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PREFACE

Honduras was the setting for the 32nd annual meeting of the Caribbean Food Crops Society. Although Honduras is physically, culturally, and historically an integral part of the Caribbean Basin, this was the first time the society convened in Central America. History shows us examples of this integration. Centuries ago the Mayans exported their trade and culture, as the ball games chronicled in the greater Caribbean islands testify. Over 500 years ago the Spaniards and the British fought territorial battles along the coast permanently embedding the two major languages used today in Central America. Two hundred years ago a large group of Afro-Caribbeans immigrated to the Atlantic coast of Central America and established the ethnic group known today as Garifunas. These two regions have been exchanging products, people, and ideas for over a thousand years. As part of that legacy a group of over 80 scientists from 15 countries made their way to Honduras to experience the lifestyles on the shores to the West.

Our 32nd annual meeting began at the Pan-American School of Agriculture, at Zamorano, Honduras. Zamorano is also a testimony to the regional integration. The technical college was created over 50 years ago with the help of the United Fruit Company to train young persons in tropical agriculture from throughout the Americas. During the annual meeting the CFCS delegates witnessed for themselves the degree of professionalism and technical capacity at Zamorano, which make it today a leading agricultural teaching institution in the tropical world.

A trip to Honduras is not complete without a visit to the Mayan Ruins at Copán. The remnants of this ancient city have been described as a dynasty frozen in stone. The CFCS delegates visited the precious art of a civilization that centuries ago marked the leading political, economical, and cultural leadership throughout the Caribbean.

Much of Central America's Caribbean coast is reminiscent of St. Johns, Antigua or Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. It seems that the Caribbean islands and the Atlantic coast of Central America have a lot in common, particularly regarding climate, architecture, food, and lifestyles. Like its regional partners, today Honduras is striving to compete on the world market with the exportation of tropical fruits, lumber, vegetables, shrimps, and textiles.

This meeting provided its participants the opportunity to visit a region just an inch or so in distance on the map, but a world apart in terms of political integration. Although Central America lies just across the Caribbean sea, it is rarely explored by its neighbors to the East. Not only did this meeting create a forum of professional exchange, but perhaps more importantly it brought our professionals closer together and hopefully sparked new friendships. If this was achieved, and I personally feel it was, then our 32nd annual meeting was a great success.

Wilfredo Colón
President

