The CARDI Update is a bi-monthly publication supported by the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA – ACP-EU). The aim is to keep stakeholders aware of CARDI’s ongoing programmes and initiatives. CARDI’s Members are Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.
Scientists, Representatives of Farmers Organisations, Climate Specialists, Water Authority Executives, Engineers, Researchers and Media-workers were amongst the participants at a three-day workshop during the Tenth Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) on Sunday October 9, 2011, in Dominica. This workshop provided the scientific and rational bases for detailing implementable Water Management Policy directives in response to climate variability and change.

Synthesizing of these policy briefs is in keeping with the responsibility of the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute’s (CARDI), to provide the technical and socio-economic framework for consideration by the Region’s Policymakers. CARDI is part of the Consortium of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Institutions on Water Management, which is expected to assist Member States in coordinated consultation with national, regional and international partners in the formulation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Water Use Efficiency (WUE). This consortium includes the CARICOM Secretariat, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management (CDEMA), The Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), University of the West Indies (UWI), University of Guyana (UG), and University of Surinam (ADEKUS).

Background

The participants noted that in the context of the Region’s vulnerability, due to the variability of rainfall, can affect our viability if our water management systems are not enhanced. Therefore immediate action is demanded. In support of this conclusion, it is acknowledged that:

- Agriculture has played, in the past and continues to play a significant role in the socio-economic development of the Caribbean region.
- For some countries within the Region, agriculture contributes to more than 20 per cent of the GDP and is seen as a major economic driver.
- Climate variability and change will impact the water availability via changes in temperature, rainfall, intensity of storms and sea levels.
- The emerging picture for the Caribbean is one of reduced available water due primarily to increased variability of rainfall patterns and also to the long term drying trend that is anticipated under global warming.
- The trends have serious implications for agriculture within the Region as production systems are predominantly rainfed; more than 50 per cent of agricultural operations rely solely on rainfall.
- Agriculture in the Caribbean is therefore sensitivity to these variations in rainfall “rainfall is king”.
- Not responding to this vulnerability is not an option as it will have serious implications for Food and Nutrition Security goals, reducing poverty and hunger and economic development.

Conclusions

Policy Influencing Issues/Points

The following main conclusions were:

- Access to water is essential for sustainable economic development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) relating to a reduction in poverty and hunger.
- Current fragmented approach to water management needs modification to ensure a focused response.
• An Integrated Water Resource Management approach is critical for sustainability.
• Collection and storage of reliable data pertaining to the water sector is imperative for the development of evidence-based policies.
• A science based approach towards the development of policies that relate to water management for agriculture is a critical.
• Enhancement of current farming operations to improve the efficiency of collection, storage and use of water should be aggressively pursued e.g. water harvesting, crop mulching, soil erosion control, drought tolerant crops, and water recycling.
• New and innovative technologies that improve the efficiency of water management practices should be pursued.
• Capacity building among technocrats and farmers as it relates to water management and climate change should be given high priority.

Way Forward
• Develop/strengthen policies from which programmes and projects are developed and implemented.

Our vulnerability due to the variability of rainfall can affect our viability if our water management systems are not enhanced and therefore demands immediate action.

Food Nutrition and Security

The European Commission along with the UK Government Office for Science organized a seminar in March of this year to look at the ‘Future of Global Food and Farming: How Can science Support Food Security?’.

This is certainly an important question for the Caribbean Region which is faced with an annual food import bill approaching 4 billion US dollars. The world welcomed its seven billionth occupant just last week with the expectation that another 2 billion will be added to the population by 2050.

The challenges faced to feed 9 billion people in a world where climate variability and change is already impacting agri-food systems are enormous. The conference opined that the needs of a growing world population will have to be satisfied as critical resources such as water, energy and land become increasingly scarce.

What role can science play to support food security in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)? The roles are many and all are vital. Science has been largely responsible for the green revolution that has fed the global population since the turn of the last century. Even better science will be needed for the sustainable intensification of food production. More...
CARDI Opens Link With India

The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), signed a Memorandum of Agreement with The Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) in Dominica on October 14, 2011 during the Tenth Caribbean Week of Agriculture.

The signing was executed by ICAR's Director General, Dr. Ayyappan and CARDI's Executive Director, Dr. Arlington Chesney. The Agreement will facilitate scientific exchanges between India and the Caribbean which will allow the Region access to scientists from India and scientific work done by ICAR in India.

Among the areas of collaboration targeted between CARDI and ICAR are the control of invasive species, starting with the Red Palm Mite, germplasm exchange and capacity building. One of the first benefits of this new Agreement will be a year-long assignment by an Indian Scientist. Dr. Avvaru Surjatha, will be coming to Trinidad and Tobago to look at the problem of the Red Palm Mite, which has been severely affecting the production of coconut on the island and some other Caribbean countries.

ICAR is the apex body for co-ordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture in India. With 97 institutes and 47 agricultural universities spread across the country this is one of the largest national agricultural systems in the world. ICAR is one of the world’s largest agricultural research institutions, and has been a linchpin player is assisting India to achieve self sufficiency in food production, thus ensuring relief from hunger for the population of over 1 billion people.

India’s self sufficiency in food production is largely due to the work of ICAR over the last 40 years. ICAR was a major driver of the Green Revolution, which in the 1970s doubled food production in many developing countries.

The Indian scientists also visited Trinidad and Tobago in October, 2011. Dr. Ayyapan gave a public lecture entitled AR4D and Food Security. He gave an insight into how India relies on agricultural research to achieve Food Sovereignty. The lecture was part of the CARDI Public Lectures.
Dr. Chesney Receives Guyana’s National Award

By Adelle Z. Roopchand

Dr. H. Arlington D. Chesney, Executive Director of the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), has been bestowed a National Honour Golden Arrow of Achievement, by President Bharrat Jagdeo of the Republic of Guyana. This Award which was bestowed for his “Contribution to Agricultural Development in Guyana and the Region” was presented at the Republic of Guyana National Awards 2011 Ceremony in Georgetown.

His career in agriculture began in Guyana as an Agriculture Assistant in the Ministry of Agriculture in 1963. He then became the youngest Chief Agricultural Officer in 1976. Through his initiative, the Month of Agriculture was established in the 1970s to highlight the importance of agriculture and related activities in Guyana’s economic development.

Dr. Chesney praises his career in Guyana as being the factors which helped him conceptualise the Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) in 2001. During the Month of Agriculture, “the Ministry of Agriculture recognised that agriculture could not be a stand alone sector. It had to collaborate with a number of supporting sectors to ensure its future. But more importantly the Ministry recognised the need for Cabinet and Head of Governments to support this initiative.”

This understanding served as a basis for the establishment of the Alliance for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Mileu (“the Alliance”), by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) with support from the Ministers of Agriculture in the Region when the Standing Committee of Ministers of Agriculture was disbanded. The Alliance embraced all major stakeholders.

Another key activity was his role in the development of the Jagdeo Initiative which was initiated at the request of President Bharrat Jagdeo to the Director General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). The first documentation to go to Suriname for endorsement of the Jagdeo Initiative Framework was prepared by the Caribbean Community CARICOM Secretariat, Byron Blake, FAO’s Winston Rudder and Dr. Chesney. The Jagdeo Initiative provides a framework for the Region to work within a combination of national initiatives and is enshrined to add value to the National institutions and actions”, according to Dr. Chesney.

As part of the regional exposure Dr. Chesney joined the CARDI in 2007, which has brought his career in a full circle as he was the representative of the Government of the Republic of Guyana on the Committee that agreed on the establishment of CARDI as the Regional research centre.

Part of his role of CARDI is to ensure that the Institute lives up to the name the premier research and development entity as spelt out in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.
CARDI & IICA Provide Assistance in Building Dominica’s Cassava Enterprises

One of the objectives of the project “Increased production of Roots and Tuber Crops in the Caribbean through the introduction of improved marketing and production technologies” is to strengthen existing production groups and the formation of clusters that will improve the activities along the commodity value chain. This project is being executed in six countries of the Caribbean (Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados, St. Vincent and, Dominica) by the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) with financing provided by the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) and the European Union (EU).

An activity in fulfilment of this objective was conducted in Dominica during the Caribbean Week of Agriculture, on 13 & 14 October 2011, under the theme ‘Cassava Industry - Developing Group Enterprises’. CARDI, with support from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) through its Agribusiness Specialist, Robert Reid, convened a workshop at the Pastoral Centre in Roseau, Dominica, aimed at assisting cassava producers and processors to work collectively towards the improvement of the local industry.

Thirty-five of the major cassava producers and processors in Dominica participated in the Workshop, which was facilitated with resource persons from CARDI, the Ministry of Agriculture of Dominica, the Ministry of Social Services, the Community Development and Gender Affairs Cooperative Division, the Essential Oils Cooperative, the Bee Keepers Cooperative, IICA, the National Development Foundation of Dominica (NDFD) and, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Export Development Unit (OECS-EDU).

At the conclusion of the Workshop, participants developed an action plan for future action which included:

- Registration of all cassava producers and processors;
- Conduction of a production and market survey by the Ministry of Agriculture;
- Introduction of improved planting material and production practices;
- Association of producers and processors in the Dispax and Colihaut communities to share information and take joint actions, including the formal establishment of cooperatives or a company to obtain financing for equipment and infrastructure;
- Establishment of a Cassava Value Chain Committee to guide product development and marketing;
- Training in product development and transformation;
- Improving the packaging and labelling of farine, cassava bread and, other value added products.

Components of this action plan will be addressed through the CARDI/IICA project funding agreement.

The post Workshop assessment indicated that the 2-day event met with participants’ expectations with respect to its content and usefulness. It also indicated that most of the participants had internalized the need to work together in order to build successful and competitive cassava production and processing enterprises in Dominica. It was also evaluated as having contributed significantly to the outputs required by the regional CFC/EU-funded Roots and Tubers project within which the event was conducted.
Agricultural Lands Under Threat in the Caribbean

The increasing possibility of more arable lands in the Caribbean falling out of production due to salination (lacking in organic content on account of rising sea levels and salt water intrusion) is of great concern to the Region’s agronomists.

Professor Nazeer Ahmad, Professor Emeritus, University of the West Indies, said some 9,000 hectares of land in Jamaica alone is out of production because of saline water intrusion. The case is even more chronic in some other Caribbean nations.

Professor Ahmad was addressing the topic of ‘Soil water management system for a drier Caribbean’ at a Climate Change Adaptation in Caribbean Agriculture Workshop, hosted by the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA) as part of the activities of the Caribbean Week of Agriculture, 2011.

He insists that water management of agricultural lands must be addressed urgently if the Region is to maximize crop production.

Case studies were presented by Mr Stanley Rampair, Water Management Specialist, about a variety of irrigation systems in St Elizabeth, Jamaica; and by Greg Marshall about irrigation best practices of a farm in Barbados.

Other issues discussed at the three-day event included: Climate variability and change and water availability in the Caribbean, Managing water resources under a changing climate and Adaptation strategy for agriculture in the Caribbean in relation to declining water resources as a result of climate change.

The 10th Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA), was hosted from the 9-15 October, 2011 in Dominica under the theme “Caribbean Food and Nutrition Security in a Changing Climate – The Nature Island Experience”.

Corn field in Belize under flood after heavy rains.
The Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA)

Since its inception, the CWA has been recognised as a facility to place agriculture and rural life in a prominent position, so key public and private sector decision makers can better acknowledge the strategic importance of the sector to economic, social and environmental stability. Most importantly, it affords stakeholders the opportunity to dialogue on the challenges affecting the sector, thus enabling it to become more relevant and competitive.

The event is held under the auspices of the Alliance, with the major collaborators being the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the CARICOM Secretariat, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA).

Activities generally include policy development meetings, workshops, trade expo, media activities, farmers’ meeting, and a host of other agricultural discussions which fosters collaboration among the stakeholders.

At the 10th CWA held in Dominica, one of the highlights of the week of activities was the Trade Show and Exhibition which provided a platform for national, regional and international exhibitors to showcase and promote their products and services.

This year’s meeting included:

- Official Opening of CWA and Trade Expo and the “Excellence in Communicating” Agricultural Media Award
- CARDI Climate Change Adaptation in Caribbean Agriculture – “Enhancing Water resources management”.
- CTA/CARDI Science and Technology Advisory Group Meeting.
- Inter-Agency Meeting
- CTA/IICA Agriculture Round Table – “Food and Nutrition Security Circle: Connecting the Dots”
- The Caribbean Forum
- The Alliance for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu in the wider Caribbean Meeting.
- Careers in Agriculture Forum.
- Farmer’s Forum
- COTED Official Meeting
- Association of Caribbean Media Workers General Meeting
- Caribbean Agriculture Forum for Youth Meeting
- Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers Meeting
- Caucus of Agriculture Ministers
- OECS Ministers Meeting
- CARDI Board of Governance Meeting
- FAO Seminar
- CANROP Meeting
- Buyer’s Conference
- CRFM Council of Ministers
- CSWIG Meeting
- Farmers’ Award Ceremony
- CABA Annual General Meeting

From L to R - Professor Bongani Ndimba – University of Western Cape (South Africa), Minister Dr. Kenneth Daroux – Ministry of Environment, Minister Mathew Walters – Ministry of Agriculture, Acting Prime Minister Ambrose George, Mr. Michael Hailu – Director CTA, Dr. Arlington Chesney – Executive Director CARDI, Professor Chandra Madramootoo– McGill University Canada
CARIBBEAN AGRICULTURE FORUM FOR YOUTH (CAFY)

"ROSEAU DECLARATION"

We, the representatives of the individual National Forums for Youth in Agriculture in the Caribbean region, having undertaken to organize ourselves into a common body to jointly pursue our goals and aspirations as youth in relation to our involvement in Agriculture as outlined in our concept document for the formation of a regional agricultural youth forum, hereby declare to this 2011 Alliance Meeting:

1. that there is limited knowledge of the Alliance and request that provision shall be made by the Alliance Secretariat and other stakeholders in agriculture for its promotion;

2. request that the Ministries of Agriculture in the various territories recognize and support the work of the national chapters of CAFY;

3. that there is limited communication between CAFY and the other Alliance constituent members, between CAFY members and regional agencies and the national chapters, request that support shall be provided for greater use of ICT, the inclusion of CAFY in all local and regional agricultural meetings, conferences, workshops, etc. and in the preparation and dissemination of periodic publications to promote its activities;

4. whereas it is generally accepted that CAFY is an effective mechanism for engaging youth from the region in the agricultural sector, financial support is an indispensable requirement for its continued operation, growth and development;

5. recognize that for CAFY to provide opportunities for youth to actively engage in sustainable agricultural development, consideration shall be given to the provision of technical support and capacity building for the continued strengthening of CAFY;

6. considering that agriculture is still a viable avenue for youth employment and empowerment consideration shall be given by member governments through policies that make lands available for youth in agriculture;

7. whereas it is generally agreed that the objective of CAFY to promote increased innovation among youth, particularly rural youth to achieve greater development in rural areas for the broad based sustainable development of agriculture remains relevant, CAFY shall increase advocacy:
   o for land reform;
   o improved access to credit for youth;
   o for inclusion of agriculture in school curriculum in primary school and
   o continuous training of youth.

Signed by the constituent members of CAFY, on this day, the 12th of October, 2011 in Roseau, Dominica:

[Signatures]

Dominica National Agriculture Youth Association (NAVA)

Kurt Harris

Craig H. Theen

Antigua and Barbuda Agriculture Forum for Youth (ABAFY)

Raphlyn Sewell

Guyana Forum for Youth in Agriculture (GFYA)

Sandra Hennessey

St. Kitts and Nevis Agriculture Youth Forum (SKAFY)

Sandra Charles

St. Vincent and the Grenadines Agriculture Forum for Youth (SVAFY)

Katharina Girma

Bahamas Agriculture Forum for Youth (BAFY)

St. Lucia Agriculture Society for Youth (SLAFY)

LWI Agriculture Society for Trinidat and Tobago

Grenada Agriculture Forum for Youth (GAFY)
Q and A with Dr. Michael Taylor

By Adelle Z. Roopchand

Dr Michael Taylor, is a Climate Change Specialist, currently the Head of the Department of Physics, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus Jamaica. During the Caribbean Week of Agriculture, Dr. Taylor, represented the Climate Studies Group as the Director of the Mona Campus.

What does the Climate Studies Group do?
The Climate Studies Group looks at how climate will manifest itself in the Caribbean region from now going to the end of the century. That is climate change, what will be some of the ways we will note climate change in the Region.

Why is the Climate Studies Group part of the Caribbean Week of Agriculture?
The Climate Studies Group is looking at the sensitivity that is inherent to our Caribbean life including agriculture. Climate Change impacts on everybody and all sectors. Our islands are small in size and as a result are sensitive to climate. A lot of our economic activities revolve around climate. There is tourism and the focus of CWA, agriculture.

So clearly when the climate changes, whether it is a short term or long term changes, everything will be impacted. Specifically, during the week of CWA, part of the focus was in light of the sensitivity of agriculture has on climate. What will happen if the climate changes? How will the climate change impact agriculture?

What is Climate Change?
Climate is a little different from weather. Weather is the everyday occurrence. Climate change is long term changes in weather patterns. Climate change is happening and in fact many of us are impacted by climate change in one way or another. In 2009-2010, there were strong droughts in this Region in early 2010, so much so, that water restrictions were implemented. By the end of the year many places were having floods. So this kind of increased variability in the weather patterns is another way we have noted that the climate is changing.

Impact of Climate Change in Agriculture.
In the Caribbean Region, “Rainfall is King”. The Caribbean Region gets its water supply mainly from either the surface water or ground water apart from a few desalination plants. These sources depend on rainfall hence reference that in the Caribbean Region rainfall is king. For Caribbean agriculture, rainfall is also king as most of our agriculture is rain fed and not irrigated. Even if it were irrigated, we would depend on the ground and surface water which depends on the rainfall. So once the rainfall pattern changes or becomes variable we see it in the yields. Once yields are negatively affected the livelihood of the farmers are invariably affected. Once the livelihood is affected it is a community issue and once it is a community issue it becomes a national issue.

What creates climate change?
Climate change is a long term changes in climate which we have seen and will continue to see. A couple of things can make climate change long term; there are natural cycles which is recognisable like a volcanic eruption. There are man-made impacts on climate which is really due to the release of green house gases into the atmosphere. Green house gases are the by-products of burning fossil fuels example carbon dioxide, water vapour and methane. The more fossil fuel is burned, the more green house gases are put out into the atmosphere. This increase in those green house gases are the causes a warmer global temperature. Warmer global temperatures disrupts all the other climatic patterns. Change in climate results in variable rainfall patterns, rising sea levels and increase incidents of hurricanes.

What can we do?
If climate change is an inevitable thing, what are some of the farming practices which will have to be reviewed not just by farmers but by all?

There are two ideas of action:
1. It is mitigation. We have to do something about the green house gases. The Caribbean is a small producer of green house gases though the region is one of the most impacted.
2. We must adapt because we will inevitably have to live with these consequence. One of the areas is clearly the agricultural sector, they have to look at if there will be warmer temperatures and more variable rainfall and likely to get more intense hurricanes. What are the ways I can adapt to this new reality?
Excellence in Communicating Agriculture Award

2011 marks the inaugural regional “Excellence in Communicating Agriculture Award”. Through the support of CTA this will be an annual competition designed to contribute to an increased understanding:

- Of agriculture and rural development, food and nutrition security and related issues among the media in the Region
- Greater opportunities for interaction and increased dialogue on agricultural issues between and among the Caribbean media
- More informed reporting on food security and agricultural and rural development issues.

Each year the Awards will be presented at the CWA and dedicated to the recognition of outstanding agriculturalists (alive or deceased).

In 2011 the awards were dedicated to Mr. Richard Allport (Dominica), Mr Jean Fritz Boutin (Haiti), and Ms. Betty Finlay (Grenada) all of whom passed under sudden and tragic circumstances, but whose contributions have left an indelible mark on the advancement of regional agriculture.

