



PR#353

## PRESS RELEASE

### Minister of Agriculture Meets with OIRSA

*Belmopan. June 25, 2021. 5:00 p.m.*

Hon. Jose Abelardo Mai, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, received a courtesy visit from Mr. Efrain Medina Guerra, executive director of OIRSA, to discuss technical cooperation between both entities.

Key issues discussed included regional projects implemented in Belize, local projects financed by OIRSA, and a project proposal submitted to the ministry for approval. Also discussed was the giant African snail that was recently detected in Costa Rica, raising alarm for other member countries. The presence of this pest triggered a declaration of a regional emergency to control and prevent its spread.

OIRSA has assigned financial resources to train a technician from the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) in entomology to assist with the diagnostic capacity of plant health. Additionally, OIRSA provided financial assistance to cover the costs of gathering and submitting documentation for review to the International Organization for Animal Health to declare Belize free of classical swine fever (hog cholera).

Also present for the meeting were Mr. Fermin Blanco, country representative for OIRSA in Belize; Mr. Francisco Gutierrez, director of BAHA; Mr. Marco Castro, financial controller of OIRSA; Mr. Abelardo de Gracia, regional animal health director; and Mr. Raul Rodas, regional director for quarantine services.

#### **Ends**

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