

CARIBBEAN CENTRE FOR MONETARY STUDIES



XXXV ANNUAL CONFERENCE
OF MONETARY STUDIES

CARICOM REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL POLICY: A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

By

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24-28 November 2003

Sir Cecil Jacobs Auditorium
Eastern Caribbean Central Bank
Basseterre
St Kitts

THEME:

Economic Reform:

*Towards A Programme For The Resuscitation of Economic Growth
And Development In The Caribbean*

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*CARICOM Regional Agricultural Policy: A Preliminary
Assessment*

Paper presented at

**CARIBBEAN CENTRE FOR MONETARY STUDIES
XXXV ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF MONETARY STUDIES
EASTERN CARIBBEAN CENTRAL BANK
24 - 28 NOVEMBER 2003**

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Any analysis of regional integration arrangements (RIAs) usually distinguishes between integration of markets and policy. Market integration involves eliminating barriers to free movement of commodities, productive factors and services across member countries of the regional integration arrangement (RIA). Policy integration refers to the establishment and implementation of common policies for the RIA. Policy integration in a common market necessitates a high level of co-ordination, at a minimum, and unification, at the highest level, of critical areas of economic policy.

The reasons for policy integration are listed to include economic, political and institutional factors. The economic rationale is based on the welfare increasing effects of integrated policy making. Here Molle (2001: 15) is worth quoting, as follows:

“Policy integration may bring economic benefits as it leads to the recovery of effectiveness in policy making. It will also take away the extra cost of compliance for companies that operate internationally under a multitude of different national regulations. Therefore, **as economic integration progresses, strong impulses are given towards the integration of various segments of the national regulatory systems. (emphasis mine)**

Political arguments relate to the willingness of the political leadership and bureaucracy in the individual member countries of the RIA to reduce or eliminate their intervention authority/power at the national level, ceding much of this to the regional authorities. In terms of the institutional arguments, common policy making and implementation require common institutional arrangements; benefits here relate to economies of scale as well as scope.

This paper presents a preliminary evaluation of regional agricultural policy in the Caribbean Common Market and Community (CARICOM)¹. The paper is divided into four sections. Following this introduction, there is a review of the agricultural sector in the region (Section II). In the next section (III), the key elements of the current regional agricultural policy are presented. A preliminary assessment of the current policy is given in Section IV.

¹ CARICOM countries are Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

SECTION II: REVIEW OF AGRICULTURE IN CARICOM COUNTRIES

II.1 Background

In 1989, as part of an agreement to deepen the regional integration process, member countries CARICOM established the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). The CSME was conceived as a critical institution geared towards facilitating economic development of Member States in an increasingly open and competitive global environment. It was anticipated that through the establishment of the CSME, CARICOM countries would be better positioned to develop exports for both intra-regional and extra-regional markets, attract investments and negotiate more effective trade and investment arrangements in the global economy. The CSME is premised on the free movement of goods, services, and factors of production; it also includes the adoption of key support arrangements, such as the harmonization of laws and regulations governing economic activities in CARICOM, and effective dispute settlement mechanisms.

To implement the CSME, nine protocols that establish the legal framework for its operations, were drafted.² These protocols have been incorporated in the Revised Treaty (2002). All CARICOM Member States have signed this Treaty. The Bahamas, though a full member of CARICOM, has derogation in respect to participation in the CSME.

In terms of sectoral policies, specific programmes have been formulated with respect to industry, agriculture and transport. Industrial policy (Protocol III) focuses on facilitating an investment friendly environment, development of small and micro enterprises, avoidance of double taxation, the removal of administrative barriers, harmonization of fiscal incentives, and upgrading of quality control and standardization. Agricultural policy (Protocol V) aims at diversification of agricultural production and improving its competitiveness through effective marketing arrangements, access to finance, training, appropriate land tenure systems, promoting rural enterprise development and an effective sanitary and phyto sanitary regime. Transport policy (Protocol VI) deals mainly with promoting air and sea transport policies to facilitate the development of internationally competitive community transport services.

Institutionally, the CARICOM Secretariat has the main responsibility for designing and monitoring the CSME process. Its human resource capacity is, however, highly extended by the workload involved in implementing the CSME; this is assessed as one of the factors creating delays in CSME

² I: Organs and institutions of the Community, II: Establishment, Services and Capital, III: Industrial Policy, IV: Trade Policy, V: Agricultural Policy, VI: Transport Policy, VII: Disadvantaged Countries, Regions, Sectors, VIII: Competition Policy, Consumer Protection, Dumping and Subsidies, IX: Dispute Settlement.

programme implementation³. There are other factors which contribute to these delays including the situation where national interests are often more highly prioritized than regional ones by Caribbean national political leaders. It is also be argued that CARICOM institutions have not been fully established in the national environments of the region. Consequently, there exists some degree of popular disinterest across many CARICOM Member States. Over the last few years, however, the increasing importance of Caribbean integration into the global economy has tended to re-energize the integration movement in the Caribbean, as well as the commitment of regional governments to this process⁴.

II.2 Agriculture in Caribbean economies: overview

Historically, Caribbean economies evolved as primary agricultural economies characterized by monoculture, beginning with sugar cane during New World slavery. These economies have been dominated by large-scale plantation agricultural activities, co-existing with peasant agriculture, which emerged in the post-emancipation period. In recent years, while Caribbean states have attempted to diversify their economies by focusing on tourism, financial services and manufacturing, agriculture still remains important in many of these countries. Throughout CARICOM countries, the officially recorded agriculture/GDP ratios have declined over the last decade, except for Belize (Table 1). Only Guyana, however, has maintained this ratio at over 30 percent throughout the 1990s. Agriculture contributes over 20 percent of GDP (2000) in Belize, Guyana and Haiti, and slightly less for Dominica. Even in those economies where its contribution to GDP is smaller, the agricultural sector still makes an important contribution in terms of employment creation and social stability.

