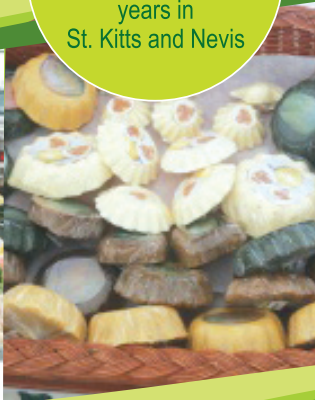




The Development of  
Agricultural Cooperatives  
in St. Kitts and Nevis:  
A Snapshot of IICA's Contribution

Celebrating  
*20*  
years in  
St. Kitts and Nevis



Augustine F. Merchant

## PREFACE

This year, 2012 marks twenty (20) years since the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) Office in St. Kitts and Nevis began providing technical agricultural and rural development support to the people of the Federation. Those 20 years have seen IICA collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture, other government agencies, producers' organisations, the youth forum and other agricultural entities.

This year also marks 70 years of IICA's service to the Hemisphere. This is a tremendous achievement and a momentous occasion. In this regard, and in recognition of these milestones, the IICA Office in St. Kitts and Nevis is pleased to provide a snapshot of its contribution to the development of agricultural cooperatives.

We do hope that you find it very informative.

***Augustine F. Merchant***  
***Coordinator***

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the following organizations, agencies and individuals who have all collaborated with IICA's office in St. Kitts and Nevis to make the projects identified possible. These include:

Australian High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago; The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI); The Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI); The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); The Department of Agriculture, St. Kitts; The Department of Cooperative, St. Kitts; The Department of Agriculture, Nevis; Mr. Ashton Stanley; Mr. Clyde Thompson; Mr. Alistair Edwards; Mr. Jeffrey Berry; Mr. Sam Powell (Former Director of Agriculture, Nevis); Mr. Washington Archibald, Director, Project Strong; Mr. Conrad Kelly; Mr. Stuart Versailles.

A depth of gratitude is extended to Ms. Kathryn Duncan for the layout and artwork as well as the professional preparation of the publication.

Finally, sincere gratitude is also extended to Ms. Diana Francis of IICA Trinidad and Tobago for her support and assistance in making this publication possible.

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE (IICA)



I wish to extend congratulations to the IICA Office in St. Kitts and Nevis for its work with agricultural cooperatives in the Federation, and to recognize the excellent work of the Coordinator, Augustine Merchant in securing external resources and building strong and sustainable alliances with the Ministry of Agriculture as well as with several agency partners.

The challenges facing agriculture require urgent Inter-agency partnership. No single organization has the adequate resources to solve such issues as hunger, poverty and rural development, and increased collaboration between organizations is critical.

The IICA Office in St. Kitts and Nevis has shown that positive and tangible results can be achieved through solid partnerships, and that IICA's work is making agriculture more competitive and sustainable for the women, youth, fisherfolk, and producers in St. Kitts and Nevis.

*Dr. Victor M. Villalobos  
Director General, IICA*

## MESSAGE FROM THE IICA REPRESENTATIVE IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES



Twenty years in the life of an institution is but a short time. However, the impact that the IICA Office in St. Kitts and Nevis has created in addressing the challenges and constraints to development facing the Cooperative Movement and the creative solutions found to remove these are self-sustaining and worthy of note.

As Representative of IICA with responsibility for managing and directing the Technical Cooperation Programme in the Eastern Caribbean States, I am very satisfied with the results obtained in St. Kitts and Nevis and congratulate the Coordinator and the Executive Secretary in the Office on a job well done in leading the process. The building of effective partnerships and securing the confidence of all

stakeholders in particular, the Rural Women and Youth in St. Kitts and Nevis augurs well for the Institution as we chart the future.

As an Office, we look forward to serving the Government and People of St. Kitts and Nevis for another twenty years and beyond to ensure a more competitive and sustainable Agriculture for All.

