



CARICOM REGIONAL FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

General Considerations¹

1.1 “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”². In the CARICOM region, a recent study found that food security is compromised not so much by lack of food availability as by inadequate access to foods and dietary patterns that adversely impact on nutritional status³.

1.2 Indeed, many Caribbean countries are experiencing a shift in nutrition patterns that has resulted in increasing rates of obesity, which in turn has contributed to an increase in nutrition-related Chronic Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) including diabetes and hypertension. Even so, the total number of undernourished people in the region increased, albeit slightly, during the period 1990-2005 moving from 7.5 to 7.6 million people⁴.

1.3 In fact, unacceptably high levels of poverty and inequality of income and access to resources occur together with an increasing prevalence of chronic nutrition-related diseases. Nevertheless, although CARICOM’s food security may not be compromised by lack of food availability, there are issues related to the declining trend of food production, and increasing trends in favour of imports (and the related expenditure of scarce foreign exchange).

1.4 Rising food prices during 2007-2008 and the economic crisis of 2008-2009 have affected all countries, increasing unemployment, reducing income opportunities, tourist arrivals and remittances and decreasing purchasing power with very serious impacts on the poor. While there are limited data by country, it would appear that these phenomena have significantly increased poverty and malnutrition and the incidence of NCDs⁵.

1.5 In addition to the external economic challenges derived from increasing prices of imports and loss of export demand due to the global recession, Caribbean countries are particularly exposed to the ravages of natural disasters. This vulnerability is compounded by a number of structural constraints related simultaneously to size and distance that affect the economic performance of Caribbean agricultural sectors.

1.6 Small populations and land masses in the small island Member States, as well as distances from other Caribbean countries and trading partners and insufficient strategic planning reduce the possibilities of exploiting economies of scale. These factors also result in higher prices for imported inputs and higher costs of export products, as smaller purchasing and sales volumes increase product, transaction and transportation costs. This situation undermines potential competitiveness. In the last two decades, Caribbean trade balances have been increasingly negative, debt burdens have increased and domestic inflation, high interest rates and low returns to agricultural investment have been a deterrent to investment in the agricultural sector.

¹ The RFNSP was formulated by a Technical Working Group comprising representatives of Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, OECS, UWI, CFNI and IICA, nominated by CARICOM Member States and serving under the leadership and guidance of the Agricultural Development Unit of the CARICOM Secretariat with assistance from the FAO with funding from the Government of Italy.

² World Food Summit Plan of Action, Rome, 1996;

³ Overview Vulnerability and Food and Nutrition Security in the Caribbean CFNI August 2007

⁴ Challenges and Outlook for the Caribbean Region, FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, 31st Session, April 2010.

⁵ Ibid.

1.7 Food and nutrition security is a multi-dimensional and multi-sector issue; its achievement requires simultaneous, holistic and concerted action on a wide front, encompassing, *inter alia*, the production (agriculture, fisheries and forestry), food processing and distribution, health and nutrition, trade, infrastructure, social welfare, education and information and communication sectors. Historically, the different dimensions of food and nutrition security have been addressed separately, resulting in a mix of policies that have not had the desired results. **This failure was recognised by the Heads of Government in the Liliendaal Declaration (July 2009), which mandates an integrated, multi-sector and regional approach for the achievement of food and nutrition security.**

1.8 In this context, the long term regional and national interest imposes on the community the need to invest in public goods for the benefit of the food crop farming, fishing, food processing, marketing and distribution sectors. These must be set in the context of a mix of pro-actively linked national and regional policies (Common Agricultural Policy-CAP, Common Fisheries Policy-CFP, Caribbean Cooperation in Health-CCH etc.) in support of health and nutrition and domestic food production and allied services at all stages and levels of the value chain. To be effective, these policies require a uniform legal and regulatory environment that guarantees food safety, health, nutrition standards and institutional arrangements for implementation.

1.9 These considerations highlight the need for an urgent and coherent response to the food security and allied public health and nutrition challenges confronted by CARICOM Member States. It is in this context that the latter have requested the CARICOM Secretariat to draft for their consideration, a Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy (RFNSP) **to ensure that the regional food production, processing, distribution, marketing and trade, and food safety and agricultural public health system is capable of providing safe, adequate, nutritious and affordable food for the region's inhabitants at all times, thereby achieving food and nutrition security.**

Rationale

1.10 The region's food import bill was estimated at US\$3.5 billion in 2008⁶ and food importation in the region continues to trend upwards. As the President of Guyana and CARICOM Representative put it on the occasion of the World Food Summit (WFS) 2009, *"the Region was seduced by the importation of cheap food and paid less attention to food security.... The soaring food and agricultural commodity prices in 2007/08 and financial crisis of the last few years caught the Region unprepared and put food security at the forefront of the Regional agenda."*

1.11 Recent events have underscored the importance of safe, secure and nutritious food supplies at reasonable prices for socio-political stability, human development and economic competitiveness. The spectre of climate change and a greater frequency of natural and socioeconomic shocks contribute to the growing interest in and recognition of the value of a joint multi-sector approach to food and nutrition security and the need for regional food production and distribution systems that ensure the manifold benefits of stable food availability, food access and appropriate food utilization for good health and nutrition with lower external costs to society and the environment.

1.12 Clearly, a common approach that builds on the comparative advantage of individual Member States will improve availability, accessibility and affordability of food, especially for the most vulnerable. **However, a consideration of paramount importance in support of a regional approach and policy for food and nutrition security is that it will enable Member States to secure for their private and public sectors as well as for households and communities**

⁶ CARICOM Statistical Office

throughout the region, benefits and economic externalities that they would be unable to access acting in isolation, and at a lower cost than they would otherwise face. Benefits that could be better accessed at national level through a regional approach to food and nutrition security include:

Food Availability-Production/Trade

- The provision of adequate incentives to agricultural entrepreneurs (**particularly small farmers and fishermen**) and other producers to grow more food i.e. price, marketing and food distribution and input supply policy as well as improved post-harvest handling and grading of food products and the existence of appropriate post-harvest infrastructure;
- Provision of a stable and predictable fiscal, trade and regulatory policy environment throughout CARICOM for agricultural, livestock and other food production in the medium term at all stages of the food value chain, as envisaged in the Common Single Market and Economy (CSME);
- Improvement and enhancement of the treatment of agriculture (and allied activities e.g. processing, packaging, distribution etc.) in the school curriculum at all levels with a special focus on urban and suburban agriculture to increase household garden production;
- The stimulation of product and service development from the indigenous agricultural and natural resource base and the application of creative design in agricultural and food products based on Caribbean cuisine and branded around Caribbean culture;
- The creation of vertical and horizontal linkages between tourism, agro-food distribution services, agro-food manufacturing and the productive sector;
- Encouraging the **addition of value** through the expansion of the range and quality of crop, livestock, fishery and other food by-products as well as improved meat cutting, processing and manufacturing techniques – value chain development;
- Upgrading of the physical supportive infrastructure (for grading, packaging and certification of agricultural and food commodities) for both the domestic and export markets;
- Keeping dependence on food imports (especially prepared/convenience foods) at the absolute minimum i.e. agricultural trade and import policy.

Food Access-Social Welfare/Equity

- The assurance of access to food by all sections of the population in all areas of the CARICOM Member States (i.e. incomes, general development and social welfare and rural development policy targeting the poor and vulnerable especially children and the elderly);
- Ability to mobilize appropriate social welfare support and productive safety nets for vulnerable populations with domestic funding (supplemented by external resources), based on constantly updated information generated by efficient and effective systems for poverty and vulnerability mapping and analysis in the framework of an Information System for Food and Nutrition Security (ISFNS);
- Reduction of health expenditures at household level as a result of improved nutrition due to the implementation of food safety, health and nutrition standards and truth in food labelling.

Food Utilization/Nutritional Adequacy/Stability of Supply-Natural Resources/Environment

- The creation of a regional and national ISFNS for food crisis prevention and risk management to give early warning of natural disasters, migratory plant pests and trans-boundary livestock diseases.
- Adoption and incorporation of international food grading and product standards, food safety and agricultural health standards into national law and regional agreements, and

the harmonization of the legal framework, regulatory ordinances and institutional arrangements for enforcement.

