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PRESS RELEASE

CSIDS SOILCARE Project Launched in Belize

Belmopan, May 22, 2023.

Today, the Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, and the Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute (SIRDI), officially launched the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (CSIDS) multicountry soil management initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and climate-resilient food systems (SOILCARE). The project, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), was launched with a soil survey and intervention site assessment workshop at the SIRDI conference room in the Corozal District.

The assessment team from the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) is in Belize to conduct assessments between May 22 and 26 in preparation for Belize's national soil survey. Sampling is planned for two intervention sites in the sugarcane belt in the Corozal District. Recently, soil assessments at intervention sites were completed in Jamaica, St. Lucia, and Grenada. Antigua and Barbuda's survey will begin after this week in Belize. Once assessments are completed, national soil surveys will be planned and executed for each SOILCARE participating country.

The welcome address at the workshop was delivered by Ms. Michelle Alvarez, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification National Focal Point from the Ministry of Natural Resources. Mr. Elberto Cowo, SIRDI technical officer, presented on a capacity building training in digital soil mapping received in Trinidad and Tobago via PISLM Regional Research, Advisory, and Capacity Building Facility on New Adaptation Technologies, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, and the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus.

Mr. Trevor Thompson, Regional Project Manager, provided an in-depth overview of the SOILCARE project. Mr. Steve Maximay, Climate Smart Agriculture and Marketing Expert, presented on the interlocking development goals of SOILCARE. Dr. Ronan Francis, land and soil expert, did a comprehensive presentation on soil visual analysis and interpretation, followed by a hands-on introduction to soil sampling in preparation for two days of scheduled field exercises at the assessment sites.

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, SIRDI, and participating stakeholders look forward to a productive week and the initiation of national activities for the implementation of the SOILCARE project.

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