

GEF SGP Trinidad and Tobago
Issue 7 (January to March 2022)

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Welcome to Trinbago Talk!

The latest news on GEF SGP in sweet T&T



Picture 1: Top Catch, the only Blue Flag certified boat operator in the English speaking Caribbean.

Happy 2022! This edition is packed full of exciting projects, and a lot of firsts for our country! Read on to learn how GEF SGP helped to make history!

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THIS QUARTER'S TOP STORIES

Top Catch attains Blue Flag certification

Plastics Upcycling Centres opens in Kernaham

If it's nice, do it twice! Youth Upcycling Centre opens in Roxborough

Online beekeeping course first cohort graduates in April 2022!

Top Catch attains Blue Flag certification

History, in Blue Economy and sustainable marine management, was made on 4th February 2022 when Top Catch, a chartered tourist boat operation in Tobago, became the first boat operator in the English-speaking Caribbean to attain Blue Flag Certification. GEF SGP would like to acknowledge that Top Catch is led by a powerful, brilliant woman, Ms. Shivonn Peters.

The award ceremony was held in Buccoo, Tobago where Shivonne Peters received her Blue Flag Certificate as well as her flag. Ms. Peter's boat offers accommodations with two cabins. She uses only eco-friendly detergents and cleaning products on the boat and all her utensils are sustainable bamboo products, some of which are made locally. Her boat can be chartered for private parties and for tours around the island.

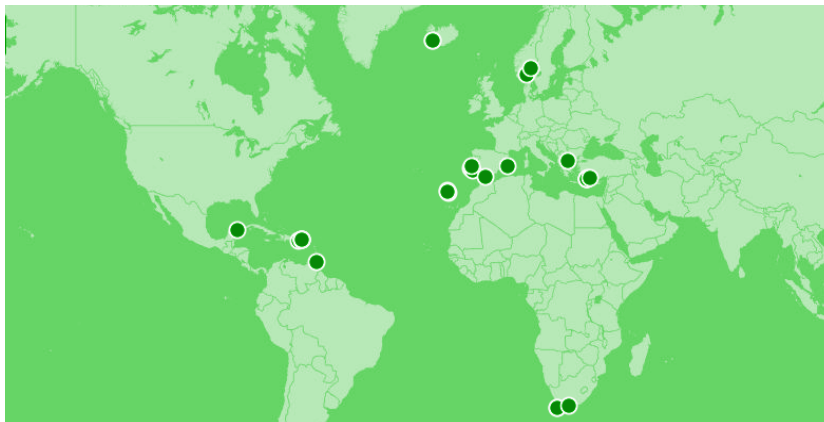


Picture 2: Ms. Shivonne Peters, Managing Director of Top Catch.

Blue Flag is one of the world's most recognised voluntary awards for beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators. In order to qualify for the Blue Flag, a series of stringent environmental, educational, safety, and accessibility criteria must be met and maintained. Central to the ideals of the Blue Flag programme is the aim of connecting the public with their surroundings and encouraging them to learn more about their environment. As such, environmental education activities must be offered and promoted in addition to a permanent display of information relevant to the site in terms of biodiversity, ecosystems and environmental phenomena¹.

¹Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). 2021. Blue Flag. <https://www.blueflag.global/>. Last accessed: 31st March 2022.

A map of the current boat operators with Blue Flag certification is provided below. Other than Puerto Rico and Mexico, Tobago is the third location in the Western Hemisphere to receive this designation and the first in the English-speaking Caribbean.



Picture 3: Map of Blue Flag certified boats.

This certification was possible through a grant awarded to Green T&T, a non-profit environmental organization that was formed to implement programs sustainable tourism certification and educational initiatives. As the organization responsible for Blue Flag certification in Trinidad and Tobago, Green T&T provided the training and technical assistance that was required to achieve this momentous achievement.

Congratulations Tobago!

Plastics Upcycling Centre opens in Kernaham, Manzanilla

History, in plastic upcycling in Trinidad, was made on the 19th January 2022 with the opening of the country's first Plastics Upcycling and Learning Centre, made from plastic upcycled products. The facility, which is based in Kernaham, Manzanilla, will be managed by the Kernaham and Cascadoux Women's Group, who will transform waste plastics collected from nearby communities as well as the beaches and the swamp, and convert these into upcycled products. Visitors to the centre will also be able to learn about plastics, how to properly use and dispose of them and how upcycling is done.

This project, which launched on January 24, is part of a Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP) funded project, within the United National Development Programme (UNDP) in Trinidad and Tobago, entitled "Reducing Environmental Polymer (Plastics) Pollution in Trinidad & Tobago". As part of this grant, the non-governmental organization (NGO) Flying Tree Environmental Management (FTEM), is to establish two community-led plastics upcycling centres, one in Trinidad and one in Tobago.



Picture 4: The Kernaham/Cacadoux Plastics Upcycling and Learning Centre in Trinidad.

Flying Tree Environmental Management has been upcycling plastics for over 5 years and in this time, they have converted almost 100 tonnes of plastics into over 1,400 products, which have been installed in public spaces such as the Emperor Valley Zoo and newly opened Upcycling and Learning Centre.

