



## Green Market Santa Cruz: A local green-blue enterprise in Trinidad and Tobago

2019

CASE STUDY #2: Local Green-Blue Enterprises in the Caribbean

This case study reflects findings of a process using CANARI's **Local Green-Blue Enterprise Radar**<sup>1</sup>. This is a tool to help local community small and micro-enterprises assess how they are delivering 'triple-bottom line' benefits (economic, environmental and social) and good governance, and what are possible areas for improvement. A focus group session is facilitated with members of the enterprise and they are asked to assess how they think the business is doing based on a set of indicators. Each indicator is discussed, and members agree on a ranking for each. The ranking for each indicator is placed on a spider diagram, which visually represents a snapshot of how the enterprise is delivering benefits. The rich discussion helps members of the enterprise work together to assess how they are doing and areas where they want to grow.

### Introduction to the enterprise

The Green Market Santa Cruz (Green Market) a social enterprise which comprises a farmers market and farm and aims to foster healthier and more sustainable local production and consumption in Trinidad and Tobago. It operates as a social enterprise located in the lush Santa Cruz valley in the hills of Trinidad's Northern Range.

The Santa Cruz valley was formerly important for cacao production and much of the valley still consists of abandoned cacao plantations as well as small-scale farming and residential development. Santa Cruz is located between Maraval and San Juan and is an important town which connects to the north coast villages and the capital, Port of Spain. The economic activity in Santa Cruz is quite diverse, with small and micro-enterprises (SMEs) considered to be important employers and revenue earners for the town. Agriculture also provides employment, but to a lesser extent.

Green Market was launched in 2012 to foster community-based sustainable development in Santa Cruz. It is managed by a Board of Directors with 10 staff. The farmers market is situated on three-quarters of an acre in the San Antonio Estate. Green Market is part of a five-acre working farm, owned by one of the co-founders and designed with low-impact architecture to blend into the natural landscape.



Green Market Santa Cruz is a local farmers market located on a working farm in the Santa Cruz valley. PHOTO COURTESY: GREEN MARKET SANTA CRUZ

<sup>1</sup> See here for more information on the Local Green-Blue Enterprises Radar and CANARI's work: <http://www.canari.org/programmes/issue-programmes/green-economy>



Green Market connects small organic farmers directly with consumers at the farmers market who are interested in buying healthier produce. PHOTO BY: CANARI

Green Market operates the for-profit local farmers market and onsite farm in addition to other activities such as education and awareness initiatives. This supports its primary aims of promoting healthier and more sustainable production and consumption and environmental conservation, while also generating income to sustain itself, staff and volunteers. It is the first synthetic chemical-free farmers market in Trinidad and has been the model for other farmers markets which have been established by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

Green Market aims to link farmers who practice sustainable farming methods directly with markets. In so doing, it generates income and revenue for small farmers and eliminates middlemen, while promoting sustainable farming practices that are synthetic chemical free. This provides the Santa Cruz and national communities and consumers with better and healthier food choices. Green Market also seeks to stimulate sustainable natural resource-based entrepreneurship by supporting local artisans and entrepreneurs to transform locally sourced raw materials into artisanal products and secondary and tertiary goods for sale to consumers. The farmers market is open on Saturday mornings. As well as fresh produce, the farmers market offers local honey, handmade crafts and foods which use local ecosystem goods and services.



Through its “local content” policy for selection of vendors, artisan products sold at GMSC are locally handcrafted or incorporate local or recycled materials. PHOTO COURTESY: GREEN MARKET SANTA CRUZ.

Green Market also engages in farmer and consumer awareness and education activities to promote sustainable farming and healthy foods. Its staff work with farmers to eliminate the use of synthetic chemical pesticides and fertilizers and genetically modified seeds through knowledge sharing and demonstrations on farming practices. Some staff and volunteers are also involved in Edible Talks which are hosted at the farmers market and are public awareness sessions which advocate for healthy and sustainable lifestyles as well as environmental protection and preservation. Green Market also hosts themed market days (e.g. the Avocado and Breadfruit Festival) to build awareness on local foods and products and profiles environmental conservation issues on special

days (e.g. World Soils Day). Green Market is currently Styrofoam-free and is working on eliminating single-use plastics at the farmers market.