- The implementation of a coherent, integrated policy for agricultural production, marketing, processing, research, education and training, irrigation/water management, soil conservation, land use policy/planning and the quality of life in rural areas;
- Effective implementation of an integrated policy for agricultural public health and food safety as well as a regional SPS regime (plant protection and animal health certification systems and food grading and product standards, food safety and agricultural health standards);
- Mobilisation of domestic and external resources for the establishment of a regional framework for the effective implementation of SPS at national level (uniform plant protection and animal health certification systems and food grading and product standards, food safety and agricultural health standards etc. (CAHFSA and NAHFSA regional network));
- The inclusion of nutrition education in the school curriculum at pre-school day-care centres as well as at primary and secondary levels; and the introduction of training in nutrition practices and food utilization for good health in the curriculum of teacher training colleges.

Stability of Supply-Institutions/Infrastructure/Resource Mobilization

- Access to external resources and technical support in respect of water management infrastructure;
- Ensuring that the agricultural research agenda is set by producers (farmers, fishermen etc) and agro-processors, using a market driven and value chain approach;
- Ensuring that regional tertiary and agricultural institutions have technical and other capacity to drive the agricultural research agenda;
- Mobilisation of regional institutions (CARDI, CFNI, CDEMA, CARPHA, CROSQ, CCCCC, etc.) and linking them to relevant national institutions to achieve synergies in resource mobilization for actions in support of national food and nutrition security;
- Capacity building for farmers and agricultural associations;
- Measures to increase the use of modern technology in production;
- Access to global funding and technical support for innovative investments in agricultural/food development and transformation (e.g. a Venture Capital Fund) as well as developing resiliency to climate change, focusing on adaptation strategies for the productive sector;
- Agricultural insurance against natural disasters (hurricanes, drought, floods etc.);
- The establishment of emergency reserve stocks of food, seeds and other plant genetic materials i.e. disaster mitigation, prevention and management policy.

1.13 The availability of these opportunities throughout the CARICOM region will give effect to the common economic space and enabling environment created by the CSME for increased domestic food production on a stable and sustainable basis. It will also foster the development of a domestic service sector based on the transformation and distribution of locally produced food products for intra-regional and external trade (including franchising of uniquely Caribbean foods and recipes in the local and foreign markets for prepared foods).

1.14 The RFNSP provides an opportunity to reassess and refocus Member States' agricultural development policies, programmes and investments implemented at the national and regional (CAP, CFP) levels, by introducing the aspects of food access, safety, stability of supply, and nutritional security, health and well-being, **viewed from the perspective of the consumer rather than that of the producer**, as is normally the rule.

1.15 The formulation and implementation of the RFNSP, therefore, seeks to unify and reinforce the various efforts made so far at national and regional levels, providing the Community with an empirically-grounded, feasible and widely supported operational frame of reference for the achievement of food and nutrition security providing the equilibrium for consumers to access food at affordable prices while producers get a fair price for their products.

Vision and purpose

1.16 The RFNSP seeks to provide a clearly articulated, holistic policy framework (for the period 2011-2025) that translates the major orientations and elements of the overarching and underexploited regional development agreements and initiatives into concrete policy priorities that will guide the design, implementation and monitoring of specific future periodic strategic action programmes to address the major food and nutrition security challenges in CARICOM.

1.17 Viewed from a regional perspective and through a food security lens, the policy focuses on how, why and when certain countries, communities and families are vulnerable to problems of food availability, access and utilization either on a chronic or transitory basis. In this context, the policy strives to outline how diverse types of value-added collective action at the regional level could complement national and sub-national interventions and serve as a catalyst for coordinated actions to meet consensual food and nutrition security goals in the Caribbean.

1.18 This policy articulates a shared vision on the issues on which CARICOM Member States can effectively collaborate in areas until now not perceived as appropriate for collective regional action and not covered adequately and explicitly in the sector development policies for agriculture, health, infrastructure, trade etc. It provides a coherent, convergent and comprehensive framework within which national governments, civil society and private sector actors can join forces with regional organizations and development partners in cross-national, multi-sector and synergistic partnerships to identify, finance, implement and monitor an integrated set of concrete actions to achieve the four objectives of **a) food availability; b) food access; c) proper food utilization for good health, nutrition and wellbeing; and d) stable and sustainable food supplies at all times.**

1.19 To the extent that many Member States are currently reassessing the adequacy of their food and nutrition security policies, this regional policy represents a living document and initiates an iterative and dynamic food security dialogue. It is hoped that it will serve to unify actions taken across a wide spectrum of relevant regional policies and programmes and as a driver of enhanced integration of our economies.

2. BACKGROUND

Food and Nutrition Security in the Region - Food Demand, Household Access and Nutritional Adequacy

2.1 In global terms and assuming an **appropriate pattern of income distribution** (which determines the level of effective demand and the degree of access to food by all sections of the population), the assurance of food availability depends on two elements:

- the capacity of the domestic natural resource base to provide, without interruptions in supply, the quantity of safe food needed to satisfy certain minimum nutritional requirements; and secondly,
- the capability of the domestic economy to finance the level of food imports determined by, and arising out of, deficiencies in the natural resource base.

2.2 However, as noted above, food and nutrition security has four dimensions—**food availability, household access, nutritional adequacy (consumption/biological utilization and care practices) and the stability of the three components**. Regionally, total food caloric availability (calories/caput/day) has been increasing since the 1960s, and is in excess of Recommended Population Goals (RPG). The supply of fruits and vegetables, though increasing sharply over successive decades, consistently fell below RPG throughout this period, with only a few countries in excess of RPG. Fats and sweeteners availability is above RPG and this is a concern in the region given increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity⁷.

2.3 Several countries in the Region still have farming systems that produce significant amounts of food to sustain traditional diets that feature roots, pulses and fruits. However, the processes of globalization and economic reforms are rapidly displacing these traditional diets and leading to health problems that impact significantly in terms of costs on the health systems. A different approach is now required to overcome challenges of food security, health and nutrition than in the past. **This means a departure from equating food security with food availability**. Thus, while sufficient food calories are available to meet recommended population goals in the region, food security is being compromised through lack of access and excessive utilization/consumption of sweeteners and fats/oils.⁸

2.4 It is clear then that the immediate and urgent problems concern **household access and nutritional adequacy**. Furthermore, the assumption of “**an appropriate pattern of income distribution**” has been shown to be invalid in the CARICOM region. Immediate action is, therefore, now required as increasing levels of inequality in income distribution and access to sustainable livelihoods as well as food deprivation are among the root causes of the spiralling crime and violence situation in the region where the incidence of crimes against property and persons have reached critical proportions.

2.5 The major determinants of household access to food are the level of unemployment and the structure of income distribution. In the CARICOM/CARIFORUM region, a recent study⁹ found that official unemployment among thirteen countries between 2000 and 2005 ranged from 8 to 23% and Gini coefficients (an international measure of income equality) indicated relatively high levels of income inequality in the region, some among the highest in the world.

2.6 Beginning with the Regional Food and Nutrition Plan in 1973, several regional frameworks have been advanced that have the potential to respond to these changes as well as other areas of threat to food security. These include, more recently, the Regional Transformation Program in Agriculture, the CARICOM Office of Trade Negotiation (OTN), the CARICOM/FAO Regional Special Program for Food Security (SPFS), the Jagdeo Initiative, and the Caribbean Cooperation in Health (CCH) Initiatives. Several of these programs are agriculture-related and have been designed to increase regional food security, strengthen agricultural development, and enhance the sector’s capacity to contribute to national and regional development. But, at the same time, land use planning and water resource policy have not taken adequate account of the needs of the agriculture sector.

2.7 These initiatives have had limited, if any, success, however, because they have been prepared and executed in isolation from other policies. Actions taken have thus been sparse, diffuse, punctual and uncoordinated. Moreover, few of them have been translated into operational instruments with regional core funding for concrete action programmes specifically addressing the unifying and

⁷ Overview Vulnerability and Food and Nutrition Security in the Caribbean CFNI August 2007

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ *ibid*

cross-cutting synergistic issue of food and nutrition security. Thus actions taken have tended to rely heavily on low and fluctuating levels of external (ODA) funding.

