



SUMMARY REPORT

With Recommendations

This report captures the key themes, outcomes, and proposed next steps – including the formation of a multi-stakeholder working group network to advance the initiative and a pilot testing of the proposed AfriCaribbean Tourism Route. It reflects our collective vision and is intended to serve as a reference for ongoing collaboration, policy engagement, and investment mobilization.

Prepared by
AgriLuxe Marketing

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ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ARC	Agricultural Research Council – South Africa
ARC	Alliance of Rural Communities
AU	African Union
B2B	Business-to-Business
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
COLEAD	Committee Linking Entrepreneurship-Agriculture Development
FANRPAN	Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
IP	Intellectual Property
ITC	International Trade Centre
NAMC	National Agricultural Marketing Council – South Africa
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UN	United Nations
UWI	University of the West Indies
WILD	Wholesome. Indigenous. Local. Diverse

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“Across both Africa and the Caribbean, indigenous and neglected crops have nourished generations and sustained communities long before globalization shifted focus toward monocultures and imported staples. There is a resurgence of interest in these crops, not merely as heritage foods, but as critical tools for advancing food and nutrition security, climate resilience, and inclusive economic development.”¹

“As the NAMC, we look forward to further collaboration to support neglected and indigenous crops as part of an agritourism/culinary tourism strategy”²



“The merge between the Caribbean and Africa goes deep. The culture in Africa and the Caribbean is very linked and I think developing this route will be very, very important. From our side, this is an initiative that we support.”³

“We believe that this [initiative] can be a catalyst to drive demand, which in turn will drive facilitation and investment promotion between the two continents.”⁴

¹ Professor Diane Abrahams, Director, School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Johannesburg.

² Dr. Simphiwe Ngqangweni, CEO, National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), South Africa

³ Mr. Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, CEO Tourism Business Council of South Africa

⁴ Mr. Kwakye Donkor, CEO, Africa Tourism Partners

INDIGENOUS AND NEGLECTED FOOD CROPS: A GATEWAY TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND GROWTH IN AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

AN INAUGURAL SEMINAR SERIES

A. Context

Objectives

1. One objective of the seminar was to highlight the social, economic, and environmental relevance of indigenous, neglected and under-utilized crops to Africa and the Caribbean. More specifically, to promote these African and Caribbean crops and related value-added foods and products as unique ingredients for developing sustainable tourism.
2. Another objective was to get buy-in from stakeholders for a proposed African-Caribbean tourism route, a framework for developing tourism circuits around indigenous and neglected crops paired with the regions' cultural and creative assets.

Targeted Audience

3. Within this context a wide range of stakeholders from the public and private sectors were invited to attend, including those from government agencies, academia, development organizations, and private sector representatives operating primarily in the agriculture and tourism sectors.
4. The structure of the agenda was designed to gain insights from the private sector operating in agritourism spaces and from academia and development partners on relevant existing programs and potential for new investments to support the proposed African-Caribbean agritourism route initiative (for details, see the program agenda in Annex IV).
5. Close to 300 persons registered for the seminar. Two hundred and six attended, most of them did so virtually.

Box 1 The Big Idea - An AfriCaribbean Tourism Route

- Develop the first indigenous crop-based tourism circuit connecting Africa and the Caribbean
- Cultural corridors rooted in ancient crops, creative expressions, and wellness
- A multi-destination, modular experience, with each country offering a unique "chapter" of a shared story. Each country/destination:
 - Offers distinctive crops, rituals, and cultural expressions
 - Can be visited independently or part of a longer curated itinerary
 - May be part of a multi-country wellness passport, loyalty program, or cross-promotional campaign

Source: AgriLuxe Marketing

B. Key Themes and Insights

Market Trends and Opportunities

6. Health-conscious travelers, seeking authentic experiences, are driving a global shift toward authentic, nutrient-rich, functional foods and culturally rich activities. With a booming wellness tourism economy valued at over US\$830 billion⁵, the market is ripe for food and travel experiences that are rooted in health, authenticity, and culture. At the same time, climate change is disrupting global food systems, making conventional crops more vulnerable to drought, pests, and declining yields. These two trends provide dynamic market opportunities for indigenous and neglected crops.

Data shows that wellness travelers spend 50-60% more per trip; demand for authentic, food-based wellness experiences is rising fast; and women, millennials, and diaspora communities are key growth markets⁶.

7. Indigenous crops are often more nutrient dense than mainstream staple crops and offer wellness enhancing options that stand out in the saturated food tourism markets. For destinations in Africa and the Caribbean, this creates a unique opportunity to position indigenous foods not just as heritage, but as premium health assets anchoring spa menus, culinary tours, and farm-to-table experiences that cater to the growing wellness tourism economy.
8. Indigenous crops are also often naturally climate-resilient, low-input, and adapted to local ecologies. Their ability to thrive under harsh conditions positions them as ideal candidates for sustainable agriculture, particularly in the Global South. As consumers and tourism markets increasingly demand climate conscious, local, and health-oriented foods, indigenous crops can be rebranded as premium, climate-smart ingredients, fuelling a new wave of culinary innovation, agritourism, and ethical sourcing.