Most of the agricultural sector activities in the Caribbean are in primary production with the major export crops being sugar cane, bananas and rice. Other traditional export crops include coffee, citrus, coconuts, cocoa and nutmeg. In addition, a sizeable amount of vegetables and fruits are produced in the region; however, these are characterized by high costs of production and unreliable supply levels and face significant competition from imports. There are limited activities in agro-processing including jams, jellies, hot sauces and wines but these products tend to be uncompetitive regionally and globally.

Of the commodities produced, sugar cane remains the most important representing almost 30 per cent of total regional agricultural crop output. CARICOM countries with large sugar industries are Guyana, Jamaica, Belize, Haiti and Trinidad/Tobago. An important feature of Caribbean agriculture

³ A.T. Bryan and R.V. Bryan, (1999).

⁴ A.T. Bryan, (2001).

is the relative specialization in one or two major agricultural commodities. Sugar is dominant in four countries, while bananas represent the dominant crop in seven countries, and rice in three.

Historically, preferential access to export markets has influenced continued crop specialization. The region has relied on special agricultural regimes for bananas, sugar, rum and rice from the European Union (EU). However, most of the earlier tariff-quota preferences or guaranteed price-quotas have been or will soon be terminated. For bananas, there is to be tariff-only preferences for the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, and the special regime for rice is already limited to a tariff-preference. However, preferential access for bananas and rice –vis-à-vis non-ACP producers- may be continued through an Free Trade Area (FTA) agreement with the EU.

The CARICOM region is presently not internationally competitive in these traditional products and contraction is to be expected. In this context, one of the conclusions of Kendall and Guidici (2002) is relevant here, where they argue that:

“The declining performance of the sector is leading to increasing impoverishment of rural communities in many countries, a situation that is likely to worsen with the elimination of preferences for major commodities towards the end of the decade. The implications for social and political stability in some countries of the Region can be quite severe.”⁵

Most of the region’s output of non-traditional agricultural export commodities as well as domestic crops is produced by small farmers. Production is characterized by high levels of risk in production, harvesting/post harvesting and marketing. Production typically takes place on poorer soils, often on steep terrain, using rudimentary technology. In addition, there is a lack of mechanization, use of low yield planting materials and serious infrastructural problems. In terms of harvest risks, the most problematic is praedial larceny. Limited or non-existent storage facilities impact sales of harvested output. In terms of market risk, without access to information on product demand, small farmers are severely constrained with respect to production planning.

II.3 Trade in agricultural commodities

For almost all of the Caribbean countries in the 1990s, the ratio of imports of agricultural and food commodities as a percentage of GDP has been higher than that for agricultural exports/GDP (Tables 2, 4 and 5). The data show that only Belize and Guyana had agricultural exports/GDP ratios

⁵ Kendall and Guidici (2002), pp. 6.

consistently higher than their agricultural imports/GDP ratios for the period 1970 to 2000. For Dominica, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, there were a few years when the agricultural export ratios exceeded those of imports. For the region as a whole, net food exports have been negative (Table 5) with only Belize and Guyana indicating positive trends.

Not unexpectedly, the ratio of agricultural sector foreign exchange earnings as a percentage of total exports of goods and non-factor services has showed a declining trend in almost all of the regional economies (Table 3). For Barbados, this ratio fell from 22.2 percent in 1970 to 6 percent in 1998. Dominica experienced a decline in the contribution of agricultural exports to total exports from 70 percent in 1976 to 24 percent in 1999. Haiti also experienced a significant decline in the ratio from 41 per cent in 1971 to 9 percent in 1998. The ratio also declined for Guyana from 39 per cent in 1971 to 26 percent in 1999. Suriname was the only Caribbean country experiencing an increase in this ratio from 4 per cent in 1977 to 8 percent in 1997⁶.

There are considerable disparities in the structure and pattern of agricultural trade across Caribbean countries (Barbados, St Kitts and Jamaica: sugar; Trinidad: non-alcoholic beverages; Dominica, St Lucia, St Vincent: bananas; Grenada: nutmeg; Guyana and Suriname: rice). In real terms, exports of agricultural products have increased only marginally over the past decade⁷. Within the region, there has been an increase in the vegetable product trade, while CARICOM's share of the trade in prepared foodstuffs and beverages has declined in favour of imports from NAFTA countries. The average age of farmers is over 50 years in many countries in the region, with the implication that the return to labour is low in agriculture⁸.

II.4 The Agricultural sector in the Caribbean: constraints and challenges

From a regional perspective, the development of the agricultural sector in the Caribbean faces serious constraints in markets (information, common standards), institutional bottlenecks, and common approaches to addressing problems of poor ecological sustainability⁹. In addition, financing challenges and training problems exist. Both the domestic and export markets for agricultural products face increased competition from extra-regional sources. Competition has increased as ACP preferences in EU markets are eroded due to ongoing multilateral and bilateral

⁶ For further details, see Kendall and Guidici (2002)

⁷ T.G. Taylor, 2001.

⁸ It has been suggested that many of the younger farmers plant marijuana because, although risky, the returns to both their labour and capital investment are high.

⁹ Ecological sustainability refers to the application of agricultural practices which do not result in the deterioration of agricultural resources.

trade liberalization (especially in the case of bananas, rice, sugar and rum)¹⁰. In a recent discussion on regional agriculture, CDB¹¹ identified some of the constraints listed above as well as:

- declining investment and development partner inflows
- increasing concerns for food security and poverty reduction
- reducing institutional capacity to service the sector.

