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REPORT OF WORKING GROUPS OF PERMANENT SECRETARIES AND DIRECTORS OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Organized jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (UNECLA) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean and the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology (CCST) with support from the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR), the Swedish Agency for Research Co-operation with Developing Countries (SAREC), the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC), the Commonwealth Foundation, the University of the West Indies, (UWI) and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.



UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA Office for the Caribbean

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial data. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses and income. The document further states that regular audits are necessary to verify the accuracy of these records and to identify any discrepancies.

In the second part, the focus shifts to the management of cash flow. It highlights the need for a clear understanding of the company's current financial position and the ability to forecast future cash requirements. The document suggests implementing a system of budgeting and monitoring cash flow to avoid liquidity issues. It also mentions the importance of maintaining a healthy relationship with creditors and suppliers to ensure timely payments and favorable terms.

The third section addresses the issue of debt management. It advises companies to carefully evaluate the terms of any loans or credit facilities before entering into agreements. The document stresses the importance of understanding the interest rates, repayment schedules, and any potential penalties. It also suggests exploring alternative financing options to reduce the company's reliance on debt and to improve its overall financial health.

Finally, the document concludes with a summary of the key points discussed. It reiterates the importance of accurate record-keeping, effective cash flow management, and prudent debt management. The document encourages companies to adopt a proactive approach to financial management and to seek professional advice when needed. It ends with a statement of confidence in the company's ability to achieve its financial goals through diligent and responsible management.

Report of Working Groups of Permanent Secretaries and Directors of
Agricultural Research

POLICIES TOWARDS AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND COLLABORATION AND CRITERIA
FOR COLLABORATION IN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

ISSUES

A. NATIONAL LEVEL:

- (1) Conflict of views on research appreciation between policy makers and researchers.

Policy makers: not convinced that investment in research are matched by contributions to agricultural production and productivity; impact of research results not evident in the agricultural economy especially in the area of the small farm domestic sector; questioning the relevance of current research.

Researchers: underrating of agricultural research in national policy, consequent underinvestment; lack of appreciation of the need for indigenous research; impatience over development of new technology and its time perspective; general lack of a climate for research ; unclear policy perspectives.

- (2) Despite this, in recent times, there has been a growing recognition that well directed research and technological change can be an efficient source of growth in the agricultural sector.

- (3) Within several of the countries of the Region there are a number of agencies - Ministries of Agriculture, Commodity organisations, teaching and training institutions and international organisations - spanning a spectrum of research or research related activities and competing for limited available manpower and financial resources. Consequently there is isolation, duplication and weaknesses in capability to impact effectively on the sector as a whole. Important issues are

the rationalisation of the conduct of research by these agencies, and the existing separation of teaching and research, research and development, and extension and farmer training in different institutions.

B. REGIONAL LEVEL

- (1) Limited links between national research agencies even on areas of common problems and exchange of information.
- (2) Regional research organisations have tended to work in isolation of each other, or at best on competing terms. Goals and work integration must be more clearly defined in relation to national efforts, regional efforts or common objectives for the regional agricultural sector. Greater collaboration is required, and a division of labour established which would more effectively and efficiently utilise the capabilities of these agencies.
- (3) An increasing dependency on external funding with serious potential for external determination of research programmes.
- (4) Generally limited scope for discussion and exchange of experiences and results among researchers on the wider problems of the agricultural sector, Limited access of professional societies to decision makers.
- (5) An inability to effectively link with international research agencies and to utilise their resources and research results for regional benefit, in part due to the absence of collaborative mechanisms within regional groupings.

GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

A. NATIONAL

The Group agreed to the following as goals for national and regional agricultural research and development:

- (a) increasing food production and productivity, improving methods of handling, storage, processing, distribution and marketing of local foods;

- (b) encouragement of regional trade in food; realisation of food security;
- (c) increasing productivity and production of traditional export crops;
- (d) development of non-traditional commodities as sources of foreign exchange earnings.

Towards achieving these goals, the Group recommended:

- (1) Continuous dialogue between researchers and policy makers on means, priorities and focus in relation to national goals. Further, particular technical research results should be continuously assessed for impact on the farming sector and must be supported by appropriate socio-economic research relating to possibility for adoption, adoption rates, associated physical and economic requisites for success etc;
- (2) Governments to agree to, and be assisted in the establishment of co-ordination mechanisms at the national level, and to the strengthening of national research and extension capabilities as a matter of urgency;
- (3) While available external resources for so doing should be tapped, due regard must be paid to the need to preserve national direction in research;
- (4) Within the context of co-ordination, Governments to give serious consideration to:
 - (i) the degree of operational autonomy which would allow research institutions to function effectively;
 - (ii) the functional integration of research and teaching, research and development, and extension and farmer training possibly under Research Training and Policy Councils or Agricultural Research and Training Institutes;

- (iii) training of less specialised extension personnel by subject matter specialists (as against development of extension on subject matter lines).

B. REGIONAL

(1) The Region to examine its commonality of research needs so as to determine areas for national agency research collaboration. This would serve as a basis for establishing linkages between national research agencies towards collaboration and exchange of information on common problems.

(2) The work and capabilities of regional research organisations must be rationalised towards supporting national efforts, filling research gaps, working on common or collaborative programmes. The roles and capabilities of these organisations should be urgently and critically reviewed within the context of national and regional agricultural goals and resources to determine a division of labour, areas of collaboration, functional relationships etc.

(3) The establishment of networks for collaboration in research between countries and across the Region should be encouraged. Donor agencies should continue to fund activities aimed at fostering research collaboration and linked with two considerations in mind:

- (i) the desirability and longer term efficacy of strengthening national systems without which regional networks would be weak;
- (ii) encouragement of the countries themselves to organise their own networks assisted by donor agency backstopping.

In the first instance, the networks may concentrate on establishing the bases for co-operation (meetings, exchange of information/materials) and on a few commodities, with expansion to other commodities as the network system demonstrates benefits, experience

gained, and the weaker national systems strengthened.

4. Follow up meetings of the nature of this current Conference to review and discuss experiences in collaborative work and establishment of networks.

CRITERIA FOR COLLABORATION

The following considerations relate to collaboration both within countries and between countries. No ranking is intended:

- (1) Common problems and interests
- (2) Voluntary initiation¹
- (3) Mutually acceptable benefits in relation to needs to be satisfied
- (4) Goals, objectives and programmes must be clear and acceptable
- (5) Use of flexible mechanisms in devising and executing programmes
- (6) Where joint actions promise maximisation of use of limited resources, and are cost and results effective
- (7) Mechanisms should serve to strengthen existing institutions rather than establish new ones
- (8) General good faith between collaborators
- (9) Continued **political** and financial support for sustaining successful collaborative efforts.

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It is recognised that where national co-ordination agencies or mechanisms are in place, collaboration may not be all that 'voluntary.' The criterion, however, holds good in relation to collaboration between countries and between national and international agencies.