"Direct Africa-Caribbean airlinks are not just about transporting people and goods, they're about unlocking economic, cultural, and historical potential. Let's connect Africa and the Caribbean not just by air but by purpose⁷."

Trade and Connectivity

9. Tourism, when done right, is a gateway for trade. The proposed route is not just about the movement of people. It is also about the movement of goods and skills within and between the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), including
 - Food and beverage trade of high quality value-added indigenous crops
 - High-value wellness products (functional food and non-food) and services
 - Cross-regional crop introduction
 - Capacity building and skills exchange

⁵ Global Wellness Institute, 2024

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ms. Hafsa Abdulsalam, CEO, LIAT20

- Regional air and sea connectivity

Entrepreneurship

10. Entrepreneurship, particularly among small holder farmers and micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises in rural communities, is critical to unlocking the full market potential of indigenous crops. These local actors are often the primary custodians of traditional knowledge and biodiversity, yet they remain excluded from high-value markets due to limited access to infrastructure, training, and investment. Empowering them through entrepreneurship – whether in value-added processing, agritourism, or crop branding – enables income generation and community-led economic transformation. By turning indigenous crops into market-ready products and experiences, rural entrepreneurs can become the drivers of inclusive growth, ensuring that the benefits of climate resilience, wellness demand, and cultural tourism are equitably shared.

“Tourism is a dominant industry in the Caribbean and as such represents a large market for agricultural products⁸”

Box 2 Supporting Entrepreneurs in Agritourism

- Linking markets across regions and B2B events. Sharing best practices and scaling success from agritourism across Africa and the Caribbean.
- Capacity building: Training in business planning, digital marketing, traceability, hygiene standards, and business development. Focus on youth and women.
- Access to finance: Tailored credit and grants for agro-tourism startups and MSMEs. Incentive packages.
- Public-private partnerships: Linking ministries of agriculture, tourism, education, and the private sector.
- Infrastructure investment: Especially in transport, digital tools, and rural facilities.
- Market development: Create labels, certifications, and promotional campaigns for farm-to-table products and destinations.
- Policy support: Develop frameworks that recognize agritourism as a formal sector and support smallholder inclusion.

Source: Isolina Boto, COLEAD

Research and Innovation

11. Research and innovation are essential for Africa and the Caribbean to fully capitalise on the growing market demand for indigenous food crops. Scientific research helps validate the nutritional, medicinal, and climate-resilient properties of these crops, while innovation enables their transformation into value-added food, wellness, and tourism products. To move from tradition to market, research is also critical in improving cultivation, processing, and shelf life – key steps in the commercialisation process. Equally important is addressing intellectual property rights, including traditional knowledge protection, branding, and geographical indications, to ensure that communities and

⁸ Ms. Shauna Brandon, Rural Development Specialist, IICC

countries retain control over the cultural and economic value of their crops. By investing in research, innovation, and IP frameworks, Africa and the Caribbean can build competitive, culturally rooted, and ethically sourced products that position indigenous crops as drivers of inclusive, sustainable development.

“Over the years, UWI has brought in a number of germplasms from IITA. The challenge was that when it was time to release it to the farmers, they were not interested. But the dynamics are shifting. There is a resurgence of interest in indigenous crops⁹.”

“We do research in Kreuger park collecting wild varieties. There is an opportunity to partner with entrepreneurs already on site. ARC can contribute to developing IP¹⁰”

Financing

12. Access to finance is critical for Africa and the Caribbean to fully seize the market opportunities presented by indigenous crops. From smallholder farmers to agro-processors and tourism entrepreneurs, financial support is essential to invest in infrastructure, equipment, certification, product development, and market access. Without adequate and affordable financing, many promising ventures struggle to scale or meet quality standards required for domestic and export markets. Blended finance, concessional lending, and targeted grants – especially those aligned with climate resilience, food security, and cultural heritage – can unlock inclusive growth across the value chain. Strengthening access to finance ensures that indigenous crops move from local potential to global impact, powered by the people and places where they originate.

“We have spent a lot of time supporting the commercialization of fonio in West Africa. We need to see what other indigenous crops would fit under this agenda. We would like to be deploying about 9 billion worth of capital into various aspects of food security on an annual basis and that would require we diversify from what we’ve traditionally done with the usual set of crops.¹¹”

“Through its diaspora strategy and the associated Caribbean initiative, Afreximbank seeks to facilitate the realization of the potential of unique opportunities for collaboration between the regions, through the provision innovative trade and investment solutions.¹²”

Partnerships

13. Partnerships are critical to unlocking the full potential of indigenous and neglected crops, particularly through the formation of cross-sectoral communities of practice that serve as platforms for innovation, knowledge exchange, and inclusive value chain development. In line with this, the seminar recommended the establishment of a working group network,

⁹ Dr. Wendy-Ann Isaacs, Head, Department of Food Production, UWI

¹⁰ Dr. Yolesa Pakela-Jezile, Head, Institute for Tropical and sub-Tropical Crops, ARC

