

**CARIBBEAN POULTRY ASSOCIATION
3rd Regional Broiler and Processing School
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**REMARKS ON CARICOM AGRO INDUSTRY PROGRAMME - Margaret S
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Secretariat**

Mr Chairman

Honourable Minister of Agriculture
Members of the Diplomatic Corp
Members of the Jamaica Broilers Group
Caribbean Broilers Group
CPA Belize

Good evening,

It is with pleasure that I bring greetings from the Secretary General of the CARICOM Secretariat, Mr. Edwin Carrington. The SG notes that the CPA is impacting the industry in terms of moving the sub-sector towards an increased level of competitiveness and he is cognisant of that the CPA through its initiatives is also creating an awareness of the magnitude of the contribution of the sub-sector to the economic well being of the Region. Regional and international issues which are likely to influence the performance and profitability of the poultry sub-sector are being brought to the highest forum of regulators and policy makers in the CARICOM. In this context the SG commends the membership and work of the CPA.

Having said that, my role this evening is to give a brief overview of CARICOM's Agro-industry programme. I put the programme activities in the context of a broader policy and programme framework. As many of you all are aware that the Caribbean Community has formulated and is implementing the Regional Transformation Programme for Agriculture (RTP, A). This programme includes a number of thematic areas - among which are agribusiness development, marketing development, technical cooperation, technology generation, validation and transfer, and diversification.

One element of the agribusiness development focuses on enterprise development and the development of a competitive strategy for the particular enterprise. The gist of this initiative is to develop general models that Member States could adapt and adopt where applicable. When tailored to meet the specific conditions of the Member States it is expected that the profitability and economic returns of the industry would be determined and that the adopted model would point to general or specific policy prescriptions which hamper or alternatively which support the competitiveness of the industry. In other words through the use of these studies Member States would be in a position to determine what needs to be done if competitiveness is to be achieved for the particular industry.

In the enterprise competitiveness studies initiative a list of approximately 22 commodities had already been debated and agreed upon by all Member States and at the moment five have been prioritised for development. I believe Member States have requested these five to be small ruminants, coconuts, papaya, sweet potato and hot peppers.

The Secretariat has already identified funds to carry out this initiative. Consultants have already been shortlisted and at the moment we are at the point where CDB/CCS is to select the consultant and allow for the process to move forward in collaboration with the national coordinators. Recently, the enterprise development initiative was presented to the American Chamber of Commerce in Washington and stirred quite an interest from the West Indian entrepreneurs.

In support of agro-industry the Community has engaged in two major supporting activities. The first initiative has led to the establishment and functioning of the Caribbean Agribusiness Marketing Intelligence and Development Network.

The second initiative which we all know of is the establishment of the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA). After many discussions and deliberations the COTED has given the green light for its establishment. CARDI has been determined to be the host institution of CAHFSA. The Secretariat is now mandated by the COTED to pursue the legal and institutional framework for the establishment of CAHFSA.

While I would wish to move with speed on this matter, my competence in law constrains me to await General Counsel's (our legal adviser) intervention in the dialogue between the Secretariat and the host institution of CAHFSA. CAHFSA will support Caricom's agro industries at the regional and domestic level with respect to a more cohesive response and approach to Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary matters.

Returning to the broader policy framework, a subset of the RTP (A) is the Regional Special Programme for Food Security (FAO/CCS). This programme

has an estimated budget of US26.4 Million. At the moment the Government of Italy has injected approximately 5 Million into the wider trust fund. These funds are to be utilised in development of model units of production using irrigation technology for vegetables, root and food crops as identified by the Member States. All MS are in the process of signing the legal documents to obtain the benefits of this assistance. Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have already signed on. The technical assistance for this programme is being supported by initiatives with the Republic of China and with Cuba. Technical assistance is also being sought under the CARICOM – Spain Cooperation for human resource development; packaging to improve product competitiveness and for the conduct of a feasibility study on the production of animal feed from banana pulp.

To sum up...the Agro industry in the Region is been administered in the context of the more holistic approach of the RTP (A) and the Regional Special Programme for Food Security. There is still much more work to be done and it is only through collaborative efforts on the part of the stakeholders, policy makers and our technical and financial partners that we can make the necessary strides to ensure the health and wealth of the agro-industry in the Region.

Thank you.