While CARICOM agriculture faces significant competitive challenges as a result of liberalization, this process may provide some opportunities, as a result of access to new markets in several product areas at more attractive prices.¹² It has been estimated that elimination of agricultural trade and domestic policy distortions in developed countries would increase agricultural prices on the world market, on average, by 12 percent. It may be surmised that the main challenge presented to the agricultural sector by trade liberalization is to achieve the necessary sectoral, structural transformation so as to capture these opportunities.

Agricultural sector actors and stakeholders in Caribbean countries will need to focus on food security so as to ensure that all the people of the region can access safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food at fair prices. In addition, this requires that regional food producers be able to obtain food-producing resources, including land, water, forests, fishing areas and other necessary productive inputs at reasonable cost. The regional agricultural sector will also need to develop into an internationally competitive and environmentally sound sector. This transformation involves planned responses to increased competition from abroad and the erosion of preferential treatment in overseas markets.

Major challenges include implementation of the necessary restructuring measures to improve competitiveness and achieve diversification, especially with respect to the development of non-traditional products and increased agro-processing. Regionally, improvements in competitiveness will need to be supported by training and research, satisfying health standards in major markets based on sanitary and phyto-sanitary requirements, improved information on markets and dealing effectively with diseases. This not only applies to crop production, but also to livestock and fisheries.

To address some of the challenges faced by the agricultural sector, CARICOM countries embarked on a regional transformation programme for agriculture, fisheries and forestry in 1996. This

¹⁰ In the case of sugar Caribbean countries also have preferential access at the USA market based on a quota system. These quotas have declined sharply over time. New quotas for 2001, however, have stabilised, as they are based on historical performance.

¹¹ Caribbean Development Bank, *Report on Meeting on Regional Agriculture*, August 2002.

¹² See Taylor (2001)

programme is geared, inter alia, towards developing modern technologies to improve productivity and to promote sustainable production systems. It addresses crop production, livestock, fisheries and forestry and targets improvements in farm organization, research and development, processing and marketing.

III. Regional agricultural policy in the Caribbean

III.1 Regional agricultural policy in the Caribbean: an historical overview

Historically, colonial relationships shaped agricultural policy in the Caribbean. The British directed policy in the British colonies, as did the French, Dutch and Spanish in their respective colonial possessions in the region. Following political independence, the former colonies established their respective government Ministries of Agriculture that had responsibility for agricultural policy preparation and implementation.

In 1975, following the formation of CARICOM, Caribbean countries developed the first regional agricultural policy - the Regional Food Plan (RFP). The main goal of the RFP was to increase domestic food production in the Caribbean region as a means of reducing dependence on foreign food sources, especially for meat, dairy products, animal feed, fish and fish products, cereal and grain legumes. Since these food items utilized significant amounts of foreign exchange, it was anticipated that foreign exchange savings could accrue to the region, if the RFP was successfully implemented. The expectations concerning the outcomes of the RFP never materialized. Among the explanations identified for this policy failure were a lack of commitment to the RFP by CARICOM Member States, and a shortage of the expertise required to ensure successful Plan implementation.

In 1983, another attempt at a regional agricultural policy for CARICOM was initiated. The Regional Food and Nutrition Strategy (RFNS) replaced the RFP as the guiding policy for regional agriculture. The achievements of this policy were limited as a result of constraints similar to those faced by the RFP. In 1989, the Caribbean Community Programme for Agricultural Development (CCPAD) and an associated Regional Action Plan replaced the RFNS. The Regional Action Plan, which was an integral part of CCPAD's policy, was defined as a "compendium of priority programmes and projects as well as a framework for their implementation." It was anticipated that the Regional Action Plan would support national and sub-regional agricultural sector plans in CARICOM countries.

An evaluation of CCPAD¹³, conducted in 1995, identified certain weaknesses. These included:

- Low levels of awareness by both public and private sector participants about the goals and objectives of CCPAD.

¹³ James O.Nurse (1995).

- Lack of commitment to and interest in CCPAD by CARICOM Member States.
- Lack of coordination and information sharing mechanisms among national and regional agencies involved in CCPAD programmes and projects.
- Absence of linkages between regional and national programmes which severely constrained strong national participation in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of regional programmes and projects.

Following this evaluation, CCPAD's operations were redesigned with the region's Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for Agriculture (SCMA) being allocated full responsibility for promotion of regional agricultural development programmes and related activities in the individual CARICOM Member States. Formulation, implementation and monitoring of the revised programmes were to be implemented by two bodies. At the regional level, a Regional Planners Forum (RPF) was organized, while National Planning Committees (NPCs) were to be established in each CARICOM Member Country.

In 1996, a variant of the redesigned CCPAD was introduced. This formed the basis of the *Regional Transformation Programme for Agriculture (RTPA)*, which currently deals with preparation and implementation of regional agricultural policy. As one of its objectives, the RTPA attempted to correct some of the limitations of earlier policy initiatives by explicitly recognizing and clearly indicating that the activities of RTPA were to be supportive of and complementary to national priorities and initiatives.

III. 2 Regional agricultural policy in the Caribbean: the current situation

The most recent articulation of regional agricultural policy in the Caribbean is outlined in the Revised Treaty, which is expected to facilitate the operationalising of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). The primary objective of regional agricultural policy is articulated in Article 56 of the Treaty as follows:

“...(T)o effect a fundamental transformation of the agricultural sector of the Community by diversifying agricultural production, intensifying agro-industrial development, expanding agribusiness and generally conducting agricultural production on a market-oriented, internationally competitive and environmentally sound basis”.

The specific goals of regional agricultural policy identified in the Treaty (Article 56) are listed as:

- i) transforming the agricultural sector towards market-oriented, internationally competitive and environmentally sound production of agricultural output.
- ii) improving income and employment opportunities, promoting food and nutrition security and poverty alleviation.
- iii) enhancing efficiency in the production of both traditional and non-traditional primary agricultural products.
- iv) increasing output levels and diversification of processed agricultural products.
- v) increasing world market share of Caribbean primary and processed agricultural exports.
- vi) efficient management and sustainable exploitation of the region's natural resources, including forests and fisheries.