According to Global Change Data Lab, Trinidad and Tobago is the 5th highest in the world for per capita production of mismanaged plastic waste. Dr. Sherwyn Millette, who completed the plastics material flow for Trinidad and Tobago, says we import 129,669 metric tonnes of plastics and their raw materials every year, of which only 6,372 metric tonnes are exported and 123,297 metric tonnes ends up in our landfills or in the environment.

Plastics in our environment and landfills have many negative effects which include flooding; disfiguring of natural spaces such beaches and river banks; killing of animals, such as turtles and birds, that mistake the waste plastics for food; and the ability to transfer toxic chemicals up the food chain, potentially poisoning fish, birds and humans.

Picture 5: Women from the Kernaham Cascadoux Women’s Group mixing concrete in their Plastics Upcycling and Learning Centre.



As such, any intervention that would help to reduce plastic's negative impacts on environment and life would be a positive step for Trinidad and Tobago. The Upcycling and Learning Centre is a demonstration site as well as an education centre for plastics upcycling. The bricks contain approximately 312 PET bottles each and in total, all the blocks contain 5 tonnes of waste plastics.

The plastics lumber contains another 2 tonnes of plastics, and as such, the entire learning centre contains 7 tonnes of waste plastics. The majority of the waste plastics used to construct the building are those not considered to be recyclable, including plastic wrappers and bags, as well as contaminated containers such as oil kegs. The facility therefore allows for the permanent processing of plastics so that it can no longer pollute the environment.

As citizens of this country, we can stop the damaging impacts of plastics by simply separating our plastics and dropping them off at the nearest recycling bin. When you separate and properly dispose of our plastics, you are not only helping the environment, but you are also supporting groups like Flying Tree Environmental Management and The Roxborough Police Youth Club in their fight against plastics pollution. One small change in how we deal with our personal waste can go a long way in helping communities, preventing turtle deaths, making our environment cleaner and creating livelihood opportunities.

So, start recycling today!



Picture 5: The leadership team of the Kernaham Cascadoux Women's Group at their Plastics Upcycling and Learning Centre.

If it's nice, do it twice!

Youth Upcycling Centre opens in Roxborough

History, in plastics upcycling in Tobago, was made on the 18th March 2022, with the opening of the Roxborough Upcycling Center. This center, like its counterpart in Kernaham, will serve the youths of Roxborough, providing them with alternative opportunities for livelihood whilst addressing plastics waste. The facility was fittingly opened on World Recycling Day 2022 under the auspices of the Tobago House of Assembly Secretary for Food Security, Natural Resources, the Environment and Sustainability, Mrs. Nathisha Charles-Pantin. Also present at the ceremony were representative of the Flying Tree Environmental Management (FTEM), Mr. Godfrey Boodoo, Director of FTEM; Mr. Navendra Ramgulam, Director, Tourism Product Development & Destination Management, Tobago Tourism Agency (TTAL) and Ms. Anna-Lisa Arlen-Bejamin, Project Manager, ICare.



Picture 6: From left to right: Dale Jaimungal, Project Assistant, ICare; Narendra Ramgulam, TTAL; Mr. Deon Brebnor, Division of Food Security, Natural Resources, the Environment and Sustainability, THA; Collis Hazel, Leader of the RPYC and Assistant Commissioner of Police (Ag.); Sharda Mahabir, GEF SGP; Councilwoman Charles Pantin, Secretary for Food Security, Natural Resources, the Environment and Sustainability; Godfrey Boodoo, Director, Flying Tree Environmental Management and Anna-Lisa Arlen, Project Manager, ICare.

The PULC is the first of its kind to be established in Tobago and was funded by the Small Grants Programme (SGP), a corporate programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) that is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme. The programme provided machinery and equipment to convert plastics into upcycled products such as benches, pots and pavers.

Mr Collis Hazel, Leader of the RPYC and Assistant Commissioner of Police (Ag.) stated that the club was thankful to the Flying Tree Foundation (FTF) who partnered with us in establishing the upcycling and learning resources centre. He said that this facility will go a long way in reducing plastics pollution and their negative impact on the environment in Tobago.

Mr. Ramgulam expressed his pleasure at being part of this initiative and especially about the developing partnerships between entities from different sectors working together for improving the environment and the tourism experience in Tobago.

Mr. Godfrey Boodoo, Director of FTEM, acknowledged the hard work and commitment of the youths in the centre, who had committed time and effort towards installing the first concrete and plastic infrastructure in Tobago, which is the bridge to enter the facility that contains approximately 5,000 bottles.

Dr. Sharda Mahabir highlighted the way in which this facility supported and strengthened Tobago's current recycling initiatives via the Tobago Resource Recycling Initiative (TRRI). She said she hoped that the TRRI would welcome the addition of the Roxborough Upcycling Facility since it would further reduce Tobago's plastic pollution by addressing dirty plastics and would provide important infrastructural resources for the island.

