



## **Shigam Inc. Agriculture development - technical or social?**

Shigam incorporated commenced its operation in Guyana during 2008.

We are growing fruits and vegetables for Caribbean and international markets.

Shigam's Dora farm in Guyana is our principle farm; helping local farmers gain access to agriculture knowledge and connecting them to local and foreign markets.

We recognize the need to change current industry practices. Agri-business and agriculture development projects should enable farmers to enjoy a sustainable life while producing healthy local produce and competing in the marketplace. We prioritize sustainability and added value to the community.

Here are a few things which will catch the eye of visitors to Shigam's Dora farm. We divide them into technical, scientific and social aspects. The successes of a sustainable project depend on implementing all.

Technical and scientific:

**Irrigation and fertigation.** The irrigation is a well-known process.

Farmers are already utilizing fertigation (mixing soluble fertilizers in the irrigation water)

Our introduction of drip irrigation to local farmers together with guidance on the correct mixtures to use, resulted in an increase of yields.

When using fertigation technics with drip irrigation lines the farms are now capable of growing fruits and vegetables on sandy soil that showed poor results in the past. The system allows farmers to control weeds without need of herbicide and to utilize lands in areas that are less likely to get flooded.

**Green house** structures demonstrate dramatic change for some crops. A good example is the tomatoes. They are very sensitive to weather conditions. In the Caribbean rain can turn from a blessed downpour of water into a destructive force very quickly.

We introduced a simple green house structure built from local wood and polietilene plastic roofing. These greenhouses allow for higher yields and increase the quality of the produce. Insect proof netting on the structure protects the crop from pests and reduces the need to use insecticides.

**Traceability** system is a set of procedures and documentation routines that helps both the farmer and the buyers of produce (customers).

The buyers are interested to know the history of each crop for food safety reasons. The farmers gather information on each of the farm activities; spraying, irrigation, planting, harvest etc. By using the tractability system the farmer can meet the needs of buyers with GAP requirements while having better visibility to the financials of his business.

## Social

There are many pages to write on our social concepts; we believe a farm can be sustainable and environmentally friendly. We partner with people who show the same interest.

Our partners are the farmers. Some work on their own lands and some on Shigam Dora farm.

Different ways of collaboration are practiced with the farmers and with the buyers. Some farmers just come for free advice; some request to engage in contract for export and some will need help with setting up their project.

Shigam's Dora farm is operated by a team of people who are rewarded on every successful crop. They gained the tools to run their own business and are now in a position to help others with advice and training. Together with them we explore their different interests in the community and their life styles.

We try to use the Dora project as a "Greenhouse" for growing ideas and methods which will help reach the goals of livelihood, low priced healthy food, suitability, and environment friendly care. Some of the answers are obvious and easy to implement like the sharing of agriculture tools and other joined resources.

There are still questions that require a social answer in order to accomplish the goals of the community and the business.

Looking at other organizations the questions are clear.

How can an organization produce large amounts of food without taking advantage of its employees?

How healthy food can be produced and sold cheaper while small farmers sustain a decent life style?

How a community can utilize resources and reward individuals without implementing cooperative models that are not compatible with the Caribbean lifestyle and standards?

These questions and more must be considered.

We at Shigam are constantly working to find the answers for the Caribbean farmers. We welcome everybody to visit and learn more. -> [www.shigam.com](http://www.shigam.com)