



Country	Guyana
Institution (s)	Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Forestry and Labour
Type	Government



LARC/20/2

Transforming food systems for healthy diets for all

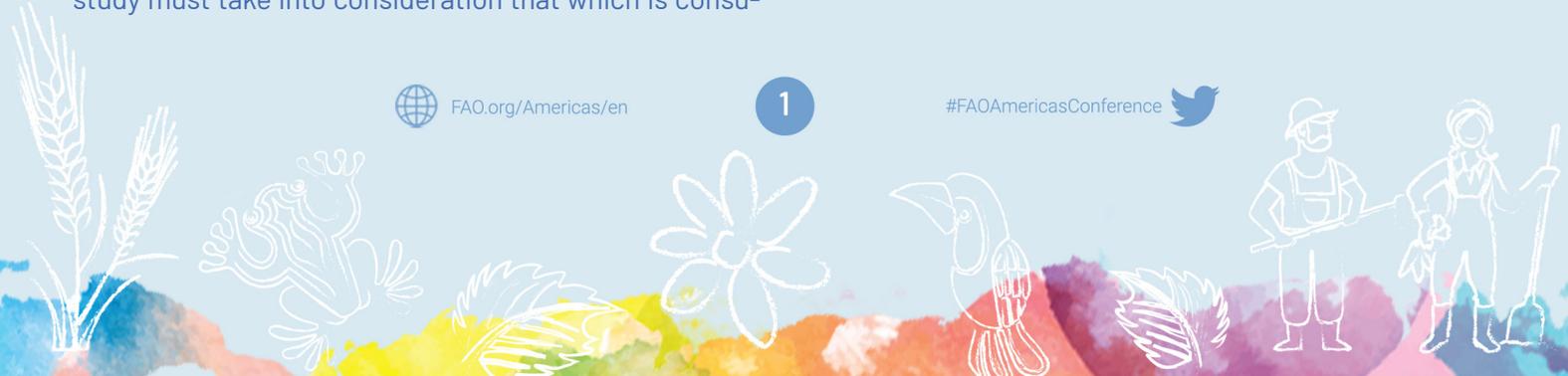
Guyana and other Latin America and Caribbean countries has attained the goal of reducing hunger mainly by producing enough food for the growing population, and this was clearly denoted in the paper by the following statement, Latin America and the Caribbean faces a rapid nutritional transition. The rate of hunger was almost halved between 2000 and 2018, from 11.9 percent to 6.5 percent, while the prevalence of overweight and obesity in adults increased from 49.8 percent to 59.6 percent in almost the same period. Invariable what however is important is teaching the people how to eat properly, and ensuring that all understand clearly what is a balanced diet. These are terms that are used loosely but to the bulk of the population what does it mean? how is it calculated? and what is actually required? What is healthy food, perhaps it is important that the FAO or perhaps some other organization undertake a study to clearly understand what people in the Caribbean and the Latin America actually eat on a normal day and work with us to improve our choices or enhance them by introducing alternative choices. I say this because on a daily basis we are bombarded to use foods that are not deemed as healthy but at no time do we see advertisements or any programmes saying to us what are the healthy choices that we have within the region e.g. hamburgers from McDonalds and other fast food outlets and cereals from Kellogg's and other manufactures, but have we ever seen an advertisement extolling the virtues of cassava bread, cherry drink or breadfruit. It is important I feel that the FAO undertake a study to determine what is regularly eaten in the countries and promote their continued and increase use. This study must take into consideration that which is consu-

med by the different ethnic groups within the LAC and promoting that which is healthy. It is a challenge to say the least for most persons to comprehend the number of calories that should be consumed daily and how to calculate the calories in each food group. Clearly, as more food become available and at a cheaper cost more food will be consumed by the population, and as a consequence the population became more obese, and invariable this would happen to the poorer and perhaps less educated sections of the population in the LAC. Therefore, the task for the FAO should be to teach the vulnerable sections of the population how to eat properly and also to promote healthy choices of locally available food and to simplify the confusion of calories and caloric intake.

On the agenda for SDG 2030 is the urgent need to transform food systems. As such it relevant for us to seek FAO's assistance to support the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of regulations and policy instruments that promote healthy eating for all.

Urgent transformation of the food system is required but may not be achievable in 10 years to address "the 42.5 million people who suffer from the scourge of hunger and the more than 262 million who are overweight in the region". It is our opinion that this requires a longer time since changes in eating habits would be required. Additionally, "Zero Hunger" and healthy eating does not go "hand in glove". Notwithstanding, the new food policies identified in part II to reduce malnutrition are good, even though some are very ambitious (such as B. Facilitating inclusive food distribution systems that promote healthy diets for the entire population) to be achieved in a decade. Overall an ambitious document.

[Challenges for healthy eating in Latin America and the Caribbean-](#) To address these challenges a collaborative





approach is needed among several organizations. Eg: In collaboration with the Ministry of Health promote nutrition balanced meals on the menus in eating establishments; and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education promote nutrition balanced meals through the school feeding programme.

