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CARIBBEAN

FOOD

CROPS SOCIETY

27

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OF THE
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ADDRESSES

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS¹

D. S. Padda

**Chairman of the Board of Directors
Caribbean Food Crops Society**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen: On behalf of the Caribbean Food Crops Society, it is my pleasure to extend to you a warm welcome. I hope that your attendance at the 27th Annual Meeting of the Society will be professionally and socially rewarding. The sponsor of the 27th Annual Meeting of the Society is the Ministry of Agriculture, Commonwealth of Dominica.

I wish to extend my congratulations to the Organizing Committee for its efforts in preparing the technical sessions and other events that have been scheduled. The theme of this year's meeting--"New Directions in Sustainable Agriculture"--is an appropriate one to meet the challenges of the new decade in the field of agriculture.

Before I give you an update of the status of the proceedings please join me in extending to Dr. Miguel Lugo-López and his wife, Aurora, heartfelt appreciation and thanks for their dedication and commitment in accomplishing an "almost impossible" task of getting the proceedings published on time. I have been informed by them that the proceedings of last year's meeting in Puerto Rico and the meeting in Guadeloupe in 1989 should be available for distribution at this meeting. The only outstanding proceeding to be printed is from the meeting held in Antigua.

I also wish to inform you that the printing and editing of the proceedings, starting with this meeting, will now be handled by Puerto Rico, under Dr. and Mrs. Lugo-López leadership. Again, join me in thanking Dr. and Mrs. Lugo-López for an outstanding job.

We have received an acceptance from the Dominican Republic to host the 1992 meeting. Martinique has also accepted to host the 1993 meeting. And, in 1994, after a 10-year cycle, the meeting will be held in our beautiful islands--the U.S. Virgin Islands.

I have been requested to review the missions and goals of the Caribbean Food Crops Society for the benefit of the new members and the host country.

Let me start by saying that the Caribbean Food Crops Society is an independent professional organization of interdisciplinary orientation and membership. It is not affiliated with any private or public institution anywhere. The objectives of the Society are to advance and foster

¹Delivered at the Opening Session, 27th CFCs Annual Meeting, Fort Young Hotel, July 15, 1991.

Caribbean food production, processing and distribution in all aspects so as to help improve the standard of living among the people of the Caribbean. It brings together scholars, researchers, extensionists, growers, and other professionals associated with food production, distribution and policy. It seeks to involve members from all four main language groups of the region--English, Spanish, French, and Dutch.

Membership is open to all persons, firms or corporate bodies interested in the objectives of the Society. The dues for individual and corporate memberships are \$25.00 per year, and sustaining membership is available for \$100.00 per year. Individual and sustaining members receive the newsletter and proceedings of the annual meetings. At present, there are some 350 active members on roll, representing 22 countries. Since its first meeting in 1964, the Society has convened annual meetings in fourteen nations of the Caribbean.

We look forward to a very successful meeting here in Dominica. Thank you.

THE CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINING AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE YEARS AHEAD¹

J. Bernard Yankey

Agricultural Economist
OECS High Commissioner to Canada

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, we have seen in this region the exhaustion of development approaches which have given industry priority over agriculture, ranging from levels of incentives to institutional and infrastructure development support including the quality and extent of public sector initiatives.

Except for the sustained development of a few products in agroindustry, the manufacturing sector has not shown significant growth in many of our developing economies. To demonstrate that point, the performance of the manufacturing sector of the region does not even feature in the annual analysis of the overall sector performance in the Annual Report of the Caribbean Development Bank.

The tourism sector has a good potential as a major contributor to growth and development, if properly managed and appropriately marketed. Performance in the past decade has been good. Increasing competition from emerging and attractive alternative destinations, coupled by economic downturns and other difficulties affecting travellers, however, make the tourist industry an unpredictable foreign exchange earner, income generator and employer of labor. There is, however, considerable scope for this sector in contributing to economic development. We will need a regional marketing strategy which promotes the islands of the Eastern Caribbean as a destination that offers specialized and unique tourism products on a multiple-island destination basis, with high and consistent quality of service, and at prices which offer value for money. This has been advanced on numerous occasions by the Prime Minister of St. Lucia, and Ministers of Tourism of the Windward Islands.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

As we enter the 1990's and the years ahead, we are being faced with the emergency of "Mega-markets". To cite three of importance, we have the financial and commercial unification of the EEC in 1993 (this is a bloc of 340 million people and a GDP of about US\$5 trillion), the Canada/USA Free Trade Area (a bloc of more than 275 million people with a GDP of over US\$5 trillion--a market which will shortly undergo another change with the incorporation of Mexico--an addition of 86 million people), and finally, the Pacific Rim Countries.

