



## Subregional Office for the Caribbean ISSUE BRIEF

#1

### Aiming for Zero Hunger - Antigua and Barbuda

July 2013



#### Zero Hunger Challenge

The Zero Hunger Challenge is an advocacy tool, a bold and urgent call to action for the world to make hunger eradication a priority. More importantly, it provides a point of convergence for the efforts of all actors in the sector - Governments, international organizations, the UN system, political and business leaders, civil society, producer organizations, academics and activists – to combine their efforts to bring lasting change.

As the UN's leading agency in the fight against hunger, FAO has already been aggressively pursuing ambitious hunger eradication targets. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, The Hunger-Free Latin American and Caribbean Initiative (HFLACI), was launched in 2005 and represents a commitment of the countries in the region to eradicate hunger in the region.

The Zero Hunger Challenge, announced by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at the Rio + 20 Conference held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012, takes it a step further. The challenge presents countries with measurable goals to be delivered within a short time-frame as a catalyst for the final push to eradicate hunger. The Zero Hunger challenge aims for:

1. **100% access to adequate food all year round**
2. **Zero stunted children less than 2 years**
3. **All food systems are sustainable**
4. **100% increase in smallholder productivity and income**
5. **Zero loss or waste of food**

#### KEY FACTS

- ▶ The Zero Hunger Challenge was launched by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon at the Rio+20 Conference in June 2012.
- ▶ The Zero Hunger Challenge provides a catalyst for hunger eradication, committing countries to achieving five measurable goals in a two year time frame.
- ▶ In the Caribbean, Antigua and Barbuda have taken up the Zero Hunger Challenge. Their Plan of Action targets five areas:
  - Economic expansion and diversification of the agricultural sector
  - Improvements in the nutrition and health status of the population.
  - Expansion in the social protection system and improvements in the management and efficiency of its operations.
  - Expansion of pro-poor employment and income generating opportunities.
  - Increase good governance and management of hunger and poverty programmes.

## Antigua and Barbuda as a pilot

During the Caribbean Week of Agriculture in Antigua and Barbuda in October 2012, FAO's Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Latin American and the Caribbean, Dr. Raul Benitez, and the Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Dr. Victor Villalobos, signed a Letter of Intent agreeing to cooperate with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda in the elimination of hunger and extreme poverty in the country.

Pockets of undernutrition, both stunting and wasting, have been reported in the child population in Antigua and Barbuda. With the current economic downturn, concerns have been raised about possible increases in undernutrition, especially in vulnerable communities. It is therefore necessary to strengthen surveillance and to promote appropriate interventions in order to prevent and control undernutrition in at risk population groups at all levels of the society.

There is also the challenge of rising levels of obesity. This is largely associated with poor food choices, increased consumption of processed foods, fast food and fried foods, resulting from a general lack of nutrition education. Emphasis must therefore be placed on improving

access to healthy foods and on nutrition education to promote healthy food choices.

In the Zero Hunger Challenge Letter of Intent, IICA and FAO agreed that they would jointly design and implement a set of coordinated, coherent and effective actions for this purpose. This would be in the form of an open program allowing for the inclusion of other actors willing to take part in this effort. The Letter of Intent resulted in the initiation of a Zero Hunger Challenge Antigua and Barbuda–2013/2014.

As a follow-up an Inter-Agency Mission comprised of representatives from FAO, IICA, the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), visited Antigua and Barbuda in November 2012 to assess the situation related to hunger and poverty in the country, identify critical problems, and propose priority areas for intervention.

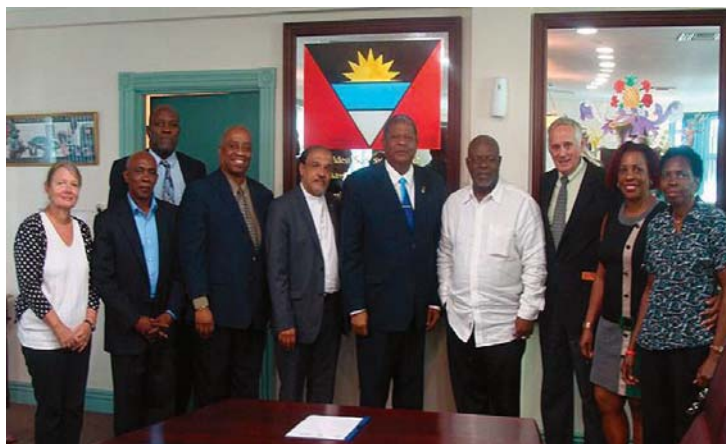
### Zero Hunger Challenge Plan of Action Antigua and Barbuda

In support of the efforts of the government, the Inter-Agency Mission prepared and presented a Plan of Action in which the elements of a roadmap for the elimination of hunger

and poverty in Antigua and Barbuda within two years are outlined.

