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FARM AND BUSINESS

**The Journal of the
Caribbean Agro-
Economic Society**

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Farm and Business

The Journal of the Caribbean Agro-Economic Society

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Arthur Lewis-George Beckford Memorial Lecture

Wm. J. Godfrey Eneas

1. Introduction

I wish to express my appreciation to the Society for this invitation to address such an august body of Caribbean professionals-: The Agro-Economists of our Region. I will also like to compliment Professor Pemberton and all of you for maintaining the legacy of the West Indies Agricultural Economics Conferences.

The post-colonial Caribbean has evolved into a complex geopolitical space because of the different types of political structures that govern the states in the region. This scenario stems from the fact that the European powers (France, Britain and The Netherlands) that introduced slavery and colonialism to the region still remain and wield political control over their dependencies and overseas territories. Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands fall under the US jurisdiction stemming from the Monroe Doctrine which came into play in 1823. States in the region like Haiti (1804), Dominican Republic (1821) and Cuba (1902) have been independent for centuries and comprise 75 percent of the region's population.

In CARICOM, for example, the two longest independent states (Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago) are only sixty years old. Within the former British colonies, four (Dominica, Guyana, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago) are republics and there are eight which have retained the British monarch as their sovereign and Head of State. There is a general consensus in the Region that within the next decade the remaining states would seek republican status.

The geographical reach of the Caribbean has been expanded to the Central American states that share the Caribbean Sea and now claim a Caribbean identity. Tourism is responsible for this dimension and in the travel lexicon, there are the island and continental Caribbean destinations. Out of this post-colonial Caribbean, a new Caribbean has emerged.

On occasions such as this, we, as Caribbean Agricultural Economists, get the opportunity to look at the scholarship legacy of academics like Professor George Beckford and Sir Arthur Lewis.

As I was preparing for this lecture, I came across remarks by Professor Norman Girvan in November 1996, when he was the recipient of the George Beckford Award at the Conference of the Association of Caribbean Economists in Martinique. As Professor Girvan highlighted, as he called him, GBeck's work on the Plantation Economy in Jamaica, he singled out specifically his position on land reform which the Castro Government had introduced in Cuba.

On his return to Jamaica, he promoted some of these reform ideas causing the Jamaican Government to confiscate his passport and refused permission for him to travel abroad. That was in 1965. Despite the actions of the Bustamante Government, this did not deter GBeck from espousing his views on "Persistent Poverty" among the descendants of the plantation society in the Caribbean.

The year 1965 was memorable for me for several reasons. It was the year that I was introduced to Caribbean agriculture as a postgraduate student at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture (ICTA). It was a revolutionizing period. Political independence was a reality as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago were now independent. ICTA itself was in transition from a colonial institution to a West Indian institution, as UWI's Faculty of Agriculture, and there was a shift in faculty composition.

ICTA was established in 1922 to train British colonial agricultural officers for deployment to the colonies. I was the only Caribbean person or West Indian in the class. The others were either English or Scandinavian. The English were from elite British agricultural universities like Cambridge, Wye, and Reading. The faculty was mixed with British, West Indian, and Asian lecturers and professors.

Coming from a North American agricultural institution, Tuskegee University in Alabama, I was about to receive training in Tropical Agriculture which would become the foundation of my professional development. One of my foundational courses was in Agricultural Development, which introduced me to Sir Arthur Lewis via lectures from Professor David T. Edwards, who authored a book called, "An Economic Study of Small Farming in Jamaica". Lewis's works - *The Industrial Development of the Caribbean* (1951) and, to a lesser extent, *The Theory of Economic Growth* - have brought an important dimension to my understanding of Caribbean agriculture. This background influenced my thinking on the way forward for Caribbean agriculture, in this era of climate change and the escalation of food imports into the Caribbean Region.

In presenting this lecture, I would like to begin by looking at the economic development models of the Anglophone Caribbean, then, I would like to offer some thoughts on those models in relation to the scholarly works of Sir Arthur Lewis. I will offer what I feel is the Region's future in agribusiness development within the framework of intra-island trade. There are key lessons to be learned from our past experiences, as well as from current and anticipated global realities.