2.8 These shortcomings in policy design and implementation have had *inter alia* the following consequences:

Food importation in the region continues to trend upwards

- Very high dependence on imported food and uncertainty of food arrival;
- Declines in productivity of land, labour and management in the agricultural sector resulting in a weakened capacity to supply food competitively.

Socio-economic inequalities hamper access to food

- Declines in earnings from traditional crops resulting in reduced household ability to purchase food and other prerequisites to basic livelihood;
- The erosion and threatened loss of trade preferences for traditional export crops, the earnings from which are utilized to purchase imported food;
- The increasing incidence of pockets of poverty in many countries, implying that portions of the population have difficulty in accessing sufficient food.
- Reduced levels of remittances curtail household incomes.

Rise in health care expenditures to deal with NCDs

- Fast increasing expenditure in the health sector to deal with malnutrition related diseases and drawbacks
- Concerns over the association of the high use of imported and processed foods and the growing incidence in the region of food related diseases such as obesity, hypertension, cancer and diabetes.

The region remains unprepared to confront crises and cyclical events (natural or man made) impacting on its food security

- Concern about the increasing gap between occurrence of events and resiliency response;
- Insufficient appreciation of the triple dividend associated with early warning systems that can mitigate risks, help adapt to climate change and enhance economic development through reduction in the damages caused;
- Failure to establish mechanisms and measures to enhance the “livelihood recovery” process of families in the informal sector;

The Food Industry in the Region - Food Supply

2.9 Despite substantial levels of agricultural support in almost all CARICOM Member States over the past forty years, food crop production in the region, except in Belize, Suriname and Guyana, has been a marginal economic activity carried out on a small scale on marginal lands, with scant resources and limited targeted support from public goods e.g. food crop research and marketing, transport and distribution infrastructure.

2.10 Regional agricultural production has fallen in recent years despite increases in the internal demand for food. Food crop producers are characterized as having uneconomically small farms, low production and productivity levels, limited incorporation of new technologies, a high presence of small subsistence farming and a low recruitment and replacement rate (an ageing population group). These factors along with limited regional cooperation within the sector have

lowered the level of competitiveness in raw material production, with the exception, in a few countries, of sugar cane, rice and some tropical fruits, mainly citrus and bananas¹⁰.

2.11 Here, it should be noted that both private and public investment in agriculture has not increased significantly. For many CARICOM countries, the proportion of the national budget allocated to agriculture development by governments remains below 5%. This translates into a lack of services that affects the ability particularly of small farmers and fishermen to access and adapt new technologies and reinforce advantageous traditional practices.¹¹

2.12 This situation is a consequence of the region's past history as a producer of a few industrial crops (bananas, sugar, cocoa, coffee, copra, rice and citrus), in large plantations for export to the colonial mother country under a preferential trade regime, in a raw state or with minimal processing (and value added), in exchange for food (mainly in a processed or semi-processed state) and other industrial commodities.

2.13 Thus domestic food crop production was a by-product of export agriculture, largely relegated to marginal lands and encouraged primarily as a means of reducing the cost of feeding the plantation workers. At the same time, the marketing and distribution system, port and transport infrastructure and customs procedures were geared to facilitating food imports¹²; hence the strong and continuing national and regional preference for imported agricultural goods and services. Indeed, together with the vested interests that have arisen around it and the strong acquired taste and preferences for foods that are not produced in the region, this situation has resulted in declining levels of demand for local food commodities that have constrained the growth of the regional food sector and the emergence of a vibrant food processing and distribution sector based on domestic food production.

2.14 As a result, the greater (and increasing) part of the food products consumed in the Region is imported in a raw or intermediate state for further processing e.g. wheat, maize, soybeans, grains, to be transformed *inter alia* into flour, animal feed and beverages. Thus the Region is almost entirely dependent on foreign producers and processors for supplies of the main food staples. This factor also accounts for the low priority so far given to the introduction and enforcement of food safety, health, nutrition, and quality standards across the region.

2.15 Over the recent past, therefore, the major component of the cost of food products to consumers in the region has consisted increasingly of processing and distribution services, now estimated to constitute upwards of 50 percent of the final market price to the consumer, especially for branded commodities. Domestic production of food commodities is confined mainly to fresh fruits and vegetables and roots and tubers. It is noteworthy, however, that a large part (in Trinidad and Tobago about 90 percent) of the latter food category consists of imported potatoes.

2.16 It follows from the above considerations that a series of interlocking and mutually reinforcing constraints (briefly outlined below) have, over the years, rendered farming and food production, manufacturing and marketing from local raw materials, an unprofitable, unattractive and challenging enterprise in the CARICOM region. Indeed, the terms of trade between domestic food crop production and the rest of the economy have remained unfavourable to the farming and allied service sector over the recent past.

Challenges and Constraints

¹⁰ Challenges and Outlook for the Caribbean Region, FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, 31st Session, April 2010.

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² A Keynote Address for the 1st plenary session of the conference: Food Security & Agricultural Development in the Americas July 28-30, 2009 Mona Visitor's Lodge & Conference Centre; Food Security: Fad or Trend Dr. Dunstan Campbell - FAO Representative in Jamaica, Bahamas and Belize July 28, 2009

2.17 Currently, the geopolitical strategy of the major food exporting countries and the emergence of a bio-fuel industry has serious implications for the future supply scenarios in respect of food staples (wheat, corn and soybean). Commodity projections of food availability and prices suggest a continued rising trend in the medium to long term. This will have significant impact on small food importing countries such as those in this region in light of the nature of the responses to the crisis by food producing and exporting countries and an analysis of their effects and impact.

2.18 Many governments tried to limit the increase in domestic food prices by raising subsidies, lowering import tariffs or imposing export restrictions. By keeping domestic prices below international levels, those interventions provided short-term relief for distressed consumers, but also had negative effects for three reasons. First, by maintaining farm-gate prices artificially low they discouraged the much needed supply response and productivity increase that is required for long-term food security. Second, export restrictions lower supply on international markets, pushing prices higher and aggravating the global situation. Third, higher subsidies and/or lower taxes and tariffs increase the pressure on national budgets and reduce fiscal resources available for much needed public investment and other developmental expenditures.

2.19 To reduce the CARICOM Region's vulnerability to the vagaries of international food markets, a radical longer-term approach is needed. This is embodied in the Jagdeo Initiative which, in February 2005, identified **9 key binding constraints** on the region's ability to **achieve a resurgence of the regional agricultural potential and hence, increased domestic agricultural output**:

- Limited financing and inadequate levels of new investments;
- Deficient and uncoordinated risk management measures;
- Inadequate research and development;
- Outdated and inefficient agricultural health and food safety (AHFS) systems;
- Weak land and water distribution and management systems;
- Inadequate transportation systems, particularly for perishables;
- Weak and non-integrated market information and intelligence systems;
- Weak linkages and participation of producers in growth market segments; and
- Lack of skilled and quality human resources.

2.20 However, as recognised by CARICOM Heads of Government in the Liliendaal Declaration in July 2009, the alleviation of these constraints will not suffice to ensure regional **food and nutrition security**. To that end, the following additional issues, *inter alia*, need to be addressed concurrently:

- Development of a strong regional Information System for Food and Nutrition Security (ISFNS) to provide the informational building blocks and empirical basis for pro-poor agricultural growth policy and poverty reduction strategies through the use of vulnerability analyses to strengthen household resiliency¹³.
- The development of innovative risk mitigation and adaptation instruments to improve and preserve food security, given the region's high vulnerability to diverse natural and socioeconomic shocks, which may be accentuated in the future in the context of global climate change and financial and economic uncertainty.

¹³ The ISFNS data will also be essential for the adaptation of farming systems to climate change and increasing rainfall variability and facilitate the pooling of regional resources and greater access to external resources for the prevention, mitigation and management of the effects and impact of these threats. It will also serve as the basis for an effective Risk Management Policy, through the timely detection, prevention and resolution of threats to national and regional food security – seed production and input supply programmes; detection and control of trans-boundary migrant pests and animal diseases.