¹¹ Mr. Sam Nganga, Upstream Manager, Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Services, IFC

¹² Mr. Raymond Ward, Assistant Manager, Client Relations, Caribbean Office, Afreximbank

comprised of thematic sub-groups – such as research, enterprise development, policy, and marketing – to advance the seminar’s agenda and provide a structured mechanism for collaboration, co-creation, and implementation across Africa and the Caribbean. Ongoing collaborations such as those between UWI and IITA on germplasm access, UJ and UWI on leveraging digital technologies to design healthy and sustainable indigenous food experiences, or the Agricultural Research Council’s work with private actors on intellectual property and commercialisation, demonstrate the value of coordinated effort. Institutions like IICA, ITC, and UN Tourism are also building synergies to promote tourism and agri-based rural development.

“In the process of developing our trails, we focused locally, regionally, but also internationally. By working together, we can turn what are decent destinations into world-class, world-renowned destinations¹³.”

Policy Support

14. Policy and political support at the highest levels are essential for Africa and the Caribbean to fully capitalise on the market potential of indigenous and neglected crops. Securing political buy-in ensures that the promotion of these crops is not treated as a niche issue, but as a strategic priority tied to tourism, agriculture, health, trade, and cultural identity. Efforts by the CARICOM Secretariat to advance the African-Caribbean tourism route to the Heads of Government agenda, along with IICA’s agritourism strategies at both regional and national levels, provide critical entry points for integrating indigenous crops into formal policy frameworks. Embedding this agenda into regional strategies, national development plans, and investment blueprints will not only attract resources but also ensure coherence across sectors. Just as important is the implementation of these strategies, which requires active coordination, monitoring, and accountability. The advocacy role of partners like UN Tourism is vital in keeping governments engaged and committed to unlocking the cultural and economic power of indigenous crops as a cornerstone of resilient, inclusive development.

“The routes that have been discussed here are well in line with the work that the Caribbean is doing in terms of extending linkages in trade and culture between Africa and the Caribbean. The Heads of Government has asked the Secretariat to quantify the linkages between local agriculture, agro-processing, manufacturing and cultural services...in essence to quantify the agritourism linkages. So the themes of this conference intersect with a number of areas for the work of the CARICOM Secretariat.¹⁴”

¹³ Dr. Lisa Chase, Professor, University of Vermont Extension and Director, Vermont Tourism Research Center.

¹⁴ Dr. Wendell Samuel, Sr Advisor and Assistant Secretary General, CARICOM Secretariat.

Private Sector Power

15. Several private sector actors made compelling presentations during the seminar, demonstrating the viability and value of indigenous crops as a foundation for tourism, entrepreneurship, and cultural expression. See some key highlights in the box below.

Box 3 Innovation, Impact, and Opportunity in Indigenous Crop Tourism

- **IKhwa ttu (South Africa)**
Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, IKhwa ttu transformed its menu from highly processed offerings to heritage-inspired dishes made with sustainably produced ingredients. This shift led to increased visitor numbers, more staff hires, and a significant rise in restaurant profitability.
- **PaBvute Gourmet (Zimbabwe)**
Specialising in luxury traditional catering services, PaBvute offers bespoke culinary experiences using indigenous ingredients alongside traditional cooking techniques and tools – such as clay pots – to preserve the flavour and nutritional value of the foods.
- **Setšong African Tea Crafters (South Africa)**
A mission-driven enterprise using local plants to produce a range of indigenous teas. The company is 49% owned by two rural cooperatives comprised of women and youth. Setšong also offers cultural tea tours, tea processing experiences, and indigenous food pairings as part of its tourism model.
- **Cross Atlantic Chocolate Collective (Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, USA)**
Alliance of Rural Communities (ARC) formed the African-Caribbean Chocolate Collective with minimal external funding. Despite limited capital, the ARC network has delivered a 1:9 input-to-output revenue ratio, highlighting the high-impact potential of grassroots collaboration in cacao and artisanal chocolate production.
- **Soothing Touch Spa & The Bamboo Retreat (Barbados)**
These wellness enterprises reduce import dependency by using locally and regionally sourced agricultural products in their spa treatments. This shift has improved sustainability and authenticity while supporting local and regional producers.
- **Belmont Estate (Grenada)**
Award-winning agritourism model that incorporates indigenous plants into its chocolate products. Demand for its culturally rich, value-added offerings now outpaces small-scale production capabilities, underscoring the need for scaling-up investments.
- **Turn.Up Travel (Kenya)**
A dynamic media and travel company leveraging storytelling to promote agritourism. By partnering with content creators and reviewing farm-based tourism experiences, they have expanded the reach and appeal of Kenya's agricultural sector to both local and global audiences.
- **Vista Dorado Estate (Trinidad & Tobago)**
Successfully introduces Moruga Hill rice – a culturally significant indigenous variety – into the U.S. market through culinary events, in partnership with renowned Executive Chef Chaz Brown, demonstrating strong export potential.
- **Londolozi Game Reserve (South Africa)**
A leading wildlife tourism destination expressing readiness to co-create a WILD Food Safari in the Mpumalanga province, linking established wildlife experiences with homestead-grown indigenous crops and culinary tourism.

