From farm to fork: Improving nutrition in the Caribbean

The challenge
Obesity rates are on the rise in the Caribbean. This is due in large part to the limited attention Caribbean countries have paid to local food production. They have relied instead on economic development through exports of plantation crops. As a result, there is a high dependence on imports of high calorie, low nutrition foods. This has created a paradox of obesity and poor nutrition, which threatens population health throughout the region.

The research
This project, supported by IDRC and DFATD through the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFSRF), uses a “farm to fork” focus to improve food production and nutrition and health outcomes in Guyana, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Researchers will assist farmers in increasing food production through agricultural diversification, conservation of water, and efficient use of land. Nutrition education and the introduction of nutritious foods will decrease caloric intake and improve nutrition and health outcomes. New policies will be developed to secure food supply in the region through improved marketing structures.

Expected outcomes
- Improved nutrition, particularly among women and children, leading to reduced rates of chronic, non-communicable diseases
- Agricultural diversification, leading to year-round supply of locally produced food products, based on improved soil and water conservation and efficient land use
- Adoption of policies to secure food supply through improved marketing structures
- Change in consumer behaviour to increase consumption of a diversified diet of fruits and vegetables
- Expanded regional capacity (human and institutional) to solve problems of food insecurity