

THE ROLE OF BARCLAYS BANK INTERNATIONAL

The Role in Caribbean Agricultural Development

Barclays have had a long standing interest and involvement in our region's agriculture. Significant contributions have been made in the financing of the major agricultural industries in the area, through the provision of facilities for commodity organizations, Marketing Boards, Development Corporations and, of course, to individual farmers and agro-firms. In addition a special development 'window', the Barclays Development Fund, has been in operation in the Caribbean since 1970, rendering assistance to rural projects which are not strictly commercial, but possessing the potential for community self-improvement.

Areas of interest of the Development Fund are not specific; however, the target is rural people and funds can be made available in the form of grants, 'soft' loans and commercial loans. The fund can also assist by taking equity in a fledgling rural enterprise until it is able to be fully viable.

Important past activities include financial support for research into the insect pests of the banana in the Windward Islands and sea island cotton in Antigua. The results of these have been most promising in that the Banana Industry has now successfully studied the serious problem of resistance of the banana weevil to chlorinated hydrocarbons and has identified new control methods. In Antigua an insect pest control unit has evolved and I believe that plant protection particularly for the cotton industry has improved.

Agricultural marketing, a most critical area in the Caribbean, received some attention through two working seminars in the U.K. and Ireland and a regional meeting in Barbados for Marketing Board Senior Executives. Results are difficult to quantify; however, it is felt that a better understanding of regional and individual territorial problems has begun to emerge.

The livestock industries in two islands have benefited by the gift of breeding stock: in one case, two Jamaica Hope bulls were donated and, in the other, a quantity of Barbados Black Belly sheep.

Lists of current activities include:-

- (a) A special Farm Plan Programme aimed at the small farmer in Barbados and the Leeward and Windward Islands, through the commercial 'window' of the Bank.

From the Development Fund:-

- (b) Personnel Training
- (i) Inservice training for extension staff of the Departments of Agriculture in the Windward and Leeward Islands,
 - (ii) Farmer training centre for the Banana Industry in the Windward Islands,
 - (iii) Middle Management Course for Dominica Banana Growers' Association Personnel,
- (c) LiveStock Development:-

- (i) Funding to provide a livestock specialist for the Caricom Secretariat Agricultural Unit, Cardats, located in Grenada,
 - (ii) Dominica village pig production and marketing project.
- (d) Support for local financial institutes:-
- (i) DFMC, Montserrat - Funds for lending to small farmers,
 - (ii) Dominica Land Management Authority - Funds for lending to tenants,
 - (iii) St. Kitts DFC - Funds for lending to small fishermen.
- (e) Provision of consultants:-
- (i) Research into desirability and viability of producing maize in the large Caricom countries,
 - (ii) Visit of specialist in Macademia nut production for Montserrat,
 - (iii) Cassava study - Guyana.
- (f) Support for Cardi, integrated pest control in sugar cane and vegetable crops in Barbados, Leeward and Windward Islands.

Future activities might well include an inservice two-year training programme to help develop young farmer businessmen.

The Development Fund is financed from an annual subvention taken from BBI Limited, after tax profits.

The number of staff involved is difficult to identify. The network of branches and agencies plays a considerable role in servicing rural people throughout the region and assists in no small measure in the Bank's response to development needs. A resource centre manned by an agricultural adviser provides backup to branches.