

The Belize Ag Report

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Triple Crown Endurance Race Results: Pg. 18



Tre' Roberson, Gabe Baron, Marjie Olson, Santiago Juan, Terry Dobson

TIGER RUN FARMS, HOME OF RUNNING W MEATS SETS NEW STANDARDS IN BELIZE WITH THEIR 5/8 EUROPEAN BREED BEEF

Farm manager Abdala Bedran believes in following the leaders in the beef world: North America and Brazil. He stresses that reading, visiting ranches and taking short courses has been instrumental in setting directions for their beef herd. Ranchers long ago found that the European breeds (Bos Taurus) when crossed with one of the Brahman or Nelore humped cattle breeds (Bos Indicus) in a ratio of 5/8 European / 3/8 Brahman or Nelore, yields a superior carcass animal which is able to withstand tough tropical conditions. Running W has established a parent herd of purebred Nelore cows, which are artificially bred with imported Angus semen, selected for maternal traits. Cows which don't catch, are put with a resident purebred Angus bull, and the herd produces 1/2 Nelore / 1/2 Angus calf crop. The resulting males are fattened for slaughter, but the females are crossed with either a 3/4 Angus (remaining 1/4 is Bos Indicus) bull, or a 3/4 Hereford (remaining 1/4 Bos Indicus) bull. The offspring of those breedings are the famous 5/8 European 3/8 Bos Indicus cross. Running W has no goals to establish a Brangus operation; their eyes are on commercial carcass quality.

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COBIA, Part 2 Pg. 22



Photo By: Peter Mayclin



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Observations of the Wild Edible Mushrooms of Stann Creek and Toledo District.

By Dr. Alessandro Mascia

At the risk of betraying my Italian heritage, I would like to share my observations with the rest of the mushroom lovers in Belize, who for whatever reason, have not had the time or inclination to get out there and search out the many excellent edible and medicinal mushrooms available here. Having hunted and eaten mushrooms from an early age, and thinking that the best mushrooms are found only in temperate climates, not being able to find all of those tasty European mushrooms was one of the few regrets I had in coming to Belize. Now, however, after a few fortuitous discoveries, I should not have worried at all; not only are there mushrooms here, there are also many of the old favourites which mushroom lovers everywhere search out with guarded jealousy.



I will confine my discussion to the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts as these are the only places where I have actively hunted. To start with a common mushroom that most of us are familiar with, the Oyster Mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus* and *P. pulmonarius*): I would rate this mushroom as common down here in the South, being found quickly and easily in primary and secondary growth forest on decaying wood pretty much all year round after three or four days of cool, damp weather; (The best times are however, from October to January). Another common mushroom that can be found is what the Mayans call okosh or Jew's Ear, or Pig's Ear (*Auricularia auricula*). Again, they can be found in our Toledo forests all year round after rains. In fact, both of the above are so common, that if you leave an old rotten

log under some thick vegetation and water it frequently, you are likely to get a nice harvest when the weather is right. I've also found these two growing on coconut husks, cardboard and unfortunate books left at the dump in a puddle. Other mushrooms which are available but which I would put under the heading of medicinal are the Varnished Conk or Ling Chi (*Ganoderma lucidum* and *G. tsugae*), the Turkey Tail (*Trametes versicolor*) and the Hairy Turkey Tail (*Trametes hirsuta*). Again, these occur in our Southern forests and will commonly appear on just about any piece of wood or stump left lying about which happens to benefit from the right environmental conditions.

Not salivating yet? Okay, let us move on to something more exciting. How about the Prince, *Agaricus augustus*? Well, of all places, it comes up in the summer months after the occasional rain followed by some hot weather, in old, decaying coconut tree stumps (start stomping through old coconut plantations!). The thick, almond flavoured flesh of this mushroom will make you want to plant more coconuts. Anyone for Boletes? Finding your first Bolete in Belize gives the same satisfaction as going to immigration in Belmopan and getting told that your residency papers are ready, *after only one trip!* Without saying too much (there is already too much competition for them!), start looking for some oak trees and you might get lucky and find some *Boletus edulis*, *B. bicolor*, or *B. barrowsii* (King Bolete, Red and Yellow Bolete and White King Bolete). If you have some pine forests around I would also recommend a walk as the above or other edible Boletes are probable finds. Along with these beauties you are also likely to find various Slippery Jacks (*Suillus* sp.).

Continued on pg. 4

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Mushrooms, Continued from pg. 3

Giant Puffball lovers will be happy to know that this mushroom (*Calvatia gigantea*) is available in the summer in your local pasture. (Start befriending your nearest rancher.) Of course, if you are so inclined, since you've already made friends with your rancher buddy, come back in the fall and winter, and you can collect your fill of assorted Psilositybe and Paneolus mushrooms.

So there you have it, a quick capsule view of Belizean mushrooms. Get out there and happy hunting; the more you get out there and handle mushrooms, the more spores you'll spread around. Oh yeah, before I forget, make sure you send me all your good mushroom spots for...ehm...scientific purposes, of course!

Dr. Alessandro Mascia is a practicing medical doctor with his wife, Dr. Mandy Tsang. They have a farm in Toledo where they specialize in growing coconuts and guinea pig husbandry. They make coconut oil soap, copal oil and other medicinal and beauty products.

The Belize Ag Report, P.O. Box 150, San Ignacio, Cayo District, Belize, Central America
Telephones: 663-6777 & 664-7272
Editor: Beth Gould Roberson
Assistant Editor: John Carr
Special Editor: Dottie Feucht
Web Design: Gregory Grant, zionfx.com
Printed by BRC Printing, Benque Viejo, Cayo District, Belize
Submissions as follows:
Letters to the Editor, Ads & Articles to: editor@belizeagreport.com
Deadlines for submissions: 10th of the month prior to publication.
We are bi-monthly, skipping of January & August.
Distributed in Belize & Southern Mexico

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Subscription Information:
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TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

The Fighting in the Citrus Industry Continues

The fight for control of the citrus processing plant by two opposing groups continues to the detriment of the Industry. When will the Citrus Growers Association begin to behave like sensible business persons and stop the vicious character assassinations of industry leaders and the spreading of outright lies and misinformation? They are promising the small growers that when they run the factory all will be well and growers will receive much higher prices. The only ones who will gain from their actions will be the lawyers.

Their latest public statements accuse Dr Henry Canton, the CEO of the fruit company with having lost over \$27 million dollars, as well as a host of other improprieties. Half true. Since Dr Canton took over the fruit company, back in 2001, he has produced years of profit amounting to \$31 million dollars, as well as doubling shareholder's equity. His net record is therefore + \$4 million. The losses of the last two years have been as a result of low prices and low production. The latter is the main reason.

When Dr Canton took over the fruit company, he was instructed by the Board, entirely controlled by CGA at the time, to put together a plant capable of processing 10 million boxes, with the most modern processes and equipment. The CGA guaranteed that production would increase to 10 million boxes within 3 years. This has never happened. Production has only passed 6 million boxes for one year. Growers need to look within themselves for the losses at the fruit company and not blame management solely.

It is noteworthy, that the very same people at CGA today, were the ones responsible for selecting Dr Canton in 2001 as the man to move the Industry forward and selected him to be the CEO of the fruit company. Perhaps it was because he was Minister of Citrus at the time, or perhaps it was because they were covering up their personal multi-million sale of junk citrus land to the initial buyers, CDC, leaving a debt that growers eventually had to assume when they took over the debts of the company.

