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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Ministry of Investment Launches Vanilla Cultivation Training Pilot Project**

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The Ministry of Investment in collaboration with the National Women's Commission (NWC), the Centro Escolar Mexico Junior College (CEMJC), and Belize Agro Forestry Development Services officially launched a first-of-its-kind Vanilla Cultivation Training Pilot Project.

Through this initiative, 26 women from the Corozal District will benefit from training on growing and reaping vanilla, with the goal of increasing income-generating opportunities for women in rural Belize. The training consists of six sessions which include an introduction to vanilla, cutting and preparation of nursery bags, raised bed construction, identification of pests and diseases, vine management, flower induction and pollination, and harvesting, curing, selection, and grading of vanilla beans. With the successful establishment of the pilot project in Corozal, the Government of Belize plans to expand the initiative to other districts.

Vanilla, which is native to Belize, is a new emerging sector that can stimulate economic activity in the Corozal District. A popular spice, it is used all over the world in beverages, desserts, baking goods, cosmetics, and for industrial purposes. It is ranked as the second most expensive spice in the world due to its labour-intensive cultivation. With interest from several companies abroad to purchase Belizean-grown vanilla, the government recognizes the economic opportunity that exists on the world market.

Present at the opening of the training were Hon. Ramiro Ramirez, Minister of State in the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Local Government and Labour; Mrs. Narda Garcia, CEO in the Office of the Prime Minister and Investment; Mrs. Thea Garcia-Ramirez, President of the NWC; Mr. Hugo Gonzalez, Dean of CEMJC; and representatives from the Investment Policy and Compliance Unit, Ministry of Agriculture, BELTRAIDE and SIRD.

#### **Ends**

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