



## GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE SIGNS MATCHING GRANT FUND AGREEMENTS WITH TWO PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS

### PRESS RELEASE

The **New River Farmers' Co-operative Society Ltd.** and the **Maya Green Growers Co-operative Society Ltd.** signed individual Matching Grant Fund Agreements with the Government of Belize.

The government, with financing of BZ\$40 million from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and participating beneficiaries, has embarked on a six-year programme called Resilient Rural Belize (RRB), which aims to minimize the impacts of climatic and economic events on small farmers while supporting sustainable market access for their produce.

The Programme Management Unit of the Be-Resilient Programme (PMU), acting through the Ministry of Finance, **Economic Development** and Investment (Lead Programme Agency) and working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, has overall responsibility for the programme implementation, including the administration and implementation of the programme's Matching Grant Fund (MGF). The aim is to support the achievement of the programme's objectives by co-financing investments that would improve, in volume and quality, small farmer agricultural production and safeguard food security in the context of existing and projected climate change effects. Working with producer organizations, the programme is providing support for the development of business plans, which identify proposed investments, including technical assistance and capacity building, aimed at achieving the above objectives, and which shall be used as the basis for accessing support from the MGF.

On December 2, 2021, the Government of Belize and the **New River Farmers' Co-operative Society Limited** signed an agreement for BZ\$255,530, which will provide support to the members of the co-operative to become more resilient by working cooperatively. The co-op is seeking to build an office, storage and marketing centre in the community and to hire a marketing and administrative officer to manage customers and suppliers. It will support members to receive, sort, store and sell all the produce from a proposed 17 acres of onions and six acres of carrots to be

cultivated both cooperatively and individually. Other activities will also include the financing of a capacity building plan to improve management, reduce chemical use, improve water management for irrigation, quality control and enhance gender equity.

New River Farmers' Co-operative Society Limited was duly registered on January 17, 1984, by the Department of Co-operatives. The MGF aims to increase the economic, social, and environmental resilience of the co-operative. It is expected that this investment will have a direct positive impact on 29 households representing the 39 members of the co-operative. A breakdown composition of the co-op is 26 men, 5 women and 8 youths (6 males and 2 females). The total number of final beneficiaries to be impacted by this investment is estimated to be 136 persons, including 41 women and 30 youths.

On December 6, 2021, the Government of Belize and the **Maya Green Growers Co-operative Society Limited** signed an agreement for BZ\$289,410, which aims to substantially improve decision-making among the farmers as they become active stakeholders in developing climate-resilient agriculture practices. A marketing, sorting and packaging facility (30' X 40') will be constructed and from which the office will also operate. In order to improve production and upskill members, a fertigation system will be provided for the two new covered structures. Water tanks will be procured and provided to the group members and for the two new covered structures to harvest irrigation water. Members' capacity will be improved through training and engagement in implementing activities while improving their understanding of the commodities (carrots, sweet pepper and tomato) they produce and market negotiations. There will also be an exchange of existing knowledge with other communities supporting the dissemination of good practices. Additionally, collective decision-making and the climate information system will enable advances in social and inter-community communication improving resilience and sustainable agriculture.

It is expected that this investment will have a direct positive impact on 14 households representing the 18 members of the co-operative. A breakdown composition of the co-op is 14 men, 4 women and 1 youth (female). The total number of final beneficiaries to be impacted by this investment is estimated at 58 persons, including 14 women and 7 youths.

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