If the CGA does not cease its irresponsible actions, our industry will be seen as unstable. Bankers and customers will begin to question their involvement, and Belize will further its reputation as a country to beware of as an investment opportunity.

Stop the fighting and behave sensibly with dignity, honor, respect for each other and truthfulness.

Frank Redmond.
Palm Springs Farm, Cayo District

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Mission Statement:

The Belize Ag Report is an independent bi-monthly agriculture newsletter. Our purpose is to collect, edit and disseminate information useful to the Belizean producer, large or small. We invite opinions on issues, which are not necessarily our own. Belize Ag neither solicits nor accepts political ads.

**Organic Production
The Choice of Organics...**

By Greg Clark

This edition, I will depart from the normal articles of stating *how to grow* organically, and divert the attention to *why to grow* organics. First, I must explain that I am not here standing on a soap box preaching that if you are not organic you will end up in a very hot place. I just want to present the middle-of-the-road approach to the items that we consume. The process of growing a vegetable or animal is presented with many decisions and choices along the way. To start a vegetable seed, it needs soil and fertilizer to ensure that it has the nurturing to start it on its way. This brings in the choices of nurturing. Conventionally, common soil is utilized for the media of the seedling and commercial fertilizers are utilized to provide the nutrients that will allow the seed to respond. In the organic method, compost is utilized for the growing media. When the seedling is ready for transplanting into a field, conventionally, the seedling is placed into the soil and side dressed with the fertilizers needed to grow the seedling to bearing stage. In the organic method, the seedling is placed into a compost-enriched soil that is very similar to the inherent soil that it sprouted in. The transitional phase of the seedlings is quite different. Conventional seedlings undergo a temporary transition before gaining a foothold in the new soil. Since organic seedlings are placed into the same media that they have been "reared in", the transitional time is reduced.

To further examine the differences: in conventional propagation the seedling is provided, through addition, the nutrients that are required in one burst. The soil is only to provide stability to the plant while growing. In organic methods, the media provides the nutrients as they decompose over time to provide a steady feeding of the nutrients as the plant can uptake them.

Each and every plant has a nutrient requirement that varies over the life of the planting. At certain stages of the cycle specific nutrients are required to complete that specific cycle of their life. In the early stages, nitrogen is important for growth and vigor. In the production phase, phosphates are important for the flowering and fruit. Continuously throughout the life of a plant, potassium is important for the strength and resistance of its immune system. With a suitable compost, all of the required nutrients are available for the plant at the appropriate time. The plant uses the available nutrients as it needs them.

To summarize all of the above, I would like to state that the important difference really comes down to choice. The efforts of growing both methods are truly the same. The costs in Belize differ between the two methods. With the current pricing of chemical fertilizers, it costs twice as much to use chemicals. The labor factor favors the conventional method, as compost does require labor to generate. So, in the end, the true result is choice.

Do you have some knowledge or opinion that you would like to have printed in The Belize Ag Report? We welcome contributed articles, as well as letters to the editor and ideas for articles. Your contributions will improve the paper. Kindly send to <editor@belizeagreport.com> or call Beth at 663-6777. Thank you.

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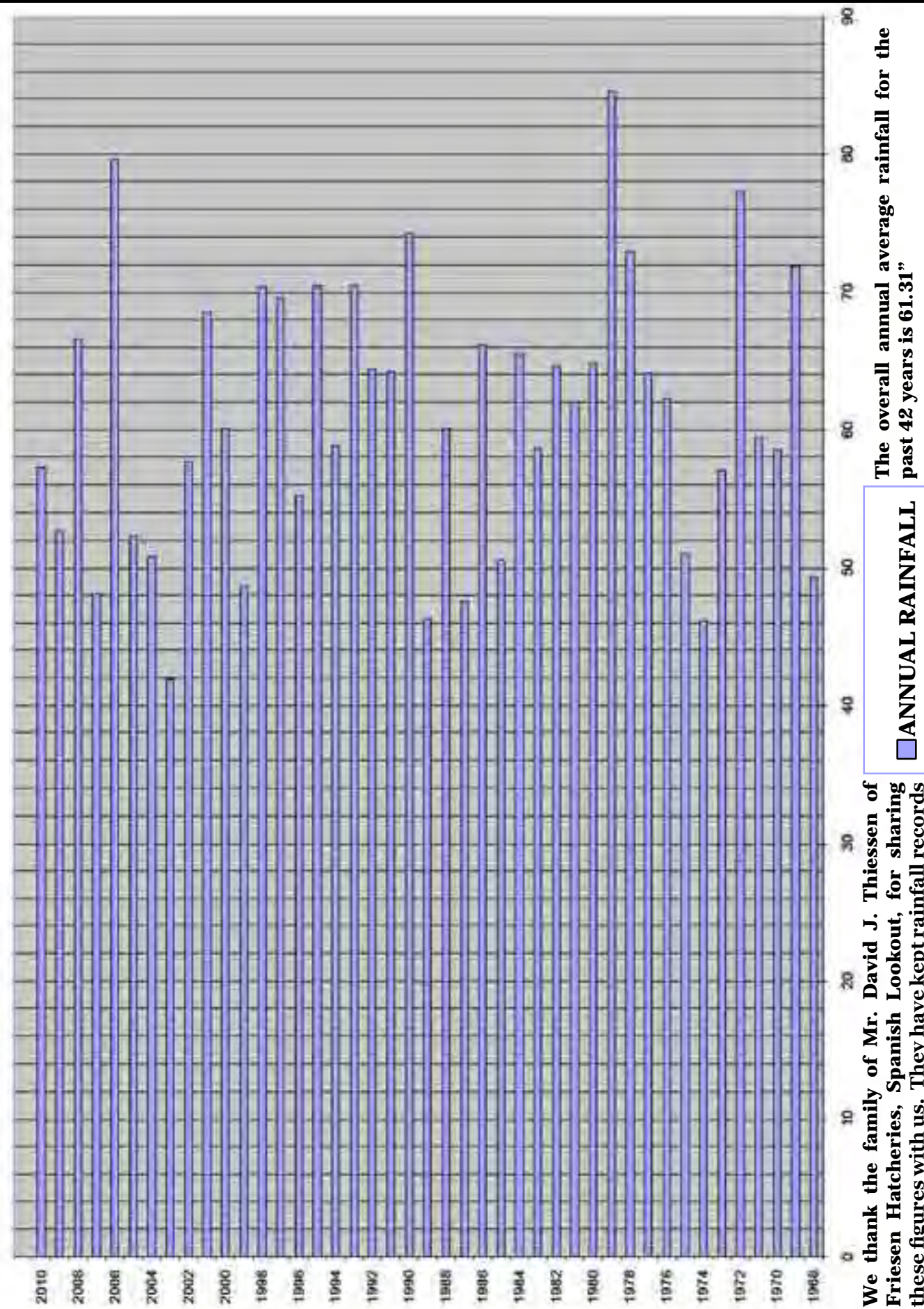
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We thank the family of Mr. David J. Thiessen of Friesen Hatcheries, Spanish Lookout, for sharing these figures with us. They have kept rainfall records continuously for 42 years.

