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PRESS RELEASE

Handing Over of Cold Storage Units to Vegetable Farmers

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The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security & Enterprise and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), through the Development of Agricultural Cooperatives and the Improvement of its Management Capacity Project, handed over four 40-foot cold storage units to vegetable cooperative producers in Indian Creek, Orange Walk on March 16, 2022.

The event follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Government of Belize and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The project included procuring and retrofitting the four cold storage units to be used in the post-harvest storage of vegetables in Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize and Cayo districts. The cost of the project is \$186,000 of which 15% is being supported by the ministry in technical assistance.

The objectives of the project are to increase onion and potato productivity and quality, and extend storage capacity for four additional months after harvest, increasing income generated by farmers and reducing food loss and wastage.

In his remarks, Hon. Jose Abelardo Mai, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, mentioned that this is another achievement of the *Plan Belize* manifesto, which addresses the compromise government has to ensure food sovereignty and investment in the development of new products from by-products and limiting wastage at the local levels by value-adding and using processing technologies. Minister Mai also thanked the JICA personnel and the Government and people of Japan for their collaboration on the project.

His Excellency Kazuhiro Iryu, Japanese Ambassador to Belize, stressed that the Government of Japan is pleased to be able to assist Belize in achieving

its food sovereignty goals and to help farmers enhance productivity. He also mentioned that the project is in line with Japan's cooperation policy with Belize and will help diversify and strengthen the domestic economy of the country.

After the ceremony, the guests and officials inspected the cold storage facilities. The San Carlos vegetable producers also received a cold storage unit. It is temporarily located in Indian Creek while San Carlos receives electrification, after which the unit will be relocated.

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