The Plan of Action, which was accepted by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, is comprised of five broad elements:

- 1. Economic expansion and diversification of the agricultural sector, particularly given the large import bill, the scope to increase domestic agricultural production and the requirement to establish appropriate links with the Food and Nutrition Security Policy**
- 2. Improvements in the nutrition and health status of the population.**
- 3. Expansion in the social protection system and improvements in the management and efficiency of its operations.**
- 4. Expansion of pro-poor employment and income generating opportunities.**
- 5. Good governance and management of hunger and poverty programmes – by institutionalizing the rules of good governance evident in greater transparency and accountability in the delivery of public services.**



Inter-Agency Mission to Antigua and Barbuda



International delegation touring the country





Facilitators for the Home-based Gardening Initiative receiving training.

In accepting the Plan of Action, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda requested that an initial focus be placed on backyard gardening and the school meals programme. In addition, three cross-cutting issues were included in the initial phase of the implementation process - markets and marketing, food safety and nutrition and health.

- ▶ *markets and marketing strategies beyond traditional outlets have been defined;*
- ▶ *an assessment of food safety was conducted, including the institutional framework, systems and processes in place, and the submission of recommendations for improvement;*
- ▶ *an evaluation of the Schools Meals Programme was completed and recommendations made for enhancement;*
- ▶ *a Nutritionist has been contracted and improvements are being made in the nutritional status of school meals;*
- ▶ *a Nutrient Cost Analysis and Nutrition Education Training Programs have been conducted;*
- ▶ *Food Based Dietary Guidelines have been completed and a promotion plan elaborated;*
- ▶ *governance mechanism has been strengthened as demonstrated by:*
  - *the appointment of a National coordinator for the Zero Hunger Challenge Initiative*
  - *the appointment of six national facilitators to support the implementation of the Agricultural Expansion component, with an initial heavy focus on backyard gardens;*
  - *the assignment of some professionals to the ZHC Initiative by the Ministry of Agriculture to*

## FAO support

FAO, partnering closely with IICA, has undertaken the leadership role in the advancement and implementation of the Zero Hunger Challenge - Antigua and Barbuda. The agency has reviewed existing and upcoming projects and programmes in the country and brought them all under the Zero Hunger umbrella in order to ensure a holistic and effective impact.

It has further used capacity already developed in the country through past projects to ensure rapid deployment of its interventions.

To date significant progress has been made:

- ▶ *the backyard garden program has been expanded*



Capacity for home-based gardening, developed during previous FAO projects, will be utilized.

*strengthen its technical capacity and capability.*

- *the establishment and operationalization of an Inter-sectoral Technical Management Advisory Committee to support the National Coordinator in the implementation of the ZHC Initiative*

## Conclusion

The challenges facing Antigua and Barbuda are far from unique. An important aspect of the implementation process of the Zero

Hunger Challenge pilot in that country is documentation of the experiences to provide important lessons on how to strengthen ongoing work in other countries.

Over the years, the countries of the region have sought to address their deepening food security issues through a variety of initiatives and progress has certainly been made. Despite the challenges, the region is one of the few in the world where hunger rates are on a downward trend. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Cuba and Guyana have recently been honoured by FAO for

already meeting international hunger eradication targets set for 2015 to halve the percentage of hungry people in their nations.

Food security and hunger eradication need to remain on the top of the regional agenda. Furthermore, while the Millennium Development Goal 1 target has been a catalyst for change, the Zero Hunger Challenge presents an opportunity for aggressive transformation because, as reiterated by FAO Director General, Dr. Jose Graziano da Silva "With hunger, the only acceptable number is zero.

## Additional resources

Visit the official project website: [www.zerohungerchallengelac.org/ab](http://www.zerohungerchallengelac.org/ab)



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