



Annual Report **2008**

# St. Vincent and the Grenadines

IICA's Contribution to  
the Development of Agriculture  
and Rural Communities



# **IICA's Contribution to the Development of Agriculture and Rural Communities**

## **2008 Annual Report**

**March 2008**

© Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA). 2009  
ISBN 978-92-9248-001-1

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	<i>Introduction</i>	5
2.	<i>Executive Summary</i>	6
3.	<i>The State of Agriculture and Rural Life in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2008</i>	8
	<i>a. The Context for Agriculture and Rural Life</i>	8
	<i>b. Changes in Agrifood Production</i>	10
	<i>c. Changes in the Institutional Framework for Agriculture and Rural Life</i>	11
4.	<i>Results of the Implementation of the National Technical Cooperation Agenda in St. Vincent and the Grenadines during 2008</i>	13
	<i>a. IICA's Contribution to the Repositioning of Agriculture and Rural Life</i>	13
	<i>b. Promotion of Trade and the Competitiveness of Agribusiness</i>	14
	<i>c. Strengthening Agricultural Health and Food Safety Systems</i>	15
	<i>d. Strengthening Rural Communities based on the Territorial Approach</i>	17
	<i>e. Introducing Technology and Innovation for the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Life</i>	18
5.	<i>Results of Inter-Agency Cooperation</i>	20
6.	<i>New Opportunities for Technical Cooperation</i>	21
7.	<i>Main Activities Organized by IICA</i>	22
	<i>Bibliography</i>	23



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Exhibitions generally generate excitement whenever and wherever they are staged. Therefore the upbeat in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2008 was understandable. After all, St. Vincent and the Grenadines was hosting the prestigious Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries was after 5 years staging its National Agricultural and Agro-based Industrial Exhibition (NAIE). Hence, activities in IICA's St. Vincent and the Grenadines Office, the Head Office of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and across the whole agricultural spectrum were heightened. Dialogue was held as plans were carefully laid to ensure that the events came off "good". Farmers were encouraged to pay extra attention to their cultivation since they were going to be judged and prizes were up for grabs. Those who wanted to exhibit specialized commodities and livestock paid attention to details to ensure that the best specimens were exposed to public scrutiny.

When the big day finally arrived on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008 and the official opening ceremony saw hundreds of nationals and overseas participants gather at the Methodist Church Hall with a "little pomp and ceremony", the emotional high was acceptable. Neither the showers of rain nor the soggy outfield at the exhibition site at the Richmond Hill Playing Field could stop the onward roll of the events in Capital Kingstown and its suburbs.

The various addresses and messages from conferences, workshops and seminars from representatives of institutions such as: IICA Director General, CARICOM Secretariat Assistant Secretary General, FAO Sub-regional Representative, CARDI Executive Director, CTA Director and St. Vincent and the Grenadines' Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture, all helped to inspire hope and confidence, and to point out opportunities and elicit renewed commitment to the sector across the region. Agriculture and rural life, notwithstanding the constant pressures and challenges, are up and running in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The following pages are snapshots of these activities for 2008.

## **2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Repositioning agriculture and rural life**

IICA, as part of the Alliance and in support of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) and the National Agricultural and Agro-based Industrial Exhibition (NAIE), October 5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008, which gave a significant boost to Agriculture and Rural Life.

### **Promoting trade and the competitiveness of agribusiness**

- The linkage between tourism and agriculture received a boost as a result of the partnership between IICA and the Hotel and Tourism Association in implementing “Vincy Flavours” 2008.
- The chairman of the National Agro-tourism Committee is better prepared to advise and guide the other members of the Committee regarding investment opportunities having attended the Regional Investment Forum for Agro-tourism in Barbados.

