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**CARIBBEAN FOOD
CROPS SOCIETY**

45

**Forty Fifth
Annual Meeting 2009**

**Frigate Bay
Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis**

**Vol. XLV
Number 1
T-STAR Invasive Species Symposium**

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
45th ANNUAL MEETING

Caribbean Food Crops Society
45th Annual Meeting
July 12-17, 2009

St. Kitts Marriott & Royal Beach Casino
Frigate Bay, St. Kitts and Nevis

**“Reality and Potential of Food Security and Agricultural Diversification in Small Island
Developing States”**

**“Realidad y Potencial de la Seguridad Alimentaria y la Diversificación Agrícola en
Pequeños Estados Insulares en Desarrollo”**

**"Sécurité alimentaire et diversification agricole dans les petits états insulaires en
développement: réalisations et perspectives".**

**United States Department of Agriculture,
T-STAR Sponsored Invasive Species Symposium**

**INVASIVE SPECIES SAFEGUARDING: IMPERATIVE FOR CARIBBEAN
REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION AND FOOD SECURITY**

**Special Symposium Edition
Edited by
Waldemar Klassen, Carlton G. Davis, Edward A. Evans, Sikavas Na-Lampang
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THE CARICOM CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICERS GROUP: RATIONALE, VISION, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MODUS OPERANDI

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INTRODUCTION

The CARICOM Chief Veterinary Officers Group has an established regularly scheduled meeting of the heads of National Veterinary Services of Member States. The recommendations coming out of this meeting are used by the CARICOM council of ministers to guide regional and national policy with respect to animal health and veterinary public health. The actual recognised meeting is that of the CARICOM Chief Veterinary Officers, Chief Veterinary Public Health Officers and Chief Environmental Health Officers. The Chief Veterinary Officers themselves meet both as the wider group and also solely as just the CVOs.

BACKGROUND: THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is made up of 15 Member States and five Associate Member States. There is the Conference of Heads of Governments made up of the Prime Ministers and Presidents of the member countries, and then the Council for Trade and Economic Development, or COTED, which is made up of Ministers of Trade and/or Agriculture.

According to the treaty which establishes CARICOM and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, under Article 26(1), a system of consultations at national and regional level must be established in order to enhance the decision making process of the Community.

- Some of the relevant articles under the Revised Treaty that are of importance to agriculture and trade, within the context of the Chief Veterinary Officers meeting, are those dealing with Agricultural Policy, Environmental Protection, Standards & Technical Regulations and Legal Infrastructure:
- Article 56: Agricultural Policy
- Article 57: Agricultural Policy Implementation
- Article 65: Environmental Protection
- Article 67: Standards and Technical Regulations
- Article 74: Legal infrastructure.

BACKGROUND: CARICOM CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICERS GROUP

From about 1986, the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) began a series of Veterinary Public Health Seminars for Chief Veterinary Officers (CVO) that were organized to coincide with the biennial conference of the Caribbean Veterinary Medical Association.

PAHO used the opportunity provided by this conference to host these seminars in order to facilitate the involvement of CVOs at the veterinary conference. The actual public health seminars started initially as half-day seminars, and progressed to one-day seminars that dealt primarily with topics such as the prevalence of diseases, such as Leptospirosis, and the preparation of animal disease emergency preparedness plans.

For various reasons, from about 1994 there was a break in the frequency of holding the meetings, with the CVOs meeting on an ad hoc basis at various sponsored workshops.

Then in 2001, with funding from USAID, and in response to several global disease threats (BSE, FMD), the meeting of the group was again convened, this time including Chief Veterinary Public Health Officers and Chief Environmental Health Officers, thus forming a joint CVO /CVPHO/CEHO Forum.

The aim here was to expand the efforts for an integrated action to address animal health and public health issues of importance to the Region, to achieve a greater impact at the national and regional level.

The goals included:

- Strengthening the animal health and food safety systems and infrastructure of Member States
- Developing policy on how to manage the threat of diseases of animal health and public health importance to the region, such as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and Foot and Mouth Disease
- To develop a regionally harmonised policy for managing and limiting the risk from these diseases, as they presented a significant threat, given the region's existing trading patterns, notably through tourism
- To review the technical and administrative conditions governing trade in animals and animal products between the Caribbean Community and Third World Countries with a view toward harmonisation
- To address emerging disease issues
- Facilitating regional coordination with respect to international positions (OIE, Codex, WTO/SPS)
- Providing advice on Institutional strengthening. It was at this time that the proposal was made for the establishment of a Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA).