BEYOND THE BACKYARD

THE GOLDEN EGG - CANISTEL

By Jenny Wildman

Oh what beautiful seeds, brown and shiny like polished walnut wood, nestled in a bed of rich yellow meat and encased in a bright golden egg, pretty enough to be a Christmas tree ornament. This fruit conjures up archaic images of creation, Adam and Eve and temptation. Fortunately this fruit has not been tampered with, unlike the impotent seedless grapes, watermelons etc. which make a pretentious performance on supermarket counters but sadly no longer taste like the fruits of our childhood and certainly fail to have the nutritional value that nature intended with the creation of life from seed. The flesh of canistel is sweet and fluffy, appearing a bit like hard boiled egg or orange pumpkin. It should be eaten when not too ripe and keeps well in the fridge. Children like its candy taste and soft texture and it is full of nutrients: beta carotene, calcium, niacin, vitamin C, amino acids and minerals. Low in fat and very easy to eat, so great for seniors. Since we tend to put salt and pepper on everything here, I tried that and can definitely recommend it. I expect most people would prefer to eat it like pudding or whipped up into a milk or super power shake. Some find its taste a bit musky and maple sweet but further south its close relative Lucuma Obovata is the prized Gold of the Incas found in Peru and Chile and depicted in much ancient art. Speciality parlours use the fresh fruit to make delicious ice cream and fragrant lucuma flour is a versatile product used for desserts, baking and baby food - all of which can be created from canistel.

The canistel tree is a glossy leafed evergreen tree native to this area and related to the mamey sapote. It can grow to a majestic height of 30 feet, healthy and hardy and does not appear to be too picky in its choice of soil but likes a sunny location. It grows from seed; however one very important point is that the seeds must be planted as soon as possible after leaving the fruit. I personally do not have a tree as I always made this error. The flowers are greenish cream and the fruit can be round to oblong in shape. Perhaps it is not grown commercially as I have never seen the fruit in the market, only in the gardens of fortunate friends. It looks like a larger version of the monkey cap which also seems to have disappeared from yards and clearings. Depending on your area it may be fruiting abundantly between October and February, harvesting when just turning yellow and ripening at room temperature. The fruit bruises easily but can be kept in the freezer for six months

so you can potentially use it all year round. Caution: if picked too green the milky latex can stick to your skin and may be an irritant.

Other names for Canistel (*Pouteria Campechiana*) include Zapotillo, Kanizte, Eggfruit, Lucuma Nervosa, Baehni, Lekima, and Tisa.

Canistel has been an ignored tree and deserves to be included in more homes again. It is so elegant it makes you want to pick up your paints and commit it to canvas. Once my favourite fruit was the apple but led, I believe, by Yum Kaac I have savoured a greater offering. Plants that provide food and do not need nursemaids are truly valuable to survival and must be cherished and respected. We are very lucky to still have wonderful fruits like custard apple, monkey cap, caimito, mamey, soursop, mango, papaya and more. Their seductive display of beauty is reminding us not to abandon them. I would love to see these employed more often, reinforcing our Belizean culinary identity instead of all these synthetic flavorings used in drinks and ice cream. If anyone is looking for a market for such items let me know and again for posterity please share any fruity stories and growing tips. Thank you.

Jenny Wildman
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The New Black Gold

How Scientists are Reversing Global Warming and Improving Soils with 2500 Year Old Practice

by Karin Westdyk

In the 16th century, Spanish explorers described the extremely fertile lands they had seen in the Amazon basin. But, it wasn't until the 19th century that geologists discovered the reason. There were bands of dark earth (terra preta), created by the original inhabitants of the region, who added charred plant material (biochar) to their soil - soil, in which the local farmers of today continue to grow their crops successfully.

Yes, centuries later, this same biochar continues to enrich the soil throughout the Amazon basin. "You couldn't help but notice it. There would be all this poor, grayish soil, and then, right next to it, a tract of black that was several meters deep," noted Johannes Lehmann, a soil scientist who worked in Brazil in the late 1990s. Lehmann wondered what might happen if the farmers of today made their own terra preta. He further suggested that the knowledge gained from studying the Amazonian dark earths, not only can teach us how to restore degraded soils, triple crop yields and support a wide array of crops in regions with agriculturally poor soils, but also could lead us to technologies that will keep carbon in soil where it is beneficial to plants, animals, and humans, and prevent it from causing further damage to the world's climate.

Plants absorb CO₂ as they grow and release it as they decay. Biochar is simply a method by which CO₂ is prevented from being released back into the environment by turning it into fine grained carbon that, when added to the soil, will enrich it and remain secure for centuries.

There are two ways of producing biochar: by smoldering or baking plant material in the absence of oxygen, a method known as pyrolysis, or by using hydrothermal carbonization, a means of steaming organic material under pressure until it boils dry. An added benefit is that both methods will produce heat which can be used to generate electricity, for cooking, or to heat water.

Biochar not only reduces runoff of phosphorous into surface waters and leaching of nitrogen into groundwater, but it has the ability to filter out pollutants. Because it is porous, it helps soils retain water and nutrients. Biochar can reverse soil degradation in areas where there are severely depleted soils, scarce organic resources, and inadequate water. But most importantly to farmers, it can replace the need for expensive chemical fertilizers. It can lower the density of clay soils, increasing root penetration and aeration, while at the same time increase water retention and nutrients in more sandy soils. Quickly degrading rainforest soils caused by over-farming and overuse of agro-chemicals can be kept fertile by the use of biochar, eliminating the need to continually destroy rainforests in efforts to cultivate in new soil.

In addition to these benefits, it has been proposed that a worldwide biochar effort could lead to lowering atmospheric CO₂ levels to what they were before the Industrial Revolution. Some scientists estimate that biochar would halt the rise in CO₂ if we biocharred only 8% of the earth's annual biomass. Craig Sams, co-founder of *Green and Black*, while in Belize, has calculated that we could end the alarming rise of CO₂ emissions into the air if just 2.5% of

the world's productive land were used to produce biochar.

Trials have already begun in Belize on techniques to take carbon from the atmosphere and bury it in the soil where it will serve as a powerful long-lasting organic soil enhancement. The idea is to grow trees and plants to absorb CO₂ and then trap the carbon by turning the resulting biomass into biochar. The possibilities and opportunities for biochar seem endless. Local farmers might share their own small biomass plants. The fertilizer produced from such plants might also be shared eliminating the need for increasingly costly agro-chemicals as well as the need to cut down diminishing forests and jungles in order to replace over-farmed and depleted soils. In addition to trees and plants, it has been discovered that other biomass materials such as paper mill wastes, and animal manures might also be used to generate biochar as well as the energy to operate the processes needed for conversion.

It is clear that modern biochar has not only the potential to recreate the Terra Preta of earlier times, but could help us all address several important "modern" problems including: soil degradation and food insecurity, water pollution by agro-chemicals, increasing burdens on farmers, and further damage to our climate/environment.

Recommended resources:

To see a demonstration on how to make a simple biochar cook stove, go here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZIMswFhwf0&feature=related>

Video: Biochar - agrichar - Terra Preta

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzmpWR6JUZQ&feature=player_embedded#!

Websites:

How to Make and Use Biochar to Organically Improve your Soil: http://www.howtogardenadvice.com/soil_prep/make_biochar.html

International Biochar Initiative: <http://www.biochar-international.org/>

To find books on biochar: <http://biochar-books.com/>

Note: Biochar is being produced in several areas of Belize. Greg Clark of Sol Farms, Teakettle (our Organic Production columnist) had his simple biochar burner made in Spanish Lookout. The Toledo Cacao Growers Association produce biochar and replenish their soil in this way too.