To meet these goals, regional agricultural policy is expected to support a wide range of activities including agricultural production and marketing, finance and insurance, inter -sectoral linkages and appropriate land tenure systems. Article 57 of the Protocol deals with the implementation of regional agricultural policy and prioritizes for promotion and support “the production, diversification, processing and marketing of agricultural products”. Other areas which are to be supported as part of the regional policy include:

- i) agricultural finance
- ii) inter-sectoral linkages involving agriculture
- iii) human resources
- iv) productive use of land and marine space
- v) land tenure systems
- vi) information and market intelligence services
- vii) research
- viii) rural enterprise development
- ix) public education
- x) investment

Institutionally, the CARICOM Secretariat has responsibility for co-coordinating the design of agricultural policy in the region. Agriculture sector technicians, representing national governments, producer and industry associations, and regional institutions then discuss these policy proposals. Following these discussions, recommendations are presented to the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED). COTED consists of Ministers of Trade or Ministers of

Agriculture from the respective CARICOM Member countries. Up until October 2003, regional agricultural matters were dealt with at COTED meetings, since SCMA is no longer functioning.

For the last few years, meetings of CARICOM Ministers of Agriculture were held under the aegis of an Inter-American Institute for Co-operation in Agriculture (IICA) sponsored 'Alliance for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu'. These meetings involved not only CARICOM Government Ministers and technical personnel, but also representatives of producer and industry organizations. However, decisions of the Ministerial meetings had no legal standing in the CARICOM institutional process. In October 2003, an agreement was signed between CARICOM and IICA formalizing these Ministers' Forums and legitimizing the decisions of the 'Alliance' in the CARICOM legal framework.

The Regional Transformation Programme for Agriculture (RTPA) represents the institutional mechanism, through which regional agricultural policy once formulated, is to be implemented. Institutionally, the Regional Planners Forum (RPF) is involved in regional policy formulation, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation, through its inputs into the process. The RPF is also involved in resource mobilization. The RPF comprises national agricultural planning personnel from CARICOM Member States, various technical advisers to regional entities and representatives of both national and regional private agricultural sector interests. The RPF is scheduled to meet annually prior to the mid-year meeting of COTED Ministers. COTED Ministerial meetings now handle the entire portfolio of issues that were formerly dealt with by SCMA.

National Committees (NCs) of CARICOM Member States are expected to form the basis for the development of regional agricultural programmes within the framework of the RTPA. These NCs are mandated to develop, monitor and review national agricultural development programmes and identify regional programmes for consideration by RPF. Regional agricultural programmes are expected to support the national ones. NCs comprise representatives from the national public and private sectors, as well as representatives of civil society. Typically, the person selected to represent the specific Member State on the RPF chairs the country's NPC. To date, not all CARICOM Member States have organized their NCs.

Three categories of institutions are responsible for implementation of regional agricultural policies and programmes; these are:

- i) regional implementing agencies or Lead Agencies, with responsibility for implementing designated regional programmes;

- ii) national implementing agencies with responsibility for the national elements of regional programmes;
- iii) support agencies that refer to those institutions which are co-opted to assist with programme implementation.

The Lead Agencies operate within the framework of specific rules of procedure, which identify their objectives to include:

- a) providing leadership in design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the RTPA;
- b) providing information and advice to COTED on achievement of international competitiveness in agricultural production;
- c) promoting RTPA, its programmes and projects in CARICOM Member States.

The Lead Agencies are Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI); Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat; Caribbean Development Bank (CDB); CARICOM Fisheries Resource Assessment and Management Project (CFRAMP); University of Guyana (UG); University of the West Indies (UWI). Co-opted institutions are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat.

Since mid-2002, the CARICOM Secretariat has initiated national consultations in Member States geared towards effecting linkages between national and regional agricultural sector policies within the framework of the RTPA, with a focus on specific commodities or industries. Following RFP discussions, twenty-two agricultural commodities were identified on a priority List of Commodities/Products to be produced across the region (See Appendix I). These commodities were selected based on the following criteria¹⁴: development impetus, import substitution, export potential and food security. Of these, six products have been identified in Phase 1 of the RTPA as being internationally and regionally competitive and marketable, as well as showing potential for agri-business. This approach is seen, in part, as a conscious attempt to bridge the policy gap that exists between regional and national policies and programmes. The six products and the countries selected are presented in the table below.

¹⁴ Information based on discussions with CARICOM Secretariat.

Commodities and Participating Countries Identified for First Phase of RTPA

Country	Commodities					
	Poultry	Coconuts	Small Ruminants	Hot Peppers	Papaya	Sweet Potato
Barbados	X		X	X	X	X
Belize	X	X	X	X	X	
Guyana	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jamaica	X	X	X	X	X	X
Saint Lucia	X	X	X	X	X	
St. Vincent and Grenadines		X	X	X	X	X
Trinidad and Tobago	X	X	X	X	X	

Source: CARICOM Secretariat.

Formal public consultations on the RTPA involve CARICOM Secretariat representatives convening meetings and workshops in Member States with government officials, industry representatives from the private sector and civil society groups in agriculture. Consultations have already been held in Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Belize and Guyana. The general policies of RTPA are discussed and strategic plans articulated at the national level for the selected commodities. It is anticipated that these national plans will be integrated into a regional plan under the aegis of the RTPA. The plans are to be implemented nationally with support from the Lead Agencies. In addition, regional commodity associations representing key sector stakeholders are expected to be directly involved in both the planning and implementation processes.