¹Keynote address delivered at Opening Session, 27th CFCS Annual Meeting, Fort Young Hotel, July 15, 1991.

In the CARICOM Region and the OECS Sub-region, we are moving towards the establishment of a single market. The two processes have been given specific timetables. It is expected that developments will advance at a speedy pace. These regional and international developments offer regional agriculture significant opportunities as well as testing problems. These opportunities are rooted in the new and expanding markets that should be created.

In this regard, we can also recognize the value of the transition movement of the Eastern European Countries toward free market economies and the perspective of new markets for tropical agricultural products in the medium-term, possible towards the end of this decade. Most important for our immediate consideration, and this is rather urgent, is how we deal with these testing problems. The opportunities have been there and they will continue to expand, but how do we equip our production and marketing systems in agriculture to seize these opportunities to both selectively expand production capability, and to sell our products effectively and efficiently.

THE CHALLENGE IDENTIFIED

What then are the testing problems? These are rooted in our ability to capture market share and to sell competitively by offering quality products which both the traditional and other products require at realistic prices. Bearing in mind that prices of agricultural products fluctuate--sometimes the swings are severe--and given the fact that primary producers are price takers; consistent improvements in productivity and quality (the former by increasing the output/cost ratio) must be the prime objective in the strategy of this sector. To remain in business at world competitive prices, as price subsidies are gradually being withdrawn, a recommended approach will be the active promotion of our products in specialized niche markets as well as our traditional markets. Because of our relatively small volumes, the former is a feasible companion, but it must be accessed through hands on experience and aggressive salesmanship, and the guts to hazard market risks with satisfactory outcomes. This then is the challenge that we face in the years ahead, if we are to sustain agricultural development in the region.

In our relatively small island situation, with limited natural resources and a fast growing population, (St. Lucia is close to 3 per cent p.a.) development strategies must be broad-based, balanced, and complementary. However, whatever strategies are followed, they must pay special attention to the role of agriculture and agroindustry. It is a critical and major sector upon which the economies of most of the Eastern Caribbean countries can be continuously reactivated and sustained.

Why is it so important to sustain agricultural development? Firstly, you never allow the wealth you have created to decline or deteriorate even if you are paying attention to something else. In development, this does not make economic sense. It is counterproductive. The strategy should always be to build on what you have and not at the expense of what is there. Secondly, agriculture contributes so significantly

to economic development in small island states that its importance must not be understated. It provides income and employment directly. Through the multiplier effect, it stimulates the growth of other sectors (commerce, transport, construction, et al.). It provides food security. It provides raw material for manufacturing (agroindustry). It improves the assetworth of a significant proportion of the population--people who live in rural areas. This generates additional participation in democratic processes and rights. It facilitates increasing domestic savings for investment in improving the quality of rural life. In real terms, it contributes to ruralization as an alternative to urbanization which we so often encourage without economic foundation.

REVIEW OF AGRICULTURE IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN DURING THE 1980's

A brief review and reflection on the performance of agriculture in the Eastern Caribbean during the 1980's will indicate where we are and the workload that has to be tackled as a matter of urgency. This should sensitize all those involved in agricultural development: the farmers, the technicians and professionals, the ministries of agriculture and infrastructure, the production, marketing and research institutions, the farmers' organizations, the range of people engaged in marketing agricultural products, the credit and services institutions, the transport systems, and the labor force.

This period of agriculture has experienced variable performance as follows:

- Declining trends in sugar production.
- Expansion in output of Windward Islands bananas except when affected by natural disasters, but with variable standards of quality--some of which have been so bad that this has led to growing concerns of buyers, consumers and the authority which guarantees the market.
- Fluctuating levels of output of food crops--fruits, root crops and vegetables. This can be attributed to a number of factors such as increasing food production in some major regional markets, unstable market arrangements, the existence in some markets of non-tariff barriers to entry of fruits, growing imports of extra-regional food products, the adverse impact of heightened incidence of praedial larceny, and acute competition in the USVI markets. Whilst these problems are being experienced, food surpluses exist in the ground.
- Generally unstable world market conditions for cocoa and spices, resulting in fluctuating levels of output and prices.
- Relative decline in research priorities geared to objectives of productivity, quality and cost management.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Let us analyze the critical issues and concerns in agriculture in the region, which needs to be addressed to meet the challenge ahead. For this purpose, I wish to highlight seven areas of attention for your consideration and discussions on appropriate action, in the course of your deliberations. And, as part of the follow-up for priority attention when you return to your various work stations to face the demands for increasing development of agriculture. These are as follows:

- Judicious and effective management of the natural resources and the environment.
- Efficient allocation of scarce resources within the agricultural sector and between sectors.
- Prudent management of cost in production, marketing, organizational operations, the development of field staff, the execution and delivery of research, et al.
- Progressive improvements in competitiveness through increasing productivity, with specific policy guidelines in such areas as realistic pricing and quality market standards.
- Developing and maintaining a symbiotic market product-mix in agriculture that will optimize the diversification objective.
- Continuous improvements in the efficiency of domestic agriculture to enable the subsector to contribute to net savings in foreign earnings, food security and increasing savings out of farm incomes for improvements in existing farm activities and alternative farm investments.
- Coordination and integration of agricultural research at the national and regional levels.

This package of objectives which must be achieved to face the challenge ahead, should set the basis for the development of a comprehensive medium-term but priority series of work programmes with a set of interrelated, well coordinated activities, for strengthening and sustaining agriculture in the medium-term. As professionals, it will be difficult to undertake individual tasks to advance the development of agriculture, without collectively dealing with these issues and solutions of substance.

Sustainable development has been described as a matter of life and death for a natural resource dependent area such as the Caribbean. Natural resource intensity, often in products for export, has historically been one of the main features of productive activity in the region. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and above all, tourism, all depend for their economic success on good management of natural resources and on a healthy and productive environment. Yet we have in the

Caribbean, good evidence that soil erosion is stripping the productive highlands and leading to siltation of some of the region's coral reefs, and to the elimination of critical fish habitat. Good quality lands and suitable located supplies of fresh water for irrigation and other uses in agriculture are critical scarce resources in most Caribbean countries. Yet, many current agricultural activities are intensive and generally destructive in their use of these scarce resources. In addition, pressures on marginal lands are increasingly rapidly--much more than we are aware. Both land use and water rights need to be re-examined in the light of scarcity and the costs of development because of misuse.

The practice of land zoning according to productive capability and corresponding market output has always been recommended. But, in most countries, we have shield away from implementation. Of course, there are considerations which must be taken into account before such a programme is effective. But that does not prevent it from happening. We need to find alternatives for farmers earmarked to be displaced. It will be finding markets for production suitable to their area or it may be a question of relocation to a suitable zone if the same enterprise is to be pursued. At the same time, we must look at the benefits--improving productivity and quality--to face competitiveness, as well as reducing the overall cost of services provided to particular groups of farmers. All these efforts at judicious management of the natural resources will enable any country to sustain its development of agriculture.

In small island economies, all the critical resources for development are relatively scarce. They are scarce in any sector but there is even greater scarcity in the flow of resources between sectors. This scarcity places a brake on the speed of the development process. But this brake is even more acute where inefficiencies in allocation exist.

Let us deal with human resources. In agriculture, we need expertise at the technical, professional, finance/project evaluation and managerial levels, among others. We can also desegregate management to include the supervisory service, middle-management and top-management. There are scarcities at all levels. In part, training is provided to deal with this. But there is the fall-out rate. With such a background of scarcity, what does one find? There is underutilization of people. Training is requested according to individual's interest as against the national need. There is tremendous duplication and overlap. Some institutions are overstaffed whilst others are understaffed. In small countries where farmers generally produce multiple crops, principally as a buffer against market risks and for food security, one finds two extension services. Each acting in a competitive way but serving the same farmers. What a classical case of inefficient allocation of resources! By integrating such a service, provision can be made for better qualified staff, greater incentives as rewarded for export, and a more effectively integrated work programme can be implemented, with adequate monitoring and evaluation practices in place. If we are to make agriculture competitive by reducing our costs at all levels in the system, there will be an urgent need for addressing the problem of inefficient allocation of scarce human resources.

The issue of prudent management of costs cannot be over-emphasized. In agriculture, we are price-takers. Therefore, we must always be searching for innovative ways to increase the relative rates of output to costs by getting greater output from a unit of money spent, as well as by reducing/eliminating wastage. If we are to sustain the development of agriculture, we will always need to negotiate guaranteed markets. But we will also need to accept the fact that prices offered will fluctuate up and down around world market prices, and that price expectations must be realistic accordingly. Any gain from foreign exchange movements is not a function of value and price. Hence the pressure must be on the management of costs and not the obsession of increasing prices. And, to be frank, the problem of management of costs does not rest with the farmer. It is a serious problem with producer and service/marketing organizations. I have estimated that inefficiencies in service/marketing organizations reduce the price which could be passed on to the farmer by as much as 20 per cent. It may be more. If that element of price could be saved and invested on behalf of the farmer, this is a sure way of sustaining the development of the particular industry.