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Observations of *Eugenia Spicata*

or Sour Peach

By Dr. Mandy Tsang

I was first introduced to this fruit five years ago when I was enthusiastic about planting anything and everything on my farm and the more unusual, the better. A friend had handed the fruit to me which was roughly five centimetres in size, bright yellow in colour, with a skin resembling that of a peach. The most striking thing about the round shaped fruit was the smell; the fragrance was of a very sweet peach and it promised such sweetness and nectar-like qualities to the taste buds! My friend gave me a knowing smile and asked me to taste it; my facial expression said it all: the anticipated sweetness was not there but instead, it was as sour as a lime and I felt the acidity in my teeth and gums, feeling as if my teeth were going to dissolve in acid.

After all that, it still did not stop me from keeping the seeds of the fruit to plant. There are about two or three seeds in one fruit which are hard and oval in shape. I planted two of the seeds on my farm and observed the growth of this tree. The bark of the plant is reddish-brown and it grows in a shrubby manner. It is an evergreen tree, leaves being dark green, ovate and entire with an acuminate apex and obtuse base; new leaves are pink in colour. Within three years it started bearing the yellow fruit for which I coined the name "Sour Peach," because by then I had forgotten the Latin name for it. The first year, I ate a few, out of principle, dipped in salt and then left the rest for the wild birds, ducks and geese. (They did not seem to have any problem with the acidity.) The trees bloom twice a year and they are heavily laden with fruit. This year I decided that I had to try and eat more of the fruit. After all, what was the use of having a farm if I was not prepared to eat the fruit of my labour? So, I peeled and removed the seeds from the fruit and then added sugar, to make jam. As the mixture simmered, it turned from yellow to orange to a beautiful red. The fruit had a lot of pectin in it and the finished product was a beautiful red jelly, tasting very much like cranberry jelly, going very well with roasted meats. I have been so pleased with this fruit that as a result, I pick every single fruit; I don't leave a single one for the birds to eat.

Eugenia spicata is in the Myrtaceae family and apparently originated from Sri Lanka, India, China and Indo-China. There is very little written about this *Eugenia* species but some information states that it is found along rivers, sea-shores and tops of low hills, growing at an altitude of 2000 feet. It is mostly grown as an ornamental for its neat crown and attractive reddish bark. I did not find any information on the fruit on the Internet or tree encyclopaedia. I recommend this fruit to anyone who likes to make homemade jellies and sweets, as, in addition to using it by itself, it can also be added to other jams as a pectin source.

Dr Mandy Tsang is a practicing medical doctor with her husband, Dr. Alessandro Mascia. They have a farm in Toledo where they specialize in growing coconuts and guinea pig husbandry. They make coconut oil soap, copal oil and other medicinal and beauty products.

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Fruit	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Fruit Availability, Compiled by Dottie Feucht												
Avocado						X	X	X	X	X	X	
Ackee										X	X	
Banana	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Black Sapote												X
Blackberry										X	X	X
Breadfruit	X	X	X									X
Bread Nut	X	X	X								X	X
Cacao												
Canistel	X	X								X	X	X
Cantalope		X	X	X								
Cashew			X	X	X	X	X					
Coconut	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Craboo			X	X	X							
Custard Apple	X	X	X	X	X							
Goose Berry				X	X	X				X	X	X
Governor Apple	X	X	X									X
Grapefruit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guava	X										X	X
Jack Fruit				X	X							
Kinop				X	X	X	X					
Lemon	X	X	X						X	X	X	X
Lime	X	X	X						X	X	X	X
Lychee				X	X	X	X					
Malay Apple	X	X	X									
Mammee	X	X	X	X	X							
Mango						X	X	X	X			
Mangosteen								X	X			
Noni	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Orange	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Papaya	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Plantain	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Passion Fruit	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X
Pineapple				X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Pitaya					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Pomegranate	X	X										
Rose Apple				X	X							
Sapodilla	X	X										X
Soursop	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Star Apple			X	X	X							
Star Fruit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Surinam Cherry	X	X	X									
Tamarind		X	X	X	X							
Tangerine	X								X	X	X	X
Tangelo	X	X	X						X	X	X	X
Velvet Apple									X	X	X	X
Watermelon	X	X	X	X	X						X	X



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February - March 2011

Agriculture Prices at a Glance- \$\$\$\$\$

A-B denotes the difference between 1st preference & second preference and sometimes between wholesale & retail and bulk or small amounts. Trend (H) means Higher over last 30 to 60 day (L) Lower (S) Steady
Prices intend on being farm gate in Belize dollars - usually price per lb

	T	A	B
Belize Cattle			
Young str. & bulls- 750- 1100 lbs	H	1.00 -1.05	.90 - 1.00
Cows & Heifers for Butcher	H	.70 - .80	(thin).60 - .70
Heifers for breeding 650-900 lbs	S	1.00 - 1.15	.90 - 1.00
Young grass cattle- 350- 650 lbs	H	1.00 - 1.10	.90 - 1.00
U.S price -corn fed- 1000- 1200 lbs	H	1.07/US=2.14/Bz	
U.S price - feeders 600- 800 lbs	H	1.10/US=2.20/Bz	
U.S price- calves 450- 600 lbs	H	1.25/US=2.50/Bz	
U.S price- aged butcher cows	H	50-70/US=80-1.20/Bz	
Belize Hogs			
Weiner pigs- 30 -50 lbs- by the head	S	\$85.00 - \$95.00	
Butcher pigs 125 - 200 lbs	S	1.70 - 1.75	1.65 - 1.70
Belize Sheep			
Butcher lambs	S	2.00 - 2.50	1.75- 2.00
Mature ewes	S	1.70 - 1.75	1.60 - 1.70
Belize Chickens			
Broilers- live per lb	H	1.10- 1.12	1.08- 1.10
Old hens	S	.75 - .76	.73 - .75
Belize Milk			
Pd to farmer per lb	S	contract .46	non contract .31
Special farm items			
Shrimp Retail- Farm Raised	S	6.50 - 8.50	5.50 - 6.50
Pitaya 12-16 oz	S	1.75 - 2.00 each	
Eggs-tray of 30 eggs@ .1372/egg	S	farm price = 4.11 per tray	

	T	A	B
Grains, Beans & Rice			
Belize yellow corn	H	.26 - .28	.25 - .26
White corn	H	.28 - .30	.27 - .28
Corn/ Local retail (Low volume)	H	.35 - .38	.33 - .35
U.S corn price @ 6.50-up from 3.75	H	Bz 23.20	
Guatemala corn price/Peten	H	.33 - .36	.31 - .33
Belize Milo	H	.23 - .25	.22 - .23
R-K's, little reds & blacks (beans)	H	.92-1.00 farm-retail 1.25-1.75	
Black eyed peas	H	farm-80-1.00 retail 1.25-1.50	
Paddy rice/ from combine	L	30 - 35 -depends on area	
Milled rice per pound	L	whosal .95-.98	Ret 1.15
Citrus			
Oranges per 90 lb box-lb.solid basis	H	\$11.50 Est. 2011 price	
Grapefruit- per 90 lb box	H	\$5.50 Est. 2011 price	
Sugar			
Cane per ton- est. 2010 price	S	\$45.03/ est.	
White sugar- 112 lbs- controlled	S	\$45 per bag	
Brown sugar- 112 lbs- controlled	S	\$39 per bag	
Bananas			
Export @ 40 lb box	S	Jan- Feb. price- \$ 12. - 13.	
Local Wholesale #2 quality- 40 lb	S	\$ 7.00- \$10.00	
Retail #2 @ 8 per sale	S	\$ 1.00 - \$1.50	
Fruits & Vegetables			
Tomatoes, cabbages, cucumbers	S	whosal 1.75-1.75-ret-\$1.00-\$2.50	

These prices are best estimates only from our best sources and simply provide a range to assist buyers and sellers in negotiations.

