

Non-traditional crops

Introduction and Background

There are many crops which are grown in the Bahamas. Many of the traditional crops include tomatoes, sweet & hot peppers, citrus, pumpkin, sweet potato, watermelon, thyme, pigeon peas, okra, bananas and many more. These crops are mainstays in Bahamian agriculture and the purpose of this article is not to discount them but to suggest some of the other crops that can be grown in tandem with traditional crops and to get you thinking more about them.

Many of the crops described here will be used in small amounts and are recommended to be grown using new technology (so as to take advantage of space – hydroponics, screen houses, raised beds - intensive agriculture). These crops can be grown on a large scale or a small scale with direct marketing suggested. Make note that many of these items can be used fresh, dried, to create value added products (e.g. soaps, tea, sauces, dressings, vinegar, and craft products) and high end products (salad greens, herbs and edible flowers) with emphasis on packaging and labeling. Please note that information on various crops and how they can be grown can be obtained at the Finn Damtoft Agricultural Library.




On a Team visit to the Department of Archives we discovered many historical documents describing agriculture on the various islands. Documented in the Annual Report of the Board of Agriculture (the precursor for the Department of Agriculture) for the year 1917 – 1918 (April 9, 1918), it described the efforts made to make aware “the absolute necessity of agriculture”. The focus crops included: citrus (grapefruit), coconuts, corn, onions, pineapples, sweet potatoes, sisal, tomatoes and livestock (sheep, pigs). “War Gardens” were encouraged to replace flower gardens at home and school garden competitions were also mentioned. In 2008 – 2009 there is a similar focus with the same list of crops seen as traditional crops.

CHA Hotel Spend Study

The Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA), with support from the ProInvest fund of the European Union, commissioned Tourism Global Inc to conduct a study titled “*The Caribbean Accommodation Sector as a Consumer of Locally Produced Goods and Services and Contributor to Government Revenues*”, hereinafter referred to as the *Hotel Spend Study*. The objective of the study was to quantify the importance of the hotel sector as a consumer of locally provided goods and services. The study is available online at www.caribbeanhotelassociation.com. ***All (100%) of the Bahamas Hotels which participated in the survey expressed a desire to use locally produced goods and services, up from the 79 percent who indicated such regionally. The report points to factors beyond the control of the hotel sector that influence their capacity to procure***

locally, such as supply chain elements like availability, quality, price, packaging, reliability, logistics, shipping patterns, and convenience. Agro-tourism promotes the linkage between the Agriculture and Tourism sectors. Hotels and restaurants are a ready market for both traditional and non-traditional crops.

Non-traditional crops

Crop:	Photo:	Description:	Source:
<i>Eggplant</i>		The eggplant, aubergine, or brinjal (<i>Solanum melongena</i>) is a plant of the family <i>Solanaceae</i> (also known as the nightshades) and genus <i>Solanum</i> . It is a relative to the tomato, potato and peppers. The plant is a short-lived herbaceous perennial that is grown as an annual. It prefers tropical climates and is used as a vegetable for cooking. It is a good source of Vitamin C, potassium, fiber and is sodium-free.	http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/doc/pg_some.doc
<i>Mint</i>		Mint (<i>Mentha</i>) is a popular herb; the leaves are used fresh or dry for jellies, drinks (tea), flavourings (oil) and seasonings. It is a perennial and two popular species are: Spearmint (<i>Mentha spicata</i>) and Peppermint (<i>Mentha piperita</i>).	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VH020
<i>Orchid</i>		These flowers belong to the Orchid family (<i>Orchidaceae</i>) and have over 880 genera, 28,000 species and more than 300,000 registered cultivars. Two popular species are: 1. The Phalaenopsis is a great orchid for indoor use. It can flower often. This orchid likes warm temperatures, daily watering, 50-80% humidity and grows well in pots. 2. The Cattleya is a popular orchid. The flowers have many colours and forms. It prefers warm temperatures, regular watering, 50-80% humidity and a balanced fertilizer. Used for – decorative use (potted plants and/or cut flowers).	American Orchid Society, http://www.aos.org and http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/horticulture/orchids.html

An Agro-tourism experience at the Farmer's Market

Island Flare is a new interview cooking show, which offers a taste of the Bahama Islands. This television program is filled with Bahamian culture, faces, food and sound! The format is very interactive as the cooking show is taped in front of a studio audience. The show is hosted by Mr. Jamall Petty, Rio's Chef de Cuisine. This program is poised to become an instant hit with Bahamian audiences and is also hoped to eventually reach our friends and neighbours in the Caribbean. As a part of this new show, under the major sponsorship of the Mall at Marathon, six professional chefs battled for the "Signature Salad" crown on June 28, 2008 and were filmed for future airing on Island Flare.

As a part of this event, IICA, in conjunction with the Farmer's Market at NPCC (to promote agro-tourism linkages) hosted a "Gone to da Market" day, June 27, 2008 for the chef's to interact with the local farmers at the NPCC Farmer's Market on Blake Road (off JFK).

Small and large scale farmers are encouraged to start growing! The Chefs were open to giving suggestions and commented on the following:

Why are you encouraged to use Bahamian grown food?

"Local taste better."

"To help our local economy. Also, the quality (taste) is excellent. It also shows our capability."

"To help develop the industry and the country as a whole."

"Quality better, appeal, better taste, fresh."

What are the top three produce items, which you have not been able to find, that you would like to see produced locally?

"Heirloom tomatoes, Heirloom vegetables, berries. "

"Watermelon, peppers, tomatoes."

"Quality watermelons, gourmet edible flowers, Portobello and shiitake mushrooms."