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DISCUSSION SUMMARY II

The role of research in productivity increase and improvements of farm incomes was emphasized. The question was posed as to whether this research is better done by private organisations or within agencies on a regional or national basis. It was felt that the farmers and agricultural extension officers should be more involved in the research processes since they are the ones who will be charged with the implementation of the results of any research.

Mr. Bergasse suggested that some priority should be given to research into short-term production techniques since such technologies would most probably contribute inversely to productivity increases. Long-term research must be aimed at the improvement of plant, seed and fertilizer varieties of greater efficiency in production. He also endorsed the need for greater involvement of farmers and extension workers and suggested that this level of involvement should even reflect on the Board of Directors.

A suggestion was offered for widening the representation of the Board of Directors. The need for stepping up the PR of CARDI was seen as critical if the organisation is to enjoy the confidence of the farmers, given the proliferation of organisations of varying sorts. Also highlighted was the problem of staff recruitment and retention. On the question of marketing, it was suggested that CARDI needs to concentrate on the problem faced by the farmers in terms of securing the necessary facilities to make their production effects more attractive.

Mr. Bergasse endorsed the concern with regard to staff recruitment and retention. On the problem of marketing, it was felt that this is an area in which CARDI has to provide some systematic advice and guidelines.

The Conference was then informed that the technical know-how of CARDI's development programme has not been at the disposal of the Department of Agriculture in St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla. Further, the need was stressed for CARDI to embark on a programme of training for agricultural extension workers to enable them to serve the farmers not merely in production techniques but also in the cost and marketing aspects.

With regard to the suggestion for extending the representation of the Board of Directors of CARDI to include farmers and possibly extension workers, the attention of the Conference was drawn to the charter which established CARDI, noting that it excludes inputs from the private sector. Regret was expressed over the proliferation of organisations duplicating the role of agricultural research and development in the region, but no solution was offered to this problem.

In response to the St. Kitts/Nevis request for information concerning dissemination of information to their farmers, the number of areas in which the units have assisted and are currently involved was outlined.

Lastly, it was suggested that CARDI should get more involved in the implementation aspects of its programme, making use of regional expertise on a secondment or consultancy basis. This view was endorsed by the Acting Executive Director who informed the Conference that CARDI was in fact doing so but on a rather limited basis under the existing financial constraints.