



**PRESS RELEASE**

**May 4, 2023**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**VEEP-FUNDED FARM SKILLS INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME BEGINS FOR RED ZONE PARTICIPANTS AFFECTED BY 2021 VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS**

**[Kingstown, Saint Vincent]** – A cohort of participants, who reside in the red zone and were negatively impacted by the April 2021 volcanic eruptions, have embarked on the Farm Skills Internship (FSI) Programme – a sub-component of the Volcanic Eruption Emergency Project (VEEP) – which was launched officially on May 2, 2023.

The FSI Programme caters to participants who graduated from the recently concluded Life Skills Programme. It is designed to train and equip up to two hundred (200) unemployed citizens of North Windward with best practices in farming and food sustainability – with the intention of creating long-term livelihoods.

The programme, which is funded by the World Bank through the VEEP, is being coordinated by the Ministry of National Mobilisation, Social Development, Family, Gender Affairs, Youth, Housing and Informal Human Settlement in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry and Labour and the Economic Planning Division of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Information Technology.

Delivering remarks at the official launch ceremony of the FSI Programme, Minister of Agriculture Hon. Saboto Caesar highlighted the importance of agriculture to the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and how vital it is to not only replenish what was lost through the April 2021 volcanic eruptions, but also to increase production and sustainability.

Additionally, Minister Caesar noted the high attendance of female participants, explaining that “...we are seeing the empowerment of women in the community through this programme.”

He further urged participants to ensure that they apply the skills and knowledge that they acquire through this programme into creating their own agro-based businesses.

Chief Agricultural Officer Mr. Renato Gumbs also echoed this sentiment, encouraging participants to be creative in their business ideas and to make use of the “capable staff” at the Ministry of Agriculture, with regard to technical assistance and guidance.

“Don’t sit back and wait for others to determine where you should go in life,” urged Gumbs.

The Minister of National Mobilisation Hon. Orando Brewster and Permanent Secretary of Social Development Mrs. Merissa Finch-Burke also delivered brief remarks.

Topics covered in this programme include: Introduction to Crop Farming, Seedling Production, Crop Establishment, Land Preparation, Basic Agro-processing, Establishment of Greenhouses, Use of Small Machinery, Bio-Fertilizer, Use of Improved Technologies, Hydroponics, Apiculture, Livestock Management

Participants, who also attended an orientation session on April 26, were assessed and selected by the Social Development Unit, of the Ministry of National Mobilisation.

The VEEP is financed by the World Bank and co-financed by the European Union-funded Caribbean Regional Resilience Building Facility, and its implementing agency is the Economic Planning Division – which operates under the remit of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Information Technology.