- Efficient transportation that is affordable and appropriate for the carriage of perishable and non-perishable food products to facilitate intra-regional trade;
- Strong farmer organizations;
- Improved marketing systems and infrastructure;
- Improved land, water and marine resource management systems for sustainable agricultural and fish production;
- The need to pay as much attention to tastes, quality and cultural preferences as to reducing cost (especially through labour saving interventions);
- The adoption of a nutritional approach in estimating and projecting regional food needs and hence indicative domestic production programmes and targets for meeting demand requirements across the food groups, thereby affording domestic food production an opportunity to influence tastes and preferences over time;
- The need to include training on good nutrition practices (particularly for Infant and Young Child Feeding) in the curricula of teacher training colleges and at pre-school and primary and secondary levels; and for a policy on school health and nutrition to ensure the use of local foods in national school feeding programmes and to form children's tastes and preferences for such foods from an early age;
- The need to eliminate one of the principal causes of malnutrition through a national water policy to ensure adequate household availability of clean, safe drinking water;
- Appropriate emphasis on farming methods and local food crop production and processing in the school curricula at all levels;
- Dissemination of information on nutrition values of local food commodities compared to those of similar imported foods and introduction and enforcement of truth in labelling rules;
- Returns to agriculture are increasingly concentrated at the retail level; this points to the need for more integrated production and distribution systems. Attracting high productivity labour throughout the commodity chain is essential to redressing this factor.
- The current disconnect between food production, processing, health and nutrition, and trade and investment policies needs to be bridged to avoid negative impacts and implications of trade policies on the productive and service (food processing, preparation and distribution) sectors and on individual health and wellbeing.
- The extent to which trade policy affecting processed and prepared foods and franchising might influence outcomes in agricultural markets needs to be considered in determining trade and tariff policy.
- How regional commitment to integrated markets might be translated into more significant regional level collaboration among governments and private enterprises within and across different member states.
- Information system development, its spread and use in rural areas need to be improved with urgency. More and relevant information needs to be readily accessible by economic agents. Information Technology needs to be more integrated into rural development approaches.

2.21 The **attainment of food and nutrition security**, therefore, entails actions in areas that fall within the purview of diverse ministries and institutions at national level and across regional

institutions and organs of the Community. The diversity in the scope and nature of these issues underscores the need for a holistic, multi-disciplinary, uniform and coordinated approach for their resolution, being mindful of five important concerns:

- the requirement of an economically feasible and sustainable degree of food self-sufficiency (**food availability**);
- the assurance of adequate soil and environmental conservation measures (**food availability/stability of supplies**);
- the need to improve linkages between health, nutrition, food retailing, manufacturing and production (**food utilization/nutritional adequacy**);
- the protection and expansion of agricultural and other employment and incomes in a value-chain approach and the use of productive safety nets in the context of National Poverty Alleviation Strategies (**household food access**); and
- the need for effective disaster prevention, mitigation and management systems and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures (**stability of supplies**).

3. PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

The Issues and the Way Forward

3.1 Food and Nutrition Security is a cross-cutting issue, and the many linkages between the various national development policies, strategies and programmes and FNS call for these concerns to be incorporated into the formulation and implementation of the latter. Indeed, the resolution of these issues calls for a multi-disciplinary approach and measures that are a composite of policy, legislative, and institutional realignment actions, enhanced professional and technical capacity, improved processes, infrastructure and client-service orientation, and public-private sector partnership arrangements.

Guiding principles for the Regional Policy for Food and Nutrition Security

Right to Food

- Recognizing that poverty, social exclusion and a lack of participation in political decision-making processes are the main causes of food insecurity, this policy aspires to identify and focus on the welfare of the most vulnerable and to address pro-actively the underlying structural causes of hunger. This means supporting strategies that tackle the root causes of hunger and malnutrition, and empowerment of marginalized groups in the design, implementation and monitoring of national programmes, as well as establishing and strengthening redress mechanisms.

Agriculture and Food Production

- Recognizing the vital role of the food and agriculture sector in the quest for regional food and nutrition security and the need to strengthen its ability to attract youth and entrepreneurship as well as adequate investment in agricultural production, post-harvest handling, storage, distribution and exchange as an integral part of the private sector of the region and a major source of employment and incomes for a large segment of the population.

Policy Coherence

- Coherent with the underlying tenets of the Jagdeo Initiative, the Liliendaal Declaration, Caribbean Cooperation on Health etc. and existing regional policies (Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, CSME, CAP, CFP etc.), and focused on translating into action these political statements and

policies related to and supportive of good health and nutrition, rural and food crop development and agro-food production, processing, marketing and distribution;

- Complementary and catalytic towards other regional sector policies (CSME, Health Policy, Agribusiness Policy, CAP, CFP etc.);
- Consistent with national food security policies;
- Having inter-temporal coherence: short-term emergency measures are consistent with and non-distorting relative to medium and long-term sector policies.

Regional Dimension

- The policy recognises the primacy of national food and nutrition security and development policies and strategies. It is based on the principle of subsidiarity whereby regional action is only taken where it is more effective than action taken at national or sub-national level, thus national jurisdiction is the rule, community jurisdiction the exception.
- The achievement of certain food security goals depends on regional inputs or the catalytic impetus that concerted regional action can deliver to address longstanding regional problems (e.g., reducing dependency on imported food or prevalence of obesity; improvement and rationalization of regional port and transport infrastructure, customs procedures, harmonisation of databases and vulnerability analysis and mapping etc.).
- The principle of complementarity permits taking into account the comparative advantage of different countries and productive sectors and brings a geographic dimension to agricultural policy, while enhancing the targeting of discretionary public investment and external aid.
- Improving and ensuring food and nutrition security in the Caribbean in the face of current and future challenges will require coordinated regional approaches, innovative regional public goods and catalytic actions that can add value to the efforts of national governments, communities and households to address priority challenges.
- Member States recognize the RFNSP as the region's unique food security policy framework in which all future food security actions and investments will be developed.
- Regional interventions will be based on a regional consensus on the order of priorities for action rather than on the availability of external resources in areas selected by external agencies.
- The principle of partnership and consultation ensures the permanent involvement of diverse stakeholders in the health and nutrition, infrastructure, trade, agricultural production, food processing/preparation, marketing and distribution sectors in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and eventual reform of the Caribbean food and nutrition security policy. The search for synergy and efficiency in the implementation of different strategies suggests a sharing of responsibilities based on the experience and knowledge of the different stakeholders and institutions working in the sector.

Political commitment

The Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy gives effect to the commitment made by Heads of Government in the Liliendaal Declaration and is a dynamic tool that:

- Encompasses actions depending pre-eminently on the political will, consensus and financial contributions of Member States committed to ensuring sustainable food and nutrition security for their citizens.
- Requires that assistance from development partners in the area of food and nutrition security at the regional level should complement (but not substitute for) the political will and financial commitment of Member States and the CCS, and be used by development partners as a frame of

reference following the principles of the 2005 Paris Declaration on the Effectiveness of Development Aid and the Action Agenda adopted at Accra in 2008.

- Recognizes that South-South cooperation and distilling lessons from the experience of other developing countries could be beneficial to the region.

Now, therefore, We, the Member States of the Caribbean Community:

- ✚ Given the dynamic and evolving nature of food and nutrition security issues, **recognize** that the RFNSP should be periodically assessed and revised (every 5 years) and translated into focused action plans composed of concrete, relevant and coordinated interventions.
- ✚ **Affirm** the need for the RFNSP to be adapted to the circumstances in each Member State.
- ✚ **Commit** to providing strong leadership in our food and nutrition security policies and to engaging with our Parliaments and citizens in shaping these policies.
- ✚ Given the diversity of Member States in the region, **declare** the RFNSP to be comprehensive in scope but flexible in implementation in that certain advocated actions may not be uniformly relevant to every member state.
- ✚ **Recognize** that potential regional actions may be based on efforts to generate economies of scale, harmonize norms and standards, align our priorities and actions, foster regional solidarity, promote free circulation of goods or align and coordinate policies that have a direct and indirect impact on food and nutrition security (e.g. infrastructure; natural resource management; intellectual property rights etc).
- ✚ **Recognize also** that potential regional measures may include *inter alia* the reconfirmation of existing policy, statements of support, advocacy, awareness, promotional campaigns, capacity building, legislation, regulatory environment, guidelines, innovative financing arrangements and fiscal measures.
- ✚ **Recognize** that the main food security challenges facing Member States and the region are multi-dimensional in nature, requiring concerted, coordinated actions by several ministries and active participation by diverse stakeholders who are the direct beneficiaries.
- ✚ **Realize** that achieving the region’s food security goals and policy objectives will require effective and innovative cross-national partnerships (e.g., “Grow and Eat Local Foods Action Committee”) and collaboration among diverse public, private and civil society institutions and actors, engaged in dynamic participatory and results-based processes to design, implement, monitor and learn from an integrated and coherent set of concrete actions.
- ✚ **Re-affirm and Emphasize** the principle of progressivity **in accordance with which we shall** move forward gradually taking into account different national circumstances and particular interests.
- ✚ **Commit** to the principles of:
 - equity and participation of the beneficiaries in the decision-making processes;
 - targeting the most vulnerable groups, in particular small producers (farmers, fishermen etc.), women and children;
 - linking our food security vision to the Caribbean food system development as it addresses challenges of mitigation of, and adaptation to climate change;
 - ensuring coherence between instruments (scope, action, timeframe) and among policies (such as agriculture, trade, fisheries, energy, environment).
- ✚ Reaffirm our solidarity with Member States in situations of fragility characterized by a high vulnerability to natural and socio-economic shocks.