III. 3 Regional agricultural policy in the Caribbean: stakeholders

Stakeholders are usually distinguished from actors in the policy process, with actors defined as those persons and institutions involved in the policy process but not directly benefiting from it. In the Caribbean agricultural sector context, actors refer to government decision makers in the Ministries of Agriculture, other state agencies, policy analysts and advisers, academics, donor organizations and civil society groups. Agricultural sector stakeholders are those formally intended beneficiaries of agricultural policies at whom the policy benefits are officially targeted.

The main stakeholders in the typical national agricultural policy process in Caribbean states include various categories of farmers ranging from small subsistence to large commercial farmers (plantation owners), farmers' organization including co-operatives, private enterprise organizations like exporters associations, and private entrepreneurs engaged in a wide range of agriculture related activities.

In some Caribbean countries, agricultural sector stakeholders are active in public policy discussions and ultimately impact national agricultural policy. In Jamaica, there is fairly widespread involvement of various stakeholders in the policy discussions. In Barbados, the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS), as well as other special interest stakeholder associations like the Barbados Sheep Farmers Association and the Barbados Egg and Poultry Producers Association, are involved in providing policy advice and recommendations which help influence the country's agricultural policies. Stakeholders are involved in various agricultural sub-sector committees, which also comprise policy makers, policy analysts, and civil society representatives. In Trinidad and Tobago, there are various national policy committees which focus on specific areas of agriculture. This is a formal process with meetings scheduled between *farmers' organizations* and other stakeholders to discuss various policy issues with representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture.

In St. Lucia, agricultural sector stakeholders are part of that country's National Agricultural Advisory Council, which comprises both actors and stakeholders. The Council has full responsibility for preparing the country's national agricultural policy. In some of the other OECS Member States including Antigua, St. Kitts-Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, stakeholder organizations include farmers' associations and co-operatives, exporters associations, chambers of commerce, input suppliers and private business interests in the hospitality, packaging and transport sectors. These organizations are usually involved in their respective national agricultural policies at varying levels.

The influential actors in the regional agricultural policy process are Ministries of Agriculture and related government agencies in Caribbean states; regional bureaucratic institutions including the CARICOM, CARIFORUM and OECS Secretariats; regional financial institutions (like the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)); technical agricultural institutions (including CARDI and IICA); research institutions (like the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI)); universities (including UWI and UG) and international organizations (like IICA and FAO)

One of the most active regional farmers' organizations is the Windward Islands Farmers Association (WINFA). WINFA began as a loose association of small farmer groups in 1982. By 1987, it became the formal umbrella association of farmer associations in the Windward Islands, dealing mainly with banana farmers. Among the oldest regional agricultural commodity producing and trading organizations in the Caribbean is the Sugar Association of the Caribbean (SAC). Established originally as West Indies Sugar Producers in 1938, its primary objective was to promote and protect the regional sugar industry.

The West Indies Rum and Spirits Producers Association (WIRSPA), recently transformed into WIRSPA Inc., is a regional organization whose objective is "to protect the interests of Caribbean rum producers." WIRSPA Inc. is an amalgam of Caribbean country associations involved with rum and spirits production. WIRSPA Inc. has been involved in developing CARICOM standards for rum production and is presently articulating a regional marketing strategy for rum and spirits

In 1998, representatives of regional private agri-business enterprises, with support from IICA, established the Caribbean Agri-Business Association (CABA). CABA's membership includes representatives from regional commodity interest groups in various agricultural sub-sectors including sugar, rice, dairy/livestock, poultry, citrus/cocoa/coffee, floriculture, feed manufacturing and input supplier. CABA's stated objectives include its involvement in forming and promoting national and regional agricultural policies; coordination of agri-business activities in the region; and providing relevant trade and market information to assist the region's agri-business in trade, marketing and negotiation.

Among the two most widely known regional civil society organizations in agriculture are the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD) and Caribbean Policy Development Committee (CPDC). CNIRD is a civil society group whose main goal is to improve the quality of life of people living in rural areas in the Caribbean. It networks with national and other regional groups that support integrated rural development. CPDC focuses broadly on developing partnerships with other civil society organizations and governments to develop and implement policies and programmes to benefit Caribbean people. Both CNIRD and CPDC have direct links with national agricultural and rural development institutions.

Although formal institutional mechanisms for stakeholder involvement in policy making at the national level in some Caribbean states exist, many of these function only infrequently with the main focus being sector policy and plan preparations, with very little involvement in policy

implementation and monitoring. Among the reasons cited for this include a low level of organization of farmers' groups (especially small farmers); declining interest in rural development resulting in limited involvement of rural development-oriented organizations; few institutions involved in agricultural policy research and advocacy; and marked deficiencies in the information base for agricultural policy related research.

In evaluating stakeholder involvement at the regional level, Atkins (2000) listed the following factors, which limit stakeholder activities in the regional policy process, many which still exist today:

- a) weaknesses of producer and related organizations.
- b) deficiencies in the information exchange/consultative mechanisms.
- c) differences in the administrative and geographic levels at which decisions are made and the stakeholders involved
- d) limited number of national institutions and regional organizations which have the technical capacities to contribute meaningfully to the regional policy processes.

IV. Regional agricultural policy in the Caribbean: a preliminary assessment

The capacity of agricultural policy making at the regional level typically reflects the strength of the national member countries of the regional grouping. Our position on regional policy is similar to that of Minde (2000) who argued that “policies are, first and foremost, national”. In the Caribbean context, for regional policies to be effective in enhancing agricultural sector productivity and promoting agricultural sector growth and development, the following issues are critical. Firstly, it must be recognized that national policy environments dominate with respect to their influence on output and related decisions of national agricultural producers in CARICOM Member States. Secondly, for regional policies to be successful, these must complement national initiatives. Thirdly, regional policies must have the full support of national member governments, private sector and civil society in all CARICOM Member States. Finally, those agencies given the responsibility for regional policy implementation require access to the necessary human and financial resources.

