Memorandum of Understanding
Between
The Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries,
The Private Sector,
And
The University of Belize

Background.

The University of Belize, the national university established by the Government of Belize, is tasked to provide, train, and educate human capital for the development of the country of Belize. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is the arm of government mandated to carry out research and development at Central Farm on behalf of the Ministry. The Research and Development Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the UB Sustainable Agriculture Program are both located at the Central Farm. The Research & Development Department of the Ministry of Agriculture has an on-going working relationship with the academic unit of UB at Central Farm as was agreed to in a signed MOU dated 30th September 2008.

The Agriculture Department of the Faculty of Science & Technology, the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries, and other stakeholders, notably the Private Sector, has been working to review the progress made as this relates specifically to awarding an Associate degree in Sustainable Agriculture program. The stage is now set for a collective and businesslike approach to the development of a physical resource base to complement the program, in a manner consistent with the new vision of the University fostering closer cooperation with the Government of Belize and the Private Sector in pursuing development goals. This enhanced Associate Degree program and planned improved physical resource base will serve not only to prepare students as young entrepreneurs, but technicians for both the Public and Private Sectors.

This new MOU is supportive of their efforts within the agriculture sector to enhance food security, alleviate poverty in rural Belize, and meet the challenges of both changing Economic Fortunes and Climate, while advancing the accreditation goals of the University.

Rationale.

A review of the first year of the Associate degree in Sustainable Agriculture program shows performance consistent with expectations. A Business Plan was developed during this period, exploring potential income generating activities within the program which would accelerate development to a level of greater financial independence and sustainability.

The successful implementation of the Business Plan was made possible with the solid support and commitment from MAF, the involvement of the Private Sector, and a renewed commitment by UB itself to procure loan financing for physical resource development, reinvest revenues in
the program, and maintain budget support constant during the developmental phase. Serious risks arising from natural disasters and larceny must be addressed through a comprehensive disaster risk management plan and enhanced security mechanisms.

This new MOU is now being presented and captures in detail significant increases in tangible support from both MAF and UB and identifies the supporting role from the Private Sector. It consolidates a tripartite approach to developing the sustainable Agriculture Program at UB Central Farm, once again underscoring the importance GOB and its partners attach to education delivery enhancement, especially in the Agriculture and Agri-business sectors.

Provisions.

Curriculum development and delivery.

- UB will consult with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (hereinafter the Ministry) and the Private Sector in matters associated with the program’s curriculum to ensure that the program remains relevant and meets its stated goals and objectives.
- UB’s associate degree program in Sustainable Agriculture will provide trained personnel to meet the human resource demand from both the Public and Private Sectors.
- The Ministry will support the allocation of at least 300,000 Euros under EDF10 towards a project of Agriculture Education Delivery Enhancement.

Practical skills development.

- UB will develop a model farm based on Agri-business principles, promoting sustainable, integrated, mixed farming systems, as a living laboratory for students during their course of training.
- The Ministry will make provisions for students to participate in regular field operations at Central Farm in support of their practical skills development.
- The Private Sector will create opportunities for internships in the field where possible.
- All signatories to the MOU will help identify and support the employment of UB Sustainable Agriculture Graduates when such opportunities arise.

Physical resource development.

- UB will procure loan financing in excess of $1.0M for investments in infrastructure, including a new administration building, renovations of four (4) dorms, field and laboratory equipment, and animals over the next year.
- UB agrees to reinvest all revenues derived from the project in its continued development and loan servicing, and to hold budget support constant over the development phase.
- The Ministry, through its budget, will support the development and stocking of the pig and sheep projects estimated at $18,500 and $17,300 respectively, and will assist with the development of another four (4) dorms estimated at $75,626.72.
- The Private Sector, through its member organizations such as the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other of its affiliated associations would spearhead and
support fund raising ventures for the development of the Agrotourism project designed to provide sustainability to the program at UB Central Farm campus.

- All physical resource development projects are scheduled for completion before August of 2010 so as to facilitate compulsory residency for all students.

**Farm Operations management.**

- The Ministry will facilitate UB’s Department of Agriculture at Central Farm with the use of its machinery at terms and conditions to be agreed upon by both parties, where circumstances allow.
- UB recognizes the wealth of knowledge and local experiences of Ministry and Private Sector personnel and will seek their assistance in the delivery of curriculum on an adjunct basis. Both sectors will actively encourage its respective personnel and members to contribute their professional services in the delivery of the curriculum on an adjunct basis at UB’s request.
- The Ministry and the Private Sector will invite UB students and faculty to their professional development activities wherever practicable.

**Information sharing and dissemination.**

All signatories to this MOU agree to:

- share research findings, new developments, local and overseas training opportunities, through circulation of printed materials, presentations after overseas missions, and networking.
- the coordination of efforts to promote appropriate technologies and Research & Development strategies in the farming communities to ensure visibility, efficient use of resources, and effective delivery to the target groups.
- share information on pests and disease outbreaks in the farm which may be considered a threat to the agricultural community.

