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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Agriculture Celebrates OIRSA's 68th Anniversary and 38th Regional Agricultural Health Day 2021

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Today, the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, and the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), virtually celebrated the 68th anniversary of OIRSA in Central America and the 38th Regional Agriculture Health Day.

Belize became a member country of OIRSA on March 26, 1996. Since then, OIRSA has been pivotal in its objectives and development plans to promote plant and animal health as well as food safety and quarantine services in the country. Many programs have been successfully implemented and have positively contributed to the ultimate objective of a strong development plan for Belize.

The global markets and the transformational technology of services via online platforms has taken the world to a new level of work, challenging agriculture to adapt and survive in these times. The lack of human and financial resources brings opportunities for change and adaptation. Over the week, a quarantine inspector graduated after successfully completing a 10-week training course in Panama in handling and managing a canine unit. The inspector will assist BAHA in the pre-inspection services at the Philip Goldson International Airport. This initiative will enhance the services provided by BAHA in protecting Belize from exotic pests and diseases.

Present at the event was Hon. Jose Abelardo Mai, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, who highlighted that safe and nutritious food is dependent on good agricultural practices in the agricultural productive sector, which is threatened by pests and diseases like the African Swine Fever for the pig industry, Avian Influenza and Newcastle disease in poultry, Mad Cow disease, and rabies; and in plants, pests like *Fusarium oxysporum* Tropical Race 4 (Mal de Panama) in bananas, the Giant African Snail, and stored product pests like the *Trogoderma granarium*. The minister also commended the marvelous work OIRSA, BAHA, and the private sector are doing in supporting the development of the Agriculture Sector.

Ends

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