At the national level in CARICOM countries, there are many constraints which impact negatively on national policy processes. Recent research (Kirton and Bailey, 2003) has identified specific gaps in national agricultural policy, including:

- i) limited capacity for effective policy formulation
- ii) problems with data coverage, quality and timeliness
- iii) limited networking within government sector
- iv) limited stakeholder involvement, due mainly to low levels of stakeholder organization and weak national networks
- v) insufficient staff trained in agricultural policy oriented areas
- vi) lack of organizational capacity for policy preparation.

In assessing regional agricultural policy, it is to be noted that within the CSME there exists no articulated regional development strategy (RDS) and related regional development plan (RDP). The major constraint here, therefore, is that there is no regional agricultural policy which is integrated with a RDS and RDP. OECS countries have recently prepared a Draft Plan of Action for Agriculture in the sub-region (See Appendix II). Some consideration should be given to replicating this approach in non-OECS CARICOM countries.

A few significant issues related to the absence of a RDS and RDP are worth citing here. Firstly, all CARICOM countries are identified in RTPA as potential agricultural commodity producers. There may be some countries in the region which, given their limited resource endowments and weak

competitive advantages, may not be suited for the profitable production of any agricultural commodities. This is not assessed in the RTPA. Secondly, any rise in agricultural imports into the region (especially food imports) exposes CARICOM to the negative effects of external supply shocks. There is, therefore, the need for food security planning which deals with establishing appropriate levels of food reserves to meet satisfy both national and regional demands. Food security issues are not explicitly included in RTPA. Thirdly, rationalization of both export and domestic agricultural production is also not covered by RTPA.

Without an RDP, there are no quantifiable goals and targets established with respect to the six agricultural commodities/products which have been prioritized for regional production. As such, activities related to planned output in the individual Member States are likely to be ad hoc and not guided by any specific, quantifiable targets.

The RTPA focuses on transforming the agricultural sector towards market-oriented, internationally competitive and environmentally sound production of agricultural output. This requires specific tasks geared towards improving the levels of productivity of both traditional and non-traditional agricultural commodities in CARICOM. Productivity levels for these crops are constrained by many factors, especially:

- i. low levels of productivity resulting from archaic farm practices, high production costs leading to uncompetitive commodity prices for both domestic and export markets.
- ii. limited technology available for non-traditional agricultural commodities.
- iii. high costs of agricultural labour
- iv. deficient infrastructure at the level of the farm and rural community, especially access roads and water.
- v. significant post-harvest losses and limited post-harvest technology
- vi. limited marketing advice for both small farmers and agricultural commodity traders.
- vii. high levels of praedial larceny
- viii. poor data collection and analysis
- ix. low levels of organization of agricultural sector stakeholders.

To be effective, therefore, the RTPA will need to articulate strategies and programmes which assist national governments in dealing with some of these problems.

As has been already indicated, the CARICOM Secretariat is responsible for both the preparation and implementation of RTPA. This is to be done in conjunction with national committees in Member States. However, the CARICOM Secretariat has consistently experienced severe human resource

constraints in this area. Over the last few years, the specific Unit in the Secretariat responsible for agriculture has been staffed by two professional with responsibility for servicing regional agricultural policy in the fourteen Member States. This is a particularly serious constraint with respect to policy preparation and policy implementation, which needs to be urgently addressed

Developments in agriculture internationally and the requirements for successful regional agricultural policy processes necessitate much more detailed and specialized information than traditionally supplied. As such, there exists a growing demand for information on a wider range of areas including agricultural 'best practices', agri-business, marketing and technology. Agricultural data mobilization and information sharing among Member States represents key elements in regional policy co-operation.

Regionally, there are deficiencies in the availability of agricultural data, which reflects many of the limitations associated with data gathering and information sharing at the national levels in CARICOM states. Serious information and communication deficiencies exist in the regional agricultural sector. These constraints limit effective agricultural information management as well as reduce the involvement of critical stakeholders in the regional agricultural policy process. There are also considerable weaknesses in information generation, sharing and usage between policy makers and stakeholders, as well as between stakeholders themselves. In October, the Agriculture Ministers Forum which is part of the 'Alliance' agreed, in principle, to support the establishment of a regional agricultural policy network as an initial step in dealing with some of the specific problems related to regional information sharing.

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APPENDIX I

Commodities and Participating Countries Identified for Second Phase of

RTPA

Commodity	Participating Countries
Mango	12 Countries
Guava	Trinidad & Tobago
Pineapple	Antigua, Dominica, Guyana, St Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago
Passion Fruit	Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia, St. Kitts, St Vincent, Trinidad & Tobago
Soursop	Guyana and Jamaica
Golden Apple	Grenada
W I Cherry	Barbados and St Lucia
Pumpkin	Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago
Vegetables (Gen)	12 Countries
Herbs & Spices	Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago
Cow Peas	Belize, Guyana, Haiti
Plantain	Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago
Yams	12 Countries
Dasheen	Belize, Grenada, Guyana, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines
Cocoa	Belize, Grenada, Haiti, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago
Eddoe	Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, St Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago

Source: CARICOM Secretariat

APPENDIX II

OECS Draft Plan of Action/Strategic Framework: A note

The OECS has developed a Draft Plan of Action/Strategic Framework (July 2002) for agriculture in the sub-region. A formal mechanism comprising the OECS Secretariat and representatives of OECS Member States has been established to develop regional strategies and design and implement regional agricultural sector plans for the sub-region. Among the recommendations of the OECS Draft Plan of Action are:

- c) reinstatement of a market intelligence unit to provide accurate, timely information to facilitate market activities of the sector;
- d) promote participation and partnerships between Government and OECS private agricultural sector interests;
- e) enhance the capacity of the OECS Ministries of Agriculture to deal with agricultural production, competitiveness and trade issues;
- f) strengthen planning and coordinating capacities of Ministries of Agriculture.