### **Promoting the development of rural communities based on the territorial approach**

- The national chapter of the Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (St. Vincent and the Grenadines Network of Rural Women Producer {SVGNRWP}) and the Caribbean Agricultural Forum for Youth (St. Vincent and the Grenadines Agricultural Forum for Youth {SVGAFY}) elected their new executives. IICA continues to provide the secretariat services to the organizations and to assist in the implementation of their work plans.
- During the CWA both CANROP and CAFY convened meetings in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and elected new executives to guide their activities over the next year. Work plans have been prepared. IICA facilitated their attendance at CWA and continues to provide secretariat support in the execution of their work plans.

## **Promoting the introduction of technology and innovation for the modernization of agriculture and rural development**

- Under the IICA/CARDI Technical Cooperation Agreement vegetable farmers/seedling producers are benefitting from the CARDI Country Representative research using several media mixes to prepare vegetable seedlings for production and are better able to select the medium which gives the best seedling development.
- In collaboration with FAO, under the Technical Cooperation Project entitled '**Strengthening and Expanding Rural Income Streams**', UD's Plantain Chips received support in the renovation and modernization of her small business bringing her operations into conformity to the requirements of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Bureau of Standards.



### **3.0 The State of Agriculture and Rural Life in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2008**

#### *a. The Context for Agriculture and Rural Life*

‘Never in the last eighty years since the ‘Great Depression’ has there been such a period of profound financial turmoil and economic uncertainty worldwide”, stated Dr. the Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, while delivering the 2009 Budget Address. He went on to explain that the regional economic powerhouse, Trinidad and Tobago, which absorbs a high percentage of our agricultural exports, has slashed \$3 billion from its approved budget for 2008/2009. “There has been a deceleration of economic growth in 2008 compared to the robust acceleration recorded in 2006/2007. Real economic growth is projected to be around 2% in 2008. At the same time the average rate of inflation which was 0.8% in 2002 has climbed to 6.9% in 2007 and was 10.3% for the first 9 months of 2008”. This imported inflation is due particularly to the high costs of oil and other energy products, food, building materials and raw materials for other goods and services”. The country’s overall balance of payments situation worsened in 2007.

On the upside, total tourist arrivals increased by 6.9% in 2007 over the 2006 figures. However, there is an expected decline in 2008 figures due to rising air transport among other factors.

Figure 1

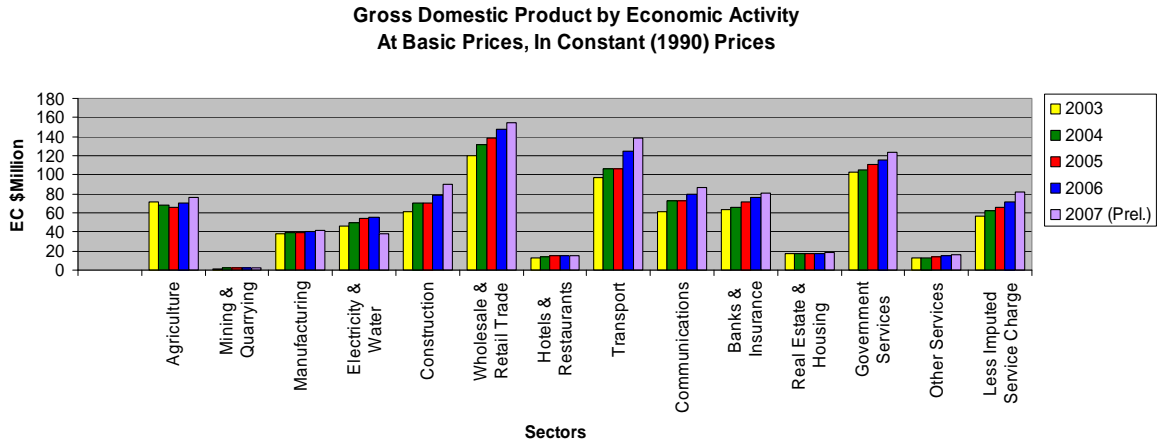
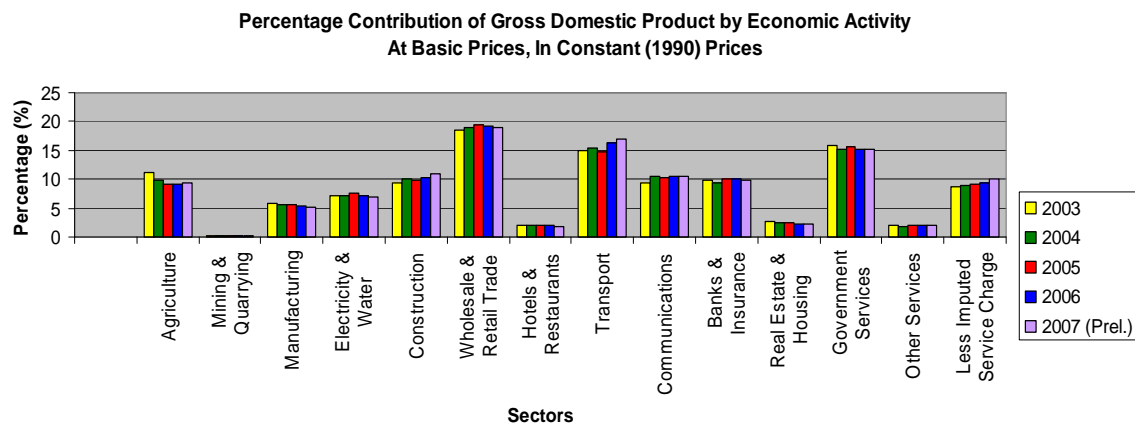