Honorees

Richard S. Allport (1959-2011)

Richard S. Allport, more affectionately known as ‘Ricky’, had always shown a passion and love for animals and nature. It was natural then after leaving school, that he sought employment in the Ministry of Agriculture. In 1980, he left for the UWI, St. Augustine Campus on a CDB scholarship returning in 1984 with a B.Sc. in Agriculture. In 2001, Ricky left for Taiwan to pursue graduate studies. In 2003 he graduated with a M.Sc. in Horticulture. For the past three years, until January 2011, Ricky served as Acting Director of Agriculture, during which he was the ultimate professional with strong convictions and a principled approach on matters concerning the direction of agricultural development in Dominica.

Jean Fritz Boutin (1945 – 2010)

Jean Fritz Boutin, unknown to many in the Caribbean agriculture and rural development landscape, was the former Caribbean Representative on CTA’s Executive Board.

Born and educated under difficult conditions, Boutin who was fondly referred to as the “marathon man” by his classmates still managed to graduate among the top five in his class from the Faculty of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine of the State University in Haiti. From 1971 – 1996 he held many senior positions in the Ministry of Agriculture in his homeland.

He used to say “that nothing is easy you are rewarded for good work”. He stood true to his belief as it was during work Mr Boutin lost his life during Haiti’s devastating earthquake of 2010.
Betty Finlay, Executive Secretary of the Grenada Food and Nutrition Council, died, at the age of 60. She played a leading role in the Grenada Food and Nutrition Council, practicing her profession with effervescence, wisdom and deep devotion.

Virtuous messages were permanently etched in all her teachings as she sought to pursue her mission to build both body and mind through rational application of the principles of nutrition. Mrs. Finlay started her tenure at St. George’s University in October 1994. She was an inspirational teacher with a kind heart and a mind to make all things right for her students, who saw her as a caring and generous person, always willing to share her expertise.

Betty Finlay (1951-2011)

The Excellence in Communicating in Agriculture Awards 2011 was presented to the winners of the first edition of the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Co-operation (CTA) Caribbean Awards in Dominica, at the Official Opening of the Caribbean Week of Agriculture and Trade Expo at the National Stadium.

The winners were:
- The Best News Story (Print), Gaulbert Sutherland of the Stabroek Newspaper of Guyana.
- The Best Business Feature (Print), Shaliza Hassanali, Trinidad Guardian.
- The Best Television News Story, Carry Bishop, Jamaica Information Service.
- The Best News Story (Radio), Antoinette Frederick, WINN FM, St Kitts and Nevis.

The competition was open to all Caribbean journalists in print, broadcast and online media. It covered work published or broadcast between May 1, 2010 and April 30, 2011.

The Awards Ceremony was part of the Official Opening for CWA Exhibition and Trade Show. The ceremony took place on the 12 October at the Windsor Park Stadium.

According to CARDI Executive Director, Dr Arlington Chesney, journalists are very much part of agriculture. He said, “these Awards are part of the actions of the Agricultural Community to involve the Media in sensitising the public as to the key role of agriculture in the development of the economies of the Region.”

The Association of Caribbean MediaWorkers (ACM) President, Wesley Gibbings, said he was pleased with the high level of interest in the first edition of the awards. “The intention here is to encourage the growth of credible channels of informed, well-told stories on the food and agriculture sector,” Gibbings said. “In the Caribbean, such stories are among the most important the journalistic community can offer.

Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) display at the CWA 2011.
Enhanced initiatives are coming for agriculture over the period, 2012 to 2016, to meet the demands of Regional Governments, for greater food and nutrition security in the Region. This, as the 38th Conference of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) approved on October 14, 2011, the CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan (RFNSAP) to implement the previously agreed upon initiatives in the Region.

The RFNSAP followed the CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy (RFNSP) which was formulated and endorsed in October 2010 by the 36th special meeting of COTED in Grenada. The RFNSP (and by extension the RFNSAP) ‘gives effect to the commitments made by the (CARICOM) Heads of Government in the Liliendaal Declaration’ as an effort to alleviate the nine Key Binding Constraints in the Jagdeo Initiative.

Consistent with the policy objectives of the RFNSP, the strategic framework of the RFNSAP over the five year planning period comprises four Action Areas (each with corresponding ‘Strategic Thrust’ with defining elements of the Action Areas). The four Action Areas are as follows:

- **Food Availability:**
  The promotion of systems for the sustainable production of safe, affordable, nutritious, good quality Caribbean Food commodities.

- **Food Access:**
  Ensuring access of Caribbean households and individuals to sufficient nutritious food at all times

- **Food Utilisation/Nutritional Adequacy:**
  Promoting the commercialization and consumption of safe, affordable nutritious quality food commodities

- **Stability/sustainability of food supply:**
  Improving the food and nutrition security resilience of the Region to natural and socio-economic shocks and climate change

Within the RFNSP, it is argued that ‘These Initiatives have had limited, if any success because they have been prepared and executed in isolation from other policies’. In this context, health and nutrition feature prominently within a Regional formula/strategy in which agriculture, food security and nutrition are juxtaposed. Additionally, partnerships between ‘diverse ministries and institutions at national level and across regional institutions and organs of community’ are emphasized.

The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) Medium Term Plan (MTP) fully captures the philosophy and activity portfolio of the RFNSAP. CARDI’s three Pillars – bottom up/client led; working together and accountability and transparency; which form the foundation upon which the Institute’s programmes have been constructed echo the collective sentiment of the RFNSP and RFNSAP. In particular, CARDI’s first two Pillars, which build on a consultative process, are emphasized within the RFNSAP.

Additionally, the Pillars are reflected within the implementing mechanisms/activities of the RFNSAP. For example, the RFNSAP recognizes ‘CARDI led Agricultural Cluster meetings and the Lead Agency Committee meetings as the basis for providing technical inputs and advice to an upgraded Agricultural Unit within the CARICOM Secretariat.

CARDI fully supports the CARICOM Secretariat in the operationalization of the RFNSAP.
Caribbean countries continue to face the challenge of ensuring food security, in the face of threats posed by climate change, according to Michael Hailu, Director, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation –African, Caribbean, Pacific -EU countries (CTA), during his address at the CTA/CARDI/IICA Forums, on Climate Change Adaptation in Caribbean Agriculture; and the Science, Technologies and Innovative Programme at the Tenth Caribbean Week of Agriculture in October 2011 in Dominica.

Mr. Hailu emphasized that the threat is a worldwide one that is closely related to the growing global population. “Globally, food production must rise by 70% if we are to satisfy a population which is forecast to increase from 7 to 9 billion by 2050”.

He said, “Climate change adaptation is a priority for the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries to meet their development goals and to eliminate hunger and poverty.”

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) announced recently that “the number of hungry people on the planet will this year reach a historic high of 1.02 billion.

“About 100 million more people than last year have been pushed into chronic hunger and poverty due to ‘hidden hunger’ - chronic lack of vitamins and minerals -The consequences of hidden hunger are mental impairment, poor health and productivity, or even death - The poor, especially women and children, in developing countries, are the most vulnerable”, Mr Hailu quoted from a Micronutrient Initiative report.

Micronutrient Initiative (MI), the leading organization working on eliminating vitamin and mineral deficiencies in the world’s most vulnerable populations, informs that “2 million children may die unnecessarily each year because they lack vitamin A, zinc or other nutrients. 18 million babies are born mentally impaired due to iodine deficiency each year.”

He explained that the report indicates that approximately 53 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean suffer from chronic hunger which is an indicator for the Caribbean to push ahead with initiatives to address the issues.

In 2009, the G8 pledged $20 billion US in farm aid to poor nations as part of the Renewed Interest in Agriculture through:

1. MDG Goal 1: Halving Poverty and Hunger by 2015
2. L’Aquila G8:20 billion USD for agriculture
3. CAADP for African investments
4. Jagdeo Initiative for the Caribbean
5. Agriculture and Climate Change linkages

While climate change was one of the main topics at the CWA forum, CTA also focused on improving post-harvest knowledge systems through its Science, Technologies and Innovation Programme.

Mr. Hailu emphasized the enormous task still ahead in changing the planet to bridge the gaps in financial, food and energy insecurity, inequalities, climate change among other worldwide issue faced.

He reviewed the threats and opportunities of alternative energies, and warned that careful consideration needs to be given to biofuel, because of “direct competition between land and food supply!” He urged the Caribbean, “further investments on solar and wind energy could bring a jump in wellbeing level in ACP Regions.”

“Now, we have the awareness, the knowledge, the technology, the commitment...to change!” said Hailu.