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## PRESS RELEASE

### **MED and UB Collaborate on Agriculture Scientific Research Project**

*Belmopan. September 26, 2022. 3:40 p.m.*

Dr. Osmond Martinez, Chief Executive Officer for the Ministry of Economic Development (MED), and Dr. Geraldo Flowers, Program Manager for Resilient Rural Belize (RRB), today went on a site visit at the UB Central Farm Campus with Dr. Vincent Palacio, President of the University of Belize (UB), and his team.

The purpose of the visit was to view the progress of a joint research project involving tomato production using covered structures. The tour was conducted by Mr. Maximilliano Ortega, Central Farm Administrator, and Mr. Alfred Serano, RRB Climate Officer.

Tomato is a highly valued crop in Belize; therefore, it is crucial to protect, innovate, and enhance its production system. As such, farmers in Belize (like many other countries) are investing in covered structures to increase the yield of this product. However, there is little research available to scientifically evaluate the performance of tomato production in covered structures.

The MED, UB and RRB signed a memorandum of understanding in April 2022, for funding from the Government of Belize, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the Green Climate Fund, operating through the RRB project, to undertake a research study aimed at evaluating the performance of several improved varieties of tomatoes and/or hybrids for commercial production under covered structures. The funding totalled BZ\$100,000 for the construction of a covered structure at the UB Central Farm Campus, including seedling units, drip irrigation, land preparation and a corn barrier for pest control.

The study utilizes an experimental design and will compare growth and yield of several tomato varieties under covered structures and will recommend a tomato variety that has the best agronomic performance and organoleptic qualities. This project will also enhance the research capacity for crop and soil science at the University of Belize.

The aim is for a continued partnership between MED/RRB program and the University of Belize to conduct further research on using covered structures with other valued vegetables in Belize.

## **Ends**

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