Management of costs by containing it within well-defined parameters, while achieving specific production targets, does not only facilitate competitiveness. It also frees funds for other priority activities in agriculture, for example, much needed problem-solving research. At the same time, the development of field staff to promote efficient production and marketing, as well as the execution and delivery of research, should be organized in a manner that the costs per activity becomes a prime target for continuous review and containment. This requires good management. Funds freed by savings in cost of operations which are normally provided by the public sector or the farmer could be effectively released for credit to agriculture and natural resource management, without having to look always to aid donors. Aid donors tend to dictate the design of our development programmes which are not always in our best interest. Funds freed by savings in costs of operations could also be used to establish a stabilizing fund for agricultural diversification. A programme which will never be touched by any aid donor. You will note therefore, that good management of costs enables funds to be freed for other important programmes in the development of agriculture.

The need to pay particular attention to improving competitiveness through increasing productivity in all activities of production and marketing cannot be overemphasized. This is an area which public decision-making must focus on and action taken irrespective of the level of popularity. The areas that should be carefully examined are set out as follows:

- The use of time
 - o How is it spent by the farmer.
 - o Are you doing the same thing more than once and therefore spending more time than is required?
 - o Are tasks so organized, that labour is ready to work on arrival?

- The application of technology
 - o How is it done?
 - o The timing;
 - o The condition of the farm;
 - o The quality of the farmer to determine how to promote the adoption of an innovative technique;
 - o The knowledge of labour to its application;
 - o The training of labour to enable them to perform better;
 - o The storage of the supply;
 - o Is the technology working? and so on.
- The use of land
 - o The quality of the land;
 - o The preparation for production;
 - o The maintenance of its condition;
 - o The climatic conditions that impact on production.
- Management
 - o How are activities organized?
 - o How are records kept for monitoring of output and costs;
 - o Are some activities questionable and therefore subject to review?
 - o How are output and costs problems identified and dealt with;
 - o What incentives you can afford to offer to labour to keep them motivated?
 - o How best do you organize and supervise labour to ensure that the optimum number of tasks are achieved per day?
 - o Are financial results improving and if not, can the problem be identified and corrected?

This is an area pleading for intensive research at the farm level.

The process of diversification of agriculture which is so important to remove dominance of one crop, as well as to make optimum use of land, climatic and labour resources, needs special attention in its enabling role in facing the challenge of sustaining agricultural development.

Starting from where we are now, in many of the Caribbean countries, there are agricultural products already in production in sufficient quantities, but cannot be marketed. This production has to be marketed before diversification can be sustained. Farmers will not leave what they have, which they cannot sell, to produce new crops which they have no

guarantee of selling at realistic prices. They see themselves repeating the old problem. At the same time, there is truth in the promise that agricultural diversification must be market-led. It must be market-led for what is being already produced as well as for the new potential products which are presently in great demand.

Whatever the diversification thrust however, it is important to use the dominant as the spring-board for advancing the process. The management experience, facilities, services, and marketing organization, where well-developed and successful, can be used to push the additional crops in both production and marketing, and thereby removing all duplication and overlap, and the wastage and costs that could emerge. The agricultural diversification process must integrate the production systems that it promotes, and this must be accomplished within a symbiotic product-mix if agricultural development, utilizing this balance approach, is to be sustained.

The development of domestic agriculture is an essential component in sustaining agricultural development. Currently many countries are experiencing a surplus of food in the ground which cannot be sold. At the same time, prices in domestic markets appear excessively high and unrealistic. Domestic agriculture needs new directions to enable it to fully develop its scope for development. First of all, food supplies should be on the domestic markets on a daily basis--be it the traditional open market, the supermarket, the wholesale farm outlet. Standards should be established and maintained and recipes should be provided to encourage increasing consumption. This requires effective marketing support.

There is a wide range of both vegetable and root crops which can be produced in many of the agricultural systems in the Caribbean. Some of these products are good intercrops. There is need for a bold effort to determine a reasonable number--not a large number--of those specific crops which can be produced under suitable conditions with good rates of return and to pursue those. Then research activities should be concentrated on those so identified with good production and marketing potential in such areas of varietal testing, technology application, input packages, harvesting techniques, post-harvest management including storage and quality control. By fostering the development of domestic agriculture, food security will be assured. However, this must be supported by aggressive sales marketing to facilitate increasing consumption of domestically produced foods. By so doing both the system of multiple cropping which is generally adopted and the strength of the domestic market place will add another dimension to agricultural development at a sustaining level.

