



IICA-COLEAD Caribbean Agrifood Business Series

Session n°9:

Successes from innovative youth-led businesses/SMEs
in the agrifood sector

Thursday 8 June 2023 – 10:00-12:00 (AST)

BIODATA OF THE SPEAKERS

María Elsy ABREU – Co-Founder, Cacao Mae, Dominican Republic

Maria Elsy co-founded with her brother the Dominican company Cacao Mae that produces organic certified and fair trade cacao products with no fillers, sugars or additives. The company sources raw materials from local Dominican farms which support agroforestry in the cultivation of cacao.



Maria Elsy is also Marketing Manager of the company Recursos Globales. She holds a degree in Marketing from the Pontifical Catholic University Madre y Maestra (PUCMM), Dominican Republic and has participated in trainings on export management, digital transformation, strategic management of social networks and e-commerce workshops among others. She has participated in local and international fairs representing the Cacao Mae brand.

Isolina BOTO – Head of Networks and Alliances, COLEAD

Isolina Boto is the Head of Networks and Alliances at COLEAD, a non-profit association of private sector operators in the agrifood sector active in the European Union (EU), Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) regions. Isolina has more than 25 years of experience in agricultural development. She started her career with the European Commission and has also worked with various ACP embassies and NGOs in areas related to food security, rural development and trade. Before joining COLEAD, she was the Manager of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) Brussels Office (2004-2020) implementing policy initiatives related to the ACP-EU cooperation in the field of the agrifood sector. She has led agribusiness projects in support of capacity development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), entrepreneurs and farmers organisations across Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and developed agrotourism aimed at linking agriculture and tourism sectors.



Delphino Gilbert CASSAR – Director and Co-Founder, Eeden Farms, Bahamas



Delphino Gilbert Cassar is Chief Financial Officer and Director of Eeden Farms/ Eden Acres. He has a strong background in finance, software and crypto assets and has an expansive knowledge of software development and the financial services product suite. He has worked extensively across the areas of trusts, equity analysis and asset management, private banking, corporate structuring, investment funds formation and administration, and crypto asset services. Delphino is also a full stack web developer, having successfully led software development projects for the banking, shipping, airline, ground transportation, pageantry, FinTech, culinary, entertainment and media industries.

Delphino is Head of Business Development & Fintech of Equity Bank Bahamas, Vice-President of the Bahamas Investments and Securities Business Association, Committee Member of the Digital Advisory Panel of the Bahamas and of the Fintech Working Group

of the Bahamas Financial Services Board.

He holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Toronto, Canada, and a Master of Liberal Arts in Finance from Harvard University, USA.

Shedron COLLINS – General Manager, Youth Business Trinidad and Tobago (YBTT)



Shedron Collins has 14-year background in the field of entrepreneur support and has consistently made a positive impact on communities by fostering youth development, providing mentorship, and delivering comprehensive entrepreneurial support. With a strong academic foundation in economics and project management, Shedron brings a unique blend of theoretical knowledge and practical expertise to his role as General Manager at Youth Business Trinidad and Tobago (YBTT).

Shedron's notable achievements include successfully leading the design and implementation of the YBTT JumpSTART Incubator and Accelerator Programs. These initiatives have been instrumental in equipping aspiring entrepreneurs with the essential knowledge and skills needed to achieve their business goals at an accelerated pace. Shedron's expertise in economics and project management has played a pivotal role in developing these programs, ensuring their effectiveness and long-term impact.

Driven by a passion to create a better world, through his personal mantra "Too many people looking for a better life, too few people looking to make life better", Shedron and YBTT's vision are to create a sustainable future, through entrepreneurship.

Kashar DANIEL – Managing Director, Fresh Harvest, Saint Lucia



Kashar Daniel is the Managing Partner at Fresh Harvest, a farm which focuses on the sustainable production of food.

She is a youth in agriculture advocate in her capacity as Treasurer for the Saint Lucia Agricultural Forum for Youth, which promotes the involvement of young persons in the agriculture sector. Kashar previously served as the Vice Board Chair of Helen's Daughters, an agricultural organization which seeks to empower women throughout the value chain of the industry. With a business and marketing background, her interest in agriculture stemmed from the desire to assist her ageing parents in making their production easier and more profitable. The development of Fresh Harvest was not only about food production, but another core function was to incorporate cost effective and simple technologies to enhance the operations of the average farmer.