C. Conclusion and Recommendations

Seizing the Momentum, Building a Movement

16. The seminar "*Indigenous and Neglected Food Crops: A Gateway to Sustainable Tourism and Growth in Africa and the Caribbean*" catalyzed a transformative dialogue that reimagines indigenous crops as engines of sustainability, cultural pride, and inclusive regional development. The discussions highlighted a shared vision for a more connected and resilient future – anchored in the AfriCaribbean Tourism Route, a proposed transatlantic initiative that places indigenous crops and culinary heritage at the heart of tourism innovation.
17. The momentum generated must now transition from dialogue to delivery. With political will, strong partnerships, and aligned institutional support, this WILD initiative can become a living model of climate-smart, culturally rich, and community-driven wellness tourism – positioning Africa and the Caribbean as global leaders in sustainable development through food, heritage, and innovation.
18. For transformative impact, the combined proposed initiative and following recommendations aims to (i) scale deep – by generating big cultural ideas; scale up – by pursuing policy change; and (iii) scale out – by replicating adapted, tested principles and models.

From Vision to Action: Recommendations and Next Steps

19. Launch Thematic Working Group Network (**Immediate Priority**)

Establish informal, action-oriented working groups coordinated by AgriLuxe Marketing, with co-chairs from Africa and the Caribbean. Terms of Reference will be prepared. These groups will also shape the agenda for follow-up seminar discussions (1–2 hours) and guide technical action in key areas. AgriLuxe Marketing will coordinate across the sub-groups.

Proposed Working Group Streams and potential Co-Chairs, to be confirmed:

 - Research & Innovation (UWI, UJ, IITA, FANRPAN, ARC-South Africa)
 - Route Mapping & Product Development (Private sector stakeholders, GAN)
 - Enterprise Development & MSME Support (COLEAD, ITC, IICA)
 - Marketing & Branding (AgriLuxe Marketing, NAMC, Tourism boards, private sector representatives)
 - Policy & Strategy Alignment (FANRPAN, CARICOM Secretariat, IICA, UN Tourism, FAO, Regulatory, Standards, Certification bodies)
 - Investor Engagement & Resource Mobilization (AgriLuxe, IFC, Afreximbank, Public/Private financial partners)
20. Secure High-Level Political Endorsement (**Immediate to Medium-Term**).
 - Leverage the CARICOM–AU Heads of State summit (September 2025) and regional policy platforms to formally introduce the AfriCaribbean Route as a flagship initiative for sustainable tourism and agrifood system transformation
 - Use Seminar report to contribute to the CARICOM’s Secretariat’s report to CARICOM Heads of State meeting in July on the opportunities for linkages and product development between agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and other productive sectors.

- Discuss with CARICOM Secretariat on integrating relevant elements of the recommendations into the institution’s work program.
 - Identify “Champions” at the sub-regional levels, such as the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Common Market for Eastern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).
21. Map and Co-Design the Route (**Short- to Medium-Term**)
- Engage interested MSMEs and tourism operators in route design, emphasizing co-ownership and commercial feasibility.
 - Establish a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework to track progress, capture lessons, and inform adaptive strategies for scaling the AfriCaribbean route and related initiatives.
22. Facilitate Technical Partnerships and Crop Introduction (**Immediate to Short-term**)
- Initiate dialogue between IITA and CARICOM Secretariat on the potential for introducing indigenous crops of interest into targeted Caribbean countries and address technical needs such as intellectual property, seed systems, and commercialization strategies.
23. Activate Flagship Events and Projects as Awareness & Investment Catalysts (**Immediate to Longer-Term**)
- Host targeted food events to showcase culinary-cultural innovation and build investor confidence. One such event, “*WILD Feast at the Vineyard*” is under discussion for execution during South Africa’s next Summer/tourist season.
 - Promote the WILD Food Safari in Mpumalanga as a high-value rural tourism model. Discussions have been initiated with potential partners
 - Identify/scale-up other innovative projects at the national or sub-regional levels
24. Test an AfriCaribbean Chocolate Trail (**Medium-Term Pilot**)
- Using a maximum of 4 countries, engage the already established Cross Atlantic Chocolate Collective network to test the concept of the African-Caribbean tourism route. [See Annex III for more details.](#)
25. Develop National, Sub-Regional Trails (**Medium- to Longer-Term**)
- Design localized trails based on commercial feasibility, stakeholder interests, and resources eg, a Maroon Heritage Trail, a South African indigenous food tour trail.
26. Align with existing strategies and platforms (**On-going**)

The nature and complexity of this initiative means that, for success, it is imperative to have on-going dialogues and coordinated actions across and within multiple sectors and institutions.

