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Session n°11:

The role of agrifood businesses in promoting circular economy: successes from entrepreneurs and SMEs



Caribbean Agrifood Business Series ...



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Indies Greens - Antigua, West Indies

IICA - COLEAD Webinar

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Presenter: Larry Francis,
Owner / Managing Director



Welcome to Indies Greens.

Who are we?

- Founded in 2010, we are a family owned business dedicated to sustainable food production specializing in aquaculture, and hydroponics.
- The idea of Indies Greens was driven out of the need to develop agriculture practices that are suitable for Antigua's climate
- We started out with 2 x 4000 gal. (15,000 L) tilapia ponds and 12 gravel grow beds
- When we started aquaponics was in its infancy and sea caught fish dominated the local market. Tilapia was not very common
- This type of agriculture was chosen as an alternative to the traditional farming methods since it produces very high produce yields while using minimal land space, water and fertilizers.



Our Business Model

- Grounded in environmental sustainability.
 - Water use minimization and reuse
 - Minimal use of organic pesticides
 - Renewable energy system investment
 - Rainwater harvesting
 - Fish waste nutrients used to grow plants and fertilize the landscape
- Recirculating aquaculture systems
 - Tilapia
 - Ornamental tropical fish
 - Caribbean coral aquaculture



Regional Aquaponics Training Center

- In April of 2013 we started construction of an aquaponics training center in collaboration with the FAO and Brazil
- We have trained over 100 persons from various countries in the Region from the Bahamas to Barbados
- We give educational tours regularly to school students from pre-school to college level and adults
- During the tours we emphasize the need for sustainable agriculture with a focus on reducing consumptions, and reuse methods



Major Challenges



NO ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE FINANCING. COMPANY NOT BEEN ABLE TO SECURE COMMERCIAL FINANCING FROM THE LOCAL NON-TRADITIONAL BUSINESS MODEL THAT IS NOT CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD BY THE LENDERS



LACK OF ADEQUATE GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION THAT FOSTERS GROWTH IN THE SECTOR. DIFFICULT TO COMPETE WITH SIMILAR IMPORTED PRODUCTS



IMPORTS ARE GIVEN PREFERENTIAL MARKET ACCESS OVER LOCAL PRODUCE

The Way Forward – Reinventing the Business

- Utilizing the circular economy in the business propels the team to be constantly reinventing the model to remain relevant in an ever-changing environment
- Transitioned over the past 13 years from being only a tilapia and vegetable farm to add:
 - Farm to table offerings
 - Events hosting
 - Coral aquaculture
 - Ornamental fish aquaculture
 - Training facility
 - Educational tours
 - System Design and Construction Services



The Way Forward – Reinventing the Business – cont'd

- PV electricity system fully incorporated into our operations
- Rainwater harvesting employed as rainwater is collected from all roofs and stored in an underground cistern
- The wastewater from the aquaculture systems is collected, filtered and reused with the sludge used to fertilize the landscape
- Collaboration with other similar producers in the Region
- There is strength in numbers. As the sector has grown over the years, Indies Greens is a member of two associations, 1 local and 1 Regional. (Antigua & Barbuda National Hydro Growers, Caribbean Aquaproducers Association)
- The aim is to have stronger representation for the sector to governments and to increase competitiveness with the import market



Future Proofing - Events Hosting

- Agrifood products produced designed local economy distribution and for on premise consumption
- Event hosting facility (weddings, birthdays, reunions, other social events). Our export market to the tourism sector is a 'local experience' as visitors to the Island come to experience the facility
- Farm has been transformed to allow persons to not only enjoy the products grown but to be exposed to what is possible



Thank you from the Team @ Indies Greens!



Larry & Marjorie Francis
(Owners)



Thank you