After the short ceremony, Councilwoman Mrs. Nathisha Charles-Pantin unveiled a bench and two plant pots which were donated by FTEM. She also planted a coconut tree in the upcycled pot which would be planted on a beach to support climate action on the island. Councilwoman Charles-Pantin then participated in the making of a paver, using plastics chipped at the ceremony. The event was very successful and was characterised by a sense of comradery since, all in attendance recognised the potential of the facility in Tobago.

Happy World Recycling Day 2022!



Picture 7: Councilwoman Charles-Pantin planting a tree and levelling a paver at the launch ceremony

Online beekeeping course first cohort graduates in April 2022!

History, in beekeeping in the Caribbean, was made with the completion of the first cohort of students from the online beekeeping course.

In 2020, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP) received a strategic grant to implement an innovation programme, with south-south cooperation, in the field of Apiculture in seven participating countries namely St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Grenada, Samoa and Trinidad and Tobago.

In Issue 6 (August to December 2021) of this newsletter, we indicated that the online course was being developed and would be available in early 2022. The course was completed and registration was opened in January 2022, for interested persons from the Caribbean.

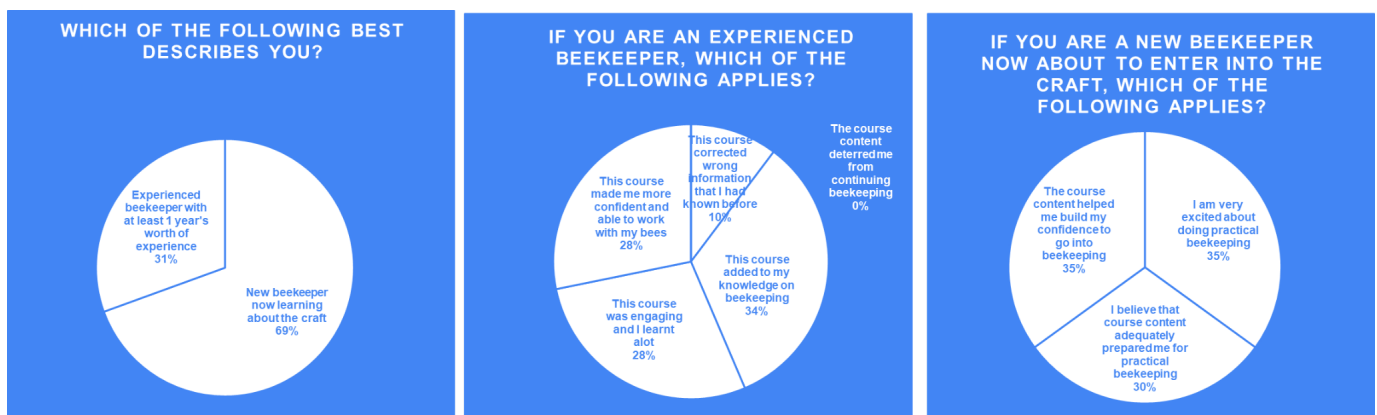
In total, 141 persons registered for the course from 6 countries: Anguilla, Antigua, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. The course is an 8 week course covering 13 theoretical modules, after which a general exam was given. As of March 31st 2022, there are 103 persons who were able to complete their coursework on time. Of these, 100 have already completed, as indicated in the breakdown of which is provided below.

Table 1: Breakdown of the participants of the online beekeeping course first cohort.

Country	Total	Completed	%	Incomplete	%
Anguilla	18	18	100%	0	0%
Antigua and Barbuda	14	14	100%	0	0%
Grenada	16	15	94%	1	6%
St. Kitts & Nevis	17	17	100%	0	0%
St. Lucia	27	26	96%	1	4%
Trinidad and Tobago	11	10	91%	1	9%
TOTAL	103	100	μ=97%	3	μ=3%

The class also successfully developed trust and communication amongst regional beekeepers. Sessions were held every Tuesday where persons pursuing the course were able to ask questions pertaining to the content online. These discussions were always very engaging and helped to bridge the gap between persons of different skills and backgrounds.

A course evaluation form was completed and distributed to the participants. Preliminary feedback for the course has been very positive. Experienced beekeepers stated that the course added to their knowledge on beekeeping and made them more confident and able to work with my bees, New beekeepers stated that there were generally very excited about doing practical beekeeping and believed that course content adequately prepared me for practicals, They also stated that the course content helped them build their confidence in beekeeping. All of the participants indicated that they would recommend the course to others. The final evaluation of the course done by the first cohort will be discussed later, when completed.



This next step in this beekeeping course is the completion of the practical training. Country mentors have already been identified and will be working with the Master Beekeeper, Richard Matthias to complete the practical training.

Look forward to further information on the development of this project across the region in later issues!



This quarter has been exciting and engaging, with so many activities and so many firsts! GEF SGP is extremely proud of these projects and their achievements. Especially heartwarming is the inclusivity of the work of our NGOs as illustrated by the FTEM project, which provides new opportunities for women and youth. It is extremely rewarding to witness a project develop from paper to person. Many thanks to our NGOs for their dedication, hardwork and commitment to making a difference locally.