Some staff members are also involved in the onsite farm which utilizes low impact farming methods with low/no synthetic chemical inputs for growing herbs, fruits and vegetables and rearing free-range chickens and ducks. The produce and eggs from the onsite farm are sold at the farmers market, thereby generating revenue for Green Market. Schools can also book tours for school children to learn about organic farming practices being utilised at the onsite farm.

## Economic benefits of the enterprise

Green Market provides employment through their operations and activities such as the onsite farm, educational activities and market days. Employing persons enables greater buy-in and support for its work while also sharing knowledge of sustainable farming practices and healthy foods with the national community.



Green Market's Community Supported Agriculture programme is a weekly local produce box subscription where consumers pay in advance and collect weekly at the market. This ensures ready buyers and income security for the farmers. PHOTO COURTESY: GREEN MARKET SANTA CRUZ

Green Market also allows sharing of benefits amongst their vendors and farmers, through enabling market access to local artisans and small farmers for their healthier, synthetic chemical-free produce and local handcrafted products. Some Green Market farmers also participate in the Community Supported Agriculture programme, which is a weekly local produce box subscription paid in advance which guarantees income security for farmers who grow healthier produce.

The activities and projects that Green Market are involved in also build strong economic linkages between its farmers, consumers and the community. The market provides a space for building direct relationships between farmers, local entrepreneurs and the public around healthy, local foods and artisan products. Green Market also noted that six vendors who were part of the farmers market have now either successfully launched their products in mainstream retail stores or have

opened their own shops. Green Market has sought to improve financial sustainability for the enterprise through various activities such as growing and selling of organic produce from its onsite farm at the farmers market and through the Community Supported Agriculture programme as well as offering school tours and workshops on healthy nutrition and sustainable farming practices.

Despite being a social enterprise, Green Market feels that there is room to improve on collective ownership/shareholding. They have sought to institute policies to encourage collective ownership of the market, such as a market improvement fund whereby a small weekly fee is collected from farmers and vendors who would decide how these monies will be used to improve the market. However, this has yet to be implemented.

## Environmental benefits of the enterprise



Green Market's on-site farm uses grow boxes to grow herbs, medicinal plants and other short crops which are sold at the farmers market and through the Community Supported Agriculture programme PHOTO BY: CANARI.

Green Market utilises good environmental management practices since their operations and activities generally minimise or avoid polluting the soil, air and water and conserve biodiversity. The farming methods used at the onsite farm are low impact, non-polluting, resource efficient and protective of the terrestrial ecosystem. In addition, the farmer policies and selection criteria seek to ensure that produce sold at the Green Market are grown using low synthetic chemical inputs and integrated crop protection and pest management methods, which indirectly supports

reducing soil and water pollution. In 2019, Green Market expects to formally launch its model organic farm which will demonstrate chemical free and sustainable farming practices such as grow box farming and hot composting.

Green Market generally engages in sound water use practices, especially on the on-site farm, since the Santa Cruz valley experiences annual water deficits. It intends to install a rainwater harvesting system on the duck and chicken coops soon to improve their water collection and storage abilities on the farm. Furthermore, Green Market strongly believes that the enterprise's electricity use can be more efficient, particularly on the on-site farm.

## Social benefits of the enterprise

Green Market strongly encourages buying and using local goods and through its farmers market and projects, it continues to support local farmers and entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago. The enterprise has a "local content" policy for selection of vendors, whereby products must be locally produced or handcrafted and should strive to incorporate local or recycled materials as much as possible. Through this policy, the products sold at Green Market are at least 80% local. Samples of products are also required from artisans before they can be vetted to sell at the market to ensure that the "local content" policy is being upheld.