Dear Ag Readers: Rain- Rain- Where Are You ? We live in a sub- tropical rainforest and now we are thinking of just calling it forest. In my 37 years at Banana Bank, both December & January have sort of set records for minimum. Dec @ .18" and January a bit more with a 1 1/2" shower to help plant around the 20th (very late). Corn prices have increased by some 30% in last 60 days. It's mostly following the U.S surge and a tighter than expected local supply- Our neighbors all around are calling for prices. Cattle marketing issues, citrus admin- confusion, sugar questions and the possible implementation of a killing labor law will all lead to higher costs to producers and eventually higher consumer prices. A friend said this is being caused by personality differences, greed and a refusal to "Do the Right Thing". Please " Love Your Neighbors". All the best, John Carr

LIGHT REIN

By Marjie Olson

Hmmm...a tough decision to pick what to write about this time around. Of course, we just had our second leg of the TCER and Open Horse Show, so that would be easy. But the Belize Carriage Industry has been a topic for the past year that I haven't talked about and should... Oh! and the fact that horses do founder on grass and can easily founder here in Belize, or the fact that just because it's green does not mean it's nutritious...or what about the different types of "grain" you can find here? Or HAY! That's a 5,000 word article. How about the fact that many of the horses here need dental work, severely, but it is so tough to even get anyone to get it done, let alone done well? Or the fact that the vets, at least here in Cayo, all seem to work for BAHA and so you're pretty much left hanging to do your own work, or getting a brother or friend to do anything for you?...At least they can help! The poor vets here have a miserable time trying to get the drugs and the proper equipment to do anything, even if they have the knowledge to do it...



Aaron Bevis

So...where does that leave my topic? I am going to touch on all of these topics in my lil 500 word slot! I think I could produce a whole magazine on horse topics alone. But as the year 2011 unfolds, I hope I can be of some help to any of you that read these articles. And it has been a joy to meet so many of you and thank you so much for all the praise you have given me. It is wonderful to know you enjoy reading them.

TCER: FABULOUS! A little crazy of a start, several wipeouts! A big switch in riders and horses left us with only two competitors eligible for the *championship*- added monies! See additional article for more info...

Belize Carriage Industry: Went through several training sessions in 2010 and has improved immensely. BUT, if Belize City Council and BTB do not start to enforce the new laws and restrictions... **why did we bother?** The carriage owners have a right to be there, they need to be guided and the laws need to be enforced, but most are trying and carriages are lighter, capacities are much better and all owners and drivers have a better understanding of horse care. A bit farther to go, but I am proud of where some have strived to get.

The grass here in Belize is such a mixed list. And "good" grasses (will discuss in more depth in another issue) can and will founder your horse. Laminitis can ruin your horse! If it truly gets to the founder stage, you are looking at a very painful, very expensive, very frustrating ordeal. Basically, if your horse is "fat" (no ribs seen or felt) and they have a heavy crest (top of neck roll) you could be setting them up for founder. Now by rights, Laminitis can be brought on by many things. Over-feeding grain, switching grain too fast, crazy loco weeds, pesticides, too much of anything... There are many types of green forage that is **not** nutritious for a horse; horses are not goats or cows and they need real nutrition. Although grass is one of my favorite feeds, it has to be of a nutritional value, not **just green!**

Many times horses have to be fed more of whatever they are getting, even grain, than they really need, due to bad teeth. Or

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they throw their heads, or hollow their backs and end up sore after a ride - also a dental issue. (Yes it can be a bad-handed rider as well.) Nowadays vets use a power dental float to do teeth. It is much safer and accurate. You just cannot get a Caudal hook with a hand float; it can be dangerous to the guttural pouches.

Veterinarians here in Belize need better and cheaper access to the necessary drugs that we all need to be able to deal with emergencies, or just routine stuff. But how does that come about?

So lots to think about! These topics will all be discussed in more depth over the next year. Thanks for wanting to read the BAR articles. Hope all of you have a wonderful 2011! Enjoy the ride...

Marjorie Olson, Light Rein Farm, 5 mile Mtn. Pine Ridge Rd. Cayo District, Belize.



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Triple Crown Endurance Horse Race=The BEST HORSE RACE IN BELIZE!!!

By Marjie Olson

The first two races have been fantastic! With great weather and having the course run on the beautiful cross country trails of the Belize Equestrian Academy, the events were amazing. And the third is yet to come! Belize has never seen a race where the competitors were given gift bags, comprised of a TCER logo string back bag filled with TCER T shirts, food goodies, Gatorade, Advil, bandanas, horse products from Uckele, TCER logo pens and bottle openers. Then handed large checks and trophies for 1st thru 3rd place...

TCER was professionally run with two veterinarians on staff, Dr. Orlando Baptist of Roaring Creek and Dr. Sylvester Trejo of Belmopan, and TCER used Polar Digital Heart Monitors for accuracy and time saving. Ice, buckets and wipe rags were provided for all competitors to use for the cool down before vet checks. Standards were set to the US Endurance rules as best as could be and everyone- competitors, vets, spectators, owners and the TCER staff, was pleased with the way the races were completed.

After each race we have held an Open Horse Show and have had a great time with Halter classes and Speed Events. Plans for more Barrel Shows are in the works, watch the www.belizehorses.com web site for upcoming Barrel/Speed Shows.

Results for TCER Race 1-15 Miles: 1st place is Gabe Baron riding Lil Bit and receiving a check for \$490.00, 2nd place is Davina Bedran on Conquistador-check for \$294.00 and 3rd was Santos Perez on Immigrant (owned by Hanna Stables) getting his check for \$196.00. Trophies were also presented to the top three riders.

Race 2-20 Miles-Sponsored by Belize Natural Energy, results: Once again-Gabe Baron and Lil Bit and with the added \$500.00 to race 2 took a check worth \$600.00! 2nd place was Santiago Juan riding Immigrant and a check for \$360.00 and Terry Dobson was 3rd on Apocalypso (owned by Johnny Johnson of Orange Walk) and her check was for \$240.00. As well as the great monies paid, 1st-3rd also received more Uckele Products and beautiful trophies.

The GRAND CHAMPIONSHIP Trophies and Prize money of \$1000.00 additional dollars and \$500.00 to Reserve Champion will be awarded after Race 3... **SEE IT FEBRUARY 19th! Come and watch the last race, and see who takes not only the 1st place check for TCER RACE #3 but the CHAMPIONSHIP Title-trophy and \$1000.00!**

The Triple Crown cannot thank their sponsors enough!!! Belize Natural Energy, Uckele, Reimers Feed Mill, San Ignacio Hotel, Belize Ag Report, Light Rein Farm and the Belize Equestrian Academy, Olde Mill, Caribbean Treasures, Cheers, Yalbac Ranch, Pine Lumber, 10 Development, Three Flags, Barn and Grill. You all helped make the race the success it was!