*Una May Gordon  
Representative in the ECS*

## IICA's 70TH ANNIVERSARY: REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE



In my capacity as the Minister of Agriculture, I am delighted to congratulate the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) as it commemorates its 70th anniversary. The government is also tremendously pleased with the work of the institution in the Federation as this year marks the 20th anniversary of IICA in St. Kitts and Nevis. Seventy years of service in the life of an individual or organization is indeed a milestone event. It is always a time for sober reflection, stock taking and celebration. Apart from being a time for celebration of its notable achievement it is also a time to project for the future.

The institution has been very instrumental in assisting with the initiation of several projects and or development of several initiatives. Its assistance in project development and accessing donor funding must also be underscored. These efforts have helped many farmers and agro-processors in the development and expansion of their enterprises. It follows axiomatically that our Federation has realised an increased availability of food primarily produced by small farmers and this has certainly put the country's food security agenda in a better position. Moreover, the increase in food production and agro-processed commodities is helping to curb the county's food import bill.

IICA has positively assisted in many areas of development in the agricultural sector. The support has been provided to a variety of entities such as beekeepers, Project Strong, the Fahie Agricultural Women's Producers Association, the Nevis Growers Association, the St. Kitts Farmers Cooperative Society, the New River Farmers Cooperative, the St Peter's Farmers Association and the St. Kitts Agricultural Youth Forum. The assistance over the years targeted both primary and secondary initiatives. In addition, and very commendable is the support given to females and the youth.

The support over the past twenty years has been tremendous. The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis is therefore thankful to have been able to partner with IICA over the past twenty years and look forward to another twenty years of closer and stronger partnership that seeks to bring about a better life to all peoples.

In closing, the 70th anniversary should provide the Institute with another opportunity to rebrand, relaunch and reposition itself to usher in the dawn of a new era of agricultural possibilities in the Americas.

With every good wish.

***Hon. Dr. Timothy Harris  
Senior Minister and Minister of International Trade, Commerce, Agriculture,  
Marine Resources, Consumer Affairs and Constituency Empowerment.***

## INTRODUCTION

The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis has enunciated that the co-operative movement would be used as a vehicle to enhance the agricultural sector and also for social transformation of the various sectors. According to the Minister of Agriculture, The Honourable Dr Timothy Harris, a strong co-operative sector is a key driver of agricultural production. He is also of the view that such organizations enable farmers to pool their resources for bulk purchasing of inputs, achieving critical mass marketing and lobbying power, all geared to increasing and promoting sustainable livelihoods. In this regard, the work of the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) on St Kitts and Nevis has been based to a large extent with the co-operative groups. Over the past decade, IICA has been involved primarily in improving the organizational and management systems of the co-operatives, enhancing their technical and financial capabilities and assisting them in procuring infrastructure.

### IICA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATIVES IN ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

#### SUPPORTING THE BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY

Beekeeping was introduced in St. Kitts during the 19th Century. However, the practice never became widespread and by 2001, most of the honey produced on St. Kitts was harvested from the wild. A study conducted by IICA revealed that two of the major constraints experienced were unavailability of equipment and low levels of technical knowledge. With the assistance of the Co-operative Department, the St. Kitts Beekeepers' Co-operative was formed.



Making candles from beeswax

Subsequently, the Institute prepared and submitted a project to the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI). A Grant of US\$12,500 was made available to procure equipment and to finance training activities. The training workshops included diverse areas of beekeeping and culminated in the development of a Training Manual. In order to ensure the sustainability of the group a Revolving Fund was also set up.

#### SUPPORTING WOMEN PRODUCERS

In recognition of the special needs of small scale female producers, IICA promoted the formation and supported the empowerment of the **Fahie's Agricultural Women Producers' Association**. The overall goal of this organization is the promotion of employment opportunities, self reliance and advocacy. Since the formation of the Association, the members have been involved in a number of activities. These include: Computer-training, agro-processing, educational field trips and participation in trade fairs and exhibitions. In 2006, the Association through the initiative of the Institute received a Grant of EC\$30,000 to procure spraying equipment, hoes, weed eaters and watering hoses. In addition, with IICA's assistance a proposal was submitted to the British Development Division in 2007 and a further US\$1,000 was received to assist four (4) members to participate in a workshop entitled "Business Opportunities in Agro-Processing" which was held in Dominica.

