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## REPORT ON WORKSHOP 2

### Subject: Processing and Agro-Industry

This group examined in the main the prerequisites for a national viable processing subsector in the Caribbean.

We discussed presentations from Dr. Sammy, Dr. Smedley and Mr. Waddel and agreed on the following components for an indigenous processing industry.

- (a) Investigation to see whether a market exists and to determine what the market desires. This will entail an assessment of the potential of the product in the market as well as the nature of the competition from within and outside the Region.
- (b) Determine an adequate and reliable source of locally produced raw material at a reasonable cost. It was suggested that constant farming be encouraged and there be a firm mutual relationship between farmer and processor.

It was agreed that the presence of a surplus or glut was not by itself an indication that a processing facility was needed or feasible. However, to buffer the farmer from the adversity on *market conditions* it may be useful to bind the farmer to the facility by the purchase of shares i.e. having a share in ownership.

- (c) The siting of the operation is crucial. A decision has to be made whether production is for export or domestic consumption. It has to be decided whether the processed products will aim at the inter-regional trade or not. Further, we need to consider the need and the availability of social and physical infra-structure close to the site.

In addition, the group agreed that the nature of the raw material on the one hand and of the packaging material on the other are influential factors.

- (d) Properly selected and trained personnel at the technical and floor level is essential. It was readily agreed that the persons must display a sound knowledge of the technology and must be able to keep the facility going. This may sometimes require the services of a good mechanic rather than a food engineer.

These persons must also know where to go for assistance in their equipment needs and in technological problem. It was suggested that training courses be made available to all levels of personnel in this subsector.

On the matter of people, the question of quality control was raised. It was emphasised that we need to obtain the right people from the start and that they must produce to meet accepted standards.

- (e) Proper packaging and marketing was also seen as a key factor. The finished product must be able to stand on its own as a product and must meet the demands of the consumer.

- (f) It was proposed that agriculture could only survive with intelligent use of subsidies. While we all agreed on the need for subsidy there was no clear indication on exactly how they should apply.
- (g) Prompt decision-making is of the essence. Too much time elapses between the investigation of the project and the final decision.
- (h) Change in attitude by the policy-makers and by the consuming public was deemed another prerequisite for the success of the processing of agricultural products.
- (i) The prospect for processing looks bright. The body of knowledge exists to make the sub-section a vibrant one. The concensus was that we needed to put the tools together to make the kind of impact for which the potential exists.