The Draft Plan of Action was discussed at a special meeting of the OECS Authority on the Economy (October 2002). In the communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, OECS Heads of Government stated that “the focus of the strategies for the agriculture sector will be on intensifying the diversification of the sector and increasing production and trade to both traditional and non-traditional markets”. Specifically, OECS agricultural sector activities are to be geared, *inter alia*, towards:

- Enhancing production and marketing levels through diversification, improved competitiveness, research and development, investments, joint marketing and market information systems.
- Continuously improving production and competitiveness of the banana industry to cope more effectively with the removal of trade preferences attached to this commodity in 2005.
- Improving the institutional structures and arrangements, including the capacity of the Ministries of Agriculture to address on-farm and farmer issues more effectively. Specifically, attention is to be given to reviewing legislation, enhancing networking and communicating among government agencies and other stakeholders.

In general, establishing policy objectives and targets, and monitoring and evaluating the implementation strategies will be the responsibility of both national and sub-regional institutions. At the national levels in OECS countries, the three principal bodies will be: Cabinet Committees which are to have primary responsibility for national economic management; National Economic Councils which are to advise Governments on issues of economic policy; and Tri-Partite Committees which are responsible for monitoring the industrial relations environment and wage levels to ensure increasing levels of productivity. In the case of agriculture, with the focus on national medium and long-term strategies for sustainable improvement of agriculture and rural life in OECS, National Technical Cooperation Agendas are to be developed based on recommendations from all stakeholders and with technical support from IICA. These are expected to formalise the specific national strategies.

APPENDIX III: TABLES

Table 1

Percentage distribution of GDP by main economic sectors in CARICOM countries: 1990 and 2000

Country	1990					2000				
	Agri- culture	Manu- facturing	Other Industry	Services	Total	Agri- culture	Manu- facturing	Other industry	Services	Total
Antigua	4.1	3.4	16.7	75.8	100	3.9	2.2	16.9	77	100
Bahamas*	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Barbados	7.4	10.1	9.6	72.9	100	6.3	9	12	72.7	100
Belize	20.7	14.9	10.5	53.9	100	21.4	17.4	9.6	51.6	100
Dominica	25	7.1	11.5	56.4	100	17.4	8.3	15.2	59.1	100
Grenada	13.4	6.6	11.4	68.6	100	7.7	7.6	16.3	68.4	100
Guyana	38.1	12.1	12.8	37	100	35.1	10.1	18.4	36.4	100
Haiti	33.3	15.7	6.1	44.9	100	29.6	7.1	14	49.3	100
Jamaica	6.5	19.5	23.7	50.3	100	6.5	13.4	17.9	62.2	100
St Kitts	6.5	12.8	16.1	64.6	100	3.6	10.4	15.6	70.4	100
St Lucia	14.5	8.1	10	67.4	100	7.9	5.5	14.1	72.5	100
St Vincent	21.2	8.5	14.4	55.9	100	9.8	6.3	19.2	64.7	100
Suriname	11.2	13.3	14	61.5	100	9.7	9.8	10.6	69.9	100
Trinidad	2.5	8.6	37.6	51.3	100	1.6	7.7	35.5	55.2	100

Table 2

Country	CARICOM: Agricultural Exports/GDP (%) - Selected years											
	1970	1980	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Antigua and Barbuda	-	0.61	0.37	0.34	0.10	0.08	0.09	0.24	0.07	0.10	0.10	-
Bahamas, The	-	0.80	1.21	1.26	0.83	0.95	0.87	0.84	1.21	-	-	-
Barbados	11.47	8.39	3.38	3.02	3.82	3.15	2.91	3.70	5.18	4.58	3.39	-
Belize	22.93	34.82	22.44	16.49	19.02	15.95	15.91	19.12	19.76	18.63	16.46	17.29
Dominica	24.79	7.21	21.56	20.50	19.16	15.91	12.37	10.75	9.99	11.13	9.24	-
Grenada	-	18.50	8.09	6.40	4.70	4.58	3.95	4.92	4.45	4.36	5.23	-
Guyana	18.86	28.00	26.99	36.48	47.70	35.82	34.15	32.19	35.48	30.17	32.53	32.03
Haiti	6.01	7.68	1.02	0.95	0.78	1.04	0.91	1.31	1.28	1.32	1.08	-
Jamaica	5.31	4.96	5.30	6.67	7.48	6.29	6.08	5.99	5.56	4.92	4.50	4.79
St. Kitts and Nevis	19.19	31.47	6.95	7.02	8.26	6.28	6.08	6.92	5.40	7.07	4.70	3.72
St. Lucia	-	14.46	21.57	16.43	16.79	13.61	10.76	11.43	10.37	6.96	6.36	6.01
Suriname	2.59	5.79	11.92	9.03	12.43	12.75	14.72	13.43	-	-	-	-
St. Vincent and Grenadines	13.64	22.01	30.48	25.02	26.98	19.20	14.33	16.90	13.15	11.74	12.69	-
Trinidad and Tobago	4.91	1.29	2.2	2.16	2.08	2.71	2.92	3.56	3.32	3.95	3.56	3.16

Source: Kendall, P. and M. Guidici (2002)