2. Models of Economic Development in English-Speaking Caribbean

2.1 The Dominant Model of Economic Development in the Caribbean

In colonial times, it appears Europe viewed the Caribbean as a source of raw materials (primarily agricultural produce, but with a few exceptions such as bauxite). From as early as the 1500s, the Caribbean came onto the world stage as the sugar islands with slavery and the slave trade to fuel its development. The plantocracy enforced this development model as the planters opposed the abolition of the slave trade (1807), emancipation (1834) and lobbied for the apprentice period, which extended slavery for another four years (1838). The plantocracy was so politically powerful that Guyana was known as “Booker’s Guiana”. Agriculture was institutionalized in the region when the British established in 1910, the Government Farm School in Jamaica to train extension and farm workers and ICTA in Trinidad in 1922. The only British colonies where there was some degree of economic diversification were Jamaica and Guyana (bauxite) and Trinidad and Tobago (oil).

2.2 Alternative Model of Economic Development in the Caribbean

Following the end of the Second World War, there was a political awakening within the region. The USA was about to expand its global political and economic dominance as colonialism was approaching its last days. The West Indies Federation was dissolved in May 1962, after four years in existence. By August 1962, two of its former members (Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago) had achieved independent status. Territories, most notably The Bahamas and perhaps Bermuda, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the Cayman Islands were operating in a different socio-economic and political sphere and did not see the path to economic development via agriculture.

From very early, the agricultural sector in The Bahamas experienced many setbacks:

- The Loyalists migrated from the southern United States in the 1780s after the American War of Independence and brought their agricultural technology, slaves, and cotton production. Soil fertility issues made cotton production unprofitable;
- The sponge industry which peaked in 1917 at one million pounds was infected with a fungal disease in 1938 wiping out production for decades;
 - Sisal production declined at the beginning of the 20th Century because it lost its competitive advantage to the Philippines after World War II;
- The citrus industry experienced phytosanitary restrictions forcing the US to prohibit imports;
- Even though the terra rosa or red soils of Eleuthera, Long Island and Cat Island were conducive to pineapple production, The Bahamas could not compete with the mechanized pineapple production in Hawaii.
- Tomato exports encountered logistical and quality constraints because of transportation limitations.

Because of these production and other challenges, The Bahamas could not compete in the export market. Bahamian agriculture concentrated on

the domestic market utilizing a labour-intensive system operated by small farmers at the subsistence level. The focus was on a few cash crops and livestock to sell in the urban Nassau Market. The topography of the islands in the Southeastern Bahamas created a production system called pot-hole farming. The Loyalists had to adapt their technology to these topographical conditions. Bahamian agriculture was rooted in indigenous food production practices which commenced with the Lucayans and augmented with slave labour brought to the country by the Loyalists. This production was not science-based or technologically driven. It is this background that caused The Bahamas to seek a different economic development path.

2.3 Bahamian Model

After World War II, The Bahamas embarked on an economic development journey which was very risky because it was unique at the time. As a colony with a British governor and lacking internal self-government status, some strategic policy decisions had to be taken between the Legislature, the Executive Council, and the Colonial Office in London. Recognizing the realities of the new post World War II world that the USA had emerged as the richest nation in the world, Americans had substantial disposable income, which could be used for travel and leisure or which required wealth management. As a result, the twin pillars of tourism and financial services surfaced as a replacement for the failing export agricultural sector.

The Bahamas established The Bahamas Development Board, which was headed by Stafford L. Sands, who was a leading member of Bay the Street Boys...the merchant class that held a stranglehold on power, influence and wealth in the colony until 1967. Shortly after the War, the government of The Bahamas, largely through the efforts of its Development Board, introduced;

- The Hotel Encouragement Act in 1949, which attracted investments in hotel development by granting duty-free exemptions.
- With an American investor named Wallace Groves, a partnership to develop the city of Freeport and a free trade zone on Grand Bahama via the Hawksbill Creek Agreement in 1955. Groves was granted 50,000 acres of Crown land; with the option to renew.
- An American - European marketing strategy to promote The Bahamas as a tourism destination featuring sun, sand, and sea along with golf, tennis, and casino gambling.
- Eventually, financial services to the colony, which became a tax haven.

With the Bahamas Development Board’s promotional agenda to sell The Bahamas as a tourism destination and tax haven to the world, the economic picture of The Bahamas started to change. During the next two decades, the local tourism sector experienced exponential growth as arrivals increased more than thirtyfold from 32,000 visitors in 1949 to in excess of one million tourists in the mid-1960s. Since then, the tourism sector has continued to experience impressive growth:

- By 1986, tourism became a billion-dollar industry;
- Diversification of the tourist product took place by expanding beyond “stop over tourism” to include the cruise ship component.
- In 2003, tourism represented 51 percent of the country’s GDP or \$2.8 billion.
- Today, 23 years later, it is 60 percent.
- Earnings from tourism generated \$1.6 million in wages and supported 100,000 jobs, which was 63 percent of the employment base.