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in 2008, made available to the Eastern Caribbean Representation of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, the sum of US\$75,000 to facilitate a set of activities aimed at reducing vulnerability to food insecurity in rural and farming communities, through the strengthening and expansion of rural income streams. This financial contribution assisted the IICA offices to examine the range of agri-business along pre-selected agriculture-tourism food chains, and identify, formulate and start up six income generating projects, one in each of the member states. The project, which was selected in St. Kitts and Nevis and supported financially, was one which was operated by a member of the Fahie’s Agricultural Women Producers Association. The project funded labels, packaging materials, equipment, and training in Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) and the production of cassava bread. Sandwiches are now sold in several supermarkets in St. Kitts and Nevis.



President Fahie’s Agricultural Women Producers’ Association receives grant funds from CFLI



Fahie’s Agricultural Women Producers’ Association received Plaques from IICA during Wprld Food Day



Straw baskets made by Project Strong



Sewing equipment presented to Project Strong

**SUPPORTING YOUTH**

**Project Strong** is a youth initiative, which deals with teenagers who ended their high school careers as under achievers. Generally, their poor high school records handicap them and they become young people at risk. Unable to find satisfactory jobs, they are prone to drift into premature parenthood, drug use and crime.

The Institute assisted Project Strong in the development of a project entitled, “Preparing Disadvantaged Teenagers for Self-Employment.” The project’s primary goal was to facilitate viable areas, such as bee-keeping, agriculture, needle work, basketry and agro-processing.

Consequently, Project Strong received a grant of EC\$30,000 to purchase a computer (monitor and CPU), one computer desk and chair, printer, scanner and surge protector, digital camera, one refrigerator, a stove, six sewing machines with covers, materials for basketry and craft design, bee-keeping equipment and 130 cases of jars.

The results were:

- A cadre of at least forty teenagers trained in non-academic but economically viable skills for generating income and promoting business enterprise.
- An enhanced working model of national support for increasing productivity and building self value among 'at risk' youth, which will contribute to the alleviation of poverty among them.

During 2005, 15 youths from Project Strong were able to deliver on a contractual arrangement to supply 400 school uniforms and 80 gift baskets. The students were able to display their competence in the various skills which they were taught.

In 2006, the Institute in collaboration with UNESCO sponsored a Project, "Enhancing the Participation of Marginalized Youths in the Development Process of the Eastern Caribbean States." The overall goal of the Project was to identify and train twenty young persons from St. Kitts and Nevis in selected skill areas, while at the same time empowering and partnering them through entrepreneurship development. It was anticipated that the participants would be assisted in establishing economic enterprises by which they could generate incomes for improving their livelihoods.

The three main activities, which were undertaken included:

#### **Enhancement Youth Entrepreneurship Skills**

**The building of entrepreneurship skills is a fundamental requirement for empowering young persons to be able to identify and respond to economic opportunities in order to generate income. Training in entrepreneurship was pursued.**

#### **Improvement Relevant Technical Skills Training**

**Apart from building entrepreneurial capacity the project also imparted skills training in beekeeping/candle making and landscaping/plant propagation, which were utilized in the development of enterprises by the youth.**

**As a result of this Project, three (3) young persons were able to obtain employment. Six (6) others have established small enterprises. Two of the persons from the latter group obtained financing from the Revolving Loan Fund, which was established. It should be noted that two Revolving Loan Funds of EC\$10,000 each, were set up for the youths on both St. Kitts and Nevis. The Institute continues to work with these youths to ensure that they become meaningfully engaged.**

