

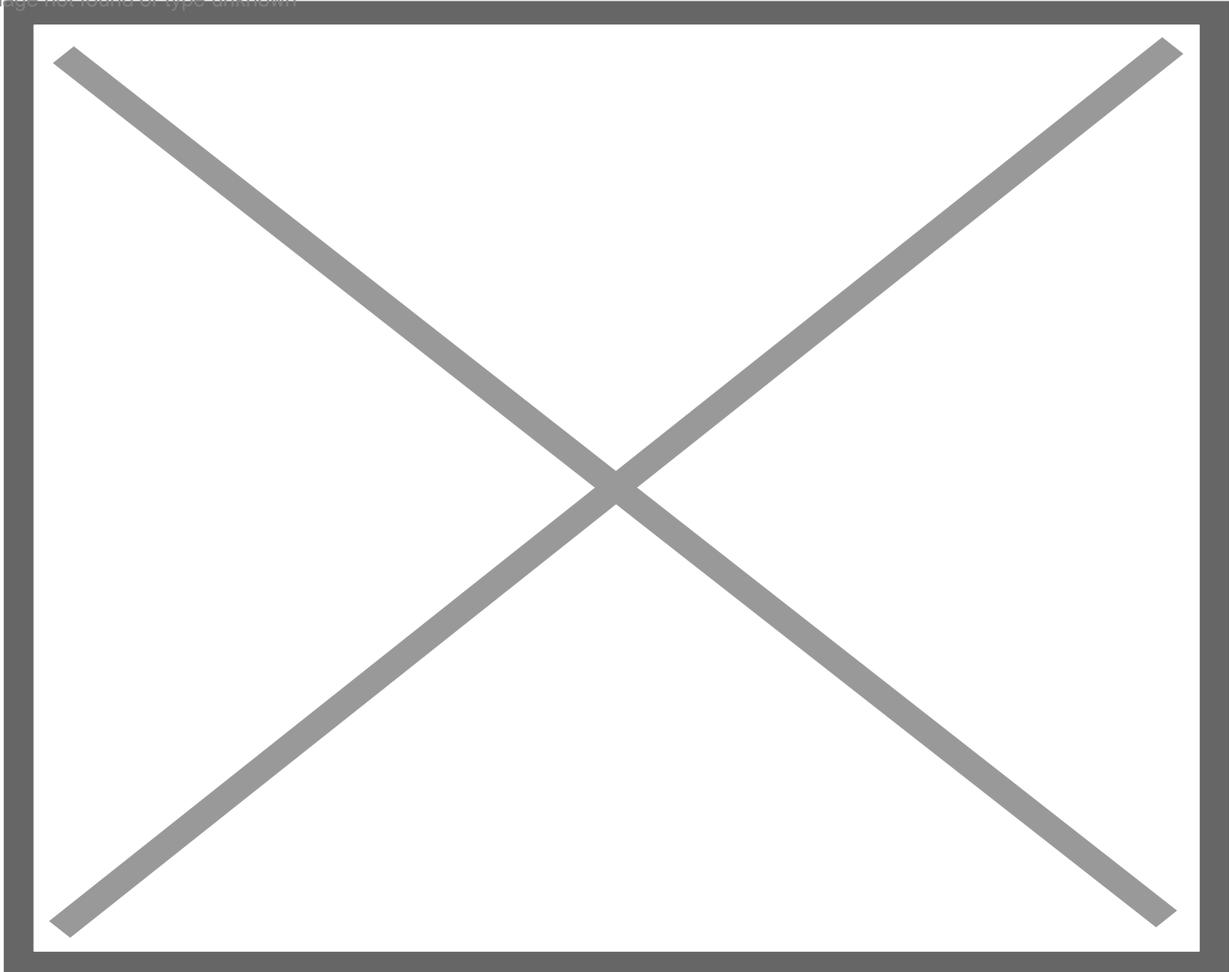
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St. Lucia Farmers Graduate from Production Enhancement Program

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ST. LUCIA — The Government of Saint Lucia in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), recently hosted a graduation ceremony for farmers who participated in a production enhancement program for fruits and vegetables, the government said.

The program, titled the Enhancement of the Efficiency of Production-Distribution Supply Chains in the Fruit and Vegetable Sector in Saint Lucia, aims to assist farmers with production and marketing strategies, and forms part of the government's plan to reduce the food import bill.

Barry Innocent, Deputy Director at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Natural Resources, Planning and Cooperatives, said crop imports cost the country about \$4.5 million per year.

“These are crops that we can grow,” he said. “Farmers, listen to me. This project aims to help you produce these foods.”

Mr. Innocent noted that new technological equipment such as specialized greenhouses will be provided via the Taiwanese Technical Mission.

Mario Cheng, Head of the Taiwanese Technical Mission, said the initiative will also help farmers meet international food and safety standards.

“This new project will bring new information to our farmers to intensify their capacity to produce,” Mr. Cheng said. “Also important is the farmer training program.”

Local Farmer, Kimran Augustin, expressed gratitude to the Government of Saint Lucia and the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) for the opportunity.

“We appreciate everything that you do,” Mr. Augustin said. “We hope to make the project a success so that the Taiwanese can boast about the success in their country.”

The Enhancement of the Efficiency of Production–Distribution Supply Chains in the Fruits and Vegetables Sector project will focus on seven crops—cabbages, lettuce, watermelons, cantaloupes, bell peppers, pineapples, and tomatoes—over a three- year period.