**International Year of Biodiversity Symposium**

On June 17th,2010, over sixty persons from all walks of life and sectors of society converged on the Tissue Culture Premises of the Ministry of Agriculture at Union, to participate in a biodiversity symposium held to commemorate International Year of Biodiversity 2010. The symposium was hosted by the Biodiversity Office of the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Forestry.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Mr. Dunley Auguste, Deputy Permanent Secretary in the ministry, and the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Hubert Emmanuel gave the opening remarks where he encouraged everyone to mainstream biodiversity conservation in their various activities. Dr. Barbara Graham, retired FAO Subregional Coordinator gave a very instructive feature address on “The importance of Biodiversity Research and the contribution of biodiversity to poverty alleviation and sustainable development”.

Several enlightening presentations were given throughout the course of the day on topics related to the theme for International Day of Biological Diversity 2010 “Biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation”. The presenters hailed from the Forestry and Fisheries Departments, the Saint Lucia Dive association and also included Mr. Laurent Jn. Pierre, associated with the Folk Research Centre, who spoke on “The importance of Jardins Keywol and their role in managing Climate Change”. Some of the other topics included “Forests :Building resilience to Climate Change in Saint Lucia” by Mr. Lyndon John of the Forestry Department, “Marine Invasive Species, are they a risk and are they manageable” by Mrs. Sarah George of the Fisheries Department and the very thought provoking “The indispensable role of wetlands in sustainable development and poverty alleviation” by Mr. Michael Bobb which got the symposium off to a stimulating start.

This activity was another of the several events that have been planned for the year on the main theme “Biodiversity is Life, Biodiversity is our life”. That day was also World Desertification Day focusing on the theme “Enhancing soils anywhere enhances soils everywhere “, to help the public understand the importance of soils and their conservation to biodiversity conservation. The Permanent Secretary used the opportunity to help the audience recognize that the country needs to implement the National Strategic Action Plan (NAPSAP) for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, to aid the country effectively address its land degradation issues.

Any member of staff or the public who is interested in learning more about the symposium and getting copies of the presentations is asked to call in their requests and give their e-mail addresses to the Biodiversity Office of the Ministry of Agriculture at 468-4122/27 or send an e-mail to anitavja@gmail.com