New food policies to reduce malnutrition- With an assessment of Guyana’s national dietary guidelines we should ensure that the agriculture programmes developed focuses on nutrition-sensitive agriculture that is unique to Guyana. A growing concern to the safety of food produced is the use of growth promoters by farmers. FAO assistance maybe in collaboration with the Food Safety Authority is welcomed to establish a framework to monitor the prohibition of growth promoters.



LARC/20/3

Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies

Unfortunately, the rural poor always tend to have to poorest resources and this include marginal land where it would be difficult to get most crops to perform to their genetic potential and in the LAC, this is no different. These farms are usually precariously located on the side of a mountain prone to soil erosion and usually devoid of systems to provide irrigation, therefore it is not unexpected that the perform poorly. The FAO recognize that without prosperous and inclusive rural territories, Latin America and the Caribbean will not be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite the enormous natural potential of the region, half of the rural inhabitants live in poverty and 20 percent in extreme poverty (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2019). Interestingly the concept outlined has taken into consideration the many constraints that stymie increased productivity within the

LAC and by working to eliminate them should be in a position to SDG’s.

This document is very relevant to our needs as it seeks to emphasize rural agricultural areas which are targeted under the SDG. We should therefore request FAO’s assistance in generating knowledge related to the cost and effectiveness of public investments to boost agriculture in rural communities in a sustainable way.

Technological change is one of the important challenges to be addressed if Guyana is to compete with technological advanced nations. GLDA and NAREI have initiatives on-going in the area of artificial intelligence and genetic improvements. Further technical cooperation would be welcomed.

- A strategy for the sustainable and inclusive development of the region’s diverse rural territories. The Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana would have benefited from the FAO/IFAD Project “Strengthening Decent Rural Youth Employment in the Caribbean.” A few rural youths would have benefited from training and grants to establish small businesses. Further initiatives to promote agriculture among the youths, women and indigenous peoples will help the effort of sustainable development.

- Eradicating hunger and extreme poverty in the lagging territories of Latin America and the Caribbean

In relation to the focus area of “Interventions adapted to different national and territorial realities”:

- Technical support which offers support in establishing cooperation mechanisms based on the identification of critical nodes of rural developed will be beneficial in identifying the critical areas that capacity development is needed so that the SDGs can be achieved.

- Monitoring and evaluation in important in assessing the projects, as such guidance in the establishment of a clear and adequate monitoring framework is also welcomed.





For Guyana, considering the development of the oil industry special attention needs to be placed on ensuring sustainable agriculture production. Productive inclusion in the framework of social protection programmes is a strategy area to be explored.



LARC/20/4

Sustainable and climate resilient agriculture

Guyana still has vast tracts of land that has not been exploited for food and development although in the LAC with only 16 percent of the planet’s land area and 9 percent of its population, the region contains 50 percent of the world’s biodiversity, 23.4 percent of total forest cover, 31 percent of fresh water and 12 percent of the land currently under cultivation. This natural wealth provides the basis for abundant and diverse agriculture and food production. It is imperative for Guyana when seeking to develop our land for agricultural purposes that we strongly adhere to the regulations pertaining to land use, in relation to climate disruptions, because, considering the effects of climate change on temperature and precipitation regimes, it is estimated that in areas of the Southern Cone, rainfed agricultural production will be reduced due to the increase in seasonal water stress. In Central America, a decrease in the yield of crops such as corn, beans and rice of up to 35, 43 and 50 percent respectively, is expected towards the end of this century.

The unique position that Guyana is in because of the virgin nature of our agricultural lands, we could propose that we could be used as a model by the FAO for the development of systems aimed at achieving the development goals SDG 6,12 13 and 14. Our expansion agricultural areas are mainly our two savannah systems, the soils in these two areas are considered as fragile soils which could easily become degraded. Soils are a critical resource for food production, which are subject to multiple degradation processes that decrease their quality and productive capacity, negatively impacting the livelihoods of producers. Within the framework of the UNCCD, most of the countries in the region have developed action plans to

achieve neutrality in land degradation. In 2018, 22 countries set specific goals in this regard. Considering the severe incidence of degraded lands and ecosystems in LAC, a large-scale restoration should be proposed within this framework. Therefore, we could learn how to handle these soils from the experiences of other countries and the FAO could be invited to establish models so that other agricultural enterprises both large and small farmers may develop systems to handle and sustain fragile soils, the results of which would be applicable to us here in Guyana, but importantly it could be our contribution to the LAC in handling and managing fragile degradable soils.

The document highlighted that transformation of agriculture will not take place on its own. A strong political commitment is needed, along with significant changes in all sectors of the economy, as well as changes in policies, investments and alliances. To be effective, these policy changes should consider the whole food system, and consider solutions along the whole value chain. Perhaps the transformation that is required within the region may well depend on the FAO undertaking a study in the small island states of the Caribbean and other import food dependent countries to ascertain what they are importing from out of the region and to determine if that which is imported could be planted and or reared in the LAC to reduce the imports. It may be necessary that partnership agreements be made among countries and regional governments to determine who would plant what, make agreements of purchase and thus securing markets. So that if climate change does result in a reduction of food production in some countries others may be in a position to bridge the gap.



