



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

27

Twenty Seventh
Annual Meeting 1991

DOMINICA

Vol. XXVII

**SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION:
ARE THESE COMPATIBLE WITH CURRENT IMPERATIVES OF MARKET
LED PRODUCTION FOR EXPORT?**

F. Gregoire

**Director of Forests, Wildlife, Parks
Forestry Division, Botanic Gardens
Roseau, Commonwealth of Dominica**

INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that the ancient idea that agricultural development must proceed at the expense of environmental preservation is "going out of the window." It also is no secret that agricultural development has been in serious conflict with conservation or preservation of the environment. This has manifested itself clearly in the relationship between Agriculture and Forestry Departments in the Caribbean.

Historically, agriculture departments have been charged with the responsibility of pursuing agricultural goals, which strongly emphasize increased food production and the clearing of forest lands. On the other hand, forestry departments have traditionally promoted conservation and maintaining forest cover for ecological reasons. Hence, these departments have gone their separate ways, and even in most cases where forestry functions were performed within the Department of Agriculture, a way has been found to change this, and to establish a separate Forestry Department.

POLICY AND PROGRAMMES

Agricultural policies throughout the Caribbean region have emphasized increased production, income generation, creation of employment and import substitution. However, in formulating these policies mention has been made of soil and water conservation or even watershed protection.

The extent to which agricultural programmes have included provisions to address soil and water conservation or even environmental preservation is questionable. Traditionally, natural vegetation, especially forests, have been cut for cultivating agricultural crops. It is often argued that any land which has been reserved as forest land as part of a land development scheme is unsuitable for agriculture.

Soil and water conservation have not been given the necessary priority in agricultural development. Programmes aimed at promoting natural resources management for ecological reasons have been few. Therefore, we have experienced immense soil erosion, depletion of water resources, loss of biodiversity and other negative consequences which impact adversely on agricultural development.

It is this trend which suggests that market led agricultural production is incompatible with environmental preservation. The intense use of land to increase production to satisfy market demands will encourage the

use of agrochemicals which are not 'environment friendly'. Market led production suggests that one should produce to satisfy external sources and, if necessary, at the expense of local considerations.

Environmentalists have challenged methods and practices used in agricultural production, and many battles have been fought on the side of environmental protection. Therefore, the emergence of what is being called sustainable agriculture is encouraging. Sustainable is the key term for the modern environmentalist, and the adoption of programmes and project activities to bring about sustainable agriculture will be acceptable. However, market led production appears to be in conflict with sustainable agriculture and hence environmental preservation.

ALTERNATIVES

Agroforestry is being promoted vigorously as a suitable scheme in the development of sustainable agriculture. The factors which determine the establishment of agroforestry schemes are tied to the characteristics of the land (such as soil types), slope, rainfall, etc. If market forces could be tied into an equation that would promote agroforestry that would be very desirable.

Eco-tourism is also widely accepted as an activity which promotes and benefits from environmental preservation, and eco-tourism is being promoted in many Caribbean islands. Can market-led agricultural production be fashioned along the lines of eco-tourism? Can the necessary linkages and institutional support be established to ensure sustainable agriculture?

CONCLUSION

The writer is of the opinion, based on the arguments presented, that for market led agricultural production for export to be compatible with sustainable agriculture and environmental preservation, a serious effort must be made to integrate all the forces that must come into play to ensure the achievement of such a noble goal. This will be a difficult goal to achieve. But to achieve the holistic pattern of development which we all aspire to, it is a matter worth considering.