

## EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN AND CLIMATE SMARTING AGRO-PROCESSING in Antigua & Barbuda

**Project Title:** Solar Energy as an Innovation in Agro Processing **Project Duration:** June 2015 – December 2018

**Lead Organisation:** Antigua & Barbuda Network of Rural Women Producers (ANBNROP) **Location:** Antigua & Barbuda **Focus:** Mitigation



### Project Overview

The Antigua and Barbuda Network of Rural Women Producers (ANBNROP) is an organisation of women entrepreneurs who use agricultural resources to produce a variety of local jams, jellies, aromatic soaps, hot sauces, coconut oil, and pastries. Established in October 2013, ANBNROP is a chapter of a broader regional body, the Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP). At present, fifteen women are actively involved in the group, with ages ranging from 21-65 years.

Under the Solar Energy as an Innovation in Agro Processing project, the Network sought to promote the use of solar energy in their operations. This project

focused on transitioning to a central processing facility outfitted with upgraded equipment and integrating solar power as an alternative energy source. This was seen as a way to reduce expenditure and climate-proof operations, as well as support the group with broader objectives to contribute to local food security while expanding the country's agro-processing industry and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2015, land with an existing structure was secured from the government with the support of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) delegation in Antigua and Barbuda. Following this, a US\$50,000 grant from the United Nations Development Programme/Global Environmental Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) was secured to refurbish and electrify a small agro-processing facility on the site. The project also undertook a series of workshops on food safety standards and built capacity for ANBNROP members through an additional grant of US\$37,000 from the Caribbean Development Bank/Caribbean Technological Consultancy Services. This covered consultancy services and technical assistance for complementary activities, such as the creation of a business plan, conduct of a feasibility study and market research, and development of an operational manual and plant layout design.

## KEY RESULTS

- Establishment of a central agro-processing facility equipped with upgraded equipment and solar power as an alternative energy source.
- Reduction in expenditure and greenhouse gas emissions and increased financial benefits to ANBNROP from more energy efficient operations.
- Ten women with enhanced capacities and knowledge of food safety standards.
- Organisational strengthening for the ANBNROP in areas such as business plan development, market research and development of operational manuals to help the group more effectively deliver its work.



## Innovations and Lessons

The project was innovative in that it promoted both gender equity and private sector engagement in climate action and agricultural processing.

In integrating solar energy, the project's approach also allowed the group to minimise costs of electricity and apply cost savings toward enhancing or investing in other aspects of their agro-processing business, as well as retain greater profits. The use of solar energy also supports the 'climate-proofing' of operations i.e., reducing risk of being out of business in scenarios where climate change related hazards such as intense storms could negatively impact electricity supply and thus business as usual.

Importantly, the project design recognised the need to not only set up an appropriate facility, but to address organisational capacity strengthening and skills enhancement for the group, to optimise the way they operate and support further business development. In relation to this, the ability to leverage support and funding from multiple partners, technical agencies and government, was instrumental in ensuring the various elements of the project were effectively financed.

In working across funders, ANBNROP was able to undertake several collaborative activities and build necessary partnerships. The Government of Antigua and Barbuda was a strategic partner in the project, providing in-kind assistance for land to expand operations and facilitating the importation of needed equipment. Key to this was the project's ability to demonstrate numerous links to Antigua and Barbuda's national development and climate objectives, related to reducing the country's greenhouse gas emissions, promoting women-led private sector growth and food security.

More broadly, establishment of the facility is expected to support ANBNROP to further develop and expand the agro-processing industry in Antigua and Barbuda, and to promote the importance of agriculture and food security. Additionally, there is potential for it to support studies and research in sustainable and climate-smart agriculture by local academics and others.

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