

APP Policy Brief No. 3

Intra-ACP Agriculture Policy Programme (APP) Caribbean Action, with funding by the European Union under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF)



Intra-ACP APP Caribbean Action

Meeting the development needs of agriculture amidst constant change in its operating environment, continued dependence on a dwindling pool of external resources and rapid advances in knowledge, innovation and technology, requires a strong and sustained capacity for planning.

Development, Change and Agriculture: What's Planning Got to do with it?

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Key Messages:

- Agriculture in the Caribbean is subjected to constant change, largely driven by external factors, which can lead to shifting priorities for policy and planning.
- Good planning is based on a plan itself, requires a methodical process and must reflect principles of efficiency, comprehensiveness, inclusiveness and flexibility, among others, and monitoring and evaluation throughout.
- There is much to plan for and a diverse group of interested and affected parties that needs to be involved and engaged in a planning process that is guided by strong policy;
- Strong and coordinated capacity for planning is essential to avoid the tendency to pause, stall or wait-&-see when change occurs and to establish a firm platform for growth in agriculture at all levels, including individual countries and for the CARICOM Region as a whole.



Planners, Youth and Agriculture Development Agencies being addressed by Dr. Ulrich Thiessen, International Cooperation Programme Manager in the Delegation of the European Union Trinidad & Tobago at the of the 9th RPF in June in Trinidad and Tobago.

(Photo: APP)

Most people are familiar with the axiom that 'if you fail to plan, you plan to fail'. Regardless of whether it is done to achieve personal goals, manage family functions, organise events, guide industry and sectoral growth, coordinate the national development agenda, or insert a country into the global integration process, some form of planning is inescapable. However, all experts and practitioners caution that before you start to plan, you must be clear about what or who you are planning for and the conditions within which this plan is expected to operate and deliver results.

This Policy Brief highlights the importance of building capacity for planning into agriculture as an important base for 'getting implementation right'. Strong planning capacity is also essential to establish a firm platform for growth in agriculture at all levels, including individual countries and for the CARICOM Region as a whole.



Brainstorming a plan at the regional Dialogue-for-Development (D4D) Forum, June 2016.

(Photo: APP)

PLANNING: By PRINCIPLES & CYCLE

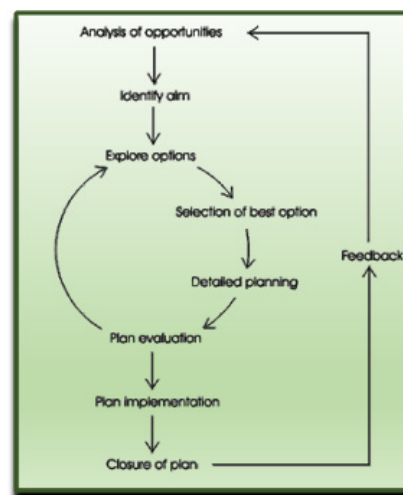
Strengthening the capacity for planning and effective implementation of agriculture development initiatives in the Region is a priority focus under Component One of the Intra-ACP Agricultural Policy Programme (APP) Caribbean Action. Funded by the European Union (EU) under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), the objective of the APP was to increase the capability of smallholder agriculture and agribusinesses in the Region, with the end goal of tackling poverty. Strengthening the capacity for planning in order to carry out these goals however has to begin with the idea that even planning requires a plan.

In his 2013 article, "Planning, Principles and Practices", Todd Litman says that "good planning requires a methodical process that clearly defines the steps that lead to optimal solutions" and reflect the principles of being efficient, comprehensive, inclusive, informative, logical and transparent. This is in contrast to the three negative types of planning that often happen which are defined by John C. Maxwell in his paper, 'Seven Principles of Planning'. Maxwell notes that projects often rely on 'passive planning', which happens when leadership just lets the project take its own route with really no plan at all, or 'panic planning', which resorts to a plan only when the project is in trouble. On the other end of the spectrum, Maxwell cites 'scientific planning', which tries to measure and account for all possible variables, leading to an inability to respond quickly to change or even make a decision on the best course of action.

"Planning bridges the gap between our desires and dreams by calling us to action."