ANNEX

I. Position Paper (Policy Brief)

MAY 2025

AFRICA - CARIBBEAN

POSITION PAPER – ADVANCING FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE, CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TOURISM TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INDIGENOUS, NEGLECTED, AND EMBLEMATIC CROPS IN AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Recognising the United Nations Member States' commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a universal framework for people, planet, prosperity, and partnerships;

Recognising the UN Food Systems Summit's aims of transforming food systems to address hunger, malnutrition, climate vulnerability, and the erosion of biodiversity and cultural heritage;

Recognising the CARICOM Meeting's directive for a cross-sectoral assessment of the agriculture sector's linkages with tourism, manufacturing, and other productive sectors to drive regional production and integration;

Recognising that the African Union and CARICOM Heads of Government have pledged to strengthen Afro-Caribbean cooperation across trade, tourism, culture, and sustainable development;

Recognising the critical role that indigenous and neglected crops play in promoting food sovereignty, biodiversity, nutritional security, and climate-smart agriculture;

Recognising that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and regional tourism strategies offer platforms to enhance value chains, storytelling, and cross-border cooperation through culturally significant food systems;

Accepting that wellness tourism, culinary travel, and heritage tourism are among the fastest growing global travel trends, with increased demand for local, authentic, and sustainable experiences;

Accepting that indigenous and neglected crops are uniquely positioned to meet these demands while empowering smallholders, women, youth, and entrepreneurs through agri-tourism and value-added product development;

Accepting that research, innovation, and coordinated policy frameworks are needed to commercialise these crops and protect the intellectual property of traditional knowledge holders;

As an outcome of our engagement in the hybrid seminar, "Indigenous and Neglected Food Crops: A Gateway to Sustainable Tourism and Growth in Africa and the Caribbean" (May 8, 2025), convened by AgriLuxe Marketing in partnership with the University of Johannesburg, the University of the West Indies, and the Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), we the participants recognize that:

- Indigenous, neglected, and emblematic crops, such as breadfruit, baobab, cassava, cocoa, coffee, fonio, marula, millet, moringa, and sorghum, have untapped potential as the foundation of new culinary and tourism value chains.
- These crops are culturally meaningful, climate-resilient, and economically viable when supported by innovation, branding, and cross-regional partnerships.
- The proposed AfriCaribbean Tourism Route—a modular, multi-country tourism circuit rooted in Wholesome, Indigenous, Local, and Diverse (WILD) experiences – can serve as a catalyst for inclusive growth.
- Micro-, Small-, and Medium-sized Enterprises and community entrepreneurs across both regions are already demonstrating success through heritage catering, artisanal teas and chocolates, cultural farm tours, and wellness retreats.
- The development of curated routes, including a Cross-Atlantic Chocolate Trail and WILD Food Safari, presents immediate opportunities for piloting the larger initiative.
- Cross-border institutions such as FAO, IFC, IICA, IITA, ITC, UN Tourism, and the CARICOM Secretariat have signaled support and identified areas for exploring collaboration.
- Political support from Heads of Government is essential to embed this vision into national and regional development strategies and attract investment.

We, the participants of the Seminar, recommend to our respective Heads of Government and regional organisations to:

- Formally endorse the AfriCaribbean Tourism Route as a flagship regional initiative at the upcoming CARICOM–AU Heads of State Summit.
- Support the formation of regional working groups on route design, enterprise development, policy coordination, and marketing, co-chaired by institutions from both Africa and the Caribbean.
- Facilitate resource mobilisation and public–private investment in pilot projects, including the WILD Food Safari, and Cross-Atlantic Chocolate Trail.
- Include indigenous crop-based tourism in updated national agritourism strategies, sustainable tourism policies, and diaspora engagement platforms.
- Ensure integration with existing frameworks such as IICA's Caribbean Agritourism Strategy and AfCFTA.
- Protect traditional knowledge and promote innovation by addressing intellectual property rights and enabling research-to-market pathways.

We respectfully submit this position paper as a contribution to advancing inclusive, culturally grounded, and climate-smart tourism development through indigenous crops – charting a shared path for economic resilience and regional solidarity.

II. Action Matrix: Advancing the AfriCaribbean Tourism Route

Action	Objective/Output	Contribution to Route Development	Linked Actions
1. Launch Thematic Working Group Network	Coordinated stakeholder action through co-chaired thematic groups, guided by AgriLuxe Marketing	Builds technical foundations, ensures diverse representation and leadership from both regions. Shapes follow-up seminar discussions.	2, 3, 4, 5, 8
2. Secure High-Level Political Endorsement	Political visibility and strategic positioning on CARICOM and AU agendas	Enables long-term policy support, mobilizes government-level commitment and resources	1, 4, 6, 8
3. Co-Design the Route with Enterprises	Enterprise-informed trail blueprint with tourism offerings	Ensures market readiness and community ownership, enhances authenticity and viability	1, 5, 6, 7
4. Facilitate Technical Partnerships (e.g., IITA–UWI/CARDI)	Crop introduction, research and innovation, technical support	Supports commercialization, regional crop integration, and scientific validation	1, 2, 5, 8
5. Activate Flagship Events (e.g., WILD Feast, Food Safari)	Raise visibility, test demand, engage stakeholders, attract media and funders	Demonstrates proof of concept, builds public momentum and investor interest	1, 3, 4, 6
6. Test a Cross-Atlantic Trail (Chocolate Pilot)	Multi-country route prototype using emblematic crops and shared storytelling	Provides operational insights, builds trail governance model, validates business case	2, 3, 5, 7
7. Develop National/Sub-Regional Trails	Country-level and themed trail packages (e.g., Maroon Trail, SA itinerary)	Builds content diversity and scale, strengthens regional tourism integration	3, 6, 8
8. Align with Existing Strategies and Platforms	Integrate with IICA, UN Tourism, AfCFTA, Diaspora programs, etc.	Ensures synergy, avoids duplication, and leverages existing momentum and funding	1, 2, 4, 7

