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PRESS RELEASE

Rehabilitated Nago Bank Road Provides Increased Market Access for Farming Cooperative

Belmopan, February 17, 2023.

Today, the Resilient Rural Belize (RRB) Programme and the Ministry of Economic Development held an official ceremony to open Nago Bank Road in the Belize District. Present were Mr. Marconi Leal, Jr., on behalf of the Area Representative for Belize Rural North; Dr. Osmond Martinez, Chief Executive Officer for the Ministry of Economic Development; Mr. Servulo Baeza, Chief Executive Officer for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise; Mr. Victor Espat, Chief Executive Officer for the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing; Mr. Valentino Shal, Chief Executive Officer for the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government; and Mr. Ruben Alexander Pineda, Chairman for the Los Pequeños Agricultores y Ganaderos de Nago Bank Co-operative Society Limited.

The Nago Bank community is identified as one of the most productive farming communities in the Belize District; however, they were severely limited in their ability to efficiently move their products from their farms to the markets. Originally, access was limited to tractor trails leading into the community that was best usable only during the dry season. During the rainy

season, on the other hand, produce was brought out either by tractor, horse-drawn carriages, or four-wheel drive vehicles that were available within the community. Additionally, the movement of children to the schools and medical personnel coming into the community was severely limited.

As such, the RRB adopted the primary farming cooperative from the community, Los Pequeños Agricultores y Ganaderos de Nago Bank, as a key stakeholder to provide input towards establishing a roadway alignment and design development. This cooperative currently has over 15,000 tomato plants under cultivation and an equal number of sweet peppers, watermelons, and other such vegetables. It also has a contractual arrangement to deliver plantains to plantain chip facilities.

Given the amount of produce harvested in the community and the need for easy access to markets, a contract valuing BZ\$1,734,102.34 for the upgrade of the Nago Bank Road was signed on May 9, 2022, between the Government of Belize and Teichroeb & Sons Limited. The upgrade was officially completed on January 11, 2023.

In his remarks, CEO Martinez emphasized that the roadway was primarily designed to provide year-round access for the farmers in Nago Bank to support climate-resilient productivity and improved market access through rehabilitation and provision of new roads and drainage. He further shared his delight for the community, who can now utilize the new road to generate an income for their families and for easier accessibility to educational and healthcare services.

The Resilient Rural Belize and the Ministry of Economic Development extend their gratitude to the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing, CEO Espat, and Mr. Lennox Bradley, Chief Engineer for the project, for their contribution to the upgrade of the Nago Bank Road, inclusive of the production design and supervision of the construction process and maintenance of the road.

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