'Seven Principles of Planning', John C. Maxwell

Having a well-defined, standard, planning cycle for every project is an effective way to avoid these common planning pitfalls. A staged planning cycle is laid out on the website www.mindtools.com and reflects a practical, usable and cyclical plan for planning.



The Planning Cycle

Source: www.mindtools.com

Stage One is an 'Analysis of Opportunities' which includes a review of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities offered by the project. This will help you identify risks, which you can choose to mitigate or eliminate, as well as opportunities which you can exploit to get the most out of a project. Stage Two includes 'Identifying the Aim of Your Plan' in a clear and concise statement.

'Exploring Options' is the third part of the cycle where you should already know, broadly, what you want to do, however in this stage you will generate as many options as possible to determine the actions that could be taken to achieve your end goals. Once this is done you can move to stage four where you will 'Select the Best Options' using evaluation tools that consider factors such as cost, risk and benefit for each action. Once the required actions have been determined, 'Detailed Planning' can begin. "Detailed planning is the process of working out the most efficient and effective way of achieving the aim that you have defined. It is the process of determining who will do what, when, where, why and at what cost."

"Putting a plan on paper is easy; putting a plan into practice takes leadership."

'Seven Principles of Planning', John C. Maxwell

At the next stage in the process you should be ready to 'Evaluate the Plan and its Impact'. If after evaluation you determine that the plan is not feasible, or will not give significant benefit, you should return to the earlier stages of planning and seek to work toward a more reliable and realistic plan. Once a solid plan has been reached it is time to 'Implement the Change', a stage which should include carrying out project actions as well as controls, monitoring and evaluation. The final stage of any plan should be 'Closing', at which time you should carry out an overall evaluation of the project and record the lessons which were learned in order to inform and improve future plans.

Some critics might question whether an industry as vast and varied as agriculture can really be effectively covered by a plan. The answer is that it can and must.

PLANNING AGRICULTURE:

Answering some KEY QUESTIONS

Agriculture, and its linkages to industry and services, is among the five economic drivers of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). Although its role differs among the countries, the sector plays a very important, multifunctional role in all CARIFORUM member states. Agriculture is viewed as one of the economic sectors that can strengthen the integration process, through intra-regional trade, enhance food and nutrition security in the Region and mitigate the likely adverse social, economic and environmental impacts of climate change.

Over the past decade Caribbean countries have moved away from agriculture and towards tourism and finance. This has led to a reduction in agricultural investment and constrained development of the agri-food industry, as well as an increased dependence on imports and an increase in rural poverty. These are not acceptable side-effects of shifted priorities. It is clear that we need to move forward in the Caribbean agricultural sector and for that we need a plan.

What are we planning for?

In Agriculture, there is much to plan for and a diverse group of interested and affected parties that need to be involved and engaged in this process. While the same can be said for almost all economic activity, agriculture has the unenviable task of needing to plan around a number of factors that are completely beyond the influence of a planner.

While there exist several descriptions for planning for agriculture, Farmland Information Center (FIC) indicates, in a concise and clear manner, that planning "is a policy process to help ensure a future for agriculture in a given place over a specified time period". For agriculture in the Caribbean to make strides over the 2015 to 2030 period, the timeframe of most National Agriculture Policies and Plans in the Region supported under the APP, the need for effective planning is a must, both in terms of the quality of the national planning processes and the capacity of those tasked to lead the process.

According to the FIC, planning is an inseparable part of the policy process. It is also dynamic, stakeholder-driven and carried out in several steps. The nature of planning constitutes that it cannot be an end in itself. Agriculture plans, like the sector, must be 'living documents' that require continuous review, renewal, reorientation and updating as the dynamics of both the external factors and internal environment evolve.

"Smallholder" refers to a producer's limited resources relative to other producers in the sector. Smallholder farmers are defined as those farmers owning generally smaller plots of land on which they grow subsistence crops and/or one or two cash crops. Smallholders often rely on family labour.

