



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

CARIBBEAN

FOOD

CROPS SOCIETY

31

Thirty First

Annual Meeting 1995

Barbados

Vol.XXXI

FUNDING AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Jeff St A. Chandler, Susan B. Persad-Chinnery and Louis E. Chinnery

*Department of Biology, The University of the West Indies,
P.O. Box 64, Bridgetown, Barbados*

ABSTRACT

Many models for funding agricultural research, development and technology dissemination have been tried. As demands on government finances increase, questions are being asked about all governmental expenditure. Some of the current structures in the Eastern Caribbean are reviewed. The use of levies on imports and exports of agricultural/horticultural products is discussed. The potential benefits of a competitive grant-funded scheme are considered. This paper is designed to promote discussion.

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural research has traditionally been the responsibility of government ministries and quasi-governmental agencies. The role of Kew Gardens in the former British colonies, through its plant introduction stations, exemplifies this. In most Caribbean countries, governmental funds for ministries/departments of agriculture are threatened by justified demands for increased funding of education, medical and social services, including the need to support the growing number of retired persons.

Against this background, we need to review other options for funding agricultural research. Amongst these are privatization, as in the Dominican Republic, levies on imports and exports, and a system of competitive grants modelled on the United States or a more appropriate regional model.

Political realities within our region mean that the model might be operational at the level of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), subregionally at the level of CARICOM or the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), or nationally. Political considerations outside our region have seen the redirection of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funds for research and development to the former USSR dominated countries. Also, there is an increasing reluctance of member governments of the European Union to continue current levels of developmental assistance funding to the ACP countries.

PRIVATIZATION

The dangers of privatization are twofold. First, commercial interests, e.g. seed firms, could limit development. Second, the policy functions of the relevant government agency could be compromised. The advantages of privatization are that the research function can be placed into the hands of producer groups that can prioritize research.

LEVIES

Levies based on imports and exports of a commodity, e.g. cut flowers or meat, could be used to create a research fund. At the national level, realistic levies of 2.5% on exports and 10% on imports, with very few exceptions, would not provide funds to provide even one full-time researcher for a commodity group.

COMPETITIVE GRANT FUNDING

Presently, there are few sources of grant funding within the region. One of these is the Jamaica Agricultural Research Programme (JARP). JARP, which was established in 1987, is administered by the Jamaica Agricultural Development Foundation (JADF). The JADF is the result of a unique partnership between a Jamaican company (Grace Kennedy & Co. Ltd.), USAID, and Land O'Lakes Inc. – a food and agricultural cooperative owned by 500,000 farmers in the USA. Funding for JARP, which provides limited grants, mainly for on-farm research, was derived from USAID. Another source is the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). The CDB primarily provides loan funds for developmental projects.

In the former British territories in the Caribbean, there are a number of organizations, other than government ministries, conducting agricultural research. Among these are: the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI); the University of the West Indies' Faculties of Agriculture and Engineering (Trinidad), and Departments of Biology (Barbados) and Botany (Jamaica); Caroni Ltd. in Trinidad; the Barbados Agricultural Management Company (BAMC) in Barbados; the Coconut Research Board in Jamaica; and WINBAN serving the Windward Islands' banana industry.

For the most part, these institutions have better qualified and more research-oriented staff than national ministries of agriculture.

If all the governmental research money was put into a regional or subregional fund, these institutions could compete for funding. The advantages of such a system can be divided into two categories. First of these is reduction in duplication of effort. Apart from meetings of CFCS, there is no established method of communication between agricultural researchers and policy-makers in the region. Similar research programmes are often undertaken and because of diffused effort do not necessarily fully achieve their goals. Of course, some duplication is essential because of differences in soils, climate and agronomic practices but, there is no need for everyone to start at square one.

The second is accountability. Organizations, or individual researchers, that do not use the funds appropriately are unlikely to continue to be funded. In many research and development organizations, job security is less than that of a public servant and determined by performance. In the university, like others throughout the world, pressure on academics to succeed through publication is increasing. Also, grants that fund the training of graduate students through research are very cost-effective. All of which might lead to value for money research.

CONCLUSION

As agricultural researchers and producers we need to encourage debate on the best ways to spend the diminishing funds for research. A first step is to encourage collaboration between the existing institutions, through which complementary expertise can be used to ensure the research output is of the highest quality. Also, mechanisms must be developed to ensure that the research conducted gives the answers to producers' problems.