Photographers: Phil Koenig, Paul LeBlanc, Claudia Koenig, Adrian Roe and Cynthia Reece took some amazing photos! Photos may be ordered from the Triple Crown.

2012-be ready with a horse to come and compete for 3 levels of championships...Rider/Horse Team, Rider, and Horse will all be crowned Champions through a point system as they compete in all three races. So change of horse or rider on a horse will stay in the running for added monies and titles. IT WILL BE OUTSTANDING! DON'T MISS IT!

MANGOSTEEN

(Garcinia mangostana)



By Alfredo and Yvonne Villoria from Dem Dats Doin

The Mangosteen tree at Dem Dats Doin is twenty years old and it started bearing fruit only four years ago. Generally speaking most fruit trees grown from seed bear fruit in three to seven years. Cultivating Mangosteen is a long term venture as it takes an average of about twelve years to produce fruit. This is probably why it is not a fruit seen in our local markets. However, we do know other people that have Mangosteen trees producing fruit in Belize.

Before transplanting the Mangosteen to its current location, it spent three years in a grow bag in our plant nursery under 50% shade cloth. When we finally planted it, we ensured it had partial shade eventually allowing the mature tree to be in full sun. Due to our clayey soil we also made sure the plant had good drainage, as we average about 75 inches of rain annually.

Our Mangosteen tree is about 20 feet tall. It has leaves varying in size from 6-10" long and 2-3" wide, which is similar to the Jamaican Malay apple leaves. The flowers are greenish white in color and take about three months for the fruit to mature. From our literature, we learned that the flowers do not require pollination or other stimulation to produce fruit. The flowers on our tree appear in the months of April and May. We enjoy eating fruits during August and September.

Mangosteen is considered "queen of fruits". The fruit size and shape is similar to a Jamaican lime. It has a thick skin, usually dark red purplish to brown in color when ripe. The rind inside the skin is pink; when bruised the juice can leave a red stain on your hands. The fruit pulp is white, divided into uneven segments, and is very soft.

There is a technique to open a ripe Mangosteen. Use a sharp knife to completely cut around the middle of the fruit (the thick skin is soft when the fruit ripens), then pull or twist the halves apart. The soft, white delicate juicy pulp melts in your mouth and tastes delicious. We usually find at least 1-2 large seeds in each fruit. Since the seeds have a short viability they should be planted within a few days. This is the main reason we do not export these seeds.

The tree so far has not been infected by insects, nor disturbed by birds or bats, nor even by the leaf cutter ants. In 2010 the immature fruits were affected by the unusual weather conditions (heavy rains, heat, extreme sun, dry, rain again) that we experienced in the Toledo district. Some of the fruits we harvested had skin lesions (hardening) which made it difficult to cut through the skin. However, the pulp was still edible.

Continued on Pg. 25

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“Corn dah Boss Bway”

By John Carr

Zea Mays is the great tropical grass most people know as *corn*. This particular grass is native to Central America. The Maya referred to themselves as corn people as it made up a major part of their diet. Columbus describes it in Isabella's court as a towering grass with an ear as thick as a man's arm. It had little seeds wondrously arranged in rows. The Europeans brought cattle, horses, apples, pigs and wheat to the new world. They took back corn, cocoa and potatoes to name a few. Some say that the American colonist would never have survived, let alone prosper, had it not been that they learned the value of corn. In 1621, Squanto taught the pilgrims to plant corn in the spring. He showed them how to put a fish in the ground near the seed. His fertilizer process made the corn grow twice as big.

Corn has always had a dual purpose- as food and a trading commodity. Its wide use ranges from being able to eat it green, to a storable commodity, to an animal feed, to a tortilla or corn bread, or to being mashed and fermented into beer or whisky. There are now an estimated 15,000 products that use corn in their manufacturing process. This ranges from ethanol to sweet syrup, to disposable diapers, trash bags and toothpaste. Like the Mayas, we may say “We are Corn.”

It is common for corn to have 300 kernels on one ear, all produced from one seed kernel. (Wheat yields around 50 seeds for 1.) Planting populations have increased from 8,000 plants per acre in a checker board in the 1930's to 30,000 plants today. Yields have increased from 4,000 lbs to 15,000 lbs per acre in 50 years. (These numbers apply to the U.S.) In Belize we have gone from 2,500 lbs to sometimes 6,000 lbs per acre. We are limited by shorter days of sunshine and sometimes super hot temperatures, which decrease corn yields. Genetics and improved farming

practices (irrigation and GMO) will help us increase our yields and improve our quality.

Our costs are very high compared to other countries. High in-put costs including diesel, butane, imported machinery and parts, fertilizers, chemicals, and a constant battle with worms, insects and weeds. Harvest costs alone can run between 20 and 30% of the total. (We dry the new corn from 25-27% moisture to a storable 13%.) This takes a tremendous amount of butane which really affects corn costs as its prices increase. Our per-acre costs run from \$800 to \$1000 including interest and rent. Farming is always risky and hurricanes, droughts like this year and too much rain makes the outcome uncertain until it is in the bin or sold.

The sex life of a corn plant is “A- Maize- Ing”. The top tassel (male) releases 14 to 18 million grains of pollen. A meter or so below is the husk/ ear (female), which has hundreds of flowers of which some send out a single sticky strand of silk to snag its own grain of pollen. After the pollen is snagged, (age old story) its nucleus divides into twins. The first twin tunnels through the silk for several hours to go 6 or 7 inches to meet the flower. The second twin follows and then goes ahead of the first twin and fuses with the flower to form an embryo. Now the first twin wakes up and enters the now-fertilized flower. This forms the endosperm or the big, starchy part of the kernel. This whole affair has to happen 300 times to get 300 kernels per ear.

God - Nature- Timing- The silks emerge from the husk/ ear on the very same day the tassel/ male starts to shed its yellow pollen. Hybridization happens when man controls the pollen and introduces it from another corn plant. The purpose of this process is to get 1 + 1 to = 3 or 4. (The product is better than either of the parents.)

Corn is very important to Belize, Central America and the Caribbean. We hope we can increase corn production to the point of being able to export a large amount of corn to our neighbors.

Tiger Run Farms, Continues From pg. 1

They use both Angus and Hereford crosses in the 2nd cross. The ¾ Hereford bulls currently used at Running W were raised at Gallon Jug Farm, Orange Walk District. Abdala feels the Hereford cross may even introduce more hybrid vigor than a 2nd cross with Angus.

All the beef produced at Running W is grass-fed, as of now. In the past some grass-fed beef has had palatability issues, but the improved 5/8 cross solves that. Also, current trends indicate many consumers believe that the grass-fed beef (omega 3 fat) is healthier for them than corn-fed beef. Calves weaned at approx 8 months at 535-550 lbs, feed exclusively on rich Mombasa grass until they are 22 months old, at which time their grass diet is supplemented by fortified molasses. Running W's program entails each 200 animal herd to rotate at 3 week intervals among 4 of 20 acre pastures. (5 pastures are used in the dry season.) In this way, Running W supports an average of 2 head/acre. Typical slaughter weight is 1100-1150 lbs, which yields a carcass with approx 55-56% dress weight (cooled).

The beef, aged and packaged at the farm's own slaughter facility in Cayo District, has continuously improved in quality through the years. Animals slaughtered at 2 yrs have visible marbling, but the real proof is in the taste. Not only can the Running W 5/8 cross meats compete on the world market for taste and tenderness, they also meet the increasingly popular consumer trend for grass-fed beef.