For the most-part, agriculture policies and plans in the Region tend to target the multitude of small to medium size farmers, food processors and traders, as the 'who'. Even the APP Caribbean Action singled out smallholders, including women and youth, and its beneficiaries. This focus on the SMEs is directly linked to the reality that the bulk of farming, fishing, food processing and trading of local agricultural produce, in either fresh or processed forms, is carried out by SMEs. This was clearly recognised in the Caribbean Action APP, which specified the need to bring attention to the requirement for developing policy regimes and incentive schemes for smallholders in Regional Development Strategies.



Caribbean youth and proprietor of a small food processing business shares about his product at the Caribbean Week of Agriculture, October 2016.

(Photo: APP)

What's in a plan?

The 'what' in a plan for agriculture can be determined by a number of external and internal factors affecting decision-making and action at the local, industry, national and regional level. However, a simple answer to this question is provided by George Konetes in his article 'The Difference between a Plan and a Strategy' (September, 2011). Konetes writes that "a plan is usually a list of steps taken to accomplish a goal. A plan tackles questions like how, when, where, who, and what? A plan is a good thing to have. In fact, it is vital to the success of almost any effort. However, developing a plan should not be the first step in addressing a task."

If a plan must ask the question 'how', then it means that the decision on what needs to be addressed must have already been taken and defined. This is usually the realm of 'Policy', also simply described by Konetes as "the guiding principle, that helps the organization (in this case the authority responsible for guiding the future of agriculture) to make logical decisions." These 'decisions', according to keydifferences.com, are directed by a set of principles

and rules, or in short a policy which is also regarded as a mini – mission statement.

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George Konetes, 'The Difference Between a Plan and a Strategy', 2011

The CARICOM Strategic Plan defines agriculture as comprising Food (including fisheries), Nutrition Security and Export Development and confirms the industry as one of the Key Economic Growth Drivers of the Community. The Plan makes reference to the three Regional Policies that together act as the overarching regional framework where the 'decisions' on what needs to be addressed for agriculture development are articulated. The policies are briefly profiled below:

- **CARICOM Common Agriculture Policy**

The CARICOM CAP was approved by COTED on 14 October, 2011. The basic goals and objectives of the CAP are articulated in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas Article 56 and Article 57. It takes into consideration the situation of agriculture in the Region, its development potential, the strengths and weaknesses of agriculture in different countries, and the agricultural and food security issues facing the Region. The CARICOM CAP is the overarching framework policy for the development of the agriculture and food sector in the Region. This is indicated by its pillars, which cover the core issues of development:

1. Food and Nutrition Security
2. Production and Trade Value Chain
3. Natural Resources
4. Rural Modernization (including Youth)
5. Agriculture Knowledge and Information

- **Regional Food & Nutrition Security Policy (RFNSP)**

The RFNSP and its Action Plan (AP) were approved by COTED in October 2010 and October 2011, respectively. Together, they provide a coherent, convergent and comprehensive framework within

which national governments, civil society and private sector actors can join forces with regional organisations and development partners in cross-national, multi-sector and synergistic partnerships to identify, finance, implement and monitor an integrated set of concrete FNS actions. The Policy and Plan are designed to address the main challenges associated with vulnerabilities at three levels (a) household, (b) national, and (c) regional, the latter representing the cumulative conditions and impacts of the other two levels.

- **Common Fisheries Policy**

This Policy is a legal agreement consisting of 28 Articles on a number of areas of importance to the Region. The Fisheries Policy is an essential complement to the CARICOM CAP and RFNSP. Food from fisheries is an important aspect of food and nutrition and all measures should be taken to enhance and sustain the supply of fisheries products to consumers in the Region.

In his presentation to the 4th Regional Planners Forum (RPF) in Grenada in January 2016, Dr. Joaquin Airas, a Policy and Sectoral Analysis Specialist from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), outlined major policy trends that are currently influencing national priorities and policy decisions in agriculture across the globe. He cited the trend of policy development in five areas:

1. A “market-oriented” agricultural sector, driven by demand and price.
2. Risk-management in agriculture to mitigate, adapt to, transfer and respond to agricultural risks.
3. Market development and regional integration to shorten supply chains, include value-added products, facilitate trade and develop common standards and regulations.
4. Sustainable management of natural resources.
5. Efficient use of inputs such as investment, technology transfer, labour and more.