4. POLICY OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

4.1 It follows from a consideration of the issues outlined above that the basic philosophy under-pinning food and nutrition security and the development of food production and allied services in the Caribbean region, may be defined as the **achievement of the optimum degree of self reliance through a strategy of feeding, clothing and housing the population, utilising to the greatest extent possible and feasible, indigenous raw materials, human and natural resources.** In this context, the RFNSP aims to achieve four overarching food and nutrition security objectives:

1. **Food Availability** - Promote the sustainable production, processing, preparation, commercialization and consumption of safe, affordable, nutritious, high quality Caribbean food commodities/products.
2. **Food Access** - Ensure regular access of Caribbean households, especially the poor and vulnerable, to sufficient quantities of safe, affordable, quality food at all times, particularly in response to diverse socioeconomic and natural shocks.
3. **Food Utilization/Nutritional Adequacy** - Improve the nutritional status of the Caribbean population, particularly with respect to NCDs including diabetes, hypertension, overweight and obesity.
4. **Stability of Food Supply** - Improve the resilience of the region's national communities and households to natural and socio-economic crises.

As a precursor to the implementation of this policy, there is need for a baseline survey to assess the food and nutrition status in the region (and *inter alia* the impact of gender and age) and to identify and agree on objectively verifiable indicators of achievement.

I FOOD AVAILABILITY Promote the sustainable production of safe, affordable, nutritious, good quality Caribbean food commodities/products.

- 1) CARICOM shall promote increased availability of regionally produced nutritious food at competitive market prices through the utilization of a territorial approach to production planning in the region in which:
 - i) Priority commodities will be selected on the basis of the promotion of a nutritionally balanced diet comprised of Caribbean food products.
 - ii) Criteria for selection of the commodities/products will be based on: market demand, competitiveness, nutritional composition/elements and natural endowments of Member States. The Dietary Guidelines for the Region will also guide the selection of these food commodities/products.
 - iii) Small producers (farmers, fisher folk, cottage food processors etc.) in the Member States (with a focus on gender) shall be critical in the production of the identified food commodities/products.
- 2) CARICOM shall improve production and productivity of the identified food and livestock commodities/products through:
 - i) Generation and transfer of appropriate technology through market driven research programmes at existing institutions (strengthened where appropriate) and international development partners.
 - ii) Documentation and dissemination of best practices for identified food crops/livestock and other food commodities, including sustainable production practices.
 - iii) Development of mechanisms for bulk purchasing and distribution of agricultural inputs with safeguards to ensure compliance with Chapter 8 of the Revised Treaty of

Chaguaramas – Competition Policy and Consumer Protection, so that companies involved in the importation of inputs do not engage in anti-competitive practices and the abuse of dominant position.

- iv) Development of a Regional Seed and Genetic Material Policy that addresses the need for a stable regional supply of seed and genetic material.
- 3) CARICOM shall seek to increase cost efficiency of value added production for locally produced and imported semi-processed foods and livestock products through:
- i) Facilitating the creation of product clusters and value chains to satisfy increasing sophistication of consumer demand.
 - ii) Increased efficiency of value addition in food processing based on based on regulated (using necessary safeguards) levels of imported raw materials, which impacts the cost of production and the price of food to consumer.
- 4) CARICOM shall create an enabling environment for the production and marketing of local foods through measures to:
- i) Support implementation of the Jagdeo Initiative in line with the Liliendaal Declaration through the RFNSP, the CAP, the Agribusiness Policy etc. which seek to lift the key constraints on agricultural development and food and nutrition security.
 - ii) Identify and progressively cover the infrastructure investment gap required to meet the food security needs of the most vulnerable groups in each Member State.
 - iii) Improve market access for small producers through improved market information and buyer/seller coordination and by promoting the value chain approach.
 - iv) Accelerate the implementation of the free movement of labour protocol of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.
 - v) Development of regional training curricula with a strong practical element to certify relevant workers at various levels.
- 5) CARICOM shall encourage Member States to formulate and implement land and water resource management plans and strategies.

II FOOD ACCESS - Ensure access of Caribbean households and individuals to sufficient, nutritious affordable food at all times.

1. CARICOM shall encourage Member States to ratify the Right to Food Convention and implement its Guidelines. Moreover, in recognition of the Region’s food distribution inefficiencies and high income inequality, taking into account the disparities between the rural and urban areas, CARICOM shall ensure that the population have economic and physical access to food at all times by:
 - a. **Improving access to Livelihood Assets through:**
 - i. Identification and mapping of vulnerable groups¹⁴ (taking a gender-sensitive approach) that are prone to chronic or transitory food insecurity and establishment of a national and regional database of this information, recognizing that each group may require a different intervention, to ensure their access to livelihoods based on self-sufficiency and sustainable income earning activities.
 - ii. Improving the livelihood of the rural population, especially small producers and marginalized urban dwellers, through the promotion of entrepreneurship, home

¹⁴ Households that cannot meet basic food needs- including People living with HIV/AIDs, children and the elderly.

food production (backyard/container/protected environment gardening and small ruminant rearing) and programmes to pay for environmental services. Micro-credit and carbon credit schemes to encourage diversification of economic activity in rural and urban areas will be promoted. In addition, the linkages of agriculture, with food crop post-harvest handling, food processing and preparation as well as with other alternative livelihood activities, employment opportunities and incentives for farmers, to broaden the income base of families, shall be fostered.

- iii. Widening and deepening vocational training programmes for artisans, farmers, fishermen and vulnerable groups (especially women) etc. to improve their skills and employability.
- iv. Encouraging Member States to prepare Poverty Reduction Programmes encompassing safety net mechanisms/programmes and complementary measures to preclude a dependency syndrome and promote sustainable livelihoods and food and nutrition security.
- v. Identifying a minimum nutritious food basket and advocating for this to be used as a key element in setting the minimum wage in Member States.

b. Improve the Regional Distribution System through:

- i. Removal of non-tariff barriers to trade (SPS-TBT barriers) that raise transaction costs and hinder access to and distribution of food within the Region, especially for the identified basket of food commodities/products. This will also have a positive impact on availability.
- ii. Facilitation of greater linkages between buyers and sellers and reduction of information asymmetries through the implementation of a Regional Market Intelligence system.
- iii. Development of strategies to address regional transportation with a view to reducing distribution costs and improving movement of food commodities across the region. Public/private partnerships to deal with maritime and air transport and port infrastructure in and between the Member States will be pursued.
- iv. Member States shall be encouraged to implement trade facilitation measures to improve intra-regional trade in food products (raw and processed as well as beverages). In this regard, emphasis will be placed on the improvement of port logistics and reduction of bureaucratic rigidities at ports.
- v. Member States shall be encouraged to improve farm to market channels, for example, access roads and post harvest grading and handling.
- vi. Member States shall be encouraged to develop wholesale and retail market facilities and packaging centres as public goods to facilitate efficient markets, which will improve availability and lower market prices.
- vii. Improvement of food safety systems and harmonisation of food standards across the Region to facilitate trade among Member States.
- viii. Encouraging Member States to develop policies to ensure that the food distribution services industry (which includes fresh markets, supermarkets, food services and institutions) operates in a cost efficient manner and delivers the targeted basket of foods at optimal prices.
- ix. CARICOM will encourage Member States to establish a regional network of reserve food stocks in partnership with the private sector as a Risk Mitigation

Response; and will take the lead through CDEMA in mobilizing resources for this purpose.

