

Final Communiqué
Caribbean Regional Youth Congress
Youth and Employment/Wealth Creation:
Opportunities in Agriculture Science and Technology
17th-19th July 2006
Grand Barbados Beach Resort
Barbados

The participants of the joint Caribbean Regional Youth Congress, “Youth and Employment/Wealth Creation: Opportunities in Agriculture Science and Technology” hosted in Barbados from the 17th-19th July 2006, by The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) in collaboration with the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology (CCST) willingly accepted the challenge announced by Senator The Hon. Lynette Eastmond, Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development of Barbados at the opening ceremony to develop an action plan for pursuing the next great mission for creating wealth in the Caribbean through the application of science and technology. We the participants were enthusiastic about the tasks set before us given the need for redefining the priorities for the agricultural sector, creating a path for innovators, developing new industries and enhancing existing industries through our science and technology endeavours. We were mindful that we must be prepared to accept our responsibilities to carry on the society and improve on it such that we contribute to improving the quality of life of our people.

The thirty three (33) multi-disciplinary participants from ten (10) countries in the Caribbean region representing public and private sector organizations and youth groups are satisfied that the objectives of the conference were achieved. We the youth of the region are committed to continue to build on the linkages with existing networks such as CCST and CARICOM Youth Ambassador program (CYAP) with the aim of strengthening the youth lobby for more conducive ST&I policy formulation and support for programmes that promote ST&I for socio-economic development in the Caribbean that will significantly impact on the agricultural sector and benefit youth.

We applaud all participants for the tremendous effort and high quality of presentations and discourse during the Caribbean Regional Youth Congress. We also congratulate the winners and participants in the youth essay competition and encourage all youth to continue to let our voices be heard on these issues. The presentations made by each country representative on their experiences on addressing the issue of “Youth and Employment/Wealth Creation: Opportunities in Agriculture Science and Technology” provided useful insight into the various approaches and successes in mobilizing youth to become more involved in agriculture. This will no doubt be a starting point for the exchange of ideas and the replication of successes.

More specifically knowledge was gained through the:

- Sharing of experiences in harnessing opportunities in the areas of agriculture, science and technology for employment and wealth creation.
- Exposure of youth to practical applications of science, technology and innovations that are being used to transform agri-food production, processing and marketing chains.
- Peer-to-peer networking among the Caribbean youth and the opportunity for using this network to popularize science, technology and innovation for socio-economic development in the Caribbean, focusing on the agri-food chains.
- Exposure of youth to the Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) policy-making processes and in determining the possible roles and opportunities for ensuring their involvement so that we can play a greater advocacy role in order that our concerns can be advanced and adopted.

ISSUES

Public Perception

We delegates were very concerned of the poor perception of agriculture and farmers in the Caribbean. We need to view agriculture as a business and encourage the promotion of

agri-business. It was recommended that agriculture should be better integrated in the school curriculum so that linkages can immediately be made between science subjects and agriculture. Adults also need to be sensitized to agriculture in all its dimensions and to the importance of science and engineering so that they no longer discourage youths from pursuing careers in agriculture and related disciplines.

Self Reliance and Self Sufficiency

The need to build self-reliance among Caribbean youth to innovate and adopt strategies that can be used to exploit opportunities in agriculture and science & technology must be emphasized. Caribbean youth need to be encouraged and empowered to be innovators to build self reliance and contribute to transforming Caribbean societies.

We noted the erosion of indigenous varieties which are important and can be exploited because of their uniqueness and resistant genes. Instead of importing livestock, crop and forestry varieties from other regions, the Caribbean should seek to develop its own, using its rich biodiversity and traditional knowledge and heritage as the basis for solving the challenges of the region. We need to be trained to characterize and document our indigenous species and traditions which will form the bedrock of future advances in agriculture.

Building the Human Resource Base

We noted with concern that youth continue to be trained in agriculture throughout the region but are unable to obtain promising careers in this field. We suggest that innovative approaches to training Caribbean youth be considered for the future e.g. courses on technical aspects can be followed immediately by the infield practical which should include the marketing and distribution of the produce and products. We also noted that the top scientists from the Caribbean migrate to other regions where they are rewarded for innovative research in their field. New programmes need to be created to provide employment for these people within the Caribbean region. Platforms should be made available to lobby for agricultural and science and technology policies that are sensitive

to the needs of the youth, by youth leaders and interested individuals. With proper incentives and the utilization of our regional human resources many challenges facing the agricultural sector can be solved.