Dr. Airas pointed out the urgency of good planning and policy in agriculture for both Latin America and the Caribbean where exports dropped by 14% from 2014 to 2015. He said that “much policy and economic evaluation does not consider the true value of agriculture”; that economic evaluations, and therefore forward planning,

have left out related agri-businesses in their accounting for sector’s impact on the economy. They have ignored the forward and backward linkages of tourism, finance, marketing, health, manufacturing, processing and transportation that are tightly tied to agriculture.

“Based on the Caribbean Community Strategic Plan 2015 to 2019, the Agricultural Sector is expected to increase production, exports, competitiveness, incomes and employment using the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) arrangements and removing the barriers among members which are hindering the free movement of goods, services, persons and capital needed to support agriculture and establish businesses. To do this, we must ensure that all member states are fully involved in the development of these initiatives and their executions.”

Ms. Desiree Field-Ridley - Adviser, Single Market and Sectoral Programmes, CARICOM Secretariat, 9th Regional Planners Forum, June 2016

Having addressed the ‘how’ and ‘what’ of the plan by referencing regional policy, the ‘when’ and ‘where’ for the Region seems to be well understood. As indicated previously, the CARICOM Strategic Plan is defined for the 2015 -2019 period. Additionally, several National Agricultural Policies and Plans have defined starting years from between 2013 to 2016, with end periods of either 2025 or 2030.



Caribbean agricultural stakeholders hear from a local farmer at a Regional Agri-Value Chain Finance Forum, September 2016.

(Photo: APP)

DOES AGRICULTURE NEED A REGIONAL PLAN?

"If one were to analyse Caribbean agriculture, it can be easily noted that many of our challenges are similar, although responses may vary from country to country", said Dr. Curt Delice, the IICA Representative in Suriname. He continued by stating that, "We are also in the presence of resource constrained countries for the most part, so it would make sense to have a regional plan, which would reduce duplication of efforts, maximize the benefits of regional technical capacity and resources, and reduce inter-regional competition for limited export markets. It would also broaden the market opportunities for individual countries and boost inter-regional trade. It can also strengthen our competitiveness in global commodity markets."

As stated in the Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) 2015-2019, "It is evident to all reasonable persons of discernment that our Region would find it more difficult by far, to address its immense current and prospective challenges, unless its governments and peoples embrace strongly a more mature, more profound regionalism." Further, in recognising the imperative of getting the plan implementation right, the CARICOM Strategic Plan also acknowledged that "among stakeholders across the Region, there is recognition of the value of being together as small states in an increasingly competitive world. This perspective is also shared by several of the Region's International Development Partners (IDPs) and a range of International Financial Institutions (IFIs)."

These statements reflect and directly apply to the agricultural situation in the Caribbean, which for decades has had to address immense challenges arising from globalisation, trade liberalisation, and the adverse impacts of climate change. Since the very first Regional Food Plan (RFP) in 1975, emerging from the Treaty of Chaguaramas in 1973 which established the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), the Region has updated existing and articulated new plans and policies for agriculture. Over the decades, several attempts have also been made to significantly improve the implementation of these plans and policies. Among the factors identified as contributing to poor execution are "weaknesses in the governance infrastructure with a resultant implementation deficit."

How do you even begin to put together a plan for an entire Region?

The absolute importance of good policy and effective planning capacity for agriculture in the Caribbean is

summed up by Vassel Stewart in his document 'Regional Policy Framework for the Cassava Industry in the Caribbean' (2016). "It is as a result of good public policy that some industries and sectors are competitive and conversely, why others fail; why some nations become rich and others poor; and why some states are called developed and others, underdeveloped."

However, with 40 million people, spread over 462,000 square kilometres of vastly different physical and population characteristics, creating a plan for the entire Caribbean Region is sure to be challenging. The CARICOM Strategic Plan has recognised that the "Caribbean Community has a long history of policy formulation and planning for the agricultural sector. This dates back to the late 1970s when the Regional Food Plan (RFP) was launched. The RFP was followed by: the Regional Food and Nutrition Strategy (RFNS) and the Caribbean Community Programme for Agricultural Development (CCPAD) in the 1980s; the Regional Transformation Programme (RTP) in 1996; the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Strategy in 2010; and the Caribbean Community Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 2011."