LARC/20/5

Results and priorities for FAO in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region

This important paper, highlighted the results from the work done by the FAO over the past 3 years and developed the projects to be undertaken by the FAO going





forward. Importantly, in the paper the FAO spoke of the potential of the LAC, stating that it has enormous potential for growth and adaptation to generate economic, social and environmental sustainability. The agricultural sector produces enough food to meet the needs of 821 million people. It is one of the world's leading food suppliers, and long-term projections confirm its continued leading global role in the production and trade of agricultural and food goods. Large-scale incorporation of information and communication technology (ICT) and biotechnology makes rural populations less isolated from critical services, including distance from markets. LAC has the world's largest available surface-area with potential for aquaculture development, and is one of the most biodiverse regions, providing a significant opportunity for producing food, feeds and aquatic protein. The increase and diversification of the global demand for food, the knowledge economy, technological innovations across food systems and the bioeconomy provide opportunities for addressing the challenges of climate change, rural poverty and the nutritional transition.

Nevertheless, following two decades of progress, hunger and poverty have been increasing in the region since 2014, while obesity, overweight and associated non-communicable diseases have accelerated, largely due to changes in consumption habits. The agri-food system's impact on soil quality, water availability, biodiversity, GHG emissions, fish stocks and forest coverage are increasing. Meanwhile, agriculture, in turn, has been affected by increased frequency and intensity of climatic events, as seen by the progressive modification of agroecological crop patterns, the spread of pests and diseases, the rise of sea levels and ecosystem deterioration. B. Regional priorities for FAO's work. This dire warning should not be taken lightly and all efforts and resources should be made available lest we lose the find ourselves back into a situation of hunger and poverty. Climate change and the concomitant problems associated with it can cause serious disruption to the progress made and it is heartening that the FAO recognizes these issues and plan to address them going forward.



LARC/20/8

Improving FAO's capacities to serve member countries in Latin America and the Caribbean

"II. A new business model and the necessary reforms" states inter alia "The main driver of regional organizational change in the coming years should be the realization that countries, rural societies and agriculture and food systems in the region, are today profoundly different from what they were in the 1970s and 1980s"

FAO should also recognize that agriculture practice is also different within blocks; within Caribbean, Guyana's agriculture is different from the Island states of the Caribbean; Also, Guyana's agricultural practices may also be different from Latin American countries. Thus, the type of technical support that Guyana may need will be different (in some cases) from other Caribbean states.

Suggested reforms: f : Agreed. Suggest that FAO budgetary allocations should be based on the significance of agriculture to a country's economy.



LARC/20/8

Improving FAO's capacities to serve member countries in Latin America and the Caribbean

While it is good that the FAO recognize the need to improve its capacity to better serve the LAC unfortunately the English-speaking Caribbean may still not receive the full benefit of all of the programmes that have been developed and are made available in the Latin American countries, particularly the livestock programmes and other small farmer programmes. In the English-speaking Caribbean small ruminants are important and you tend not to see too many programmes being done in the region when compared to the cattle dairy programmes in the Latin American countries. Perhaps it is time that the FAO in building the thematic technical networks of excellence hold discussions with the local networks so that there would be better use of the resources available and greater impact.





LARC/20/9

Innovation and Digital Agriculture

It is heartening to observe this important step being taken by the FAO to advance the cause of the small rural poor farmers into the realm of digital technology in agriculture, and to recognize that the FAO mandate is to effectively contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commitment of leaving no one behind, digital innovations must be promoted in two dimensions. First, products and services must be geared towards fostering more inclusive growth by allowing family farmers, small and medium-scale rural entrepreneurs and other rural inhabitants to participate in, and benefit from, the growth process. Second, the access to and use of these technologies by low-income rural households requires addressing the vulnerabilities that they face in developing sustainable livelihoods. This is a very good initiative and would reap great reward.

The MOA supports and welcomes this proposal. In fact, the GRDB (rice) has already been working with FAO of a digital enhancement programme. It comprised of two parts: 1 Strengthening the Rice Production Monitoring system and 2 Investigating Value Chain Opportunities in Guyana for rice.

The use of digital tools is very pertinent to us and is definitely the way forward for all involved in the sector. It is recognized that one of the most promising aspects to increase productivity is the digital connection between biotech and ICTs. The benefits of ICTs to rural communities cannot be over emphasized. As such we should support FAO's quest for the establishment of an International Digital Council for Food and Agriculture.

- Strengthening innovation to transform rural areas in Latin America and the Caribbean

"It is a priority of FAO to support national and regional efforts to promote research, technology and innovation in agriculture, food systems, and rural development, in order to achieve impacts on a large scale. Of particular

importance is the identification of new public-private research associations and partnerships, new funding mechanisms and research, technology and innovation policies that promote new investments"

- Supports this since it supports current Research and Development programmes such as the development of a fortified variety, and a salt tolerant variety, water Management and improvements of the Agronomic practices.

"One of the most promising aspects to increase productivity is the digital connection between biotechnology, information and communications technologies (ICTs)"

- This area is definitely needed in the agriculture industry and can enhance agricultural development in developing countries.