#### **Improvement Social Skills**

**Actions were undertaken to strengthen social skills and self esteem as a critical pre-requisite for engendering both entrepreneurial and technical skills development among targeted youths and for participation in the development process.**

#### **SUPPORTING FARMERS GROUPS AND ASSOCIATIONS**

**The Nevis Growers Association (NGA)** has demonstrated how small farmers can be organized to satisfy a particular market. Despite their many challenges they were able to organize themselves and satisfy the Four Seasons Resort, a Five Diamond Hotel's demand for specified agricultural products on a consistent basis. The IICA however, realized that some of the farmers were hampered by inappropriate irrigation methods. Consequently, a project was prepared

and submitted to the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI). The CNFI approved the project and US\$5,000 was made available to procure 26 rolls of drip line. A drip irrigation workshop was also held to enhance the farmers' competences. The NGA also benefitted from a Grant totalling EC\$58,000 which was obtained from the CFLI. This was to procure farming implements and fencing materials.



Members of Nevis Growers' Association at Drip Irrigation Workshop

In November 2007, the **St. Kitts Farmers' Co-operative Society** and the St. Kitts Marriott Hotel signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the co-operative to supply the hotel with vegetables. However, the co-operative did not have the requisite infrastructure to enable the smooth undertaking of this contractual arrangement. The Institute therefore assisted the co-operative to develop a project proposal valued at EC\$49,000. This project was funded by the CFLI. The funds were used to procure a "walk-in" chill room (10'x15'x8'), 1500 crates/containers and 50,000 labels. The project also enhanced the capacity of members and strengthened the organizational and management structure of the group. This it did through training in post harvest handling, group dynamics and financial management.



St. Kitts farmers brand label



Walk-in Chiller acquired by St.Kitts Farmers

In October 2008, Nevis like other islands of the Eastern Caribbean was adversely affected by Hurricane Omar. The marketing arrangement which was established between the farmers and the hotel and which was regarded as one of the "Best Practices" by the proponents of Agro-Tourism linkages was severely affected. The Institute was able to assist the NGA in developing a Project, which was submitted to the CFLI and as a result the NGA received a Grant totaling EC\$43,000. This Fund was utilized to procure seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, fencing wire, drip irrigation and a walk-in Chiller.

In 2008, the **St. Kitts Farmers Co-operative Society** was also affected by Hurricane Omar. The Institute was the first agency to assist. It developed a project proposal which sought to re-energize the farming community and to assist in the rapid recovery of the sector. Consequently, the Society received a Grant of EC\$43,000, which assisted in land preparation and procurement of inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, fencing wire and livestock feed.



Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), visited St. Kitts after the closure of the sugar industry in 2005. Discussions were held with government officials regarding the potential health and nutrition fall-outs which could result from this closure. She also visited the IICA's office and held discussions with the Institute about possible projects which could be embarked on jointly. Dr Ballayram from the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute followed up on these discussions and together with Mr. Ashton Stanley, the then Director of Agriculture and IICA office, six (6) projects were developed and submitted to PAHO for funding. A total of US\$75,000 was allocated for the following projects:

**The St. Peters Farmers' Cooperative** was formed in 2009. One of the main challenges it faced was inadequate water for irrigation. A grant of US\$12,000 was made available to construct a 520,000-gallon earthen dam. Drip irrigation pipes for the farmers were purchased.



Dam at St. Peter's

**The Nevis Fishermen Cooperative Society Limited** has been in existence for the past 35 years. However, in recent years the fish catches have declined significantly. The problem has resulted from fishermen using a smaller size fishing mesh than the legally regulated size mesh of 1.5 inches to catch fish. Consequently, juvenile fish are caught and thereby reduce the reproduction rate of the fish stock. A grant of US\$10,000 was provided to procure fishing supplies such as 1.5 inch fishing mesh, rope twine, buoys and other fishing gear.



Wire mesh

**The St. Kitts Rabbit Producers Association's** goal is to increase food security by contributing to the required animal protein intake by maintaining a reliable supply of rabbit meat. A grant of US\$6,500 was provided to procure rabbit stunner and five rolls of rabbit cage wire.



