



A bi-monthly electronic bulletin about interdisciplinary research, teaching and outreach at the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES)  
 Editors: Maria Pena and Dr. Patrick McConney

## Coping with COVID-19: reviewing our resilience

By Patrick McConney

CERMES, like almost every educational entity worldwide, has been coping with the impacts of – and the UWI and Barbados government directed responses to – COVID-19. But are we also adapting and building resilience? In the next few months our academic, administrative and technical staff will contemplate such questions amidst getting on with work. As an academic institution with the tag line, “Applying science to sustainability,” CERMES will be reviewing the resilience lessons that the ongoing experience of the novel coronavirus is teaching.

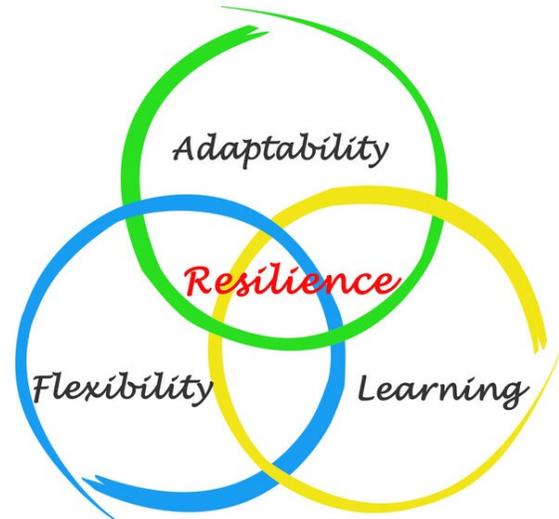


In resilience language, COVID-19 has been a major *perturbation*, or disruption to our system. CERMES has coped, so far, by quickly taking courses fully online, and releasing students to return to their homelands. We think we have systems in place to take us to the end of the current academic year. Our students should not be unduly adversely affected, bearing in mind the stressors and personal perturbations that they may face within their households in order to complete their MSc degrees, including research projects. We are looking out for their interests and will work with them, communicating and cooperating for mutual benefit. How COVID-19 will also impact the coming 2020-21 academic year is yet to be seen, but we are preparing for those who have applied and will be applying. There will be even more need for environmental studies.

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The CERMES social network is extensive but also strong. We also maintain close ties to our widely dispersed alumni and our project partners. Physical distancing is necessary, but social links need to be strengthened, not weakened by distance. Our regional projects continue. New and innovative ways of implementation are being developed in collaboration with partners. In the next few issues of CERMES Connections you may read about how we are reviewing and rethinking our resilience. If you want to be a part of this, drop us a line, share your views and experiences about academic adaptation as we move ahead to maintain or improve our services.



## COVID-19 and Caribbean food system resilience

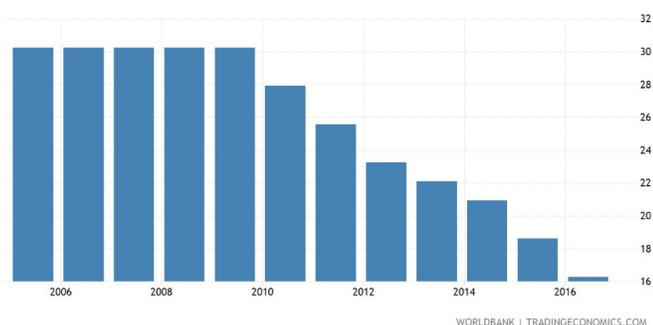
By David Yawson



Source: barbados.org

The new coronavirus (a.k.a COVID-19) has forced economic shutdown in many countries for varying periods of time. No one knows when this will be over, globally. The impacts of the shutdowns are both national and transnational. With respect to food, countries that depend largely on imports for their food security will be adversely impacted if their main sources of imports are shutdown or major trade routes are disrupted. In this sense, the import-dependent country must find ways to survive whether it shuts down or not.

Most Caribbean countries are net food importers. The shutdown of major trading partners and our own Caribbean countries constitutes not only a test of the resilience of, but also an opportunity to rethink or re-imagine our agri-food systems. This means reviewing the state of resources and robustness of the infrastructure underpinning food production, the value and supply chains, and consumption behaviour. With production, availability of and access to land is crucial. In Barbados, for e.g., the area of arable land has declined steeply since 2010 (see Figure below).



