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STRATEGY AND INSTRUMENTS FOR RESEARCH MANAGEMENT IN THE CARICOM REGION

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There appears to be an impending crisis of confidence in indigenous agricultural research in the CARICOM Region, which presents itself as a reluctance to provide national and regional funding for research projects, regularly and on a long-term basis. This attitude exists in the face of equally serious crises in the economies of most, if not all, of the CARICOM States. This crisis manifests itself in a number of other ways including:

- questioning of the need for indigenous research
- embarking on production projects without the benefit of research findings or indeed providing for back up research
- consideration that new technologies and the concomitant adaptive research components can be imported in a commercial package
- complaints, without analysis, of the ineffectiveness of indigenous research
- misunderstanding of or impatience with the time needed to develop a new technology, by research which is often grossly undersubsidised.

At the same time, international funding for well planned research projects with a strongly biased development orientation, is generally available from a few funding agencies, particularly for socio-economic and extension projects and projects on on-farm research. This international funding almost always requires local counterpart contributions, the absence of which leads to the frustration of the internationally funded project. It also requires considerable time and skill in the negotiation of research contracts. International funding is also seldom available for a comprehensive agricultural research programme but rather, for specific projects which may not lead to a development of objectives. However, mention must here be made of the funding of such a programme in the Faculty of Agriculture by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

At a time when there is a call for new technologies in agriculture and for the importation of such new technologies from international sources, little research investment is being made in indigenous technologies by regional, national and international funding agencies. This state of affairs, together with the rapid advancement of new technologies e.g. bio-technology in developed countries, through mammoth investment in research, could put developing countries in a position of dependency in the 21st century. Worse than the darkest moments of colonialism.

It is submitted, that the impending crisis of confidence in indigenous research springs from the feeling among politicians, planners, and administrators, that earlier and current investments in research have not led to improvements in agricultural production, productivity and profitability. In other words, the proverbial bottom line approach is now being strongly applied to research projects - although often in retrospect.

In order to overcome or to prevent the crisis of confidence in research, researchers and those interested in agricultural development through indigenous research, must develop a new strategy and new instruments for research management in the CARICOM Region, since the evidence suggests that it is the management rather than the conduct of research that is often the limiting factor in research institutions in the Region.

It is here suggested that the major thrust of a new strategy for agricultural research should be:

- *THE COORDINATION OF ALL RESEARCH INFORMATION TOWARDS ACHIEVING WELL DEFINED OBJECTIVES.*

It is further suggested that *PROJECT OBJECTIVES MUST BE ALL EMBRACING*: including studies on why research results have not led to improved agriculture.

The instruments of such a strategy are briefly presented for discussion under the following headings:

- objectives of agricultural research
- institutions of agricultural research
- coordination of agricultural research
- funding of agricultural research
- dissemination of results of research.

Objectives of Agricultural Research

It is suggested that the objectives of agricultural research might be examined and redefined in terms of:

- client objectives and priorities
- enterprise, commodity and subsectoral viability
- long term versus short term objectives.

It is noted that clients will include:

- governments
- state enterprises
- large and small private agro-industrial enterprises
- wholesale and retail marketeers
- shippers
- large and small farmers.

It is suggested that mechanisms for implementation of research findings should be discussed with the client at all stages of development and implementation of the research project. However, before embarking on client-prioritised projects, researchers have the responsibility to define the limits of benefits (either in financial or in social terms) of the enterprise commodity or agricultural subsector to be investigated. Realistic time limits, given available resources, should also be placed on all projects in relation to client priorities for implementation of findings.

Institutions of Agricultural Research

There are many designated institutions of agricultural research in the CARICOM Region, although many of them are small and concerned with specific areas of commodity research. There are also a number of institutions which, although not so designated, conduct or sponsor research investigations, the results of which are used in their routine operations. These latter institutions are important since, presumably, implementation of research results is not a problem here, where the client and the researcher may be in the same institution or at least enjoy a close working relationship.

The conduct of research in designated and non-designated institutions needs to be rationalized since, often data is collected in one institution without the knowledge of the others, leading to duplication of effort. Since the Governments of the CARICOM Region are the major funding agencies for indigenous research, it is suggested that they should contract a group of senior researchers from the Region to rationalize the conduct of research both at national and regional levels.

The designated and non-designated research institutions are listed below.

