

# PRESS RELEASE

## CAF, FAO, and CRFM partner on new Regional GEF Funded Blue Economy Project to strengthen Marine Biodiversity and Fisheries resilience in the Caribbean



Marine biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries management within the framework of the Blue Economy—through stakeholder inclusion and a focus on national priorities—lies at the heart of the BE:CLME+ project, with fishers reaping tangible economic benefits!

(Photo: CRFM)

**27 September 2023 - Belize City, Belize** - A new US 48 million dollar project to strengthen the foundation for blue economic growth and sustainable development of marine living resources by focusing on marine spatial planning, area-based management, and climate-smart sustainable seafood value chain development has commenced. The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), are partnering to implement the four-year project in the region.

This initiative titled the “*BE-CLME+: Promoting National Blue Economy Priorities Through Marine Spatial Planning in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Plus*” project, aims to maintain and preserve cultural heritage through sustainable fisheries management, improved livelihoods, and alternative livelihoods while strengthening the integration of fisheries and ecosystem management to restore, protect and maintain marine biodiversity, productivity, and resilience of marine ecosystems.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) endorsed the Project in November 2022, including the provision of US\$6.2 million for the project. The participating countries are Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Panama, and Saint Lucia, while the partners partner organizations are CAF, FAO, CRFM, UWI-CERMES, University of Florida, which has committed co-financing of approximately US\$41.7 million. The CRFM is the executive agency, while FAO and CAF

are the GEF co-implementing agencies. These partners will support the governments of the participating countries in implementing the project interventions, from which benefits will be spread across the region.

The project has three main components: (i) implementing cross-sectoral marine spatial planning and area-based management tools; (ii) inclusive, climate-smart sustainable seafood value chains; and (iii) regional coordination, project management, and knowledge management.

The Inception Workshop and First Regional Steering Committee Meeting of the Project is being convened from 27-29 September 2023 in Panama City, Panama. The meetings are expected to approve several important documents including the first year's workplan and will mark the commencement of field activities under the project.

The BE:CLME+ project seeks to balance the sustainable use and conservation of the region's marine resources with economic and social benefits for the countries and local communities through policy advice, capacity development, and knowledge sharing, food security and nutritional benefits, and increased stakeholder involvement and empowerment including women, youth, indigenous groups in the wider Blue Economy growth initiative.