Agriculture Policy Programme (APP) Caribbean Action

July 2016 – 1 – APP/PMU
The Intra-ACP APP is funded under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF)

Country Brief: Grenada

APP Country Brief from Grenada, July 2016.

(Photo: APP)

The Regional Strategic Plan also reconfirmed the shifting emphasis over time on the priorities of these programmes based on global and regional economic conditions. Issues related to the rising food import bill, the impact of climate change on food production and aging farming populations, provide further challenges that must be confronted for an expanded and sustainable agricultural sector. This lines up with the previously noted FIC description of planning for agriculture as "a policy process to help ensure a future for agriculture in a given place over a specified time period".

Despite noted challenges though, Dr. Delice of IICA feels that a regional plan can work but only if it is supportive of and harmonized with the various national plans and differentiated policies designed for each country.

PLANNING REGIONAL AGRICULTURE:

From Country Up

According to the CARICOM Secretariat, National Agricultural Plans are the 'building blocks' for the Regional Policy Agenda. Stakeholders have come to accept that a focused, methodical and sequential approach to regional agricultural policy coordination is essential for the Caribbean Community. All Member States play a key role in steering the process in a consultative manner and positioning their respective agricultural sectors to respond to prevailing global and regional events through the creation of an enabling environment for investment. The Secretariat also concluded that the National Agricultural Plans are the policy tools through which the regional development priorities for agricultural development will be implemented at the national level.

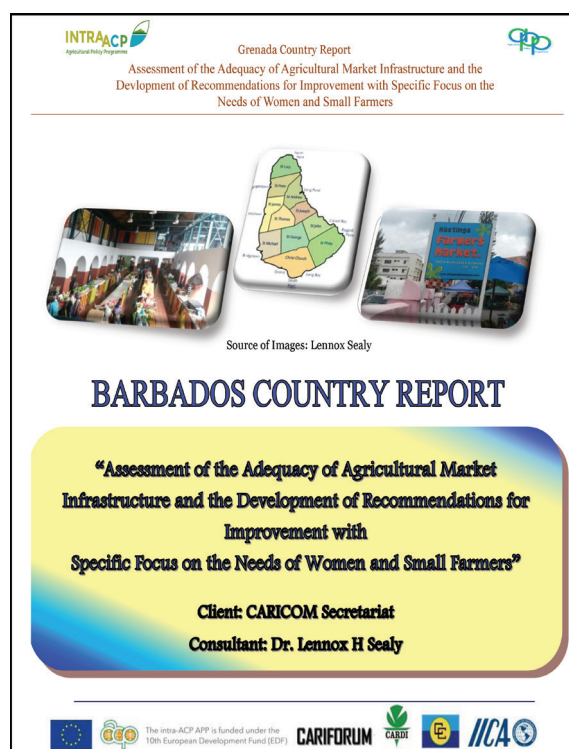
Dr. Delice aptly sums up what most agree are the greatest planning challenges for Caribbean Agriculture: limited investments and mechanisms to facilitate investment in large scale agriculture; a tendency to focus on short term agricultural planning usually tied to political cycle rather than on longer term planning; a lack of planning continuity, especially linked to political cycles and change of governments; limited funding and importance dedicated to agricultural research, especially applied research; a disconnect between education systems at all levels which are not geared towards solving the Region's agricultural problems; a lack of statistical databases and information for evidence based planning; an inability to readily apply or incorporate prevailing developmental jargon, as appropriate, into policy design; and, a lack of adequate risk analysis and risk management planning for the sector.

For certain, the issue of 'lack of planning continuity' was emphasised by the Senator the Honourable Clarence Rambharat, Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries, Trinidad and Tobago, when he addressed the opening of the 9th RPF, in Trinidad and Tobago. He lamented that "the Planning Division of the Ministry of Agriculture at one point was far superior to the Ministry of Planning and had tremendous capacity, but unfortunately presently the Ministry's planning capacity is experiencing absence of sustained capacity building."

