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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Agriculture Establishes Vegetable Interdiction Team

Belmopan, August 2, 2023.

To combat the issue of contraband in the agriculture sector, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise has established a standing Vegetable Interdiction Team (VIT) comprising officials from various government departments and agencies.

The VIT includes representatives from the ministry's Extension Service and Supplies Control Unit, the Customs Department, the Belize Agricultural Health Authority, Belize Marketing and Development Corporation, and the Mobile Interdiction Team of the Police Department.

On July 24, Hon. Jose Abelardo Mai, Minister of Agriculture; Servulo Baeza, CEO in the ministry, and members of the VIT held a meeting with farmers and producers from the districts of Orange Walk, Corozal, and Belize at the Yo Creek Agriculture Station in the Orange Walk District. During the meeting, concerns were raised about the increase in contraband activities, the presence of illegal vegetables and fruits in local markets, and the challenges farmers face in selling their products due to the competition with contraband items.

The VIT pledged to intensify collaborative efforts and increase the frequency and effectiveness of its operations. As a result of the increased surveillance and monitoring, the VIT has confiscated a significant quantity of contraband vegetables, including 1,278 pounds of cabbage, 2,253 pounds of onions, 983 pounds of tomatoes, 86 pounds of habanero peppers and 130 pounds of sweet peppers, valued at \$16,190.40.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise reminds the public that acquiring illegally obtained vegetable products may result in the confiscation of such products and imposition of fines. The VIT will continue its heightened frequency of actions to ensure Belizean products are protected, and the ministry assures its unwavering support for farmers as they relentlessly work to ensure the food security of the nation.

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