III. Pilot AfriCaribbean Chocolate Trail

WILD Cross Atlantic Chocolate Trail **"Where History, Wellness, Culture, and Flavour Intersects"**

THE VISION

To create a vibrant, cross-continental tourism experience that celebrates the shared heritage, creativity, and resilience of Africa and the Caribbean through cocoa and chocolate. The pilot trail will connect communities, empower smallholder producers and artisans, and offer travelers immersive, ethical, and culturally rich journeys - anchored in the transformative power of a single, emblematic crop. Through storytelling, entrepreneurship, equitable trade, and other sustainable practices, the trail will serve as a model for the broader AfriCaribbean Tourism Route.

WHY COCOA? WHY NOW?

- Though not indigenous, cocoa is an emblematic crop of both Africa and the Caribbean, representing centuries of resilience, creativity, and global contribution. Africa produces over 70% of the world's cocoa, while the Caribbean has a legacy of high-quality, artisanal chocolate making.
- The crop naturally links both regions through shared histories of cultivation, diaspora narratives, and evolving entrepreneurship.
- The bean-to-bar movement enables value creation by local producers and opportunities for export.
- Cocoa/chocolate offer versatile, premium ingredients that can be reinterpreted across a spectrum of culinary styles – from traditional recipes rooted in local heritage to contemporary gourmet creations and bold AfriCaribbean fusion dishes.
- Cocoa plantations offer sustainable opportunities for multi-cropping, including with indigenous crops.
- Wellness, ethical food, and heritage tourism are growing global trends, which position cocoa-based tourism—such as farm tours, chocolate tastings, and cultural festivals—as a high-impact, globally attractive offerings.
- An existing dynamic network - the Cross Atlantic Chocolate Collective

THE EXPERIENCE (Pilot Itinerary Overview)

The itinerary will be curated around historical, wellness, culinary, and cultural themes and activities in each country and would include stops at key relevant historical sites, cocoa rituals, cocoa farm immersion, bean-to-bar chocolate making, cocoa/chocolate tastings and pairings, culinary events, and spa treatments.

PILOT GOALS

- Test feasibility for a permanent WILD Cross Atlantic Chocolate Tourism Trail and lessons learned for the larger proposed AfriCaribbean Tourism Route
- Build and/or scale sustainable community-led tourism foundations
- Create and/or scale income-generating opportunities for smallholders
- Model ethical tourism tied to heritage/emblematic crops.

PARTNERS WELCOMED IN:

- Route development and itinerary design
- MSME training, branding, and certification
- Air connectivity, media, and trade facilitation

Lead Partners/Coordinators: AgriLuxe Marketing and Cross Atlantic Chocolate Collective

Potential collaborators: UWI, IICA, COLEAD, FAO, FANRPAN, UN Tourism, LIAT20, Tourism Boards etc, private sector investors to be determined.

IV. Seminar Agenda

INDIGENOUS & NEGLECTED FOOD CROPS: A GATEWAY TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND GROWTH IN AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

CONTEXT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This seminar is the first in a series to promote a wider initiative – AfriCaribbean WILD™¹⁵ Tourism Routes. Given increasing trends in tourism markets for local, healthy “authentic” culinary and cultural experiences, the tourism routes initiative between Africa and the Caribbean aims to promote the regions as sustainable and unique culinary cultural meccas for both international, regional, and domestic travelers and public and private sector investors.▪ The seminar will be in hybrid format (in-person and virtual), with most attendants expected to participate virtually.
OBJECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Highlight the social, economic, and environmental relevance of indigenous, neglected and under-utilized crops to Africa and the Caribbean. More specifically, to promote these African and Caribbean crops and related value-added foods and products as unique ingredients for developing sustainable tourism
KEY EXPECTED OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increased awareness on<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The socio-economic and cultural value of indigenous, neglected and under-utilized crops vis-à-vis sustainable tourism development for the regions○ Opportunities for partnerships between the two regions in promoting indigenous and local foods crops and sustainable tourism○ Opportunities for relevant policy and investment projects▪ A seminar report and next steps

¹⁵ Wholesome. Indigenous. Local. Diverse

INDIGENOUS & NEGLECTED FOOD CROPS: A GATEWAY TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND GROWTH IN AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

AFRICARIBBEAN WILD TOURISM ROUTES SEMINAR SERIES

AGENDA: 12:30-19:00 SAST

FACILITATOR: Mr. Jerry Mabena, CEO, Motsamayi Tourism Group and Chair,
Tourism Business Council South Africa.