III FOOD UTILIZATION/NUTRITIONAL ADEQUACY - Promote the commercialization and consumption of safe, affordable nutritious quality Caribbean food commodities/products.

1. In recognition of the challenges facing the Caribbean population with respect to increasing levels of obesity, non-communicable chronic diseases (NCDs), iron deficiency, anaemia and persistent pockets of under nutrition, CARICOM will implement policies to:
 - a. Promote, support and protect appropriate infant and young child feeding practices;
 - b. Diversify production in line with regional population dietary goals through:
 - i. Development of regional population dietary (nutritional) goals in line with international standards;
 - ii. Development and dissemination of food based dietary guidelines for each Member State;
 - iii. Analysis and dissemination of data from Member States on the cost of a nutritionally balanced economical food basket with a view to monitoring access to food for vulnerable groups;
 - iv. Encouragement of the creation and/or strengthening of the nutritional surveillance systems in Member States in accordance with WHO standards, so as to monitor the nutritional status of the population in order to identify those at risk of nutrition-related ailments;
 - v. Encouragement of physical activity in line with WHO recommendations.

2. Early Childhood Learning Centres, primary and secondary schools provide an entry point for interventions with children to prevent and control some of the identified nutrition conditions and influence food tastes and preferences. In this regard, the policy will seek to address the following areas in the education sector through primary and secondary schools by:
 - a. Promotion of the preparation and implementation of national school health and nutrition policies in Member States;
 - b. Support for the development of curricula at teacher training colleges and at pre-school, primary and secondary school levels that include nutrition and family education for good health and lifestyle choices.
 - c. Developing regional guidelines on school health and nutrition as a guide in school meal preparation and in respect of the foods allowed to be sold in schools. This may include the development of manuals (e.g. recipes, food safety and food service etc.) in collaboration with the Health, Education, Social Development and other relevant Ministries.
 - d. Encouraging Member States to adopt a policy that the meals provided under national school feeding programmes should have at least a 50% regional food content.
 - e. Reviewing the school gardening programmes in the Region to identify strategic areas for intervention, including the provision of technical support, promotional materials, etc.

- f. Developing regional promotional campaigns to encourage healthy and nutritional food choices in schools. In this regard, CARICOM shall support Member States in the implementation of such campaigns in schools by using innovative mechanisms that will influence students to make nutritious food choices. CARICOM shall also provide support for the expansion and promotion of competitions about food and nutrition in the region.
 - g. Encouraging and assisting Member States to develop standards of care for the elderly, mentally challenged and persons living in institutions e.g. orphanages, prisons etc.
3. There is a need to review the existing regional food standards relating to food safety, nutrition, labelling and to identify and remedy deficiencies in their development, implementation and enforcement so as to promote greater intra-regional trade. It is also imperative to increase consumer awareness of nutritional standards and to ensure that correct and comprehensive information concerning nutritional content is provided in food labelling. In this regard CARICOM will take steps to:
- a. Harmonize regional food safety standards based on the Codex Alimentarius (CAHFSA, CARPHA, CROSQ):
 - i. Member States shall enact and implement appropriate legislation to foster the implementation/enforcement of food safety standards.
 - 1. Develop and disseminate regional guidelines for maintaining food safety and traceability along the value chain.
 - 2. Develop and disseminate standards for nutrition labelling.
 - b. Assist Member States in developing or amending consumer protection legislation to include accurate labelling of food for nutrition content, redress, etc. (Regional consumer body).
 - c. Organize and strengthen civil society and consumer advocacy groups to increase their participation in the process of food and nutrition security planning and implementation;
 - d. Develop and implement a Regional Marketing Campaign to promote Caribbean foods based on their nutritional content:
 - i. Implement a promotional campaign that emphasizes the health and nutritional benefits of selected Caribbean foods.
 - ii. Outstanding Caribbean personalities will be used to promote the consumption of nutritious regional foods.

IV. FOOD STABILITY - Improve the food and nutrition security resilience of the region to natural and socio-economic shocks and climate change.

- 1. CARICOM recognizes that there are recurring threats to food security, and that their intensity is exacerbated by climate change, the effects of which can be mitigated, and for which adaptation is essential to build resilience to this evolving threat. In this regard, the policy will emphasize the implementation of **adaptation and mitigation strategies** as a means of enhancing the stability of food security. To this end, therefore, CARICOM shall:

- a. Promote the creation of an ISFNS at national and regional levels for food security development as well as food crisis prevention and risk management and the construction of adequate risk profiles for the region's main crops¹⁵.
 - b. Pursue climate resilient development which focuses on **adaptation** as well as mitigation strategies for the food and agriculture sector. In respect of **mitigation**, priority focus shall be placed on coastal management (which affects the fishing industry) as well as sustainable forest management for reducing emissions while improving livelihoods and ensuring their stability over time. This will also support a reduction in deforestation, improved watershed management and protection of carbon reservoirs.
 - c. Encourage Member States to reduce tariffs on goods that could assist in the reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions by the agricultural and agro-processing industries. For example, liberalization of environmental goods, solar panels, etc.; since with the drive to increase agricultural production and agro-processing, there is the threat that carbon emission will also increase. Special attention will also be paid to technologies for the reduction of carbon emissions and the use of crops/livestock/food waste as an input to biogas production.
 - d. Encourage capacity enhancement within such entities as Ministries of Agriculture (extension services in particular), Research Institutions and Hydro-Meteorological Departments so that they can provide accurate and timely climate information to the farming community. In this area, within the framework of the regional ISFNS, CARICOM will seek technical and financial assistance for institution building and capacity development at regional and national levels from the World Bank's Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GFASP), the American Feed the Future Initiative (FTF), and the second phase of the EC's Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP) as well as FAO and WFP.
 - e. Integrate climate management considerations into programmes to develop farm management and build industry and farming community capacities to increase resilience through: (i) developing dynamic farm/agricultural management tools that integrate climate change risks into existing and emerging farm management systems; (ii) developing, where possible, environmental management systems for the agricultural sector; (iii) identifying and building on successful indigenous knowledge and strategies for adaptation.
 - f. Promote the inclusion of adaptation and mitigation strategies in the curricula of all training institutions and extension training mechanisms for farmers and other producers e.g. farmer field schools.
2. With regard to **adaptation**, the policy will focus on:
- a. Retraining and retooling of farmers in appropriate production practices (e.g. conservation farming, zero tillage etc.) to adapt to the changing environment.

¹⁵This will entail the harmonization and coordination of the collection and collation of information *inter alia* on : a) markets – sources and volume of commodity supply to the market, number of traders and prices of commodities, agricultural labour and livestock and terms of trade including trends; b) production-type and level; c) income sources and reliability; d) government policies affecting trade and distribution of food products; e) Baseline information on food availability, access, utilization; f) Population numbers and distribution; g) Infrastructure – roads, financial institutions, etc. h) Household coping mechanisms; i) Rainfall information (volume, water deficit, flooding, drought and climate outlook; j) Crop and livestock diseases; k) Monthly state of crops in the fields; l) Security conditions-extent of praedial larceny; m) Health and nutrition situation; n) areas affected by food crises and/or chronically food-insecure; o) the number of food insecure persons; p) level of food insecurity (long term or short term); q) major causes of food insecurity (structural and cyclical) etc.