In addition to these, increasing domestic agriculture can contribute to net savings in foreign earnings which will be required for other activities to support agriculture. At the same time, it can support increases in rural farm savings to enable small farmers to invest more in innovative ways of doing things.

In promoting production and marketing practices, innovations should not outstrip the capability of the farmer to understand and use. These must be developed in harmony with the system. Obviously, this will be the business of extension research and development.

Lastly, the big question of agricultural research and how much more can be done in this area to facilitate sustained agricultural development. To achieve this, research must focus on the following:

- Natural resource management and the environment.
- Productivity and quality improvements.
- Management of costs in all critical operations of the agricultural sector.
- Development of aggressive marketing salesmanship including the human assimilation of risks involved by product and market.
- Determination of an efficient and responsive domestic agriculture that is totally integrated in the agricultural system.

The new direction for agricultural research, if it has to be cost-effective in small island countries, must be built on a holistic approach. It must give priority attention to problem-solving concerns, as well as to innovations that have been developed but require testing in our situation.

Above all, however, is that research in agriculture must get its act together. There must be one set of national research objectives, determined by and large by the farmers, their organizations and technical expertise support. In each country, there should be one agency undertaking research, not the numbers that have become fashionable. It doesn't matter where the funds come from. The monies should be pooled together, and organized and managed by one research agency with a clear public sector mandate to undertake all agricultural research for the individual country. By so doing, research can be based on priority national needs which all agriculture is aware of. Care will be taken to refer to work already concluded so that the wheel will not be re-invented continuously. There will be more effective management of staff resources and costs. Research will not be based on one professional's idea of what should be tackled. The time span on research could be effectively shortened. Results would be subjected to scrutiny and should then be properly analyzed, disseminated and stored for reference. In such a system, research staff would have to perform and be accountable.

Such an approach to agricultural research, which emphasizes full integration of all research activities and establishes a regional network of consultation and referencing among national research institutions, will guarantee value for money from research in agriculture. It will also place farmers, farmer organizations and governments in a secure position to succeed in meeting the challenge of sustaining agricultural development in the years ahead.

I have been asked how can all these be achieved. I called these testing problems. These problems test our will, skill, commitment, and determination to resolve them. As a people, we have these all, so we can.

Thank you for this kind invitation.

VOTE OF THANKS¹

M. A. Lugo-López

Vice-Chairman, Board of Directors
Caribbean Food Crops Society

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed a real pleasure and my privilege to extend a Vote of Thanks, on behalf of the directors and members of the Caribbean Food Crops Society and of all others participating in our 27th Annual Meeting, to those who have made, in one way or another, this meeting a reality. We long dreamed of coming to the Commonwealth of Dominica and enjoying the well known hospitality of its people.

To Your Excellency, Sir Clarence Seignoret, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, for honoring us with your presence. We are very grateful to you. Also to the Hon. Prime Minister, Eugenia Charles, for formally opening this meeting. May I take the liberty of saying at this time, Miss Charles, that we are aware that you have already a unique plaque in history as the first lady to rise to such a high government office in the Caribbean. May I further say that in Puerto Rico your name is very familiar since you are one of our best friends and one of our most distinguished partners in our effort to establish twin plants in the Caribbean. I will like to thank you on behalf of our people. I convey greetings from Gov. Rafael Hernández Colón and from Secretary of State, Antonio J. Colorado.

Thanks to the Hon. Heskeith Alexander, Minister of Labor and Acting Minister of Agriculture of the Commonwealth of Dominica for your kind and warm welcome address. To the distinguished economist Dr. J. Bernard Yankey, for his excellent and timely keynote address on the challenge of sustainable agriculture. Thanks are due to Dr. Darshan S. Padda, Vice President for Research and Land-Grant Programs of the University of the Virgin Islands. As Chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO of CFCS, his participation at this ceremony is appreciated. We praise his unfailing faith and unexcelled leadership.

Our particular appreciation to Mr. Eliud Williams, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture of Dominica, and President of the CFCS for his untiring efforts in organizing an excellent program of activities for this week. To the Local Committee that helped Mr. Williams in this challenging and difficult task: I want to recognize John McIntyre, Charles James, Oliver Grell, Richard Allport, Rowland Fletcher, Winston Maglorie, Collin Bully, Urban Martin, Gregory Robin, Errol Harris, Dr. Donovan Robinson, Claudia Bellot and Rosamund Horsford. Thanks to all those that helped in the Secretariat, including this nice lady, Mrs. Aurora Lugo-López.