Figure 2



Notwithstanding the rise of energy cost, the challenges of food security, and the finance and environmental changes, agriculture’s contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) remained at around 9.3% in 2007 (see figure 2). The sector has its own unique set of factors which impinge on it. Most of them are not new but they are significant, viz:

- Pests and diseases – in 2008 a severe outbreak of yellow sigatoka (leaf spot) affected 28% of the banana production and the Moko disease caused 239

acres to come out of banana production. Hence the further decline in banana contribution to GDP.

- Dwindling and ageing labour force affect farm output and productivity.
- Natural disasters ruined some persons' investments in agriculture overnight.
- Rising cost and the untimely availability of inputs have affected production and the competitiveness of our primary production.
- Low returns on investment due to low productivity in agriculture result in low interest in agriculture.
- Praedial larceny is regarded as a demoralizing plague which prevents well-meaning people from taking the risk to invest in agriculture production.

The above "toxic" combination of factors and crises has resulted in lands, which for generations facilitated the socio-economic upward mobility of rural families, now lie fallow. Banana exports has declined dramatically from the high of 71,000,000 tonnes in 1991 to as low as 17,584 tonnes in 2007. For the first 9 months of 2008 the exports of bananas was 9,057 tonnes. In a similar way, while the earnings in the 1980s to early 1990s were in the region of over EC \$100 Million, in 2007 the earnings were \$24.5 Million.

*b. Changes in the Agrifood Production*

As a direct result of the outbreak of the Moko disease in bananas, farmers whose fields were treated for the disease have switched to the production of root crops. Therefore, dasheen, eddoes, sweet potatoes and white yams have either increased or have held their position in 2008. Livestock is being grazed on some of the lands. This has to be closely monitored to avoid the spread of the disease.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has been stressing the importance of backyard farming to help alleviate the pressures on households and to increase some measure of food security. Vegetable and fruit production are encouraged to support the emphasis in health and wellness.

c. *Changes in the Institutional Framework for Agriculture and Rural Life*

The Ministry of Rural Transformation now has a strategic plan for rural development. This is expected to guide the implementation of activities for rural communities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

*Building Regulations 2008*

These measures are designed to standardized procedures in the enforcement of the Town and Country Planning Act #45 of 1992. Some areas of interest to agriculture would be the section dealing with small buildings and how these building guidelines and standards would impact farm house construction.

