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WORKSHOP

REPORTS

I. AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE MARKETING ARRANGEMENTS

The Workshop decided to discuss the topic under the following headings:-

1. The definition of cooperatives
2. An examination of agricultural marketing problems and whether the cooperative system can solve these problems
3. Aspects of marketing
4. Size of cooperatives as economic units and the role of management
5. Successful cooperatives in the Caribbean and the areas in which they have been successful
6. Second level cooperatives versus Central Marketing Agencies
7. Government policy in relation to cooperatives.

The Workshop has defined a cooperative as: A group of people with some particular or common interest who get together in order to work toward some particular objective. It is an organisation in which each member has one vote. Benefits are related more to the business turnover with the cooperative rather than with the amount of capital invested. The objectives are not wholly economic but also social, since people with common interests are working together. There are generally three levels of decision-making:

- (a) the general membership level
- (b) the management committee level
- (c) the executive officer or manager level.

Cooperatives in developing countries are usually not taxed. Since the discussion in the Conference was on the problems of agriculture it was decided to define agricultural marketing cooperatives as: Groups of producers who associate freely to perform marketing services and to gain the benefits from large scale purchase of such items as fertiliser and seed, and from acquiring agricultural credit.

Agricultural Marketing Problems and how they can be solved by cooperative activity

In the Caribbean area most of the marketing problems are associated with the non-traditional crops produced mainly for the domestic and regional markets. These problems result mainly from the small scale of production and inadequate internal marketing arrangements. They include:

- (a) lack of marketing information
- (b) inadequate storage facilities
- (c) undeveloped systems of grading, crating and quality control
- (d) inadequate transport facilities.

The cooperative as a responsible body can solve most of these problems. What must be realised is that the success would depend on the standard of management available. The Workshop felt that the failures of cooperatives in the Caribbean were mostly due to poor management.