¹Delivered at the Opening Session, 27th CFCS Annual Meeting, Fort Young Hotel, July 15, 1991.

I also wish to thank the management and staff of the Fort Young Hotel for their kind attentions and hospitality and for making us feel at home.

It is likely that I might have left out someone, but deep from my heart please receive our sincere expression of gratitude.

I feel emotionally compelled to say that I was privileged to share a friendship of many years with Clem Dupigny. I will always remember him as a very dear one. Thank you.

TRADE AND OTHER ISSUES AFFECTING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE¹

C. Maynard

**Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism
Commonwealth of Dominica**

Every time we consider support for agriculture in our region and indeed for the goods that we produce at a conference of this type, the first question that strikes me is: How have the participants themselves taken steps to ensure a sustainable agriculture? We have held the conference here in Dominica, we have had over a hundred overseas participants. Can we conclude that by the things that you have consumed while you are here and indeed, by the items that will be served at the Banquet that you will be ensuring a sustainable agriculture?

My theme tonight has to do with the trade and other issues affecting sustainable agriculture. So we will start with the assumption that agriculture cannot be sustained unless the product that comes out of the efforts of the farmer and of the research activities of the Caribbean Food Crops Society find a ready market, and the first and immediate available market has to be the local market. In terms of our regional perspective, I define the regional market as the market of the Caribbean Community and I have the liberty, I expect, to extend it to the area covered by the Caribbean Food Crops Society.

In discussions that you have been having and in the analysis you have been doing, you have been looking at a number of issues including food security, increasing foreign exchange earnings through exports and of course, sustainable agriculture. In the course of your analysis, you have been paying attention to concerns that have to do with land use planning, land tenure, appropriate technology and government policies concerning production factors such as infrastructure, roads, use of inputs and a host of others. But all these lead in one direction. The final outcome is a product, that if farmer cannot dispose of it, agriculture cannot be sustained. If people out there cannot be persuaded to use the product of sustainable agriculture, however we define it, it remains a concept unrelated to reality. So the first issue I will naturally tackle has to do with the kind of research that is being undertaken to understand the attitudes of our people towards the agricultural products that we produce.

If we went around our supermarkets and our outlets for agricultural produce, what would we find? Would we find a preference for locally produced goods or would we find a preference for what comes from outside? At a recent Heads of Government Conference in Saint Kitts/Nevis, I was rather surprised to find that at the hotel where the Heads and Ministers were staying we were offered pepper sauce from Louisiana. If you go

¹Keynote address delivered at Annual Banquet, 27th CFCs Annual Meeting, Layou River Hotel, July 18, 1991.

throughout the region, you find a great emphasis on temperate fruits and vegetables. The staggering fact is that a recent paper presented to OECS Trade Ministers at their recent meeting in Grenada revealed that we import into the OECS 50 million dollars worth of fruits and vegetables that could be produced within our region.

If agriculture and farmers have to be sustained in our region, radical steps have to be taken to produce the things that we require to consume them. Reginald Walter, Professor of Food Science at Cornell University, at the 26th Annual Meeting had this to say: "Primary agriculture in the Caribbean is at a stage when a concomitant programme of advanced food processing is the obvious next agenda topic". He goes on to suggest that continent ready to eat microwaveable food facilitated by dehydrated foods and vegetables are recent consumer trends that cannot be ignored.

What is the experience? Again, throughout our consumer outlets we see large quantities of imported agroproducts and juices and vegetables from outside of the region that are available within the region. Sustainable agriculture requires that we find mechanisms for ensuring that we influence the taste buds of our people in favor of the things that we produce. This is a challenge for society and for governments, for the media and for all those in our region who wish to see sustainable agriculture develop. A related trade issue has to do with the linkage between tourism and sustainable agriculture. I was very pleased when two years ago at our Standing Committee Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture, here in Dominica, the Trinidad Minister of Agriculture observed that it is unusual for him to go into a country and go to a hotel or food establishment and within one day was able to be exposed to six different types of juices based on local produce. There has been a radical change in Dominica, if I may say so, in terms of using the local produce. The advent of the blender in the seventies, a strong programme of nutrition education by the Food and Nutrition Council, supported by some of our leading professionals and with the strong arm of Government behind the effort, resulted in some changes in our people's attitude towards the local product.