By B. Roberson

Note: Belize Ag thanks Abdala Bedran and his son Assad Bedran for the informative tour of Tiger Run Farm.



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By Dottie Feucht

Sorting Cobia



Photo By: Peter Mayclin

Ten miles off shore from the Marine Farms Belize (MFB) Ltd. HQ near the 6-mile marker on Western Highway are the cages for raising cobia from 3 – 4 grams to their market weight of 3.5 kg. It takes 12 months from hatch to harvest. When the juveniles (age 40 – 50 days) are shipped from the hatchery in Dangriga to the cages at MFB they are first kept in “nursery” cages until they reach 150 grams. It takes about 1 month of high-quality feed for the juveniles to reach the weight acceptable for their transfer to the big cages, which are 60 – 100 feet in diameter. The cages are made out of HDPE

plastic (High Density PolyEthylene) anchored at the bottom with an outer net to keep other fish, especially predators out, and an inner net which is home to the cobia. The net cages are anchored in 80 feet deep water. MFB has deep-sea diver employees who monitor the nets and repair them. The nets are periodically dismantled for laundering; MFB has a special washing machine and huge framework at their shore facility for drying nets. Nets are replaced while the cobia are living in them so it is a well-defined set of procedures to detach the old net and attach the new one to the frame. The new net is attached first; then the cobia are slowly “rolled” from the old net to the new one. The sheer size of the nets and frame require a team of experienced personnel several hours to exchange nets.

The cages are sparsely populated; cobia attack each other or bump into each other causing various blemishes if there are too many in a cage; so as the cobia grow in size they are rounded up in their home cage by manipulating the net and sent through a trough shaped like an inverted Y. The trough is part of a portable floating workstation for the crew of MFB “fishermen” who catch a bucket of cobia from the home cage, dump the fish into the trough from the cage, and examine each fish - first for blemishes and then for size. (Blemished cobia are not marketable to the chefs of fine restaurants, MFB's primary market.) At the Y junction a fisherman guides the smaller cobia to a cage for further feeding and the larger ones to a cage to be harvested for market. Another crew member counts the fish that are sent to the cages to maintain the low density of cobia.

Continued on pg. 23

Responsible Nutrient Management.

By: Ing. Emmanuel Godoy

A soil is called fertile if it has the correct amount of water, air and nutrients needed to produce crops. Plants require 16 essential elements (minerals) for healthy growth. These elements are classified as raw materials, macro or micro nutrients.

Raw materials: hydrogen, oxygen and carbon make up 90% of plants.

Macro nutrients: The 6 elements required by plants in large quantities are nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium and sulphur. They are either *primary* or *secondary* depending on the importance of their functions. However, most farmers in the Caribbean know about only three macronutrients: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium and they are considered the *golden tripod* because of their role in plant growth and survival.

Micro nutrients: The remaining 7 elements, boron, copper, manganese, iron, molybdenum, zinc and chlorine, are required by plants in small quantities. Although their function is not considered as vital as macro nutrients, *all of them must be present for the healthy growth and functioning of processes in plants.*

It is important that fertilizer production and use focus on all three aspects of agriculture: plant, soil, and environment. When considering the plant, it is important to apply the correct amount; fertilizers in excess can cause a lot of negative physiological effects that can cause tie-up of nutrients, change in soil pH and a reduction of microbial activity in the soil. When considering the soil, it is important to carry out a soil analysis before applying fertilizer to have the most effective growth environment.

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“The Scrap House” by Jay C. Danilczyk, JD REA

For millennia, whether by choice or necessity, the ingenious & the wise have been reusing the discarded materials of others. The reasons for doing so only recently include social conscience, the “green movement” and environmental afthought. The presence of both wealth (supply) & poverty (demand) in a closely knit community, the prevalence of hurricanes destructive to real estate and buildings (particularly along rivers & shorelines) and man’s creative nature, born out of a therapeutic & spiritual necessity, all predate our society’s attempt at environmental sustainability & conservationism, as reasons for man’s reusing & recycling materials.

The scrap house is a type of construction based upon the reclamation and reuse of discarded building materials. This eco-friendly design has a long and distinguished place in both Caribbean & world architectural history. In fact many Caribbean roads & beaches include scrap houses of differing colors & varied texture, a practice born out of economic necessity & sheer desire, only later combined with environmentalism. Bomba’s Shack is of scrap house construction and located on Cappaons Bay, Tortola, BVI. It is one of the most popular daytime & nightspots there. And after each major storm, Bomba reassembles the torn out structure with washed up driftwood, lumber, zinc and other materials that the wind and waves have provided. He can afford to buy new things, but instead his eco-friendly business changes in appearance as storms carry away some materials and bring forth other things to replace it. Old Caribbean stock photos from Jamaica, Belize and other nations, and even photos of the Middle East, Australia & Africa can provide similar references. The environmental movement in this country continues as residents of the Hummingbird Highway, Bullet Tree Falls and other areas annually reclaim, reuse and sell raw wood & lumber dislodged and washed away from other properties by storms, down stream to their junction(s). Other eco-warriors here wisely choose to use a mixture of burnt oil & used automotive fluids to treat wood before buying Thompson’s Weather Proofing (\$50).

In today’s politically correct society, “The Four R’s of Environmentalism” are (i) **Refuse** (to purchase unsound environmental products based on “cradle to grave” analysis), (ii) **Reduce** (the quantity consumed & disposed), (iii) **Reuse** (materials & possessions) and (iv) **Recycle** (products into raw materials needed to build new things). The positive environmental, economic & social impact that reusing building materials has on society includes tons of waste diverted from landfills, savings on disposal & purchase costs, plus the value of materials reused & individuals made more responsible. There is a saying, ‘one man’s garbage is another man’s treasure’. The Bible says man’s garbage is God’s treasure: ‘For the stone that the builders discarded, this shall be the corner stone of my kingdom’ (Psalm 118:22). You can further reference en.wikipedia.org/wiki/reuse, www.bmra.org, www.greenoptions.com, www.thereusepeople.org, www.seconduse.com, and other related web site addresses for additional information on today’s environmentally-conscious organizations that promote the prioritization of reusing materials in our lives.

Jay C. Danilczyk is an environmental, legal, marketing & real estate relocation consultant, who resides in San Ignacio and manages his business, www.CoastTownMedia.com.



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Cobia, Continued from pg. 22

Cobia are hand-fed pellet feed at least once a day by technicians who throw the extruded pellets into the cage from a boat (photo page 1). The feed conversion ratio (number of pounds of dry feed required to produce a pound of round-weight fish) is roughly 2:1. The high content of omega-3 fatty acid in their food is reflected in their own nutritional value which exceeds even salmon, known for its omega-3 nutrition.

The current of the water in Belize’s main channel inside the reef, where the cages are located, runs north to south; the cages are situated to take advantage of the current for maintaining the quality of the water. MFB is proactive in its concern for the ecology of the area.

MFB leases two concessions totaling over 800 hectares for the cages and its platform in the Caribbean Sea where personnel are stationed around the clock for monitoring the cages and welfare of the cobia. (MFB currently has 2 concessions in use: one is about 200 hectares, and the other 650; in addition they are applying for other concession further south for potential future expansion of the operation). They currently have capacity for 2000 metric tons of cobia but plan to double that in the future.