- Tourism played a major role in diversifying the workforce of The Bahamas. By 2005, there were 6,000 more females in tourism than males. The three most recent Directors-General have been female.

The tourism product in The Bahamas was deepened by market forces that wanted diversity and the cruise industry was the vehicle. The cruise industry is engaged in investments to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars in the development of their own island destinations and cruise ports which are already completed or under construction in New Providence, Grand Bahama, and Eleuthera:

- Holland America has developed Half Moon Cay off the island of Eleuthera,
- MSC has turned the Aragonite mining locale, Ocean Cay, into a mini-Disneyland which accommodated more than three million MSG passengers,
- Royal Caribbean has developed Little Stirrup Cay into Coco Cay.
- Norwegian Cruise has a development on Great Stirrup Cay.
- Disney established Cast Away Cay on Gorda Cay which is north of Great Abaco.
- After three and half years under construction, the \$300 million Nassau Cruise Port is completed. The Port is expected to attract four million passengers this year and create a daily market of 30,000 visitors.
- The Port will accommodate the Icon class cruise ships which carry as many as 7,500 passengers and 2,600 crew. The Icon class is the next step in terms of vessel growth.
- Port Mayaguana is being developed into a cruise ship terminal and village as the first stage.

The Bahamas has been transformed from a fishing village to a modern high-income country with a services-based economy. I can vividly remember the attitude towards tourism of some of the students during my days at ICTA/UWI. One student referred to The Bahamas as the place “where you’ll wait on the white man’s table”. Today, the entire Caribbean Region, without exception, has partially or fully adopted this tourism-based model.

2.4 Bahamas Model vs Lewis’s Theory

I highlighted the Bahamian Model because I believe that Lewis did not recognize “services” as a legitimate economic sector. He was a classical economist, who was British influenced as a result of his training at the London School of Economics. A classically trained economist working at the height of colonialism and during the aftermath of World War II, Lewis’s model for economic development drew heavily on the prevailing theory of modernization. Modernization theory advanced that in order for a society to become advanced, it had to progress sequentially from agrarian activity to some sort of industrial undertaking like manufacturing.

Prior to his stint as President of the Caribbean Development Bank, Sir Arthur advanced the argument based on the success of “Operation Bootstrap” in Puerto Rico, where he had advocated the production of manufactured goods for domestic, regional, and metropolitan markets. It was a radical position at a time when the agrarian economies of the West Indies had been historically structured to provide agricultural and other primary commodities to the colonial powers.”

As a young professional, I had the opportunity to observe “Operation Bootstrap” first-hand in Puerto Rico. It was from Operation Bootstrap that the Pindling Government in the ‘70s attempted to diversify the Bahamian economy with a light industry and manufacturing sector.

The Bahamian model has demonstrated that it was not necessary for economic development to progress in the linear fashion outlined in the modernisation theory. The Bahamas, and now the remainder of the Caribbean Region, have illustrated that tourism in itself was a driver of economic development.

As a region, some of the CARICOM states have been independent for 60 years- Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. We in The Bahamas celebrate fifty years as an independent state this year. Over the past 60 years, after:

- passing through slavery and colonialism;
- confronting global policy issues like trade liberalization;
- blacklisting; and
- now encountering the vulnerabilities of climate change,

the states in the region should now be in a position to understand the framework in which they have to function and develop themselves in the 21st Century. In my opinion, that is the challenge for the region moving forward.

The Caribbean, as the sugar islands, provided the fundamentals, which were responsible for the Industrial Revolution as pointed out in Williams’ Capitalism and Slavery. However, if it were left to British colonialism and the plantocracy, CARICOM states would still find themselves trapped in some kind of dependency on export agricultural markets.

Tourism has made the Caribbean the number-one cruise destination in the world. Fifty million visitors come to our shores annually. This will increase dramatically over the next five years, as the cruise ship industry has some 125 ships under construction.

The service model with tourism as the agent of transformation has created this New Caribbean, which is very different from the one where Africans were engaged in the backbreaking work of cutting sugarcane and bananas; most of them now wait on tables, drive taxis or mix drinks as bartenders. Despite the growth of the industry and its importance to the region, we as benefactors have not exploited the opportunities this mega-industry has afforded us.