I was surprised to learn that in one country where we had a conference, both the hotelier and local staff were opposed to using breadfruit for various dishes because it was considered not the thing to do. If the recipe had been something from North America it would receive full approval. There have been many new recipes developed for the use of breadfruits, yams and so many of our crops to provide the large clientele that comes to us from overseas in the tourism business. Perhaps nothing contributes considerably more to sustainable agriculture and to provide a continuing avenue for our farmers than a working relationship between our hotels and the agricultural sector.

The Caribbean Tourism Organization which I am now the Chairman, is dedicated to mapping out the strategy that will provide a linkage and a strong one between agriculture and tourism. Indeed, if public policy is directed at ensuring that we manage the tourism sector to sustain our environment, to provide foreign exchange, to create jobs, then it makes tourism a continuing growth area to support an improved quality of life for our people.

No examination of this issue before us could be complete without understanding how agricultural subsidies, provided by the developed countries, impact on sustainable agriculture in our region. The February 1991 issue of the Readers Digest has an article entitled "One Hundred and Ninety-four Million Dollars Isn't Peanuts". The article then goes on to indicate that what makes the land dedicated to peanuts in the United States so appealing, is that peanut quotas in the United States are worth to one farmer for million dollars. The Government not only guarantees that quota owners will recoup their production cost each year but also see to it that their minimum selling price is about fifty per cent higher than that of the world market price. Peanut processors say every mother feeding her children peanut sandwiches also pays a cost. So too for every baseball fan munching on ballpark peanuts. In addition, the United States Department of Agriculture estimates that an extra one hundred and ninety million dollars a year in hidden subsidies must be added to the quota. The conclusion is that farmers qualify for a support price of six hundred and thirty-one dollars a ton on the peanuts they produce, enough to ensure a profit of a hundred and two hundred dollars a ton. And we are in a period when there is considerable pressure by the United States for removing protectionism in agriculture.

In his book "The Challenge of Europe", Michael Hesselstine, the current Minister of Environment in the U.K. and former Minister of Defense, suggests that the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy is a definite deterrent to agricultural development in the developing countries. He tells us that the communities regional fund is designed "to help under-developed rural areas whose economies depend for the most part on agriculture and those areas whose former prosperity was founded on industries which are now in decline such as coal, steel, ship building or textiles".

The policy which is by way of subsidies provides finance for programmes, the effect of which is to enable farmers who would have gone out of business long ago, to obtain guarantees for share surpluses and protection against competition from cheap imports, courtesy of the common-agricultural policy. The absurdity does not stop there. The community, we learn, from an article in the July 6th to 12th issue of the Economist, has just sold of (hugely subsidized by tax payers) forty thousand tons of surplus beef to Brazil where local farmers produce it at a fraction of E.E.C. costs. It is instructive to note that the article points out that the E.E.C. has set itself up as a model market economy for its polish, czechoslovak and hungarian neighbors, yet in the current trade negotiations with them, it wants to keep out the farm goods, in which they are competitive. The subsidies run into billions of dollars annually.

American agricultural subsidies cost approximately the same as Caribbean subsidies. The Americans provide a loan rate scheme by which cut price loans are extended to farmers and the Government guarantees to buy part of the produce to keep up the level of subsidies. That way, we are told, the loans get repaid and state subsidies are paid on top of considerable federal subsidies. In Japan, intervention buying, as it is called, to sustain small farmers, note the word sustain, leads to a level of subsidies that is around two and a half times that of Europe as a percentage

of the GDP. At its most extreme, Heseltine indicates that Japanese crop producers receive ninety-two per cent of their income by way of subsidy. When we reflect on these trade concerns and their impact on sustainable agriculture, we understand the effect this has on the international tendency that exists for us to try to import temperate fruits (apples, peaches, etc.), into our region at highly subsidized prices at the expense of our farmers, our agriculture, jobs and the rural development of our islands. These are serious concerns in any form like yours are concerned with a theme that has the label sustainable agriculture.

Recent trends indicate that our copra industry and coconut farmers are in serious problems in our region. Soya is rapidly taking over from coconut--soya from outside our region. Those of us who went into programmes of coconut production in a serious way had a good thing for a while. The agriculture and the farmers were sustained until cholesterol came into the picture. However much, the researchers, like yourselves, and the scientists, have told us that there is no relationship between coconut oil and high cholesterol, we are bombarded daily by Cable News Network (CNN) and other media, by nutritionists from the third world telling us that soya is good for us, coconut oil is bad for us. It is instructive that our own farmers and many who wish to demonstrate for governments to ensure that their produce can be sold, do not themselves use coconut oils. Someone said the media is the message. We see a great challenge to sustainable agriculture in this kind of context. What conclusions can your conference draw from this situation? But before we conclude, I would add another factor affecting sustainable agriculture. It is labor and the productivity of labor in agriculture. Farmers are telling us that at forty and fifty dollars a day in Dominica they cannot get labor. When they get labor a day means two to three hours. Can we sustain agriculture with that sort of work ethic? We require a major think tank review on the work ethic in our region.