Since its inception, Green Market has continued to foster partnerships with academia, private sector and civil society, both locally and internationally, to support and carry out its activities and projects. In 2017, for example, it launched an eco-literacy initiative called EcoMinds in partnership with the University of the West Indies with sponsorship from Atlantic LNG, where school children from two



Students from nearby Santa Cruz schools take part in Green Market's EcoMinds project which takes place on the farm and promotes life skills through learning about organic farming methods and healthy nutrition. PHOTO COURTESY: GREEN MARKET SANTA CRUZ.

nearby schools in Santa Cruz were taught life skills through sustainable farming and learning about healthy foods in the EcoMinds Community Garden located on the farm. This initiative will continue in 2019.

Green Market noted that the enterprise does not directly engage in capacity building and empowerment activities. However, through their policies and selection criteria they have indirectly encouraged small farmers and local artisans to 'green' their current practices and products. In addition, by connecting farmers with local and international experts, the enterprise has indirectly supported building capacity of farmers through facilitating sharing of best practices on sustainable farming.

## Governance of the enterprise



Through awareness and education initiatives like Edible Talks held at the farmers market, Green Market shares knowledge on environmental conservation and sustainable consumption and production with farmers, vendors, consumers and the general public. PHOTO COURTESY: GREEN MARKET SANTA CRUZ.

Green Market continues to positively build common vision amongst its staff, volunteers, farmers and consumers on the key principles of the Green Market since its inception. Through implementing its farmer and vendor selection policies, for example, the enterprise has shared its common vision of promoting synthetic chemical-free produce, encouraging sustainable farming practices and buying and supporting local. Staff do farm visits before vetting farmers who wish to sell at the Green Market to ensure that their policies and guidelines are being met. In so doing, the Green Market continues to advocate for a nationally accepted organic or agroecological standard.

Green Market is also very good at engaging with stakeholders and sharing knowledge on healthy nutrition, sustainable farming practices and environmental conservation issues with its farmers, vendors, consumers. It does this through its public awareness and farmer education initiatives and its social media pages. However, Green Market noted the need for developing appropriate impact measurement tools for its activities to measure shifts in behavior and decision-making amongst stakeholders to support achieving its vision.

A key area of improvement was noted to be sharing of decision-making amongst staff. Improved delegation of tasks and powers was needed to ensure that key managers were not overburdened with too many tasks while staff would improve in their work efficiency, prioritisation and leadership skills. In addition, some staff agreed that recognition by managers would help to increase motivation amongst staff.

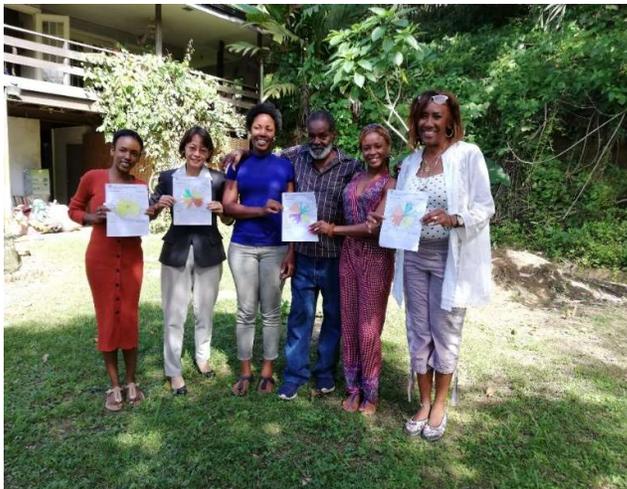
## A bright future ahead

Green Market is achieving success as a local green-blue enterprise in Trinidad and Tobago, from directly linking small farmers to consumers who want healthier synthetic chemical-free foods at its farmers market to promoting buying and supporting local through its 'local content' policy.