With the attainment of independence, Caribbean economies began transitioning to service-type economies. Globalization, however, presented the region with new challenges as the world became more inter-connected, requiring significant adjustments. Tourism in the region is now at different levels of development depending on the State but are countries learning or reinventing the wheel? For the region to progress, policymakers must understand this and stay ahead of the curve.

3. Key Lessons Learnt

The Bahamas and the region as a whole have to look at the food bill with reference to the tourism sector. In the case of The Bahamas, public policy decisions have put food supply in the hands of importers rather than domestic producers.

Food Demand Table

The Reagan Administration sent a strong message on free market agricultural trade through its Secretary of Agriculture, John Block. In 1986 at the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Block made the following statement that declared food self-sufficiency for developing countries to be officially dead:

“The idea that developing countries should feed themselves is an anachronism from a bygone era. They should better ensure their food

security by relying on US agriculture products which were available, in most cases, at lower costs.”

Until the ‘90s, the main source of revenue for The Bahamas was customs duties. The World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Trade Liberalization agenda would negatively impact the revenue of The Bahamas.

Between 1992 and 2021, there were seven Administrations and four different Prime Ministers. This scenario created an environment of policy instability. The government introduced a duty reduction policy and bought into the Block Doctrine by believing it was cheaper to import food rather than grow your own. The “Cheap Food” notion puts the food supply in the hands of food importers. This accelerated imports and by 2007, The Bahamas was importing food to the value of 0.5 billion USD.

In 2010, the Block Doctrine also destroyed the production of three million rice farmers in Haiti. As the UN Special Envoy to Haiti, President Bill Clinton apologized for forcing Haiti to drop tariffs on imported, subsidized US rice during his time in office. Clinton admitted that “since 1981 the United States had followed a policy ...that we rich countries that produce a lot of food should sell it to poor countries and relieve them of the burden of producing their own food, so...they can leap directly into the Industrial Era. It has not worked.”

This was also the background to the loss of preferential markets to the EU market by the ACP States. This hit banana growers in the OECS and destroyed their livelihoods.

To change this American policy, it would take the Director-General of FAO to step in. In 2009, Dr. Jacques Diouf’s as FAO Director-General proposed to the FAO Council that a World Summit on Food Security should be convened. Sixty Heads of State and Governments and 192 Ministers from 182 countries and the EU attended.

This is the background for the Caribbean becoming a food deficit region. The sad part is that countries have allowed mega-institutions like the IMF and World Bank to influence them into engaging in duty reduction policies, as in The Bahamas.

3.1 Domestic Export Market

CARICOM needs to re-evaluate the manner in which tourism is perceived in the Community. Tourism drives the economy of the region and has been a socio-economic transformative tool that has produced underutilized opportunities which the States have not exploited. Tourism is an evolving activity and will continue to evolve for a number of reasons. In its evolution, the tourism sector will demonstrate its capacity to create unlimited opportunities for the region. It is within this context that tourism should be examined as a domestic export market because of all the benefits it brings to the region. It offers the region the avenue to a Caribbean economic reset.

Tourism is more than island tours, souvenir stores, golfing, snorkeling, gambling, and, of course, feeding the millions of visitors. It also has the capability to provide a sustainable industrial component to the economies of the states. This aspect has been overlooked thereby eliminating a dimension with much potential.

In The Bahamas, tourism has been used as the centerpiece of the Bahamian economy. It’s also been used as a lynchpin of the economy as a provider of linkages to other sectors. In the ‘70s, the Pindling Government launched a “light industry, assembling, and manufacturing” sector, for example, to produce various items for hotels like beds, mattresses and bedding. Recognizing the fact that Tourism was driving food imports, the

government embarked on various programmes and the most recent was an import substitution programme in 2012.

3.2 Import Substitution: National and Regional

As part of the establishment of The Bahamas Agriculture and Marine Science Institute (BAMSI) in conjunction with an Associate Farmers Programme, 30 crops and four livestock species (pork, poultry, sheep, and goats) were selected for the import substitution strategy.

The crops were chosen from the imports of fruits and vegetables that had the best market penetration potential. They were picked based on value and quantity and comparative advantage associated with the production of the fruit or the vegetable within the capability of The Bahamas to grow the fruits or vegetables competitively. The total values of the crops were:

- 2006 - \$31,201,006 + \$12,665,199 (By-Products)
- 2007 - \$31,901,132 +\$14,528,148 (By-Products)
- 2012 - \$40,000,000

To be self-sufficient in the crops would require 10,000 acres in production. Among the 30 crops, a dozen was valued between \$10-12 million and could be imported from the region. For the past 50 years, The Bahamas has been trying to import mangoes directly from Haiti without success. Fruits and vegetable shipments from Haiti have to enter The Bahamas via Florida because the USDA prohibits shipments to a third country if their facilities are used.

