to stimulate increased pitahaya production, enabling farmers to tap into local and global value chains, thereby enhancing their income-generating capacity.

The farmers participated in a field demonstration on tree management conducted by Mr. Israel Pech, a representative from the ministry. Mr. Palacio led a comprehensive lecture on business planning. Belize Marketing and Development Corporation gave presentations on market opportunities, and La Inmaculada Credit Union and the Development Finance Corporation presented on financial services available for farmers.

The next milestone in the pitahaya value chain development is the promotion of the fruit at the Agricultural Trade Show 2024, scheduled for late April. This initiative aligns with the overall objective of the JICA Project to empower Belizean farmers and strengthen the agricultural sector against the backdrop of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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