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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Agriculture Hosts Exchange Program for Southern Farmers in Cayo District

Belmopan, April 1, 2026.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and New Growth Industries, through the Department of Co-operatives, held an agricultural exchange program on Monday, March 30, 2026, in the Cayo District, bringing together farmers from the Stann Creek District. The initiative aimed to strengthen knowledge-sharing and expose southern farmers to modern agricultural production systems and technologies.

The program opened with remarks from Hon. Rodwell Ferguson, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security, and New Growth Industries, and Hon. Alex Balona, Minister of State, who underscored the Government's commitment to policies that drive job creation, improve livelihoods, and boost GDP and foreign exchange earnings.

Highlights of the exchange included:

- **Sayab Farmers' Co-operative Society Limited:** Farmers toured cover-structure production systems and processing facilities, observing value-added practices and marketing strategies. Crops included lettuce, kale, herbs, and sweet peppers, with produce distributed to major markets such as San Ignacio, San Pedro, Caye Caulker, Placencia, and Belize City.
- **Oxmul Farmers' Co-operative:** Participants witnessed open-field systems enhanced by plastic mulching, drip irrigation, fertigation, and smart agriculture sensor technology. Crops such as cantaloupes, papayas, and watermelons showcased how modern methods deliver higher productivity and improved returns.

- Maya Green Growers Co-operative: Farmers observed peanut and carrot cultivation and saw a carrot washer in action. “This machine does the work of three farmers,” noted the chairman, emphasizing how co-operative philosophy strengthens member commitment and bonds.
- San Antonio Women’s Co-operative Society: Over a working lunch, members shared their journey from a small chicken project to a medium-sized enterprise, highlighting diversification and resilience.
- Agro-processing Unit, Central Farm: The laboratory team presented innovative products, including a new plantain, cassava, and cheese-based item introduced by Dr. Maria Yacab, with strong potential in Belize’s local market.

Southern farmers expressed enthusiasm for the innovations and co-operative models demonstrated. Many confirmed their continued interest in formalizing and registering new co-operatives in the near future.

Ends

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