Table 3

CARICOM: Agricultural Exports/Total Exports of Goods & Services (%) - Selected years												
Country	1970	1980	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Antigua and Barbuda	-	0.64	0.42	0.38	0.11	0.08	0.11	0.30	0.09	0.14	0.13	-
Bahamas, The	-	0.19	2.10	2.44	1.64	1.90	1.71	1.63	2.46	3.35	4.38	-
Barbados	22.21	12.58	6.61	6.19	7.51	5.90	5.01	5.92	8.23	7.68	6.00	-
Belize	-	-	36.97	28.57	32.52	29.77	31.59	38.06	40.32	36.42	34.26	29.18
Dominica	-	27.13	40.08	39.76	36.87	33.02	26.44	23.93	20.73	21.05	16.71	13.92
Grenada	-	40.71	19.22	15.68	11.87	10.40	8.08	10.86	10.02	10.07	12.81	-
Guyana	-	41.34	-	-	36.06	30.67	31.63	31.75	35.02	30.65	34.16	25.89
Haiti	-	36.74	9.53	15.02	15.06	16.46	26.61	17.89	19.82	9.83	8.71	-
Jamaica	-	9.65	10.14	11.39	10.73	10.64	7.99	8.50	9.09	8.98	8.53	7.83
St. Kitts and Nevis	-	46.88	13.25	11.92	13.52	10.87	11.20	14.29	11.00	13.82	9.59	4.77
St. Lucia	-	22.30	30.42	24.78	24.91	20.40	16.50	16.84	16.55	11.31	10.20	8.39
Suriname	-	4.71	4.35	4.99	6.52	11.67	12.20	8.66	-	-	-	-
St. Vincent and Grenadines	-	34.20	46.42	47.18	45.49	38.40	30.97	32.72	24.98	23.99	24.97	15.36
Trinidad and Tobago	-	2.56	4.88	5.26	5.27	6.71	6.86	6.77	6.68	7.64	7.76	6.40

Source: As for Table 2

Table 4

CARICOM: Agricultural Imports/GDP (%) - Selected years												
Country	1970	1980	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Antigua and Barbuda	-	19.18	9.72	8.80	8.53	7.40	6.83	6.99	6.54	6.58	5.91	-
Bahamas, The	-	11.18	6.86	7.44	6.34	6.14	6.08	5.80	5.38	-	-	-
Barbados	14.97	10.46	6.77	7.06	6.66	6.66	6.99	7.21	7.26	8.02	4.12	-
Belize	19.56	18.57	12.11	6.73	12.07	9.59	8.83	8.46	8.45	9.05	7.84	6.71
Dominica	19.23	21.16	16.04	15.18	13.75	12.03	11.63	14.55	14.86	13.97	12.37	-
Grenada	-	18.61	13.07	11.85	10.34	13.12	12.34	13.42	14.76	11.34	12.08	-
Guyana	7.43	8.55	9.53	10.45	12.26	11.87	8.08	9.53	8.58	8.44	7.37	8.25
Haiti	3.32	8.21	7.22	5.84	10.64	10.97	10.40	14.48	12.84	14.71	10.68	-
Jamaica	5.81	8.48	5.97	6.61	7.97	6.92	6.48	7.28	6.61	6.41	6.76	6.45
St. Kitts and Nevis	16.79	17.16	12.49	11.54	9.47	9.47	8.77	10.36	11.14	8.92	8.37	7.04
St. Lucia	-	17.83	13.88	14.84	14.37	13.94	13.89	13.76	13.31	13.83	13.28	10.61
Suriname	6.79	5.54	16.46	15.50	18.80	16.98	18.73	17.05	-	-	-	-
St. Vincent and Grenadines	21.13	30.92	14.33	13.40	12.85	13.08	12.38	12.05	11.90	14.01	12.82	-
Trinidad and Tobago	7.20	5.49	4.74	4.85	4.49	4.67	4.35	5.01	5.05	5.26	5.08	4.39

Source: As for Table 2

Table 5

CARICOM:Net Food Exports/GDP (%) - Selected years												
Country	1970	1980	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Antigua and Barbuda	-	-18.58	-9.35	-8.46	-8.43	-7.32	-6.74	-6.75	-6.47	-6.48	-5.82	-
Bahamas, The	-	-10.38	-5.65	-6.18	-5.51	-5.19	-5.22	-4.97	-4.16	-	-	-
Barbados	-3.51	-2.07	-3.39	-4.04	-2.84	-3.50	-4.08	-3.51	-2.09	-3.44	-0.74	-
Belize	3.37	16.25	10.33	9.75	6.95	6.36	7.07	10.65	11.31	9.57	8.62	10.58
Dominica	5.57	-13.95	5.52	5.32	5.41	3.88	0.74	-3.80	-4.87	-2.84	-3.11	-
Grenada	-	-0.11	-4.98	-5.46	-5.64	8.54	-8.39	-8.49	-10.31	-6.98	-6.85	-
Guyana	11.43	19.46	17.47	26.03	35.43	23.95	26.07	22.66	26.90	21.73	25.16	23.78
Haiti	2.69	-0.52	-6.20	-4.89	-9.85	-9.93	-9.49	-13.17	-11.56	-13.39	-9.60	-
Jamaica	-0.50	-3.52	-0.66	0.06	-0.49	-0.63	-0.40	-1.29	-1.05	-1.49	-2.26	-1.66
St. Kitts and Nevis	2.40	14.31	-5.54	-4.52	-1.21	-3.19	-2.69	-3.44	-5.73	-1.85	-3.67	-3.31
St. Lucia	-	-3.37	7.69	1.59	2.42	-0.33	-3.13	2.33	-2.94	-6.87	-6.92	-4.60
Suriname	-4.19	0.25	-4.54	-6.47	-6.36	-4.24	-4.02	-3.62	-	-	-	-
St. Vincent and Grenadines	-7.49	-8.91	16.15	11.62	14.13	6.13	1.95	4.85	1.25	-2.27	-0.13	-
Trinidad and Tobago	-2.29	-4.20	-2.54	2.69	-2.41	-1.95	-1.43	-1.45	-1.74	-1.31	-1.52	-1.23

Source: As for Table 2