How do we address these issues? The recent remarks that we hear from young people themselves, from not so young people, from those in agriculture business, in managing factors of production, in the public sector, in the private sector generally, is that there is a great desire to obtain money without putting in any effort. Those of us in positions of leadership must engage in a great public debate on this issue if we are to meet the challenges of competition in the post 1992 situation.

Quality, whenever it is urged on farmers, particularly in the banana industry, is seen as an imposition by Government, by the managers and the board of directors of our agricultural association. One very well known Jamaican entrepreneur once said to me, that to give a man a license or to enable a man to produce under conditions of production without some concern for quality is to give him a license to steal. So what is the role of the scientists, of researchers, of our extension staff, of our professionals in agriculture and what is the role of your conference in addressing these issues? What is the role of the media? We see the role that is playing the media in the U.S. in favouring U.S. produce.

In all countries there is a big drive today to buy things made in the U.S. Could we have a similar drive to buy things made in CARICOM, made in our region, always having regard of course to a desire to improve quality? Always ensuring that we do not put improved quality as an excuse for not buying the things that we produce? Food security cannot be provided without ensuring that there is security for the farmer, in addition that he produces and of his ability to dispose of them. But as I conclude this analysis, we have to ask ourselves, how do we deal with issues of price if we have to sustain agriculture?

Can we proceed on the basis of fixing prices by ourselves? We say we are price takers, we are certainly not price takers in the local market. We have an approach, if you don't want it leave it. That approach cannot apply in international trade, so we have to educate our farmers to understand that the goods that we produce are in competition with others and that he does best when he can make some effort to meet the competition and it is not always possible to get the price that he estimates in his own judgment that he should get. So the effort to sustain trade in agriculture, as I have expressed them to you, suggests much work needs to be done. The work would have been contributed to, if when we have paid our bills, those of us who are from overseas, we can feel sure that seventy-five per cent and more of the money will remain in our region largely because we consume the things that the farmer produces in furtherance of our goal of ensuring sustainable agriculture.

BANQUET REMARKS¹

D. S. Padda

**Chairman of the Board of Directors
Caribbean Food Crops Society**

Your Excellency, President Seignoret of Dominica, honorable ministers, Mr. Williams, other distinguished members of the head table, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the membership of the Caribbean Food Crops Society, I wish to thank the government of the Commonwealth of Dominica for hosting our Society's Annual Meeting.

The local organizing committee, under the leadership of Permanent Secretary Eliud Williams, has done an outstanding job. We have found our visit to this beautiful island professionally rewarding and socially enriching.

The program activities were well planned and the field tours were carefully designed to give us a real insight of the agricultural industry of Dominica. Our hosts have gone out of their way to meet our individual, as well as collective, needs. I request my fellow CFCs members to join me in giving our hosts a big hand of applause.

This is our twenty-seventh annual meeting. Our meetings are held on a different island every year with two purposes in mind: Firstly, to provide an opportunity for CFCs members to gain first-hand knowledge of the host country's agricultural industry and study both the strengths and weaknesses for mutual benefit; and, secondly, an equally important purpose is to focus collectively our attention to regional agricultural expertise in offering assistance to the host country.

We were very pleased with the media attention given to agriculture as a result of our meeting, and we wish to offer our Society's hand for help, which can take two forms:

1. All members who have suggestions for Dominica are encouraged to write to Mr. Williams.
2. The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica is welcome to ask the Society for assistance in providing scientific literature, as well as subject matter technical assistance.

Some of us feel that Dominica has a great potential in agriculture, and the Society is willing to work with the government to achieve your potential. Your desire to diversify is understandable. However, we feel you should continue to capitalize on your success in banana.

¹Delivered at Annual Banquet, 27th CFCs Annual Meeting, Layou River Hotel, July 18, 1991.

The key to success in banana is that it has a guaranteed market. New crops, like ginger and herbs and spices, offer great promise. But for these crops to become important agricultural enterprises, just like bananas, marketing should be the first consideration. Production and marketing are like two wheels of the cart and must be considered simultaneously. We applaud Dominica's effort to encourage new farms, but we feel these farmers can use additional technical assistance in improving existing crop production practices.

Without taking too much of your time, let me sincerely thank the government of the Commonwealth of Dominica and the people of the island and offer our collective help in any way we can.

Thank you very much.