Arable land area as a percentage of total land area of Barbados

The COVID-19 food stresses provide us with an opportunity to evaluate the need for farmland protection laws and policies, as well as land management practices, to safeguard a minimum threshold of food security and resilience in the Caribbean. It is known that during crisis such as this, supermarkets and small local food markets do not perform or respond equally. Supermarkets are first to show signs of distress due to disruptions in external supplies, while local (short-chain) markets recover faster provided local food production is maintained or recovers. In Barbados, for example, the long queues at supermarkets suggest a need to assess the spatial distribution of food markets to reduce food distance, strengthen the connectivity between local producers and food markets, as well as improve value addition.



Source: repeatingislands.com

We have an opportunity to encourage and facilitate kitchen or home gardens and use of vacant, idle spaces for food production in urban areas. Finally, we have an opportunity to re-evaluate our food consumption behaviour. In Barbados, and most Caribbean countries, wheat and derived products are the main source of dietary energy. Is it time to begin to reconsider our own ground provisions? Dasheens are among the most easily digestible starchy crops. Cassava and breadfruit are two crops that can provide considerable dietary energy and fibre but these seem orphan crops at the moment. They are climate-resilient and can be processed into various products that have longer shelf lives. Can we take a step back in time to reconsider what we used to eat; look back to bounce forward?

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## Gender in the time of COVID-19

By Patrick McConney



The CERMES-led regional Gender In Fisheries Team (GIFT) has joined several other applied gender research initiatives globally in collecting data and information on the impact of COVID-19, and responses to it, on fisheries. The focus on

gender is to differentiate between how women and men are impacted and respond. Similar to natural hazards and climate change we expect there to be differences of many types in both fisherfolk livelihood and household spheres.

## Saint Lucia equipped with a management effectiveness assessment tool

By Justin Springer

The BIOPAMA programme continues to strengthen the capacity of protected area stakeholders across the Caribbean by creating tools to assess Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME). The programme has been working with the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) in Saint Lucia to enhance the country's management of its national protected area system through a series of workshops between 2019 - 2020.

BIOPAMA facilitated a PAME Framework and Tools National Workshop in Saint Lucia from 9-12 April 2019 with the aim to expose persons to the various PAME tools available that can be considered to develop a national tool to conduct future site level assessments. After a series of in-country meetings coordinated by the DSD, a follow up workshop was conducted in November 2019 to merge elements of the **Advanced Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)** with the **Enhancing our Heritage (EoH) Tool** used for World Heritage Sites.

The tool design process is detailed in the video here:

[Developing the Saint Lucia PAME Tool](#)

The third national workshop was facilitated in February 2020 to assess The North East Coast – Iyanola Region (NEC-IR). Collectively the Saint Lucia PAME Tool was used to conduct three (3) PAME Assessments for the following sites:

- [The Pitons Management Area \(PMA\), UNESCO World Heritage Site;](#)
- [The Pointe Sable Environmental Protection Area \(PSEPA\);](#) and
- **The North East Coast – Iyanola Region (NEC-IR).**

Developing a national tool was important for Saint Lucia as it allowed protected area agencies to cater specifically to stakeholder requirements and the unique challenges experienced at the site level. Asking the right questions during assessments allows managers to screen for potential weaknesses in management practices, leading to better outcomes.

## CNFO leadership institute off to a good start

By Maria Pena

The evening of 1 April 2020 was an exciting one for the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) and the FAO/GEF StewardFish project. It marked the launch of the very first training module for the CNFO Virtual Leadership Institute. Led by Mitchell Lay, CNFO Coordinator, and informed by the Blackman and Almerigi (2017) [Leading Fisherfolk](#) guide, this inaugural one-hour session on *Exploring Leadership* focused on (re-)introducing the eight course participants to notions on What is leadership?, Why is leadership important?, Who leads fisherfolk organisations?, How is leadership carried out? Following the 20-minute introductory lecture, Lay engaged participants in an interesting discussion on the facets of leadership using two questions as guides:

1. What are your thoughts on defining leadership as a social influence?
2. What are your thoughts of leadership as a continuum?

Further discussion continued for the remainder of the module around questions posed by participants to the instructor. Two women and six men representing fisherfolk organizations (FFO) or cooperatives in Antigua

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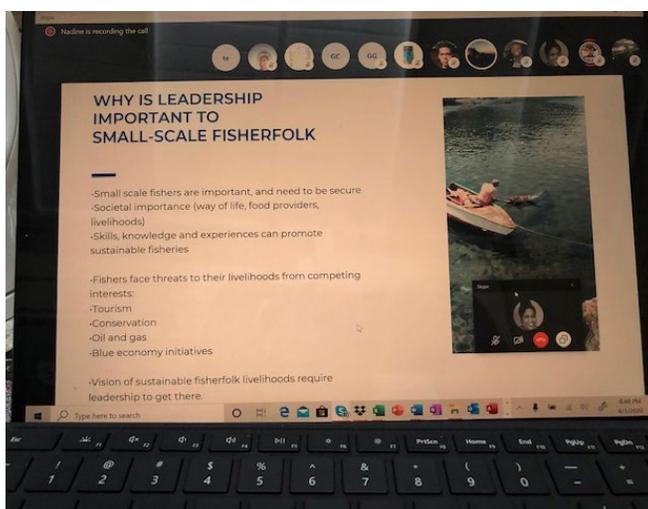
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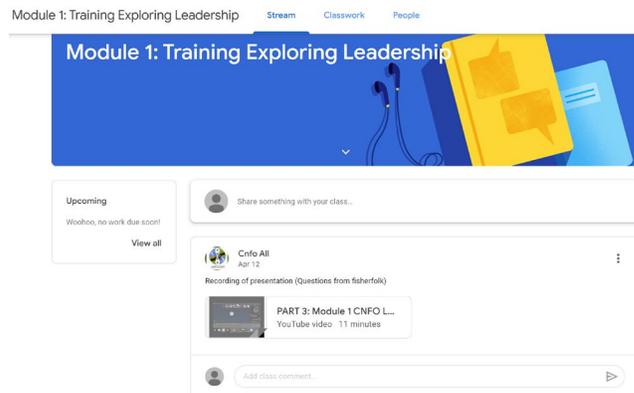


and Barbuda, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos Islands, Saint Lucia, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana and holding leadership positions such as president, chairman, secretary and public relations officer, as well as FFO members and mentors, participated in the training module. CERMES as regional project partner with responsibility for assisting the CNFO with the establishment and demonstration of the leadership institute, and the FAO Sub-regional Office (FAOSLC) audited the delivery of the module. Terrence Phillips, StewardFish Regional Project Coordinator, commented after the training, that, “The presentation was focused and well set out. The discussions went well as folk were relating to their experiences.”



The training was delivered via Skype as the preferred platform used by fisherfolk leaders. The management structure for the training is being piloted in Google Classroom as the external platform for synchronous and asynchronous teaching, discussion forums and as a repository for course material. The Caribbean ICT Research Programme, UWI-St. Augustine (UWI-CIRP) – another StewardFish regional project partner – was instrumental in providing the CNFO with technical guidance for hosting the training and set up of the Google Classroom. Maria Pena, CERMES, notes that “while participant activity within the Google Classroom has been low up to this point, it is sure to improve with well-managed facilitation by CNFO. CERMES is very much interested in monitoring the virtual leadership institute’s progress in building leadership capacity of FFO in the region.”

Nadine Nembhard, CNFO Administrative Assistant, must be congratulated on her tireless efforts to engage FFO



leaders in this first training module. Through communication via a special WhatsApp training group she ensured a smooth training registration and orientation process.

CERMES will explore the utility of the virtual leadership institute in the delivery of leadership training specifically targeting women and youth, an activity of Component 1 of the StewardFish project. The value of the CNFO virtual leadership is even more critical at this time given the probable impact of COVID-19 restrictions on previously planned face-to-face training workshops, which may no longer be feasible under the project timeframe.

## ***Moving on with shrimp and groundfish online meetings*** *By Patrick McConney*

CERMES, FAO and the national fisheries authorities of Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago moved on with the CLME+ FAO shrimp and groundfish sub-project implementation. They held two consultations on the sub-regional shrimp and groundfish ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) fisheries management plan (FMP) and the linked national strategies for implementation in the three countries. The online consultations, held on 27 March for Trinidad and Tobago then 2 April for Guyana and Suriname, each had nearly 30 participants drawn from the public sector, private sector and civil society. The CERMES consultants and FAO regional coordinator addressed recommendations for the draft EAF-FMP. FAO is contemplating proposals for project follow-up to assist EAF-FMP implementation. Over the next few months CERMES will be looking to wrap up this project with the assistance of key contacts in the three countries.

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