Institutions Conducting Agricultural Research in the CARICOM Region

Designated Institutions (Regional)

University of the West Indies (UWI)

- Faculty of Agriculture and Cocoa Research Unit
- Faculty of Social Science and ISER
- Faculty of Natural Science

CARDI

WINBAN

Sugarcane Breeding Station (Barbados)

Designated Institutions (National)

- Central Experiment Station (MALFP), Trinidad & Tobago
- Research Division of Agriculture Ministries in Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica
- Rice Breeding - Guyana
- Coconut Research - Jamaica
- Banana Research and Breeding - Jamaica

Non-Designated Institutions (Regional)

CARICOM Secretariat
Caribbean Development Bank
West Indian Sugar Association

Non-Designated Institutions (National)

Sugar Companies
Cocoa and Coffee Marketing Boards
Banana Board (LDCs)
Marketing Boards
Ministries of Industry and Commerce

Coordination of Agricultural Research

Effective mechanisms for coordination and evaluation of agricultural research are needed both at national and at regional levels.

At National Level, such functions might be carried out by a National Agricultural Research Committee (NARC) including:

- senior researchers
- research clients.

The Committee should be chaired by a client rather than a researcher and it is suggested that committees might be constituted for Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, the Eastern Caribbean States and Belize. Such committees already exist for Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago but it is suggested that their compositions and terms of reference might be more clearly defined.

At Regional Level, evaluation and coordination of research should be done by professional groups. It is proposed that researchers might organise themselves into such groups, which might be constituted as professional societies, in areas of: agricultural economics, agronomy, livestock production.

It is further suggested that these societies should have a joint committee with specific responsibility for Regional Coordination and Evaluation of Research. This committee, here designated the Regional Agricultural Research Committee (RARC), should include senior researchers in the Region, but should be empowered to invite clients and representatives from funding agencies to participate in their deliberations - without voting rights.

RARC should be assisted in its functions by a permanent secretariat. It is here proposed that the secretariat be located in the Faculty of Agriculture, because of its stability of funding for a large core teaching staff, who are located at St. Augustine for a maximum of 25 teaching weeks in the academic year. This resource together with that in CARDI (Trinidad) will be invaluable to the work of the Permanent Secretariat.

It is further suggested that an important part of the mechanism for evaluating and coordinating of research will be simultaneous annual research meetings organised by *three proposed societies*. These meetings should be mounted by the proposed societies with assistance of the Permanent Secretariat, NARC of the host territory of the meeting and RARC. The meetings should include scheduled, joint and concurrent sessions.

Opportunity will also be provided at annual meetings for liaison between RARC and the local NARC in the coordination and evaluation of Regional Agricultural Research as well as for professional activities by the societies.

The joint activities of the *three proposed societies* will constitute a Caribbean Agricultural Research Society (CARS), which, it is submitted, is now in existence in a pre-emptive synthesis in the Agro-Economic Society. There are also already in place annual and biennial meetings of Directors of livestock research and livestock researchers, respectively, and the original agricultural economics meetings could be easily re-established. However, a new group of agronomy is now needed.

It is suggested that the CARICOM Secretariat might take the lead in

promoting the coordination of agricultural research by encouraging expansion of the livestock meetings to include agronomy and agricultural economics portfolios, thus bringing together research, planning and professional activities of all regional agriculturists in CARICOM in a single meeting. The support of five national governments of the OECS is also needed for the realisation of the mechanism of research coordination and evaluation here suggested.

Funding of Research

Funding of research must be pursued at national, regional and international levels.

At National Level, NARC should assume responsibility for securing national funds and would function by receipt, discussion and evaluation of research proposals before approval and recommendation for funding.

At Regional Level, NARC should assume a similar function. Research institutions should, however, be left to take the initiative in seeking international funding but should inform NARC when proposals are being prepared so that duplication of preparation of similar projects to the same or different funding agencies is always avoided.

NARC might also circulate lists of funded projects and projects submitted for funding to research institutions in the Region for information.

Dissemination of Results of Research

This is the weakest sector of the entire research process. Here, it is suggested that although extension and development agencies and staff share the responsibility with researchers for this function, researchers must:

- (a) commit the results of tested research findings to publications for:
 - (i) fellow researchers
 - (ii) extension officers
 - (iii) clients (in collaboration with extension staff);
- (b) engage in discussion and advise clients on the implementation of research results;
- (c) evaluate the benefits wrought through application of research findings.

A major step in the improvement of dissemination of research results in the CARICOM Region will be effected by publication of the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of Caribbean Agricultural Society, either in three volumes or under a single cover. It is suggested that this function should be the responsibility of the Permanent Secretariat of the Societies and that adequate support should be provided by regional governments, and regional and international funding agencies for the publication(s). Bulletins for clients might be produced at national and regional institution level but the Permanent Secretariat of CARS should maintain a catalogue and collection of all publications for regional circulation.

Discussion and written comment on the proposals are invited.