**The St. Kitts Broiler Association** was formed with the main aim of supplying fresh poultry to the many households, restaurants and hotels. Most of the poultry meat is imported and it is hoped that ultimately the import bill for this product will be reduced substantially. The Association received a grant of US\$10,000 for the procurement of three (3) portable plucking machines.



Poultry equipment acquired by Broiler Association

**The St. Kitts Peanut Growers' Association** has been in existence for the past ten years. However, the planting service, which it provided to its members, was greatly affected through its non-functioning of its equipment. A grant of US\$20,000 was provided to procure a hydraulic-type peanut planter.

**The Nevis Agro-processors Cooperative** was established in 2001 and produced a wide range of high quality agro-processed products.



Peanut planter



Products made by agroprocessors



Hammermill (above). Grater (below)

Previously, most of their production took place in their home kitchen. However, in 2010, a facility was constructed by Government. This building was incomplete and in order to bring it into use and to expand its production capacity a grant of US\$11,000 was received from PAHO/CFNI. This grant has enabled:

- a. Completion of the agro-processing room.
- b. Fencing of the property.
- c. Installation of a 'walk-in chiller' (already procured with Canadian Funds)
- d. Purchase of a hammer mill and grater to produce flour from local crops.



In addition to the funds, which the Nevis Agro-processors Co-operative received from PAHO/CFNI, the Institute previously sent two persons to Grenada to look at agro-processing facilities and to obtain floor plans ideas which could be used to develop the plan for the facility in Nevis.

Furthermore, the office was able to develop a number of projects for the co-operative to procure equipment for the building. Grant funds of EC\$120,000 were made available.



Official opening of the Agroprocessing facility, Nevis by Hon. Joseph Parry, Premier, Nevis and Augustine Merchant, IICA.



(l.-.r) Ms. Ingrid Green-Mills, IICA and Hon. Joseph Parry, Premier, Nevis at the official opening ceremony



Agroprocessing facility, Nevis.

**The New River Farmers' Co-operative** in Nevis also benefitted from the assistance of the IICA office. The Society did not have the appropriate infrastructure to store its vegetable produce. Consequently, it suffered from very high post-harvest losses. The Institute assisted in developing a project, which was submitted to the Australian High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago and US\$11,000 was received to procure a 'walk-in' chiller in 2011.

**The St. Kitts Agro-processors** also benefitted from a grant of US\$10,000 from the Australian High Commission to procure a hammer mill and grater. With these pieces of equipment, the agro-processors have been able to fully utilize the cassava, breadfruit and sweet potato. These have been processed into flour to make a number of products. Consequently, this has enhanced the island's food security capability and also increased the agro-processors' incomes.



New River Farmers Cooperative Walk-in Chiller



Handing over Ceremony of hammer mill and grater to St. Kitts Agro-processors.

**The St. Kitts-Nevis Agricultural Youth Forum** was formed in 2002. Since then it has been involved in youth development work. Its mission is to build the capacity of youths within the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis in Agriculture, Science and Technology, while empowering them to participate actively in society and policy formation processes. In 2011, the Forum through the initiative of the Institute received EC\$49,205.00 in grant funds to undertake a green house project. The project entailed the construction of two greenhouses on the Needsmost school farm in St. Kitts and at the Gingerland High School in Nevis.

The aim was to encourage agriculture within schools and among young people. The greenhouses are available for both practical and theoretical training for students, as well as for use by young farmers. The project also included training in greenhouse production, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and plant research.



Augustine Merchant delivering remarks at Shade House hand over Ceremony Gingerland High School, Nevis.



Ms. Una May Gordon, IICA Representative in the ECS , hands over shade houses to the Minister of Education, The Hon. Nigel Carty (left) and the Minister of Agriculture, The Hon. Rebeltor Hector of the Nevis Island Administration (right).