**Security networking.**

- Recognizing the enormous annual losses from larceny and malicious intent and damage to property, the parties, especially the Ministry, and UB Central Farm have agreed to:
  - Share information on security threats.
  - Coordinate patrols of vulnerable areas, and during risk periods.
  - Seek support from the uniformed services at CF during periods of high risks and emergencies.
  - Network and report any suspicious activity and/or intelligence gathering.
  - Support each other during times of security breaches and emergencies.

**Boundaries and conflict resolutions.**
Recognizing the difficulties associated with mixed farming systems, the parties, in particular the Ministry and UB Central Farm have agreed to the following:

- Refrain from grazing livestock in pastures adjacent to cropped areas.
- Check boundary lines regularly and repair weak and broken areas.
- Ensure that all fertilizer sacks, plastic bags, old rope, broken bottles, scraps of metal, and containers are properly disposed of and not discarded in the neighboring fields, to become serious hazards to livestock.
- Notify each other of any chemical and/or environmental hazards to livestock, arising from chemical and fertilizer use, accidental spills, and errors in formulation.
- Resolution of conflicts outside of court and in an amicable manner with the third party acting as mediator when the need arises.

Disaster Management.

The parties in particular the Ministry and UB Central Farm have agreed to:

- introduce good disaster risk reduction practices in their respective farming systems to increase coping capacities and reduce vulnerability to disasters.
- coordinate their activities as much as possible during the preparedness phase in the following areas:
  - Livestock movement to higher ground.
  - Valuable equipment to a secure location on high ground.
  - Chemicals, fertilizers, and seed to a dry secure location on high ground.
  - Trimming of trees.
- assist each other with mass evacuations during periods of crisis management, bomb threats, and fires.
- establish and test a warning system for all disasters.
- ensure that a standard method of assessment of losses and needs is used in the post disaster period by all evaluators.

Duration.

Unless explicitly withdrawn, the MOU will have validity for continuous periods of five years. Changes to this document can be entered by any of the three parties by giving written notice to each other. Such changes will be deemed to be in effect from the date of respective signature of authorized personnel from among the three interested parties.

Execution.

Responsibility for the execution of this agreement on the part of the Ministry lies with the Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry, on the part of UB by its President, and for the Agriculture Private Sector by its representative, Ms. Amparo Masson, chairperson, Belize Chamber of Commerce. The primary contact officer on the part of the Ministry shall be the Officer-in-Charge/Director of the Ministry’s Research and Development Department in Central Farm, for
UB it shall be the Campus Administrator of Central Farm, and for the Private Sector Mr. Anthony Chanona.

Santos Mahung(PhD)  
President of UB

Hon. Rene Montero,  
Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Belize

Mrs. Amparo Masson  
President  
Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Date:  
Date:

Addendum to MOU

1.0 The Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI), through its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will liaise with Dr. Gordon Holder in an effort to achieve the following deliverables:

- Share the names of persons, as members of BCCI, who would commit to a timetable to visit the UB Central Farm Campus for the purpose of contributing their professional services, on an adjunct basis, in the delivery of the curriculum.
- Identify from among its membership, specific agri-businesses that will create and organize opportunities for internships during the school year.
- Spearhead and support fund raising ventures and such like initiatives designed for the sole purpose of development of the Agro-tourism project as a means to sustain the Associate Degree program of the UB Central Farm Campus.
Share information pertaining to possible identified resources in persons, institutions or printed (electronic) material and training seminars which can be of benefit to the overall educational development of the UB Central Farm Campus.

Share pertinent information on appropriate technology, research & development and joint venture opportunities that may exist within the region or extra-regional agri-business community.

2.0 Brief Outlines of UB Central Farm Business Plan

The Mission Statement.

The Central Farm department of the Faculty of Science and Technology houses the University of Belize’s integrated program in agriculture [who are we] that plans, delivers and evaluates its agricultural program of studies, agriculture-based extension services and applied research [what do we do] contributing to Belize’s food security in a sustainable manner [why do we do it]. The department offers a high quality program in sustainable agriculture to produce graduates with current and relevant skills and competencies as farmers, agro-business entrepreneurs, technicians, or professionals in agro-industry [how we do it]. Production and extension services include the production of improved genetic stock, planting material, technical and research services and commercial products, both primary and processed for agro-industry [services to stakeholders] in a manner that students, faculty and technical support staff continuously learn by studying and working in the farm as a living laboratory of a self sustainable farm [methodology by which it is done].

The business of UB Central Farm is teaching agriculture, extension services, and research. The primary goal at this stage is the production of graduates, at the Associate Degree level, with competencies and skills in agriculture suitable for agro-business entrepreneurship, and/or technical and professional vocation in agro-industry.

To achieve this, the development priorities which address Relevance, Quality, and Sustainability are:

- A farm as a business and as a living laboratory for training such individuals.
- Infrastructure for students to reside on campus and participate in the living laboratory.
- Specialized training, extension, and research services as additional business opportunities for income generation (Relevance).
- The infrastructure necessary for quality delivery and accreditation, namely laboratories, a library, and an administrative centre (Quality).
- Agrotourism as an additional income generating source towards greater financial independence (Sustainability).

These are all achievable goals with investments and renewed commitments by UB and tangible support from GOB, The Private Sector, and The Alumni.