With the livestock segment, egg producers face marketing innovation issues. Most egg producers in the region produce table eggs, chiefly for the supermarkets and in turn housewives. In The Bahamas, there is a demand not only for table eggs, but also egg yolks, eggbeaters, powdered eggs, pasteurized eggs, frozen eggs and liquid eggs. These are the types of egg commodities that are demanded by hotels, gourmet restaurants and bakeries. Some tourism destinations have not reached this level of sophistication. Further, food imports have been assimilated into the daily diets of the urban Bahamian as American fast-food franchises abound throughout Nassau and Freeport.

For tourism to be regionally activated as a domestic export market, aspects of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) would have to come into play, particularly the point on the expansion of trade and economic relations with third states. The Bahamas has the largest tourism market in CARICOM. There are many items/commodities that CARICOM States can supply to the Bahamian market for tourists and Bahamians.

Rice is a staple in the Bahamian diet; yet, the country does not produce one grain of rice even though there are locales in The Bahamas where rice can be grown. Husbandry and technological limitations have been the constraints to production. In 2021, six thousand tons of rice valued at B\$11 million were imported. The main source of rice for The Bahamas was Asia, principally Thailand, thousands of food miles away. Even though Guyana is a global supplier, consideration was never given to rice imports from the region.

During Haiti’s Papa Doc era, rice from the Artibonite, Haiti’s rice-growing locale, and a variety of commodities including fruits (mangoes, bananas, and plantains), rum, sugarcane, and woodcarvings were sold in The Bahamas from Haitian vessels which plied in Bahamian waters and traded here. Reinvigorating trade between Haiti and The Bahamas is a course CARICOM should pursue on Haiti’s behalf.

Regional Import Substitution is now a reality. The French shipping company, Maritime Freight Company, and General Maritime Company

(CMA Shipping Co.) have partnered with the government of Jamaica to operate the Ports of Kingston and Montego Bay. The Port of Kingston has or is evolving into the hub for the Caribbean and has now become an option for shipping from the Southern Caribbean to the North rather than heading to Florida ports. One Bahamian importer informed me that one of his main suppliers, Matouk's (jams and sauces) out of Trinidad, will not be shipping to Florida ports but to the Port of Kingston. The commodity will then be transhipped to The Bahamas.

At the recent ninth Summit of The Heads of State and Government of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), in La Antigua, Guatemala, on May 12, 2023, our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance the Hon. Philip E. Davis stated the following:

“The region's over-reliance on imports means that our people were too vulnerable to price hikes driven by events outside its borders and meant that we all continue to funnel revenue outside the region, rather than keeping it at home.”

“In The Bahamas, as in other countries in the region, we are seeking to diversify our economy through targeted investment in a new generation of farming and fishing entrepreneurs. Throughout the region, governments and the private sector must work together to invest in our people and in our capacity to feed ourselves — and further, to invest in stronger intra-regional transportation links to enhance opportunities for trade among our nations.”

3.3 Caribbean Challenge: Finding the Solution to Food Imports and Tourism

It is inevitable that the CARICOM States and the wider Caribbean will remain, for the foreseeable future, a food deficit region. The reason for this state of affairs stems from the fact that the economic lifeline of the region is tourism, which has food demands that are beyond the capacity of the regional resources. Tourism, as the main economic catalyst for the economy of the region, drives food consumption. This is related to the fact that growth in visitor arrivals far exceeds the growth of the indigenous population.

Caribbean governments must decide whether this scenario is an imbalance or a challenge. From my perspective, this arrangement is not a liability but should be treated or viewed as an opportunity. CARICOM policymakers, however, have instituted a 25 percent food import reduction policy for member states. In my opinion, the policy is repressive and myopic because it denies the Agricultural Sectors of the member states to be innovative, augment existing technologies and enhance their competitiveness. It also nullifies the option to save foreign exchange via an import substitution programme or strategy as described above.

Using The Bahamas as a case study, the CARICOM Secretariat's analysis of the reduction of food imports by 2025 is flawed. It is impossible for The Bahamas to reduce its food imports by 25% by 2025. Policy makers in CARICOM for example must understand that in the Caribbean Region food and nutrition security cannot be addressed on an individual basis; it must be viewed from a regional perspective. The solution is to utilize the strength and assets of all the states in the region. This entails greater knowledge sharing and recognition of the different levels of economic development among the states in the region.

