

Farmer to Farmer Bahamas

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INTRODUCTION

The Bahamas is made up of about 700 islands and home to about 400,000 people. Tourism is the number one industry. Fishing and farming make up a very small percentage of the Gross National Product. In 2019, Hurricane Dorian, a Category 5 hurricane, hit the Bahamian Islands and caused extensive damage, especially on the island of Abaco. In 2020, Covid-19 had a major impact on the country's economy as tourism came to a halt. Transportation issues and importing food became a problem. The Bahamas imports about 92% of their food. Finding ways to grow their own food and sell it as a business became a priority.

NEED AND GOALS

- Growing focus on tourism over decades diverted individuals from the agricultural sector. This shift led to a decline in the number of people engaged in agriculture, resulting in a significant erosion of agricultural knowledge and traditional farming practices.
- The hurricane and pandemic highlighted the urgent necessity for enhanced local agricultural production and sustainable food sourcing.
- Established in 1994, Convoy of Hope operates as a faith-driven nonprofit organization dedicated to alleviating hunger globally and disaster relief efforts.
- In early 2022, MU Extension was approached by Convoy of Hope to connect agriculture expertise with the Bahamas.
- MU Extension specialists educated and trained individuals in the Bahamas on sustainable food cultivation practices, aiming to reduce reliance on foreign food sources.
- Individuals in the Bahamas across the three islands exchanged knowledge and skills acquired, fostering a collaborative learning environment.
- Bahamians enhanced their proficiency in cultivating their own food.



Participants learn about composting during an afternoon farm tour.



Acknowledgements:



Hurricane Dorian, a Category 5, devastated the Bahamian Islands in 2019



Various events: (a) Morning farmer training (b) Backyard farm tour (c) Meeting with a government agency (d) Poor soil makes growing food challenging (e) A backyard farmer learns about growing tomatoes

PROGRAM IMPACTS

- 573 participants on 3 islands received agriculture training on growing food
- A two-year follow-up in January 2025, revealed that MU Extension programming significantly inspired and influenced the Bahamian community
- Resumed backyard farming to cultivate their own food and enhance their sustainability
- Gained skills to cultivate crops in a more productive, efficient, and organic manner.
- Acquired the knowledge necessary to address problems related to plants and soil
- Possess the ability to structure their gardens into distinct zones
- Understand significance of bookkeeping and possess the skills to execute it proficiently
- Two companies started back into commercial farming.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- Three locations: Nassau, New Providence; Freeport, Grand Bahama and Marsh Harbour, Abaco Islands
- Nine two-week educational trips over 11 months in 2022-2023
- 14 MU Extension specialists taught the trainings
- Two MU Extension Specialists on each trip
- MU Extension specialists provided education and training to both backyard and commercial farmers on effective food cultivation techniques
- Morning trainings with PowerPoints and handouts were followed by afternoon backyard farm tours
- Beginner and advanced trainings were offered and repeated twice on each island
- Engaging with gardeners and growers during tours allowed for in-depth discussion regarding challenges and production techniques.
- Information was distributed to participants during trainings
- Surveys were given to participants on each island at the end of the trainings
- Two-year follow-up in January 2025

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Participants learned how to amend soil for growing fruits and vegetables
- Participants learned how to diagnose plant diseases and disorders and how to correct the issue
- Participants gained knowledge in gardening methods for sustained production
- Participants learned how to market their products
- Participants gained knowledge in record keeping
- Key findings and recommendations were made
- Participants gained knowledge through lecture and hands-on learning during tours



Commercial hydroponic operations in the Bahamas supply produce to island resorts



QUOTES

- “A lot of development and growth that came about from those trainings was so powerful”.
- “The professional trainings by individuals from University of Missouri blessed our lives and made an impact on food sustainability in the Bahamas. As we all know we import more than 92% of all the food we consume in the Bahamas. So, to be able to impact lives so that number can decrease, and we can grow more in our country and sustain ourselves was impactful, and it will be best for the long term and generations to come”.
- “I’m so grateful and thankful for the experience, encouragement, motivation and inspiration that came from that program”.

SUCCESS STORY

A gardener in Abaco, Bahamas, engaged in backyard farming prior to the devastating impact of Hurricane Dorian, which struck as a category 5 storm. After surviving the disaster, she participated in training sessions offered in Abaco. Through the Farmer-to-Farmer program facilitated by Convoy of Hope and the University of Missouri Extension, she resumed her food cultivation efforts. Her successful backyard farming not only improved her own diet but also allowed her to share fresh produce and valuable insights with her community. By teaching others the techniques she acquired, she fostered a spirit of collaboration and encouraged her neighbors to start their own gardens, thereby amplifying the positive effects of the program she had benefited from.