12:30-13:15 WELCOME & KEYNOTE ADDRESS

12:35-12:55 OPENING REMARKS

- Prof. Diane Abraham, Director, School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Johannesburg
- Dr. Simphiwe Ngqangweni, CEO, National Agricultural Marketing Council, Republic of South Africa (RSA)
- Mr. Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, CEO, Tourism Business Council, RSA

12:55-13:15 KEYNOTE ADDRESS

- Mr. Kwakye Donkor, CEO, Africa Tourism Partners

13:15-13:45 SETTING THE STAGE

13:15-13:30 CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

This presentation provides an overview of trends in the tourism markets that are relevant to indigenous and local food crops. It also reviews the food system framework to highlight the benefits of collaboration between Africa and the Caribbean in maximising these market opportunities for achieving their sustainable development goals, namely those linked to food and nutrition security, food import reduction, job creation, and climate change adaptations.

- Ms. Jeanette Sutherland, Founder, AgriLuxe Marketing

13:30-13:45 BUILDING BRIDGES: STRATEGIES AND LESSONS LEARNED IN CREATING CROSS-BORDER AGRITOURISM ROUTES

This presentation provides strategic insights gleaned from creating an international tasting trail between the United States and Canada

- Dr. Lisa Chase, Professor at the University of Vermont Extension, Director of the Vermont Tourism Research Center, past President and current Education Co-Chair of the Global Agritourism Network.

13:45-14:45 CASE STUDIES: COUNTRY RESPONSES TO FOOD AND WELLNESS TRENDS IN TOURISM MARKETS

Examples of primarily private sector-driven business responses will highlight, among other themes: (i) the key markets targeted, (ii) social and environmental returns on their investments; (iii) challenges in their supply chains; and (iv) the role of smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs and how they can be more efficiently incorporated into agritourism value chains.

Fine Dining; Farm-2-Table

- **Case Study 1:** Mr. Michael Daiber, General Manager, !Khwatla, an award-winning San heritage educational center and tourist destination, in the Western Cape, **South Africa**, transformed its restaurant menu to tell an indigenous story.
- **Case Study 2:** Chef Gracia Bvute, Director & Head Chef, PaBvute Gourmet PVT LTD, specialising in luxury, traditional catering services and bespoke experiences in **Zimbabwe**.

Food Festivals

- **Case Study 3:** Chef Nyanda Peltier Charles, Founder, WATO Festival, Commonwealth of **Dominica** (celebrating Caribbean local foods and culture)

Specialty Foods; Retail

- **Case Study 4:** Ms. Retang Phaahla, Co-Founder, Setšong African Tea Crafters, **Limpopo, South Africa** (transforming local flora and fauna into an indigenous brand)
- **Case Study 5:** Ms. Gillian Goddard, Founder, Cross Atlantic Chocolate Collective, (a network of primarily **African-Caribbean** cocoa farmers and artisanal chocolate producers)

Spa and Beauty Treatments

- **Case Study 6:** Mr. Steve Andrews, Founder, Soothing Touch Spa and The Bamboo Retreat, **Barbados** (pampering agri-style)

14:45-15:00 OPEN DISCUSSION

An opportunity for dialogue through Questions and Answers

15:00-16:50 SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

15:00-15:10 DEVELOPING AN AUTHENTIC, LOCAL, CULTURALLY DIVERSE FOOD ECOSYSTEM FOR SOUTH AFRICANS AND GLOBAL TOURISTS

This presentation explores key learnings from the development of a food ecosystem at the V&A Waterfront, one of South Africa's premier tourist destinations. Participants will gain insights into how this complex neighbourhood is leveraging market-driven strategies, driving an ambition to foster an example of a just, equitable and sustainable food landscape, benefitting local communities, small-scale farmers and culinary entrepreneurs

- Mr. Henry Mathys, Strategic Programme Manager, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town, **South Africa**.

15:10-15:20 REDEFINING FARM LIFE – REIMAGINING LUXURY

This presentation showcases how farms, traditionally places for food production, can now be hubs for health and wellness experiences, tapping into an emerging market of travellers seeking nature-based therapies, organic foods, and holistic well-being experiences.

- Ms. Shadel Nyack Compton, Managing Director, Belmont Estate, **Grenada**

15:20-15:30 POTENTIAL FOR HERITAGE FOOD TRAILS IN THE CARIBBEAN

This presentation will highlight success stories in food and wellness tourism in selected Caribbean countries and the development of regional heritage trails linking indigenous foods and healing cultures

- Ms. Ena Harvey, Agritourism Specialist

15:30-15:40 LINKING ENTREPRENEURSHIP-AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: FROM FARM TO TABLE

This presentation will highlight opportunities in the agri-food model to drive entrepreneurial innovations for meeting the demands of both local and global tourism markets.

