

Georgetown, Guyana

Food and Nutrition Security Institute team preparing for next phase of work

The team that is studying the feasibility of the establishment of an Institute of Food and Nutrition Security (IFANS) at The University of Guyana (UG) is preparing for a key next phase of its work, which is, visits to model food security entities abroad in forthcoming weeks. At the top of the list is the Center for Food Security and Entrepreneurship at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill, headed by distinguished scientist Professor Leonard O’Garro, who is co-chair of the UG feasibility team.

The team was appointed earlier this year by Vice-Chancellor Professor Ivelaw Griffith following a national stakeholders consultation held last November, at which Minister of Agriculture Noel Holder delivered the keynote address and which involved officials from the Ministries of Agriculture, Public Health and Education, the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, Inter-American Institute of Cooperation for Agriculture (IICA), the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI), and university officials.

The FAO, whose Representative in Guyana, Mr Reuben Robertson, is a member of the feasibility team, has provided UG with a US\$50,000 grant to support the team’s work. The 35-member, broad-based team is co-chaired by Vincentian-born Professor O’Garro, Founding Director of the Center for Food Security and Entrepreneurship at UWI in Barbados, and Guyanese-born distinguished food scientist Professor Verian Thomas of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee, Florida.

The team’s inaugural meeting was a two-day exercise on January 25 and 26, 2018. On the first day members of the team held Look, Listen, and Learn sessions at Global Seafood Distributors, GSA, NAREI, Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA), and the Satyadeow Sawh Aquaculture Station. On the second day, the full team met at the Turkeyen Campus to begin work on goals, the design of the Institute, and a timeline for action, among other things. In attendance were representatives from the Edward Beharry Group of Companies, the Ministries of Public Health, Agriculture, Communities, and Education, FAO, IICA, Demerara Distillers Ltd, GLDA, and UG.

Vice-Chancellor Griffith wrapped up the day’s proceedings with a charge to team members to remain engaged with the process, inform colleagues at their institutions and to help garner public support for the initiative. He also encouraged them to seek to leverage resources to aid the work of the feasibility team and of the Institute when it is formally established. The team undertook to present a first draft report to the Vice-Chancellor by the end of June, after which there will stakeholder consultations in various parts of the country to discuss the report before it is finalised. Also, on February 28 Vice Chancellor Griffith and members of the feasibility team updated Minister Holder on the team’s work.

According to Vice-Chancellor Griffith, “the advent of oil and gas makes it even more important that we do not forget the essence of what we are—an agricultural nation, with wonderful potential to satisfy national and regional food and nutrition needs. I trust our nation will use some of the soon-to-be available oil and gas bounty to invest intentionally in agriculture and education.” He added, “It would be great to launch the Institute on this year’s World Food Day, in October.”

###

UG IN BRIEF

With a current enrollment of some 8,000 students, The University of Guyana (UG) has graduated more than 20,000 students who have gone on to successful careers locally, regionally and internationally. The University is also a major contributor to the national economy and to business and industry. Established in 1963 on a part-time basis with shared space at Queens College, UG moved to its own campus at Turkeyen in 1970 and expanded in 2000 with the addition of the Tain Campus. It now offers more than 60 Under-graduate and Post-graduate Programmes including Engineering, Environmental Studies, Forestry, Urban Planning and Management, Business, Entrepreneurship, Tourism Studies, Education, Creative Arts, Economics, Law, Medicine, Optometry and Nursing. Several online programmes are available and UG also offers extra-mural classes at four locations through its Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE). The UG also offers the opportunity for student engagement in debating, sports, and cultural, religious and professional activities.

Public Relations Division
March 20, 2018