*Implementation of the praedial larceny legislation*

While the Act was passed in the Parliament and assented to by the Governor General its implementation has run into a snag. When the advertisement was placed to recruit the rural constables only females applied. The Prime Minister has stated that fresh attempts will be made in 2009 to recruit a more balanced cadre of rural constables to effect the legislation.

*Agriood trade and the development of agri-business*

National Properties Ltd. (NPL), a public sector company which operates the Lauders Agro-processors (LAP), purchases root crops from farmers and then processes and exports the name to the United Kingdom Market. This part of the NPL's business has replaced what was formerly the St. Vincent Marketing Corporation (SVMC).

The Eastern Caribbean Trading and Agricultural Development (ECTAD) Organization, a farmer organization has become a significant player in the export

of dasheen to Europe, while another company, the St. Vincent Agro-producers, has become a major exporter of bananas on the regional market.

## 4.0 Results of the Implementation of the Regional Technical Cooperation Agenda in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

### a. *IICA's Contribution to the Repositioning of Agriculture and Rural Life*

#### i. Caribbean Week of Agriculture

From October 5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008, IICA, as part of the Alliance Secretariat, supported the Ministry of Agriculture in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in hosting the Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) and the National Agro-based Industrial Exhibition (NAIE). In the words of the Chief Agricultural Officer, Mr. Rueben Robertson, “these events will be the largest to be hosted by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in the last 30 years”. Under the theme “Innovative Agriculture and Industries – Fueling Sustainable Development” and with the slogan “Twas always agriculture”, seminars and workshops were convened, field visits were made, items were exhibited and agriculture and rural life were showcased. This significant exposure was a very welcomed boost to agriculture and should strengthen the resolve of policy makers, and all other stakeholders in the sector to keep agricultural development and rural life at the center of their economic development plans.



*At the podium: Hon. Montgomery Daniel, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries*



*L-R: Dr. Hanjorg Neun, Director of CTA; Dr. Arlington Chesney, Executive Director, CARDI; and Hon. Montgomery Daniel, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries*



*L-R: Irwin Larocque, Assistant Secretary General – CARICOM; Dr. the Hon. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Dr. Chelston Brathwaite, Director General of IICA; Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, Minister of Agriculture, Jamaica; and Dr. Barbara Graham, Sub Regional Representative, FAO*



*Attendees at the Official Launch of the National Agricultural and Agro-based Industrial Exhibition*

*Front Row – Left: Hon. Clayton Burgin, Minister of Works; Hon. Rene Baptiste, Minister of Culture & Urban Development; Hon. Gairlyn Miguel, Minister of Education; and Hon. Selmon Walters, Minister of Rural Development*

*ii. Annual Accountability Seminar*

21 participants on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008 shared in the visioning of IICA's work in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The Hon. Montgomery Daniel, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries was among the attendees. This forum and dialogue helped to ground IICA's work in the national agenda.



*Right: Hon. Montgomery Daniel, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries*

*b. Promotion of Trade and the Competitiveness of Agribusiness*

IICA supported the Hotel and Tourism Association in the implementation of “Vincy Flavours” 2008 on November 22, 2008. Chefs and bartenders of several establishments prepared meals and drinks from a pre-selected basket of agricultural goods and the public was allowed to sample these treats. This linkage



between tourism and agriculture is expected to provide further impetus for the consumption of local agricultural produce.



*Chefs busy preparing dishes for patrons to sample*

Additionally, IICA facilitated the attendance of the Chairman of the National Agro-Tourism Committee at a Regional Investment Forum for Agro-Tourism in Barbados, February 18-19, 2008. Agro-Tourism is promoted by government as one of its economic pillars. Government is leading the way in investment through the EU-Funded Tourism Development Project. Private sector businesses are expected to partner the government in this initiative.