The recent change of administration after the general elections in Saint Lucia (6 June 2016) was used to illustrate the reality in the Region; that with the change in

Government, planning seems to stall, development seems to pause, and a 'wait to see what the new Government would do' reaction sets in. The Minister referred to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) who pointed out the lack of long term planning because after a change in government, the middle part of the term is spent trying to get things going and the last few months are lost on the campaign trail.

The Minister concluded with a key observation that should be an important lesson learned for agricultural planning, that "every Agriculture Report sector plan is focused on a Ministry without emphasizing the need for collaboration among Ministries, and it is seen in Trinidad and Tobago with the issue of Food Safety. Making decisions based on an assessment of needs and data and projecting your plans into the future is critical to the development of the agricultural sector."



The Barbados Country Report, with a special focus on adequate market infrastructure and the needs of women and small farmers.

(Photo: APP)

Perhaps a good example of planning in the Caribbean can be found in Jamaica where the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) led the process to articulate a National Development Plan towards developed country status –'Vision 2030 Jamaica'. Unlike the traditional, 'old' planning model which focused on a nation's finances, natural resources, production and export abilities, as well as consumption based pricing, the Jamaica 2030 Planning process focused on what it described as the capital stock of its nation such as, culture, human resources, knowledge and institutions.

Vision 2030 Jamaica - A Good Practice Process

The Jamaica 2030 planning model includes the following elements:

- Long-term planning horizon with a strategic focus, or vision
- Bi-partisan support
- A high-level of stakeholder involvement
- Engagement of children and youth
- Well-defined implementation framework
- Robust M&E framework
- Underpinned by principles of sustainability
- Aligned with other national, regional and international frameworks
- Focus on transparency and accountability

Guiding Principles of "Vision 2030 Jamaica"



Source: Presentation from Elizabeth Emanuel Programme Director, Vision 2030 Jamaica Secretariat, Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) to the APP-C1 Dialogue for Development Forum – Policy Orientation Training, January 2016

Jamaica 2030 took a cyclic approach to planning which fosters a Plan-Do-Check-Act process and a stringent system of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). M&E identifies very specifically what needs to be achieved and how to achieve it, as well as tracking intermediate results, including what measures will be used to determine those results. There is no doubt that the

experience of Jamaica's national planning process can serve as a good guide in strengthening both the national and regional policy and planning processes.

What is Differentiated Policy?

Differentiated policies are public policies which target specific groups and are distinct from the broad -based approach commonly adopted for developmental initiatives. They recognize the diversity of types and systems employed in society and define public actions that will serve the various categories. - IICA

Differentiated policies are also important in that they "allow for a specific focus on the needs of the various categories of people that policy aims to benefit and as such, improves the efficacy of the policy", says Dr. Delice. Differentiated policy "allows the most important target groups to be identified disaggregate of the whole, and as such intervention can be tailored to their specific needs." He points out that though broad based policies are usually designed to assist the disadvantaged, often more powerful actors in the sector are in a better position to reap the benefits of those policies. A regional plan needs to benefit all of the countries within CARICOM in an equitable yet targeted manner.

APP CONTRIBUTIONS TO BUILDING CAPACITY FOR PLANNING AGRICULTURE

In describing the Caribbean Action of the APP in 2012, there was clear direction on the need to strengthen regional, integrated and multi-sectorial approaches to development challenges. The APP Description of the Action also recognised "the steady diminishing capacity for policy formulation, implementation and coordination, both within Member states and at the level of regional policy coordinating mechanisms."

This provided the backdrop for the APP's Specific Objective to "increase the capability of Regional Agricultural Development Organizations of the Caribbean Region to address the development needs of smallholder agriculture", through the three main Result Areas. One of the three areas, strengthening regional agricultural development policy and strategy implementation, placed priority on the role of the development of national agriculture policies and plans, as well as, improving national capacity for planning. To this end, under

Component One, the APP provided resources to support the framework for building capacity for more effective planning. This support prioritised the:

- development of national agricultural policies and/or plans for ten (10) CARICOM member states, aligned to the Regional Policy Framework and agenda;
- strengthening of opportunities for more dialogue among Ministry of Agriculture Planners, through the Regional Planners Forum (RPF);
- facilitation of engagement on key technical themes for agricultural development in the Region, through support to four (4) Thematic Groups;
- positioning of the Agriculture Food and Nutrition Cluster (AFNC) as the umbrella platform for policy dialogue and coordinated action on agricultural development in the Region.



