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Role of the Faculty of Agriculture (UWI) in Agricultural Development of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

The Faculty of Agriculture of The University of the West Indies has a serious commitment to assist wherever possible in agricultural and rural development of its contributing territories.

In the case of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (the OECS), the Faculty has been making even greater efforts in this regard in the recent past because of the importance of agriculture in these economies.

Our main contribution is in education and training and we have been heartened by the growing numbers of students from the OECS in our Bachelors and Masters Programmes, as well as in the Diploma in Extension.

With particular regard to St. Kitts/Nevis we can note that following examinations which start this morning, two students from St. Kitts/Nevis should be among the top graduates in the B.Sc. Agriculture Programme for 1987/88.

Our annual In-Service Windward and Leeward Islands' Agricultural Extension Training Courses remain an important link with Ministries of Agriculture of the OECS as well as the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla.

But perhaps the most visible sign of our cooperation with the OECS in agricultural and rural development is the Caribbean Agricultural Extension Project — a joint project of the Faculty, MUCIA (the Mid-Western Consortium for International Activities), Ministries of Agriculture of the OECS and USAID. CAEP is the major outreach activity of the Faculty.

The aim of this project is to improve the extension services in the states. To this end, special sondeos or rapid reconnaissance surveys have been held in each state (including one in St. Kitts and another in Nevis). Also, there has been substantial training and development in extension planning and programming, as well as a major thrust in the improvement of the economic performance of farm families through a Farm and Home Management Programme.

CAEP takes pleasure in being associated as a co-sponsor of this 19th West Indies

Agricultural Economics Conference.

Turning to this Conference Series, (as the President of the Society noted), its genesis was in the Faculty's Department of Agricultural Economics & Farm Management which hosted the first Conference in 1965. The Faculty has always maintained through that Department, a very special interest. In fact, we consider these conferences as another important arm of our outreach activities.

We again note with pleasure the direct association as a co-sponsor of this Conference of the Department of Agricultural Economics & Farm Management.

However, despite our activities, the Faculty is aware that more is expected of it from these states. In particular, there has been a decline of citizens of the OECS on the staff of the Faculty. The Faculty in fact suffered a great loss with the return of Dr. Keith Archibald to St. Kitts as Director of Agriculture last year. Though I may hasten to add this must surely represent a great gain to this state of which we feel great pride.

Then there are the special needs of individual states that the Faculty may not be in a position to meet at this time, because of severe financial constraints the University currently finds itself in.

But our inability to be totally responsive to your needs is in no way a reflection of the importance that the Faculty places on our commitment to agricultural development of the OECS.

We are always actively seeking ways to increase our contribution, and we do hope that you shall continue working with us to achieve our mutual objectives.

We do hope that this conference will assist in our particular objective of deepening our understanding of the process of agricultural diversification which is a subject of deep concern to the OECS and to St. Kitts/Nevis in particular.

On behalf of the Faculty of Agriculture therefore I extend warmest greetings to the Governments and people of the OECS, and very warmest greetings to the Government and people of St. Kitts and Nevis.