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PRESS RELEASE

MET Establishes Bi-Monthly Meetings to Boost Transparency and Efficiency in Sugar Industry

Belmopan, January 9, 2026.

Dr. Hon. Osmond Martinez, Minister of State in the Ministry of Economic Transformation, convened a meeting with key stakeholders from the northern sugarcane industry to review preparations for the 2026 crop season. The 2026 crop is scheduled to begin on January 19, 2026. Supporting Minister Martinez were Mr. Carlos Pol, Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Economic Transformation, and Dr. Marcelino Avila, Senior Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister. The meeting formed part of the Ministry's ongoing efforts to strengthen coordination, transparency, and joint decision-making across the sugarcane value chain.

During the meeting, the Ministry of Economic Transformation reaffirmed its commitment to the northern sugarcane industry by establishing bi-monthly stakeholder meetings to be held at the Sugar Industry Control Board (SICB) Conference Room in Buena Vista, Corozal. These meetings will include representatives from the SICB, the Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute (SIRDI), Belize Sugar Industries/American Sugar Refining (BSI/ASR), the Sugar Cane Production Committee (SCPC), and the four cane farmers' associations—Northern Sugar Cane Growers Association, Progressive Sugar Cane Producers Association, Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association, and Corozal Sugar Cane Producers Association.

In his remarks at the first stakeholder meeting of 2026, Dr. Hon. Martinez underscored the Government's resolve to ensure that all actors in the sugar industry work toward a common vision of a resilient, competitive, and farmer-focused sector. He emphasized that the newly established bi-monthly meetings would serve as a permanent platform for reviewing progress, addressing emerging issues, and maintaining open dialogue among farmers' associations, the mill, and regulatory bodies.

Stakeholders reviewed mill readiness for the 2026 crop, during which BSI/ASR confirmed plans to begin steam trials on Friday, January 9, 2026. The meeting also addressed key support measures, including the fuel subsidy and the waiver of licenses for sugarcane transport units.

Participants received updates on sugar road works, which were identified as critical to the timely and efficient delivery of cane during the harvest period. To improve coordination and oversight, participants agreed to establish a technical committee. The committee will include representatives from major institutions to work alongside the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH) on road maintenance. As part of this initiative, Dr. Martinez indicated that he would lead a field visit on January 12, 2026, to assess priority road sections and advise on immediate follow-up actions.

The meeting concluded with the scheduling of the next coordination session for January 16, 2026, thereby formalizing a bi-monthly meeting schedule throughout the crop season. This regular forum is expected to strengthen planning, improve responsiveness to weather and logistical challenges, and ensure that interventions deliver clear benefits to cane farmers and the wider industry.

Through these recurring engagements, the Ministry of Economic Transformation and its partners reaffirmed their collective commitment to modernizing Belize's sugar industry and safeguarding the livelihoods of thousands of sugarcane farmers and workers across northern Belize.

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