



Pomeroon: From Gold to Coconuts

Over 150 coconut farmers in the Pomeroon, Guyana have tapped into the lucrative entrepreneurial opportunity of exporting coconut water.

In 2016, 150.2 tonnes of coconut water valued at US\$364,121.00 were exported and this activity has encouraged greater production for 2017 and beyond. However, a few short years ago, this picture of growth and prosperity was not always the case in the Pomeroon.

Land owners and farm operators abandoned their properties and turned their attention to the more lucrative earnings from Guyana's gold mines. However, in 2014, the Compete Caribbean Program collaborated with the Pomeroon Export Producers Association (PEPA[1]) to revive agricultural production in the Lower Pomeroon, improve the state of the farms and secure markets for export.

Now, this remote territory spans more than 20,000 hectares and has potential to be the key to both sustainable trade and social development in Pomeroon. Located in Region Two on the North-East bank of the country, the Pomeroon is a remote area more than two hours away from Guyana's Georgetown capital. The coconut farms are situated along the bank of the Pomeroon river and vary in size from 50 to 1000 acres.

Preparing the farms for large scale operation entailed creating ditches deep enough for adequate drainage, protection against flood waters and removal of dense forestry in the backlands.

Compete Caribbean granted the PEPA technical assistance of US\$500,000 to undertake these activities and to increase farmer capacity to secure and fulfill supply contracts. Project funds were also used to provide extension services to assist in managing the day to day operations and strategic implementation of the business plan¹, to purchase two six-ton excavators for farm improvement and additional equipment for creating other valuable products from coconut waste

¹ The PEPA business plan calls for the association to provide services to members specific to the access and rental of equipment to facilitate field clearing, drainage, extension and advisory services, advocacy and brokerage related to credit facilities and the cost of inputs for the farmers. To do this the PEPA requires a secretariat. The project financed the 9 months of consultants' fees to provide General Management Services, Administrative and Accounting services and technical extension services.

as well as to investigate the feasibility of exploiting the natural linkages to organic and/or fair trade.

By the end of the project, the demand for coconut water from the Pomeroon exponentially increased with three regional buyers secured as well as 372 jobs created across the value chain (from farm to market) with the percentage of women employed rising to 55%.

Farms became more productive due to improved ditch and irrigation systems and the Pomeroon Cluster will embark on more environmentally friendly production and the creation of value added products using machinery that turns coconut waste into compost and other useful products from July 2017.

~*~