Socio-economically, tourism has transformed the region. Despite the impact it has had, the advantages which have accrued from it have not been exploited. Even though the Caribbean may have agronomic and climatic limitations, technology can make up for the deficiencies.

3.4 Reacting to Climate Change

Caribbean political leadership is aware of the fact that climate change is a threat to the region that cannot be ignored. It is a challenge that must be addressed at all levels: national, regional, and through the Bridgetown Initiative, globally.

A dual approach is being developed to address climate change. The UWI Faculty of Agriculture in Trinidad has organized a group called the Consortium of Universities involved in agriculture, food, and rural development. The Consortium comprises national universities like the University of Guyana, the University of Trinidad and Tobago Anton de Kom, Suriname, and the University of The Bahamas. The University of Belize may soon join the Consortium.

One of the goals is to develop sustainable climate-resilient agriculture in CARICOM. An initial project is the Shade House Project in which UWI is partnering with the Ministry of Youth, Trinidad and Tobago where 100 youth are being trained. Financing for the project is being provided by the government of Guyana in the amount of a million dollars. This is an innovative approach.

It is an example where regional institutions are pooling their resources to protect their national assets from the vulnerabilities of Climate Change like hurricanes and droughts in order to preserve the capacity to grow food.

It seems as if the US is paying attention to the Bridgetown Initiative's call for a reassessment of the current global financial architecture to drive multilateral and private sector financial resources toward climate mitigation and resilience. The Vice President of the US, Kamala Harris, will be here this week. A press statement stated the following:

“Harris will visit Nassau, Bahamas, on June 8, along with Bahamas Prime Minister Philip Davis to discuss climate change, energy, food security, and economic prosperity in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. They will co-host a gathering of leaders from the Dominican Republic and the 15-member Caribbean Community. Davis is currently chairman of CARICOM, which has recently been stepping up its foreign engagement with the U.S., Canada and the United Kingdom.”

“The Bahamas meeting will build on previous meetings the Vice President has had with Caribbean leaders, including at last year's Ninth Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles. During the summit, President Joe Biden promised to “intensify” relations between the United States and the Caribbean with Harris taking the lead. The U.S. used the summit to roll out a new “Caribbean Climate Partnership” to tackle climate change and the region's energy crisis. The focus is to help Caribbean governments get better access to financing for climate and clean-energy projects and make the transition from fossil fuels— something some member states told the Biden administration they are not quite yet ready to do, given the concentration of oil and natural gas reserves in Trinidad, Suriname, and Guyana.”

CARICOM policymakers must acknowledge the fact that Caribbean Agriculture has declined and needs a wakeup-call in this New Caribbean because of:

- market demand has changed owing to tourism and improvement in income levels;
- WTO trade liberalization policies;
- Loss of preferential markets; and
- The fact that the Caribbean has been a very vulnerable locale to external shocks like the global meltdown in 2008, COVID-19 and climate change elements like hurricanes.

CARICOM has to seriously consider making adjustments in policy determinations. Policy decisions, for example have been oriented to the Lesser Antilles while most of the economic growth and development has been in the North, specifically in tourism. The agricultural future for the bloc is among the Continental States of Belize, Guyana, and Suriname. There needs to be a whole new alignment in policy design.

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About “The Sir Arthur Lewis-Professor George Beckford Memorial Lecture”

This lecture series was inaugurated in 1992 at the 21st West Indies Agricultural Economics Conference in memory of Sir Arthur Lewis and delivered by Professor Compton Bourne.

William Arthur Lewis (1915–1991) was born in St Lucia and was the first black academic at the London School of Economics with his first appointment in 1938. In 1979 Sir Arthur Lewis was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics for “pioneering research into economic development research with particular consideration of the problems of developing countries”.

The second lecture in the series was dedicated to the memory of Professor George Beckford (1934–1990) and was delivered by Professor C.Y. Thomas at the 22nd West Indies Agricultural Economics Conference in 1995. George Beckford was a distinguished Economist known for his book “Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in the Plantation Economies of the Third World”. Beckford taught Agricultural Economics at The UWI at St. Augustine from 1963, before he moved to the Mona campus in 1957. He served as Professor of Economics there, until his passing in 1990.

The third lecture was presented in Nassau, The Bahamas at the 23rd West Indies Conference in 2000, by Professor Vaughn Lewis, a nephew of Sir Arthur Lewis. Over the years the Memorial Lecture has been delivered by several eminent Caribbean scholars.