*L-R: Mr. Ruthvin Harper, SVG participant and Mrs. Ena Harvey, IICA Hemispheric Specialist in Agro-Tourism*

*c. Strengthening Agricultural Health and Food Safety Systems*

Nationals who have responsibilities for administering the international obligations of the WTO/SPS Agreement sometimes due to various constraints are unable to satisfy their obligations e.g. the countries may not have the human and financial resources and where they do have them, the human resource is untrained in the critical areas. Travelling abroad for training is expensive. In order to bridge that gap IICA partnered with the FAO in implementing two electronic courses. The first



course entitled “The Codex Alimentarius Standard Setting and You was conducted on June 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, 2008. 14 persons attended the session which was held at the training room of the Services Commissions Department.



*Participants at the Codex Training Course*

The second training on World Organization of Animal Health (OIE) Standard Setting Process was conducted at the video conference facility of Cable and Wireless (SVG) Ltd. on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008. There were 12 participants drawn from several organizations including the Animal Health and Production Division (AHPD) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Agricultural Department of the St. Vincent Technical College.



*Ms. Mischka Edwards, Lecturer at the SVG Technical College, and Vice President of the SVGAFY*

Through these sessions nationals now have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities in helping the country to meet its international obligations under the WTO SPS Agreement.

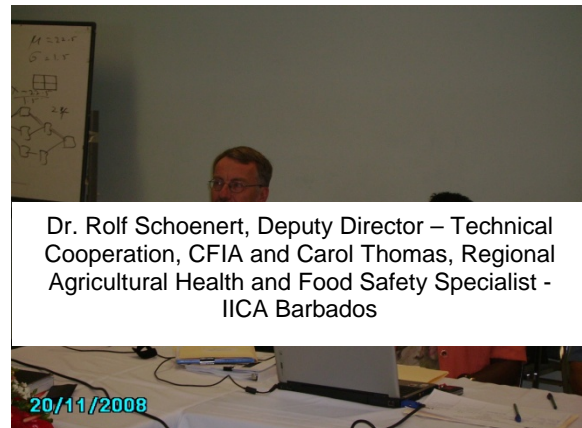
The initiatives of the Americas project through which nationals of IICA Member States attended the WTO/SPS Committee Meetings in Geneva for six years came to an end in October 2008. In order to build



*R: Chief Agricultural Officer, Mr. Reuben Robertson; next to him: Dr. Ricardo Molins, Director of Agricultural Health and Food Safety of IICA; L: Mr. Crista Wilson, Assistant Comptroller, Grenadines & Air Operations - Customs & Excise Department*

on the gains of that project, the STDF Project was launched by IICA. One

component of the project was implemented between September 30<sup>th</sup> and October 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ms. Carol Thomas, IICA's Regional Specialist on Agricultural Health and Food Safety. She interviewed and gathered information on Agricultural Health and Food Safety of St. Vincent and the Grenadines from several stakeholders. Then on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Dr. Ricardo Molins, Director of Agricultural Health and Food Safety at IICA Headquarters, supported by Dr. Rolf Schoenert of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Carol Thomas concluded the activity by using the IICA-developed tool Performance Vision Strategy (PVS) to help the stakeholders to develop a *Common Vision for Agricultural Health and Food Safety* for St. Vincent and the Grenadines. 15 persons from public and private sector interests participated including Public Health Officials, Ministry of Agriculture, Plant Quarantine and Inspection Unit, the Animal Health and Production Division, Customs and Excise, and agricultural produce exporters and importers.



Dr. Rolf Schoenert, Deputy Director – Technical Cooperation, CFIA and Carol Thomas, Regional Agricultural Health and Food Safety Specialist - IICA Barbados

d. *Strengthening Rural Communities based on the Territorial Approach*

The IICA SVG Office continued to serve as the secretariat for the national chapters of Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP) and the Caribbean Agricultural Forum for Youth and Caribbean Agri-business Association (CABA). New executive members were elected by these two groups (SVGNRWP & SVGAFY). SVGAFY has begun implementing its work plan. In collaboration with the Forestry Department and the Research and Development Division's Soil Conservation and



Members of the SVGAFY and students of the SVG Technical College carrying/planting vetiver grass

Engineering Unit, and the Agricultural Department of the SVG Technical College, the youths planted vetivere grass in an area which is prone to slippage and which poses a threat to users of a section of the Windward Highway, close to the rural village of Fancy. Some 35 persons participated in this activity on December 2, 2008.

