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China-backed tissue culture lab marks new chapter in Antigua's agricultural modernisation

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The biotechnology centre is expected to accelerate crop improvement, build scientific capacity and support long-term food security objectives

Antigua and Barbuda has strengthened its agricultural biotechnology capabilities with the inauguration of a plant tissue culture laboratory established through technical cooperation with the People's Republic of China, marking a significant step towards enhancing food security, research capacity and sustainable agricultural development.

The facility has been developed under the Phase II Agricultural Technical Assistance Project, a bilateral initiative between the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and China aimed at modernising the country's agricultural sector through technology transfer, scientific collaboration and institutional capacity building.

Describing the laboratory as a transformative addition to the nation's agricultural infrastructure, Anthony Smith Jr., Minister of Agriculture, said the facility will significantly enhance the country's ability to undertake advanced crop research, propagate disease-free planting material and build local technical expertise.

According to the minister, the laboratory is expected to play a central role in strengthening Antigua and Barbuda's food sovereignty by improving access to high-quality planting material, supporting climate-resilient agricultural practices and reducing dependence on imported crops.

Beyond research, the facility will serve as a hub for training scientists, extension personnel and agricultural professionals, creating opportunities to build technical capacity while accelerating the adoption of modern biotechnology across the country's

farming systems.

Smith acknowledged the Government of China and the Chinese technical mission for their support in delivering the project, noting that the collaboration reflects the growing importance of international partnerships in advancing agricultural innovation and long-term food system resilience.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by senior government officials, representatives of the Chinese technical cooperation mission and stakeholders from the agriculture sector, culminating in the formal commissioning of the laboratory through a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The launch of the tissue culture laboratory comes as Caribbean nations increasingly invest in biotechnology and climate-smart agriculture to improve crop productivity, strengthen food security and reduce vulnerability to external supply disruptions. By expanding its scientific and propagation capabilities, Antigua and Barbuda is positioning itself to develop more resilient agricultural value chains while supporting sustainable rural development and national food security objectives.