



PR#442

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Government Officials Meet with the Banana Growers Association**

*Belmopan. September 2, 2021. 2:00 p.m.*

Hon. Michael Espat, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment, and Dr. Osmond Martinez, CEO in the Ministry of Economic Development, met with representatives of the Banana Growers Association (BGA) headed by Mr. Antonio Zabaneh and Mr. Eugene Zabaneh.

The purpose of the meeting was to get first-hand information on the state of the banana industry and discuss financing opportunities to boost one of the most important industries in Belize. The banana industry is vital for national economic growth and employment opportunities. According to the July 2021 report from the Statistical Institute of Belize, earnings from bananas went up from BZ\$5.3 million to BZ\$6.1 million.

Mr. Leroy Martinez, economist and focal point for the Green Climate Fund (GFC), presented on the financing opportunities from the GCF and other international and regional funding agencies that can assist with climate change impacts and other identified needs. Mr. Armando Aban, senior co-operative officer and focal point for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in the Ministry of Agriculture, presented on FAO's role in Belize and technical and financial opportunities available to support the agriculture sector.

The meeting was as a result of a GCF readiness project that was recently launched to boost the capacity of Belize's private sector to access climate finance for investments in climate change projects. The project is managed by government in collaboration with the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Caribbean Development Bank as the delivery partner that will implement the project.

Mr. Jose Novelo, Director of Projects Unit, Ministry of Agriculture; Ms. Genesis Tucker, Project Manager, GCF Private Sector Readiness; and other Banana Growers Association representatives including Mr. Michael Ferslev, Mr. Hezron Cadle, Mr. Antonio Zabaneh Jr. and Mr. Elroy Foreman also participated in the fruitful discussion.

## **Ends**

For more information, contact:

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