The proposal for the establishment of a regularly scheduled structured meeting of the group was presented to the Seventeenth Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) in Trinidad & Tobago in June 2004, and the COTED commended the work of the group and endorsed this recommendation.

The concept was that the CVOs, CVPHOs and CEHOs would be the recognised competent authority which should guide the formulation of regional policy with respect to animal, veterinary public health, and to food safety issues. Every year the recommendations of the meetings are taken to COTED for their consideration. In general these recommendations are endorsed and so accepted by the Community as policy or as recommended actions which should be taken at the national level.

The Meetings of the CVOs now make recommendations to the COTED regarding all areas of animal health and veterinary public health, legislation, policy, capacity building, institutional strengthening and trade facilitation.

Increasingly the role of the CVOs, CVPHOs and CEHOs is being directed at the regional level to develop mechanisms, plans and measures which can facilitate trade within the CSME. Regional trade should then be guided by relevant protocols, standards and measures.

From its inception, the Pan American Health Organisation has provided strong support, both financial and technical, to the meeting. As the group matured, strategic partnerships were forged with the major relevant regional and international agencies, which are now permanent observers at the meetings. Linkages were also made with private sector organisations, such as the Caribbean Poultry Association.

With the recognition of the CaribVET network as the regional organ for animal disease surveillance, the tremendous support of CIRAD has allowed for the CaribVET and CARICOM CVO meetings to be held consecutively, further strengthening the relationship between the two while affording considerable savings in the logistics of holding the meetings.

There are now several issues that Chief Veterinary Officers are expected to advise on:

- Recommendations on updating and implementing comprehensive legislative, regulatory and enforcement policies for animal health in order to meet the requirements of the WTO and other trade regimes as well as to promote the national economies;
- Advise on a harmonised approach to recognition of veterinary qualifications and the registration and movement of veterinary professionals within the CSME;
- Recommend on the training of laboratory staff in current analytical methods and quality control programmes to ensure the highest level of expertise and quality in testing services and in upgrading the capacity of laboratories to:
 - meet requirements of trade and public health initiatives;
 - provide an infrastructure that can deliver the desired level of testing services;
 - meet the requirements for international accreditation;
 - Develop and strengthen the relationship between national and regional laboratory facilities to ensure efficient access for testing for animal diseases, food-borne pathogens, biotoxins and residues;
- Commission the conduct of risk analyses with a view to facilitating intra and extra regional trade in animals and animal products;
- Review and adopt the recommendations of the CaribVET Steering Committee;
- Further develop the concept of the establishment and operations of the CAHFSA;
- Using the CaribVET Network of Animal Health mechanism, the CVOs recommend on:

- the conduct of surveys of significant animal diseases, such as HPAI, bovine TB and brucellosis in order to understand the prevalence of important diseases that affect trade and animal and public health; and
- Developing effective intervention strategies.
- Establishing databases for census of farm animals and their disease status to allow for the efficient determination of numbers and location of farm animal species, animal health status, traceability, and WTO trade implications;
- Developing an animal disease emergency preparedness plan aimed at allowing the countries to reach a level of preparedness for effective response and recovery;
- The CVO meeting is expected to further develop the concept of the establishment and operations of the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA). CAHFSA is expected to play a monitoring and evaluation role of the national agricultural health and food safety programmes in each member state with a view to:
 - Facilitating safe agricultural trade;
 - Strengthening food safety systems;
 - Promoting development and use of international and regional SPS standards and in particular Member States' obligations under the WTO/SPS Agreement;
 - Strengthening intergovernmental and inter agency cooperation;
 - Strengthening animal quarantine capacity by providing national veterinary services with the mandates to inspect and certify animals and animal products, both for import and export and upgrading or establishing animal quarantine stations and animal product import and export inspection capacity to provide an environment whereby imported and exported animals and foods of animal origin can be properly inspected and certified.
- Other activities of the CAHFSA would be:
 - To train relevant personnel in animal and food-borne disease risk assessments so as to ensure that the animal health and veterinary public health systems have the capacity to assess the most important risks to animal and human health, and have the means to prioritize resources and programmes;
 - Where required, to develop cost recovery programmes through legislative authority to permit agencies to sustain a high level of service, and
 - To promote accreditation of veterinary laboratories to facilitate trade through the international recognition of test results.

In short, the outputs of the CVO meetings are expected to achieve the goals of the Caribbean Community as set out in the relevant articles of the Revised Treaty:

Article 57 "...the Community shall through competent Community Organs and Bodies promote and support the establishment of an effective regime for SPS measures."

Article 74 (2) "... Member States shall harmonise their laws and administrative practices in respect of, inter alia, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures."