March 20, 2015:- Small ruminants have been identified by CARICOM Member States as important for the maintenance of acceptable levels of food and nutrition security. CARDI serves as the lead in developing this commodity as a contribution to improved food security. Presently, most of the demand for small ruminant meat is met by imports, which account for approximately 80-90 percent of what is consumed in the Region. To improve local (Caribbean) supply, greater collaboration among the key actors in the sector is mandatory, allowing for joint planning and implementation of strategies, programmes and projects.

In his Welcome Remarks at the Regional Workshop on Small Ruminants, held on Tuesday 17th March, 2015 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Trinidad, Mr. Bruce Lauckner, Acting Executive Director of CARDI, stated ‘the reason for this [workshop] is that we really need to coordinate and work together’. The Regional Stakeholders’ Meeting facilitated information sharing and discussion on the harmonisation of strategies, programmes and projects for the Small Ruminants Industry.

Karime Carey, the Small Ruminants Association President in St Kitts noted that with a ‘high importation bill on goat meat and mutton’, he believes that by producing and using our own, costs can be reduced. ‘Collaboration is a great help, and with a lot of issues and constraints’ this Workshop provides the opportunity to access critical information for St Kitts’ success in this industry.

Newjohn Bernard of Grenada’s Ministry of Agriculture stated that the small ruminants industry in Grenada is ‘very important’ and with a heavy rural population, the ‘small ruminants industry can greatly assist the socio-economic status of persons in those communities’. He noted that the Workshop, by ‘putting our different resources together, this will strengthen our efforts to supply the need for small ruminants in the Caribbean’!

Presentations were made on ‘Status of the Small Ruminants’ Industry in Barbados - The role of the Barbados Blackbelly Sheep and the potential for
increased production to meet the demand of the region for breeding stock'; ‘Status of the Small Ruminants Industry in Jamaica - The potential for increased production to meet the demand of the region for breeding stock'; ‘The status of the Small Ruminants’ Industry in St Kitts/Nevis: Slaughter, processing and marketing arrangements for small ruminant livestock'; ‘The status of the Small Ruminants’ Industry in St Lucia: Constraints and opportunities'; ‘The status of Small Ruminants Industry in Grenada: Constraints and opportunities'; ‘The status of the Small Ruminants Industry in Trinidad and Tobago: Programmes, projects and approaches to increasing the supply of breeding stock'; Status of the Small Ruminants Industry in Tobago - the role of the facility at Blenheim in increasing the supply of breeding stock to meet regional demand'; ‘Regional small ruminants’ programme: Current and future projects – Perspectives from the Food and Agriculture Organisation – FAO'; and ‘The structure and functioning of the Small Ruminants Industry in New Zealand: Success factors’.

The Session was led by the Commodity Leader for Small Ruminants at CARDI, Mr. Norman Gibson, who noted that ‘today is the beginning of a process that will allow us to collaborate more deeply and derive important synergies that will help us to improve production and productivity in this critical sector’.

Attending organisations included senior representatives from CARDI, FAO, IICA, CARICOM Secretariat, Ministry of Agriculture, Jamaica; Ministry of Agriculture, Barbados; Ministry of Food Production, Trinidad and Tobago; Tobago House of Assembly; Trinidad and Tobago Goat and Sheep Society (TTGSS). Also present were two representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand who are in the region to help CARDI formulate a project for support to the small ruminant industry as part of CARICOM/New Zealand cooperation.
Participants at the Regional Small Ruminants Workshop
A participant makes a contribution during the Workshop

CARDI … presenting the ‘facts on agriculture and research for development’.

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