MFB was dealt a devastating blow by Hurricane Richard. Substantial amounts of the cobia in the sea cages were either destroyed - when the winds collapsed the cages - or swam out to sea from the cages. Cobia are endemic to Belizean waters.

PROMEFRUT and Central American Farming Council Completes Final Draft of Fifteen-Year Competitive Strategic Marketing Plan

By Maruja Vargas

The final document setting forth the regional strategy for international marketing of Central American fruit products for the period 2010 through 2025 has been released and awaits the approval of the Central American Farming Council (CAC) (Consejo Agropecuario Centroamericano).

The combined resources of the seven participating Central American countries together with the Dominican Republic presents a strong and viable marketing block on the international market, a posture that none of the participating countries could effect individually.

The CAC report provides the following chart of fruit productivity by country demonstrating the importance of the fruit sector in the overall agricultural profile of each country.

The value of fruit production of each country in the region in international dollars for year 2007.

Total by country	Value of fruit production (International \$)	% value of fruit production / value of agricultural production
Dominican Republic	380,638	34%
Belize	65,331	65%
Guatemala	543,535	30%
El Salvador	76,812	14%
Honduras	297,670	30%
Nicaragua	40,146	6%
Costa Rica	877,035	60%
Panama	157,001	44%
TOTAL	2,438,168	34%

Source: FAO, Valor de la Producción, 2007

Of the eight participating countries, Belize is most dependent on the successful implementation of the proposed marketing cooperation. Of the total agricultural production for Belize, fruit contributes 65% of the total revenue. The continued health of the fruit sector is vital to the economy of Belize. The following chart from the same CAC report shows how the fruit sector in Belize is apportioned among the various fruit commodities.

Fruit Crops, Belize

Category	Hectares
Oranges	15,929
Grapefruit (incl. pomelos)	2,739
Bananas	2,558
Cashews with skin	707
Other Fruits	680
Papayas	428
Coconut	350
Plantains	132
Watermelons	78
Pineapples	72
Mangos, mangostenes, guayabas	26
Other melons (incl. cantaloup)	17
TOTAL	23,716

Source: FAOStat, 2008

Belize citrus represents approximately 15% of the total consolidated citrus production of the eight countries. Again, Belize stands to benefit substantially from this cooperative strategic initiative.

Once approved by the CAC, the Technical Committee is in place to carry out the work. This committee is comprised of two appointed members from each country, one from the public sector and the second one from the private sector. The Technical Secretary is a contracted position to coordinate the function of the Committee.

The Minister of Agriculture GOB has committed funds to engage personnel and vehicles to implement this strategy immediately upon its final approval.

Among the many benefits of regional cooperation will be technical training, exchange of genetic materials, supported marketing, regional database, and timely brokering of commodities.

CAC comprises the Ministers of Agriculture of the eight participating countries. Current President Pro Tem is Hon. Rene Montero, Minister of Belize Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

For further information call Francisco Tzul, Belize Representative for PROMEFRUT at 822-2672.

What (good) is Organic Agroforestry?

By Maarten Hofman - Ya'axché Conservation Trust

The word *agroforestry* may sound vaguely familiar to you, because it has been around for a while in the periphery of traditional agriculture practice. Organic agroforestry means the inclusion of trees into agricultural lands in order to increase the productivity and economic stability, ecological resilience, and carbon storage capacity of your farm

Different species of trees can be planted in your crop fields/gardens for various reasons, and each tree species usually has multiple uses. For example, fertilizer trees (e.g. moringa, barbe jolote) can be used for land regeneration, soil health and food security; fruit trees (e.g. cacao, mango, papaya) for nutrition; fodder trees (e.g. tamarind, barbe jolote) for improving smallholder livestock production; timber and fuel wood trees (e.g. mahogany, santa maria, barbe jolote) for shelter and energy; medicinal trees (e.g. guava, gumbo limbo, provision bark) for combating disease; and trees that produce resins for use as natural insecticide (e.g. neem, madre de cacao) or fungicide (e.g. jackass bitters).

Trees work together with your crops to increase productivity and to diversify your farm products. Diversifying crops is your insurance against crop failure and thus helps you guarantee yourself a sustained income, even in unpredictable weather circumstances. Moreover, it is well known that a rich biodiversity attracts eco-tourism activities that benefit the community as a whole.

Ya'axché Conservation Trust is based in Punta Gorda and is concerned about the health of the people and the environment in Toledo, and specifically in the Maya Golden Landscape. Ya'axché encourages farmers to start (or convert) their farm as an organic agroforestry enterprise, because we believe in its capacities to heal the economic and ecological damage inflicted upon the natural environment by traditional slash and burn or intensive monoculture farming that's done for short-term gain. The way we suggest to get your enterprise going, is to include cacao trees (medium-term crop for shade and fruits) and mahogany (long term crop for shade and timber) among your short-term crops currently produced (e.g. beans and corn).

Once set up, your organic agroforestry farm could diversify to include many more crops, taking into account local soil quality and climate, and the beneficial interactions between different species (companion plants).

Ya'axché evaluates the health of the environment by recording the occurrence of a number of bird species that indicate a healthy and diverse environment. An array of neotropical migratory birds (NMB) is in decline due to the destruction of their wintering habitats in Belize and other Central and South American countries. By sharing the land for agriculture and forests, we create a win-win situation for both farmers and birds.

For all information about agroforestry in Toledo and neotropical migratory bird habitat conservation, contact

Ya'axché Conservation Trust
#2 Alejandro Vernon Street, Punta Gorda.
Tel: 722 0108
Email: info@yaaxche.org
Website: http://www.yaaxche.org

Mangosteen, Continued from pg. 18

Almost all fruits have some medicinal value and a variety of health benefits. Mangosteen has been produced commercially to make Xango juice. This is a blend of Mangosteen (whole fruit) puree and juice concentrates of other fruits. Xango utilizes the entire fruit of the Mangosteen, including its thick skin, which yields a dark reddish hue. Xango is a product high in antioxidants; we have tasted and enjoyed it but believe it is not being sold in Belize yet. Other uses and recipes can be found on the internet.

There are about twenty acres of *Garcinia mangostana* at the Wilson Popenoe Arboretum in Tela, Honduras. However, the fruit is most common in Southeast Asia. In southern Florida fruit enthusiasts have finally been successful in cultivating it. According to our readings, Mangosteen likes high humidity and moisture; thus, certain areas of Belize are conducive for backyard and/or potential commercial production.

Organic Agroforestry benefits

	Economy	Ecology	Health
Local scale (your farm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased revenue Income security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less vulnerable to crop failure No chemical residues on the fields Ensured long term farm soil quality More wildlife (e.g. birds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No hazardous residues in fresh products Food security
Regional scale (your community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased revenue for the community through eco-tourism and product diversity Community of good standing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More diverse array of habitats and species Avoiding soil erosion Clean drinking water in streams and soil Buffer against flooding Buffer against droughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A community with healthy people in a healthy environment For current and future generations Long term food security
Global scale (your planet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More stable markets and financial security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased carbon storage Climate regulation Air purification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term health and survival of human population

If you want to know more about organic agriculture in Belize, visit **Sol Farms Ltd.** at <http://solfarmsltd.com> or at their farm in Teakettle, Cayo district.

A very comprehensive source of information on agroforestry is the World Agroforestry Center (<http://www.worldagroforestry.org>).

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