- b. Integration of climate adaptation into agricultural adjustment programmes through a risk management approach.
 - c. Integration of the pest, weed and disease implications of climate change into strategies that minimise their impact on the agricultural and natural resources systems.
 - d. Promotion of cost-effective alternatives to fossil fuels that improve energy efficiency in agriculture.
 - e. Increasing understanding and integration of scientific knowledge of climate into farm management decisions.
 - f. More efficient water and land management systems *inter alia* to address shortages and excessive rainfall.
 - g. Investment in new or existing water management and control infrastructure.
 - h. Re-zoning of agricultural production as necessary to reduce vulnerability.
 - i. Fostering the development of an early warning system and a preparedness strategy (short-medium-long term) dealing with climate change parameters. This will utilize forecast data for key climate variables such as rainfall, river flow/levels, temperature, sea level rise and the incidence of extreme weather events (such as hurricanes, floods, droughts).
 - j. Promoting the harmonisation of agro-meteorological data;
 - k. Facilitating the development of innovative financial instruments through partnerships (e.g. Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, Carbon Partnership Facility, Global Environment Facility, etc.).
3. In preparation for **natural disasters and within the framework of the regional ISFNS:**
- a. Development of a regional monitoring and forecasting system for weather and natural phenomena (for example, tsunamis).
 - b. Development of effective disaster preparedness and mitigation systems/plans (CDEMA).
 - c. Development of vulnerability analysis and mapping to provide timely nutrition and socio-economic information on vulnerable population groups to decision-makers to enable the design of more effective emergency and relief responses.
 - d. Development of a cropping plan for the region, taking into consideration hurricane patterns, in order to reduce overall production risks.
 - e. Identification and monitoring of supplies of key staple food commodities/products in Member States, for storage at an agreed minimum level and managed by an institution with a specific mandate, which would be available for distribution in times of crisis. This would include public/private partnerships and build on the system already in place with WFP assistance for Latin America and Caribbean Region.
 - f. Development of an agricultural risk management scheme, which may include:
 - i. A regional agriculture/crop risk management and insurance scheme to compensate for losses incurred due to the impact of natural disasters.
 - ii. A regional disaster fund.
 - iii. A functional germplasm bank at locations both within and outside of the region.
 - iv. A regional emergency response plan (for food).
4. Due to the openness of the regional economies, which are very vulnerable to external socio-economic shocks (such as price increases, reduced remittances etc.) and market impacts, CARICOM recognizes the need to reduce poverty levels and provide increased opportunities for women and youth to become more involved in the food and agricultural

sectors. Therefore, the policy will support initiatives to provide stability in food availability and access for the population in the short, medium and long term. These measures will include the:

- a. Creation of a Venture Capital Fund, with a particular focus on women and youth, to support innovative and creative value addition activities for traditional and non-traditional commodities along the supply value chain;
- b. Establishment of a functional market information system to reduce price volatility, taking into account global prices;
- c. Establishment of a nation/region-wide inventory of vulnerable groups (farmers, producers groups, communities), and the levels of vulnerability (vulnerability mapping);
- d. Expansion (where needed) and linking of relief interventions with longer-term structural improvement measures;
- e. Evaluation of the feasibility of bulk buying and hedging in the purchase of production inputs and basic commodities/products.
- f. Promotion of non-distorting intra-regional trade policies and programmes to be applied in times of food crises to reduce the risk to the most vulnerable and reduce market uncertainty.
- g. Establishment of a food crisis fund that will cater to the needs of the most vulnerable
- h. Dissemination of information on trade policies to be applied during times of crisis or after a natural disaster.
- i. Establishment of a mechanism that is triggered when there is a food crisis and consensual agreement on procedures to be followed at country level after a disaster (Preparedness strategy);
- j. Identification of social welfare programmes, productive safety nets and other policy prescriptions that can be applied in times of crisis.
- k. Advocacy with Member States for the establishment of additional safety nets for extremely vulnerable groups.
- l. Development of a food aid policy consistent with regional and national food security and agricultural policies.
- m. Development of principles and criteria to assess the environmental impact of agriculture and the Value Chain System e.g. sustainable use of water resources, use and disposal of packaging materials, energy, fertilizer, pesticides, outputs (waste from agricultural processes), and introduction and enforcement of systems and mechanisms to minimize any negative effects and impact.

5. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK/IMPLEMENTATION

INSTITUTIONS

General Considerations

5.1 The issues addressed by the RFNSP have ramifications which transcend the agricultural and rural sectors and cut across the existing division of functions and responsibilities of the various ministries and agencies of the public sectors of most Member States as currently structured. A number of national and regional efforts (policies and programmes) have been developed through a participatory process to promote food and nutrition security at national and sub-national levels and a favourable policy framework for growth of agriculture and allied services in the areas of food processing, preparation and distribution. Existing and emerging regional and sub-regional responses

(such as Latin America *sin hambre*) promote integration, coherence and consistency of national level efforts. The drive for greater policy and implementation coherence is also evident in the efforts of donor coordination through the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action.

5.2 The role of the private sector should not be underestimated, as well as the food industry, which has substantial research and development capacity and extensive supply chains and market penetration. Working together, these stakeholders can contribute more effectively towards eliminating chronic hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition and preventing future food security crises from occurring.

Global Food Security Institutional Framework

5.3 In July 2009, the G8+ Summit in Italy gave rise to the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative where those present committed themselves towards a goal of mobilizing USD 21 billion over three years to improve agriculture and food security in a more coordinated, comprehensive manner. Since then a number of meetings within the context of The Road from L'Aquila have been held with concerned international bodies and donors to prepare a systematic approach to translate L'Aquila commitments into concrete plans and practical steps. In addressing fundamental concerns over food security and nutrition, these initiatives have called for a new design of the governance of world food security, building on and reforming existing institutions, and strengthened partnerships. The functions of the organizations addressing agriculture and food security need to be realigned, strengthened and coordinated to meet new and emerging challenges.

5.4 The most recent and promising initiative to strengthen coordination and partnerships to combat hunger and food and nutrition insecurity is the reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). The reform package, which was approved by CFS members on 17 October 2009, aims to make CFS "... a central component of the evolving Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition [that will constitute] the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for a broad range of committed stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner and in support of country-led processes towards the elimination of hunger and ensuring food security and nutrition for all human beings."

5.5 Features of the renewed CFS include:

- *Successful global coordination* of efforts to eliminate hunger and ensure food security for all. This includes supporting national anti-hunger plans and initiatives; ensuring that all relevant voices are heard in the policy debate on food and agriculture; strengthening linkages at regional, national and local levels; and basing decisions on scientific evidence and state of the art knowledge.
- *Inclusion*: give voice and effective roles to a wide range of organizations especially civil society working with food security and nutrition in both the public and private sectors.
- *A platform for discussion and coordination*: greater policy convergence including through the development of international strategies and voluntary guidelines on food security and nutrition based on best practices and lessons learned from countries who have succeeded in reducing hunger, will be promoted.

Regional Public and Private Sector Institutional Framework

5.6 The objectives of the RFNSP are to be achieved through the preparation and implementation of an agreed Action Programme to create an enabling environment to facilitate the release of productive energies in the food production, manufacturing and marketing sectors of CARICOM Member States as well as to establish and ensure adherence to appropriate agricultural

public health, food safety and nutrition standards across the region. This will increase the production and processing of food from domestic resources and hence food availability for local consumption and export. Farm incomes and the proportion of the food import bill covered by agricultural exports will rise and, in the medium term, domestic food prices will fall. To this end, a broad-based, multi-sector regional institutional mechanism is required that will determine, agree upon, coordinate, oversee and keep under continuous review the actions that need to be taken, in collaboration with the relevant regional and national agencies and persons.

5.7 The required measures are a composite of policy, legislative, and institutional realignment actions, enhanced professional, technical and institutional capacity, improved processes, infrastructure and client-service orientation, and public-private sector partnership arrangements. At national level, some Member States have already established Food Security/Prices Commissions/Committees that address some, albeit not all, of these issues. In line with these developments at the global and national levels, and so as to reap the same benefits of coordination, harmonization and concerted action, CARICOM shall establish at regional level a Regional Commission/Committee on Food and Nutrition Security (RCFNS), composed of selected representatives of Member States and regional institutions (comprising the public and private sectors, civil society/consumer representative bodies and farmers' organizations), having its focal point in the CCS. The RCFNS will provide oversight, management and direction for implementation of the RFNSP.

5.8 CARICOM Member States shall be encouraged to make similar institutional arrangements at national level, based on the principle of public-private sector partnership and giving a voice, where appropriate, to indigenous peoples. CCS shall take appropriate administrative action to assure its capability for discharging its new functions and responsibilities in the field of food and nutrition security under the RFNSP.