- Ms. Isolina Boto, Head of Networks and Alliances, COLEAD

15:40-15:50 PROTECTING HERITAGE AND PROMOTING GROWTH: THE ROLE OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS (GIs) IN MARKETING INDIGENOUS AND NEGLECTED FOOD CROPS

This presentation will explore how the recognition of these crops with a GI label can elevate their marketing value, attract tourism, and stimulate sustainable local

economies. They will also touch on the challenges of establishing such systems and the impact of protecting indigenous knowledge in both the agricultural sector and cultural tourism.

- Mr. Mark Forgenie, Managing Director, Vista Dorado Estates Moruga Hill Rice, **Trinidad and Tobago**

15:50-16:00 CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS – THE ROLE OF TOUR OPERATORS IN SHAPING AGRITOURISM EXPERIENCES ACROSS AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The presentation will highlight the role of tour operations in, among other things, facilitating logistics and operations for a competitive agritourism route, marketing and promotion, and creating tailored tourism packages while supporting local community engagements. The presentation will also highlight feasible business collaboration models among tour operators from both regions to ensure the route is successful/competitive.

- Mr. Muthuri Kinyamu, Founder, Turn Up Travel and Board Member, **Kenya** Ecotourism.

16:00-16:10 IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Increased and competitive connectivity between the two regions is required for efficient South-South collaboration in maximising opportunities in tourism markets for mainstreaming indigenous food crops. This presentation will provide an update on flight options between Africa and the Caribbean, based on the joint venture between Air Peace and Antigua and Barbuda.

- Ms. Hafsah Abdulsalam, CEO, LIAT 2020, **Antigua and Barbuda**

16:10-16:20 PROMOTING SOUTH-SOUTH COLLABORATION AND AGRITOURISM TRADE BETWEEN AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Afreximbank is leading a transformative process to strengthen social and economic ties between Africa and the Caribbean. Facilitating trade and investment is a vital step in this process and has formed a major part of the bank's Diaspora Strategy. This presentation will explore how this support can be leveraged to promote joint investments in establishing an African-Caribbean tourism trade route centred on indigenous and neglected crops bundled with the regions' cultural and creative assets.

- Mr. Raymond Ward, Assistant Manager, Client Relations, Caribbean Office, Afreximbank

16:20-16:50 TAKING ACTION: MAKING A PITCH

This presentation will provide an elevator pitch for developing a WILD food safari around homestead communities in Mpumalanga province to complement South Africa's well developed wildlife safari. It will also highlight lessons for integrating indigenous and neglected crops into more mature tourism market segments.

- Mr. Dave Varty, Co-Founder & Co-Owner, Londolozi Private Game Reserve

This presentation shares plans for RICE, Rising in Community Everyday, a proposed festival for promoting communities' uniqueness through culinary art and experiences.

- Chef Chaz Brown, Executive Chef at Garces Events

16:50-17:00 OPEN DISCUSSION

An opportunity for dialogue through Questions and Answers

17:00-18:30 RESPONSES FROM ACADEMIA & DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

This session aims to learn more about Academia and Development Partners' agenda, particularly in terms of (i) on-going related activities; (ii) opportunities for collaboration among themselves for increasing efficiencies in delivering related impacts; and (iii) opportunities for new investments to contribute to maximising African and Caribbean indigenous and local food crops for sustainable tourism and development.

16:50-17:30 ACADEMIA

- Prof Michael Abberton, Director for West Africa and Head of the Genetic Resources Center, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and director for IITA's work on neglected crops
- Dr Hema Kesa, Director, Food Evolution Research Laboratory and Senior Lecturer at the School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Johannesburg

- Dr. Wendy-Ann Isaacs, Head, Department of Food Production, Faculty of Agriculture, University of the West Indies
- Dr. Yolisa Pakela-Jezile, Head, Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Crops and Acting Executive Manager, Crops and Natural Resources, Agricultural Research Council, RSA

17:30-18:30 DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

- Mr. Samuel Kamau Nganga, Upstream Manager, Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Services, International Finance Corporation (IFC)
- Mr. William Castro Rodriguez, Programme Officer and Caribbean Country Manager, International Trade Centre (ITC)
- Ms. Sandra Carvao, Director, Market Intelligence, Policies, and Competitiveness, UN Tourism
- Ms. Shauna Brandon, Rural Development Specialist, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
- Ms. Nyabeni Tipo, FAO Representative, Tanzania
- Dr. Wendell Samuel, Sr. Advisor to the Secretary General and Acting Assistant Secretary General, Directorate for Economic Integration, Innovation, and Development, CARICOM Secretariat
- Dr. Tshilidzi Madzivhandila, CEO, FANRPAN and President-appointed Member of the National Planning Commission.

18:30-18:45 OPEN DISCUSSION

An opportunity for dialogue through Questions and Answers

18:45-19:00 CLOSING REMARKS

Closing remarks from partners