Further, two Vincentian youths were among the hemispheric participants in the young leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Programme held in Costa Rica, March 23<sup>rd</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008. This exposure is expected to enhance their capacity for innovative leadership in agriculture and rural life.



*L-R: SVG's participants: Conroy Huggins and Marcus Richards, Young Leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Programme*

IICA also facilitated the exchange of information between the President of the national chapter of CABA and the project implementation unit of the IBD/MIF Project. IICA's Office was the venue for several meetings of consultants on the project.

*e. Introducing Technology and Innovation for the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Life*

The IICA Office facilitated the IICA/CARDI Cooperation Agreement which saw the handing over of a 24-horse power shredder/chipper for the preparation of media for seedling production. CARDI, as a result, has a small commercial enterprise selling a coconut coir mixture to farmers.



*L-R Mr. Philmore Isaacs, IICA Consultant and Ms. Pathleen Titus, CARDI Representative, examining the 24 Horse Power Shredder*

IICA has been providing technical advice to NPL on greenhouse production of vegetables.



*NPL's Greenhouse Production at Peter's Hope*



## 5.0 Results of Inter-Agency Cooperation

IICA SVG Office participated in the FAO/IICA Project Strengthening Rural Income Streams by implementing a project renovation and modernization of an agro-processing small business “UD’s Plantain Chips”. Through this project Eunice Pierre, the proprietor, is now located on new and more secure premises. The process she follows is in compliance to good manufacturing practices and she received some modern equipments. The business has potential for sustainable growth and development. The business has since doubled its exports to Anguilla and has made its first shipment to Tortola. Technical guidance was provided by Mr. Jonathan Chen, Food Technologist of Mission Taiwan in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.



*Improved facilities at UD's*



*Finished plantain chips ready for sale*



*Proprietor of UD's Plantain Chips, Eunice Pierre (right) with employees and Mr. Jonathan Chen (second from right), Food Technologist of Mission Taiwan*

## **6.0 New Opportunities for Technical Cooperation**

### *a. Agricultural Production Committee*

The Chamber of Industry and Commerce in its effort to become more involved in targetted agriculture has initiated a multi-sectoral committee to spearhead this thrust. IICA was invited to be part of this committee which included the Hotel and Tourism Association, Eastern Caribbean Trading and Agricultural Development Organization (ECTAD) and others.

### *b. Rural Development Project*

The Ministry of Rural Transformation has invited IICA to be a member of the steering committee for this project. This forum has provided an opportunity for IICA to use its significant knowledge to influence the activities which are geared towards the upliftment of rural communities.

## 7.0 Main Activities Organized by IICA

Official name of the event	Date held	Site of the event	Number of participants
1. National Technical Cooperation Agenda (NTCA) / Accountability Seminar	May 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	Conference Room Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries	21
2. a. IICA/FAO Electronic Course 'The Codex Alimentarius Standard Setting Process and You'	June 18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	Training Room Service Commissions Department	14
b. OIE Standard Setting Process	September 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	Video Conference Facility Cable and Wireless	12
3. Caribbean Week of Agriculture and National Agricultural Agro-based Industrial Exhibition (CWA/NAIE)	October 5 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	Methodist Church Hall & Richmond Hill Sports Field	Over 200 overseas participants
4. Performance Vision and Strategy – Developing the Common Vision	November 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	Conference Room Department of Fisheries Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	15
5. Windblow Stabilization and Enhancement Initiative	December 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2008	Fancy to Georgetown Highway	35

## **Bibliography**

- 2009 Budget Address by Dr. the Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries Operation Plan 2008-2010
- Statistical Office Report (unpublished), Central Planning Division, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning





Granby Street, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines  
Tel: 1 (784) 4572698  
E-mail: [iica@vincysurf.com](mailto:iica@vincysurf.com)