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PRESS RELEASE

Government Launches Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Project

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The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise today launched the project STDF/PG/682: “Piloting the use of Third-Party Assurance (TPA) Programmes in Central America (Belize and Honduras) to Improve Food Safety Outcomes for Public Health and Trade.”

The project is funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and implemented by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) at US\$619,916, with in-kind contribution for both countries at US\$322,696. The total value of the project is US\$942,612.

At the national level, IICA is collaborating with the National Coordinating Committee comprising the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), Belize Bureau of Standards (BBS), Pesticides Control Board, Directorate General for Foreign Trade, Belize Trade and Investment Development Service, and the beneficiary sectors.

The three sectors that will benefit from the pilot project in Belize are the poultry, beans and coconut sectors.

This project presents several opportunities for Belize:

- ❖ It seeks to empower a private sector to set its own standards modeled off international standards such as Codex Standards. Food business operators have the primary responsibility for the safety and quality of the food they produce. Thus, the training component of this project in inspection and auditing will enhance

their monitoring mechanism to prevent foodborne illnesses and improve food quality.

- ❖ All agencies involved in the national food control system will have the opportunity to improve collaboration and cooperation and identify strategies on how to maximize the use of already scarce resources.
- ❖ It will allow for the building of greater partnerships among the public and private sectors in areas related to food safety and quality.

The Government of Belize recognizes the need for institutional building and is committed to ensuring that the delivery of services of key trade facilitating institutions, like the BAHA and the BBS, adequately meet the needs of the private sector. However, meaningful institutional strengthening can only be achieved with the support and collaboration of the private sector, as they are the ones engaged in trade and commerce.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise reaffirms its commitment to the goals of improving safety and quality of our industries for all Belizeans.

Ends

A recording of the ceremony can be viewed on Facebook at the link below:
<https://www.facebook.com/maf.gov.bz/videos/1072559933264152>