## KEY RESULTS OF THE ACTIONS

Some of the key results of the actions which were pursued are as follows:

1. The organizational and entrepreneurial capacities of agri-business groups are strengthened.
2. Production infrastructure for agriculture has improved in St. Kitts and Nevis.
3. Entrepreneurs engaged in protected agriculture are better organized to supply market demand.
4. Knowledge, capacity and capabilities of stakeholders in agri-business to pursue commercialization and use of appropriate technology have been enhanced.
5. The capability to add value to local crops and vegetables has been enhanced considerably and the packaging of these products has improved.
6. Post harvest loss of farmers' crops reduced considerably.

## CONCLUSION

The Co-operative Societies have been greatly enhanced by the interventions of IICA over the past ten years. Their organizational and management systems have been improved, technical and financial capabilities enhanced and they have been able to procure appropriate infrastructure to make their operations more efficient. Indeed the cooperative sector is the key driver of agricultural production.

## IICA

### Sowing Innovation to Harvest Prosperity

We are the specialized agency of the Inter-American System for the promotion of agriculture and rural well-being, and our efforts are fully focused on making agriculture competitive and sustainable in the Americas.

We have an innovative vision of the challenges facing agriculture, which range from the effects of climate change on agricultural production to the urgent need to feed a growing world population; while at the same time creating opportunities and jobs for the men and women of the rural areas of our member countries.

Faced with such extraordinary challenges, we propose a new paradigm for agriculture: one in which the sector will improve national revenues and individual incomes, play a key role in making food security a reality, and is a line of defense in mitigating the impacts of climate change. We are committed to making agriculture more productive, more inclusive and more sustainable.

Since our founding, in 1942, we have acquired a wealth of experience in the provision of technical cooperation in the areas of technology and innovation for agriculture, agricultural health and food safety, agribusiness, agricultural trade, rural development and training.

More recently, the Institute has become involved in the relationship between agriculture and the environment, natural resources and climate change. It has also helped the countries to meet new challenges in areas such as biotechnology and biosafety, agroenergy, agrotourism, organic agriculture, agricultural insurance, rural agroindustry and rural development from a territorial approach.

In our 34 Member States, we work very closely with the ministries of agriculture. Our governing body is the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), comprising the ministers of agriculture of the hemisphere. In addition, we serve as the secretariat of the Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture in the Context of the Summit of the Americas Process.

### Strategic Objectives

We offer technical cooperation to help the countries achieve the following strategic objectives:

1. To improve the productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector.
2. To strengthen agriculture's contribution to the development of territories and to rural well-being.
3. To improve agriculture's capacity to mitigate the effects of, and adapt to, climate change, and make better use of natural resources.
4. To improve agriculture's contribution to food security.

## IICA Staff - St. Kitts and Nevis



**AUGUSTINE MERCHANT**  
Coordinator

MSc Agriculture – University of Reading  
BSc Agriculture – University of the West Indies  
Diploma in Agriculture – Guyana School of Agriculture  
Certificate in Teacher Training – University of the West Indies

### AWARDS

- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) - Award to pursue undergraduate studies
- Commonwealth Award to pursue post graduate study at Reading University
- United Nation Environmental Programme (UNEP) Fellowship to study Social Forestry at Dresden University in Germany
- Hubert Humphrey Fellowship for Barbados and Eastern Caribbean to study agricultural development at Cornell University in the United States.



**INGRID GREENE-MILLS**  
Assistant Executive Secretary

Completed Administrative Professional Secretaries Course  
Currently completing a BSc. in Management Studies.



**IICA Office in St. Kitts and Nevis**

La Guerite, Basseterre, St. Kitts, West Indies

P.O.Box 848, La Guerite, Basseterre, St. Kitts, West Indies

Tel: (869) 4655104 / 4659325

Fax: (869) 4658908

Email: [iica.kn@iica.int](mailto:iica.kn@iica.int)

Web: <http://www.iica.int/SaintKittsandNevis>