Lidia DÍAZ - Founder and Manager, Plant Powered SRL, Dominican Republic



Lidia Díaz is the founder and manager of Plant Powered SRL, a Dominican company producing meat substitutes, dairy substitutes and ready-made frozen meals from Latin American, Caribbean, and Afro-Hispanic gastronomy. Offering authentic, high quality, vegan, gluten-free and locally sourced products, the company provides a solution to current global food production problems which include environmental, health and ethical aspects. Lidia is dedicated to promoting sustainable food choices that address food system challenges associated with livestock, including intensive resource use and CO2 emissions. Plant Powered was elected as one of the 30 Business Promises in 2021 by Forbes Central America; was among a winner of the 2021 International Trade Centre (ITC) Youth Ecopreneur Awards and ranked 176th/500 in the 2020 Green Latin America Awards. In 2020, Lidia also won the Sica Emprende Award for Female Entrepreneurship. Since 2022, she has been part

of the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLA) for emerging entrepreneurs and business leaders from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada.

Gregory FERGUSSON – Financial Advisor, Barbados Youth Business Trust (BYBT)

Since joining the Barbados Youth Business Trust (BYBT) in 2014, Gregory Fergusson has worked in Business Support & Development with youth seeking to start or strengthen their businesses in various sectors. Gregory has gained experience working on loan portfolios and grant applications, conducted trainings and offered support with real life experiences along with theoretical applications. Within the organisation, he has engaged in extensive trainings locally, regionally and internationally with various stakeholder groups learning various developmental models and approaches in entrepreneurial development

Prior to joining BYBT, Gregory earned a Bachelor degree in Banking & Finance at Cave Hill, The University of the West Indies, Barbados.

Gregory is dedicated to helping others getting started in business, especially to support young people particularly between the ages of 15 to 29 who struggle in the area of self-discovery. He believes that everyone has their own talents and it is our responsibility as good citizens to ensure everyone is given the opportunity to use it for the good of society and themselves.

Allister Reynold GLEAN – Technical Specialist, International Trade and Regional Integration Programme / Representative in Barbados, IICA



Allister Glean is the Representative (Acting) of the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in Barbados. He spent the last 5 years as the International Specialist in Agribusiness and Value Chains, stationed with the St. Lucia Delegation. Allister has worked extensively in the agricultural sector for over 20 years with experience working in agricultural research and development, agribusiness development, food and beverage processing as well as development financing for agribusiness.

Allister has lectured on a part-time basis at the tertiary level for over 16 years in the areas of marketing, strategic planning and business ethics. While trained in management and marketing, he also possesses post graduate qualifications in international relations and agribusiness development. He is also a qualified attorney at law. Allister tends to have a particular interest in governance, market development and trade facilitation.

Allister has a passion for working with micro, small and medium sized business with emphasis on women, youth and producer groups. In fact, he is himself also a small farmer producing food crops on a 2 ½ acre plot.

Teesha MANGRA-SINGH – CEO, Agriculture and Innovation Entrepreneurship Programme (AIEP), Guyana

Teesha Mangra-Singh is the CEO of the Agriculture and Innovation Entrepreneurship Programme (AIEP), a programme fully financed by the Guyanese Government as an effort to reduce the importation of high value crops while incentivising youth to start their own agricultural enterprises. Teesha is a young leader committed to driving innovation and sustainability in Guyana. Throughout her leadership positions in various organizations, including One Guyana Agriculture Inc. and CARICOM, she has refined her strategic planning, financial management, team building, and stakeholder engagement skills. Teesha is currently pursuing a Master's degree in project management, which has further enhanced her expertise in project planning, risk management, and quality control. With a strong focus on innovation and sustainability, she is confident that her skills, experience, and ongoing education will enable her continued success and growth while positively impacting the environment, the community and her country at large.



This event was organised by the Fit For Market Plus programme, implemented by COLEAD within the framework of Development cooperation between the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), and the European Union (EU).

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the EU and the OACPS. Its contents are the sole responsibility of COLEAD and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the EU or the OACPS.