

## The IICA-CBF EbA project starts drone training for community-based ecosystem monitoring



*Participants at the first day of community drone training. Addressing them is Dr. Eben Broadbent of the University of Florida and June Jackson, Executive Director of the Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development (GARD) Center (Photo: IICA Antigua)*

**St. John's Antigua. September 13, 2022 (IICA).** Community drone training commenced today for the IICA-CBF EbA Project in Antigua and Barbuda. These 9 'drone pilot' trainees are part of 40 persons to be trained to use drones to monitor important vulnerable ecosystems which form part of the EbA project's target zones. Once trained, the drone pilots will manage monthly drone flights over specifically, pre-programmed areas to monitor and document changes in the landscape. This process will continue over the next 6 months, to the end of the EbA project in March 2023.

Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture Extension Division in Antigua and Barbuda were included in the training session along with persons from the community. National Specialist, IICA Delegation in Antigua and Barbuda, Craig Thomas, explained their in-country approach is *"to work together in harmonization to look at how we can improve on mapping selected areas within GARD and also within the Ministry of Agriculture."* Mr.

Thomas spoke positively about the use of drone technology as an innovative approach in agriculture, aligned with IICA's efforts in the country to promote data and statistics research.

UF's Dr. Broadbent, drone training facilitator, was pleased with the attendance and participation of the trainees, remarking, *"They have done exemplary. Learning quickly lots of complicated technology... We're going to have an afternoon flying drones around, collecting data."* The group is learning to operate the DJI Air 2S Fly More Combo Drone with RC Pro Remote Controller, which is equipped with visual sensors. After this morning's sessions, Adrian Bowen, lead drone technician in Antigua and Barbuda under the EbA Project, reflected, *"I enjoyed the different sessions, looking at the drones, the different parts, setting up of the mission plans, and eventually the flying of the plans. I look forward to putting it in an application state, seeing how it's going to be done, and what we can do with the data afterwards."*



*Community drone pilot trainees make their first flights at the GARD Center (Photo: IICA Antigua)*

Data collected by the community-based drone pilots will reflect losses and gains in vegetation cover, including vetiver, the nature-based tool adopted by the project to help mitigate sediment and soil loss and erosion in the rural communities where the project is being implemented. The results from this ecosystem monitoring will complement yearly Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data collection by project partner, University of Florida (UF) to measure the impacts of the vetiver installations. The first round of LiDAR baseline mapping occurred in September/October 2021 and the next round of LiDAR collection will take place in October this year.

Community drone training continues in Dominica from September 15th to 16th, with a second mission planned for Saint Lucia and Tobago at the end of the month.

### **About EbA Project**

The Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) Project, "Strengthening Coastal and Marine Climate Resilience through Upland and Coastal Ecosystem Based Adaptation and Community

Engagement,” is funded by the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF) EbA Facility, and supported by the Government of Germany through the German Development Bank (KfW) with resources from the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The project is being implemented by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), along with partners IAMovement, and the University of Florida, as well as community-based organizations in the four participating countries: Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Center (A&B), Petite Soufriere San Sauveur Village Council (DOM), Canaries Community Improvement Foundation (SLU), and Environment Tobago (TOB).

### **About IICA**

IICA is the specialized agency for agriculture in the Inter-American system, with a mission to encourage, promote and support its 34 Member States in their efforts to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being through international technical cooperation of excellence.

More information:

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