

■ Harnessing benefits of sargassum

4 Caricom nations to get IDB funding

📍 WASHINGTON

THE Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) says projects from four Caribbean Community (Caricom) countries have been selected to harness the potential of sargassum as a resource for various industries.

The Washington-based financial institution said that, together with its innovation laboratory, IDB Lab, projects from Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Belize are to benefit from its Sargassum Innovation Quest: Building Resilient Coastal Ecosystems.

'This initiative was launched to identify and support solutions that leverage advanced technologies and innovative practices to harness the potential of sargassum biomass and enhance the resilience of coastal communities in Latin America and the Caribbean,' the IDB added.

It said that this effort, developed in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is a response to the challenges faced by the region due to the increasing influx of sargassum, which has been progressively affecting tourism, fishing, and coastal ecosystems since 2011.

According to the IDB, the selected projects aim to harness the potential of sargassum as a resource for various industries and mitigate the environmental and economic impact of sargassum influx in the most sensitive geographic regions.

It said the initiatives eligible for financial support are from Caribbean Chemicals (Barbados, Belize, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago) and that 'this project focuses on developing safe products for food and ornamental crops by leveraging technologies that significantly reduce arsenic and heavy metal levels in sargassum biomass.

IDB said that, embracing a circular economy approach, the initiative aims to minimise waste and utilise renewable energy for drying the sargassum.

The IDB has also approved a Waste Recycling Environment Network for Belize that seeks to implement and promote the Static Pile Inoculated Compost Extension (SPICE) composting process in coastal communities of Belize, including training and employment of local residents, to sustainably manage solid waste, including sargassum, and produce high-quality compost and liquid fertilisers.

The IDB has also approved projects in the Dominican Republic.

It said SOS Carbon proposes efficient and sustainable sargassum collection using the Littoral Collection Module (LCM), a patented system that converts local vessels into high capacity sargassum collectors.

It also includes transforming sargassum into biostimulants

for crops, developing products under research such as animal feed and cosmetics, and incorporating a carbon offset mechanism.

The IDB said Origin by Ocean, another project from the Dominican Republic, aims to extract multiple valuable chemicals for various industries and produce arsenic-free animal feed from sargassum and other invasive brown seaweeds, all in a single process using a patented biorefinery system.

The IDB said the preselected organisations will undergo a due diligence process and that, upon successful completion, they will proceed to design their projects and become candidates to receive funding from IDB Lab and USAID to develop their innovative models in the specified countries.

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