The enterprise has identified a few key areas for improvement to help strengthen its impact in delivering economic, environmental and social co-benefits and good governance including:

- becoming more energy efficient, especially on the onsite farm;
- improving collective ownership and shareholding amongst vendors;
- developing impact measurement tools to measure shifts in behaviours and decision-making amongst stakeholders; and
- increasing the sharing of decision-making amongst staff to improve work efficiency and prioritisation.

Overall, Green Market is a sound example of what it means to be part of an inclusive, green and resilient economy. The enterprise has expanded its activities from the farmers market and the on-site farm to consumer and farmer awareness initiatives such as Edible Talks and community-based environmental education projects such as EcoMinds. These activities ensure that Green Market continues to advocate for healthier produce and supporting local through different methods and to new stakeholders. However, the Green Market noted that they cannot be legally recognized as a social enterprise in Trinidad and Tobago due to the existing laws governing incorporation of companies. Legal recognition of their social enterprise status will better enable the Green Market to continue delivering economic, social and environmental co-benefits as a local green-blue enterprise.



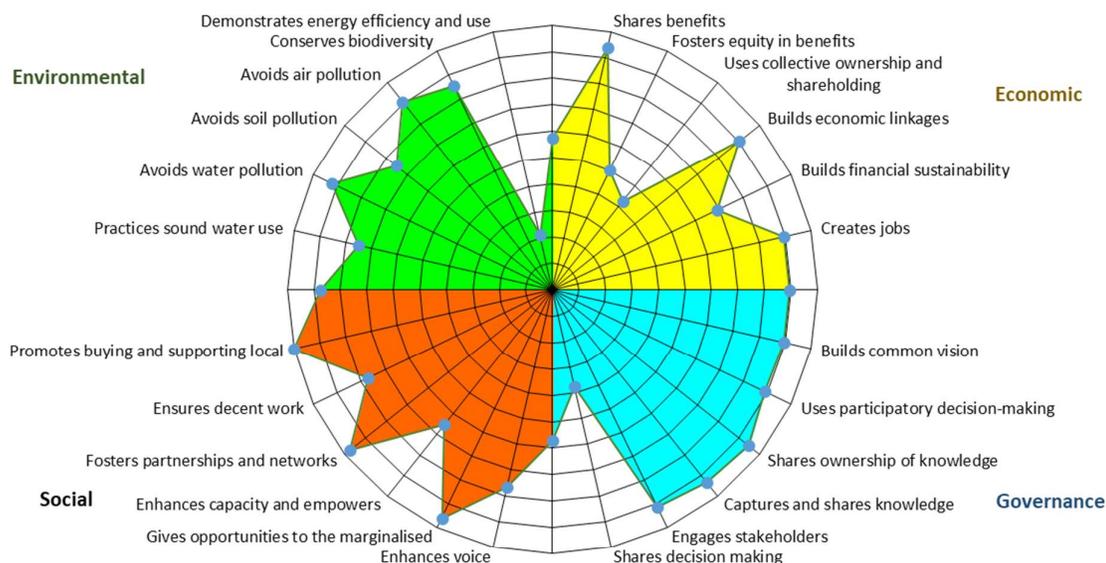
Green Market members utilised CANARI's Local Green-Blue Enterprise Radar tool to assess their enterprise at an exercise facilitated by CANARI in Santa Cruz on December 12, 2018. PHOTO

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*“The green-blue enterprise radar gives us a snapshot of how the Green Market is doing at a point in time on achieving environmental, social and economic co-benefits and show us the key areas for improvement. Doing the radar on a yearly basis can help Green Market to compare our progress over time and whether we are continuing to meet our social enterprise objectives.” Vicki Assevero, Co-founder, Green Market Santa Cruz*

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## Green Market Santa Cruz Radar



The Radar for the Green Market Santa Cruz was developed by staff of the enterprise based on their self-assessment in December 2018. This shows that staff ranked the enterprise as being very strong in delivering environmental co-benefits and good governance. They also identified opportunities for improvement in terms of energy efficiency, sharing decision making and promoting collective ownership and shareholding.



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