Political Will and Investments

We thank the Honourable Minister for bringing to our attention the fact that the Treaty of Chaguaramas addresses improving the quality of life of the people of the region. In light of this we agree that what we who are involved in science and technology must contribute to the social and economic development of the region. However, we believe that there is further need for policy makers to make the necessary resources available such that science, technology and innovation can have a sustainable positive impact on the economies and societies throughout the region.

The importance of food security and the ability of a nation or region to feed itself cannot be overly emphasized. The need for our countries to train and retain high caliber individuals as a strategy for competing in the globalized world where knowledge is a tradeable commodity is of strategic importance. We note that governments of the region have placed more emphasis on the service sectors especially tourism, but the money earned especially in the tourism industry is lost in purchasing foreign produce and meat and other imported goods. The foreign exchange being spent on the importation of food can be reduced and some can be redirected to increasing investments in agriculture, science, technology and innovation which can have a positive impact on the economic performance of the region.

ACTION AREAS

Caribbean Regional Youth Congress Action Plan:

- To enter into agreement between the CARICOM Youth Ambassador Programme (CYAP) and the Caribbean region to further the development of the Youth through ST&I

- To establish a Caribbean Youth Scientists (ST&I) Forum to influence the ST&I policy process as it pertains to youth.
- To build linkages among the various youth initiatives within the region and channel their concerns through the CYAP.
- To channel the issues of ST&I via the CYAP to the Heads of Government in CARICOM.
- For the Young scientists to lobby regional and international organizations for support in various initiatives.
- To promote forums that provides incentives for youth to come up with innovation.
- To provide a forum to educate youths on the value of ST&I and its contribution to every day life.
- To utilize the already existing OAS /RICYT network on ST&I indicators to show the impact of ST&I to economic development of the region.

Follow-up

Establishment of an e-group

Maxine Brown of Jamaica and Cindy Eugene of St. Lucia volunteered to coordinate the e forum and lead the e group.

The e group will be owned by the youths of the Caribbean but will be supported by the CCST and other regional and international agencies.

Judith Francis, Senior Programme Coordinator, S&T Technology Strategies, CTA will also be a member of the e forum providing timely information

Interim working group

An Interim working group for the Caribbean Youth Scientists forum was also set up.

Youth Action

The Youth were mandated on their return to their countries to mobilize others to be an active part of the Caribbean Youth Scientists forum (informing policy makers etc). The Youth were also challenged to ensure that the Communiqué was published in their local paper and to share their success with their partners in the region.

Interim Committee

Positions

- ***Acting Chairperson*** - Mc Garret Vitalis
- ***Deputy Chairperson*** - Harod Wacott
- ***Secretary*** – Aminah Mason
- ***Liason Officer*** – Thomas Jackson
- ***Public Relations Officer*** – Dwayne Mitchell
- ***E Group Coordinator*** – Maxine Brown and Cindy Eugene
- ***Technical Support Advisors*** – John Darville, Chad Blackman, Damien Small, Armando Rodriguez, Gitanjali Chanderpal

Country Representatives

Guyana – Gitanjali Chanderpal
Grenada – Carla Noel
Barbados – Tawalla Cyrus
Bahamas – Roosevelt Rolle
Trinidad and Tobago – Margarita Samsoodar
St. Lucia – Mc Garret Vitalis
Jamaica – Orane Savage
Dominica – Aminah Mason
Cuba – Dwayne Mitchell (6 months)
St. Kitts – Thomas Jackson

Actions plans

1. Formation of group, or forward a copy of outline /proposal.
2. Change Damian reference information on CAFY. www.IICA.INT (Damien.hinds@IICA.INT)
3. Contact CCST focal point to ensure representation at nation/ level
4. Mobilize youth (in college) through CAFY to get ideas to future regional forum.
5. Work with existing organization in schools (High)

6. Inform people as to why you attended the youth forum. To ministry FORUM youth groups inform them of our movement to exchange ideas
7. Create database an all youth organizations CCST and what they do (liaise with Dwayne Mitchell) go through youth council, use media. (1 month from today- August 30th)
8. Create formal letter of request to media etc. (template) for CCST signatures from secretariat
9. In 3 months when we form a committee name finance officer and signatures
10. Set up a birthday club! (Lois-send me your birthdays LATM27@yahoo.com)