Training small enterprises to produce processed products from local small ruminant meat requires effective planning to move from policy to action.

(Photo: APP)

What is the Regional Planners Forum?

The need to strengthen platforms for continuous policy dialogue, relevant and timely information exchange and effective networking is vital in order to move forward with successful agricultural development in the Region. Support provided under the APP has allowed for this to happen through RPFs, which have been addressing a number of common issues on the regional agenda, as well as national priorities of Member States.

The RPF serves as a platform for dialogue among planners from Ministries of Agriculture (MOAs) and includes representatives from agricultural development organizations, commodity and farmers' groups, universities and health organizations, and members of the private sector involved in agri-business, all of

whom have important inputs for consideration in the managing and improvement of the agricultural system in the Region.

What are Thematic Groups?

Thematic Groups (TGs) are teams of experts in their field from around the Caribbean who are assigned a specific portfolio of focus in agriculture to address issues and make policy recommendations. There are now four TGs under the APP project:

- Business Development TG, led by IICA
- Agricultural Research and Human Resource Development TG, led by CARDI, in collaboration with UWI Faculty of Food and Agriculture
- Climate Change & Natural Resource Management TG, led by the FAO
- Agricultural Health & Food Safety Systems TG, led by the CCS

What is the AFNC?

The Agriculture Food and Nutrition Cluster is the recognised regional umbrella mechanism for institutional coordination among agriculture development agencies and organized stakeholder groups in CARICOM. Chaired by CARDI, the AFNC supports and promotes implementation of approved agricultural policies, strategies and programmes. A central purpose is to eliminate the many overlaps in institutional activities and foster dialogue and decision-making for a well-coordinated Regional Agricultural development agenda.

The AFNC, in its paper titled "CARICOM Agriculture: The Future We Want" (April 2016), offered a glimpse of the 'what' that should be the focus of a regional plan for agricultural production, processing and trade. They specified some key factors which should be addressed, consistent with global trends in agricultural policy, namely:

- Facilitation of intra-regional trade and the mitigation of non-tariff barriers;
- Establishment of functional transportation systems to support agriculture;
- Development of investment profiles for selected value chains;
- Strengthening of research and development along targeted value chains;
- Reinforcement of policy development and planning units that are linked to market information;

- Provision of information for decision-making at national and regional levels, including the private sector;
- Promotion of food and agriculture extension systems that encourage technology adoption and adaptation.

“Planners and decision-makers in the Region are being challenged to come up with the best possible policy instruments and systems for proper implementation; monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes, so that policy goals prescribed can be attained.”

Mr. Gregg Rawlins - IICA Representative in Trinidad and Tobago and Coordinator, Regional Integration, Caribbean Region

The AFNC paper acknowledges the importance of a plan but also highlights the key component of working together. “Regional food production will only be maximised by working together and by extra regional support. It is vital that any attempts at competition between us are not allowed to exist. The competitors are our food imports and those who do not place food production high on the agenda”.

The APP has filled a gap, and over a period of 15 months has successfully brought many concerned parties together physically, virtually and practically. Today, regular and fruitful meetings of the AFNC and RPF are occurring with excellent representation by important Caribbean agencies involved in agriculture, and planners from the various Ministries of Agriculture around the Region. Productive meetings are also occurring in targeted Thematic Groups (TGs), fostering profitable discussions that address binding constraints in the Region. These meetings, and the resulting follow up work, are bringing about the production of valuable policy research and technical studies upon which strong and useful policies and strategies can be created, leading to the basis for a solid plan.

The agriculture sector, with its wide ranging national and regional impacts, holds the potential to alleviate poverty and increase food security across the Region; to positively and significantly impact individuals and communities across fifteen CARICOM countries. Creating effective national plans that are harmonized with a regional agriculture plan for the Caribbean is a lofty goal however, it is a goal that is reachable and realistic if tackled with a strategic, cooperative and planned approach.

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