5.9 In the area of governance for regional food and nutrition security, CARICOM shall be guided by the following principles:

- Food security should be a recurring item on the agenda of COTED (Agriculture), COHSOD and the Conference of the Heads of Government.
- Food and nutrition security, being a multidimensional issue, it may be appropriate that responsibility for it be shared between COTED and COHSOD reporting to a Head of Government.
- At regional level, the organizational structure should be minimal yet effective, making maximum use of, but not limited to, existing resources. There is a role and function for CCS to plan, foster and promote food security; this will require additional human resources.
- The RCFNS will be responsible for the development and preparation of regional multi-sector programmes for submission to COTED and COHSOD as well as their oversight.
- For consideration of the recurring agenda item on food and nutrition security, COTED and COHSOD should constitute a joint sub-committee on food and nutrition security. CCS secretariat will then do the ground work to convene this sub-committee every six months (possibly through alternate video conferencing and a meeting at CCS HQ in Georgetown).
- Member States should ensure consistency at the national level with regional initiatives on food security policy.
- The governance and programmes of regional institutions, such as CARDI, CARPHA, CFRM, CAHFSA, CDEMA, CROSQ, etc., working in the agriculture and food and

nutrition sectors should be reviewed and appropriately transformed to incorporate the dimension of food and nutrition security, without prejudice to the achievement of their core mandate.

- Linkages with other food security initiatives (e.g. Hunger-free Latin America and the Caribbean).
- The region presently has a development fund and a food security window should be opened under this fund dealing with issues of availability, access, use and stability. This fund will be triggered when the region faces economic shocks and natural disasters (which are aggravated by the effects of climate) such as floods, hurricanes etc.
- SPS – There is need for a regional programme to keep farming practices and the entire value chain under continuous review and certify their fulfilment of SPS regulations on the use of pesticides and other agricultural chemicals, maximum levels of chemical residues etc., and appropriate post-harvest storage and handling;
- A baseline survey must be carried out and *inter alia* statistics on drivers for demand e.g. working women, per-capita income need to be collected.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Formulation of an Implementation Framework

5.10 A *Food and Nutrition Security Policy Implementation Strategy* will be formulated to outline the concrete actions that will be taken by CARICOM to implement the policy. The Strategy will include a work plan with detailed initiatives, timeframes, institutions and costs that will be required for implementation.

5.11 *Oversight and Coordination of Policy Implementation* will take place at 2 levels, national and regional:

- At national level, Member States shall be asked to prepare a National Food and Nutrition Security Policy and Strategy; and to establish an Inter-ministerial Food and Nutrition Security Committee (IFNSC) or National Food and Nutrition Security Commission to coordinate, manage and oversee the implementation of the measures outlined in the national policy and ensure their consistency with the actions implemented under the RFNSP. Given the breadth, diversity and importance of the issues falling within the purview of this committee and their financial implications, the IFNSC should be placed directly under a portfolio ministry where it would be invested with the requisite authority, and include representatives of the Ministries of Finance, Planning and the Economy. The chairmanship of the IFNSC will rotate among the ministries represented on it and the secretariat will be provided by the Ministry of Agriculture which will also serve as the national focal point on behalf of the respective Governments with responsibility for coordinating all activities required for implementation of the RFNSP in their respective countries. The IFNSC will also function as a liaison with the CARICOM Secretariat and the Regional Committee on Food and Nutrition Security.
- At regional level, CARICOM shall establish a Technical Unit for Food and Nutrition Security within the CCS that will facilitate and coordinate the implementation of the policy in concert with the national focal points. It will also have responsibility for the development, preparation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation arrangements of regional multi-sector programmes for submission to COTED and COHSOD. The CCS Technical Unit for Food and Nutrition Security will function as the technical secretariat of the RCFNS.

Mobilization of Resources

5.12 CARICOM shall seek to mobilize resources (financial, human and material, etc.) for the implementation of the food and nutrition security initiatives that will be outlined in the *Food and Nutrition Security Policy Implementation Strategy*. In addition, a Regional Food and Nutrition Security Investment Programme will be prepared in support of this strategy.

5.13 Bilateral donors (EU, USAID, CIDA, JICA, etc.), international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and relevant technical agencies of the United Nations (FAO, WFP, PAHO, etc) will be approached by CARICOM to fund and/or provide technical support for the initiatives outlined in the Implementation Strategy and Investment Programme.

Capacity Building

5.14 CARICOM recognizes that regional and national institutions that are critical to policy implementation may not possess sufficient capacity to implement the policy. As such, it will be necessary to identify the additional resources (human, material and financial) required at the regional level by the various stakeholders to achieve the objectives outlined in the policy. Thereafter, targeted capacity building programmes will be implemented for groups and institutions (including farmers' organizations and other non-governmental organizations) that are key to the success of the policy. Revision of mandates and operational guidelines for implementing regional entities/institutions responsible for implementation of the policy will also be undertaken.

5.15 At the national level, Member States will be equipped with the necessary capacities to discharge their functions and responsibilities adequately under the policy. In recognition of the importance of climate change to the stability of food supplies, capacity building for producers at the national level for dealing with climate change will also be undertaken.

Public education and advocacy

5.16 A key element for policy implementation is public education and advocacy aimed at sensitizing relevant stakeholders and civil society about the importance of food and nutrition security in the Caribbean Region. CARICOM will also seek to bring about a greater awareness and acceptance of the RFNSP and promote inclusion of all stakeholder groups. Emphasis will also be placed on the promotion of the consumption of nutritious foods produced in the Region and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle by the population.

Consensus Building

5.17 Consensus building among Member States around key issues (such as greater intra regional trade of a common basket of nutritious products, harmonization of data collection systems under the ISFNS etc.) will be undertaken to ensure that implementation of the policy is successful.

Information for Decision Making

5.18 In order to facilitate effective decision making and monitoring and evaluation of activities, an assessment will be made of the information/data requirements necessary for monitoring and evaluation of the policy implementation process. In respect of the establishment of a regional ISFNS, steps will be taken to harmonize agricultural and climate statistics and data collection and analysis systems across Member States and regional bodies with uniform criteria for national and regional databases and linkages among them at all levels so as to prepare and provide updates, analysis and recommendations relating to on-going and planned actions in the medium to long term for self reliant sufficient availability of staple food commodities/products, and preparedness for shocks. Expansion of data collected by the Regional Data Bank will also be undertaken in order to provide consistent, reliable data to facilitate decision making and inform the policy process.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

5.19 As noted above, the region's vulnerability to natural disasters, exacerbated by the effects of climate change, and its dependence on external markets for the greater part of its food supplies, has underlined the importance for governments of having access to timely, reliable and accurate information on domestic food output, availability and prices, the nature, extent and geographic distribution of vulnerability and food insecurity as well as the state of the crops in the fields, so as to have early warning of the probability of crop failures etc. There is need, therefore for an M&E system at national and regional level for two purposes:

- to inform the national and regional decision-making process for disaster management, mitigation and response through an Early Warning System; and
- to inform the oversight and management of the process of implementation of the RFNSP.

5.20 The nature and scope of the M&E system for the second of the above-mentioned objectives will be determined on the basis of the activities agreed on in the various Action Programmes that will need to be prepared to give effect to the RFNSP in each of the sectors that it encompasses. At national level, the main issues to be resolved arise from a diverse array of objectives throughout the region (M&E for sector, project and/or programme objectives rather than national issues of food security, vulnerability and nutritional status); few, if any, of the countries that have a national system have set up a food security and nutrition early warning system. Once, the Regional Action Plans/Programmes have been agreed and approved, there will need to be a consensus on indicators of achievement etc. and a mechanism put in place for coordinating M&E across the region.

Annex I

Proposed Terms of Reference of the National Food and Nutrition Security Committee/Commission

- Formulation of policy measures (fiscal, trade, tariff, educational, quality assurance, market location and management etc.), the preparation of legislation to be submitted to the Attorney General for approval (including the amendment of existing laws and regulations) and the proposal and implementation of changes in the institutional/administrative framework, processes and procedures of the relevant departments and agencies of the State that may be required for the achievement of food and nutrition security as well as the revitalisation of agriculture at all stages of the value chain, with continuous reviews and modifications as necessary;
- Coordinating the inputs and making available the additional resources (human, material and financial) that may be needed by the various ministries and other agencies in achieving the objectives established above;
- Making representation to Cabinet for additional financial assistance that may be needed from time to time, and the issuance of special orders, regulations or proclamations;
- Ensuring that all its policies, as approved and promulgated by Cabinet, are carried out by the relevant departments of the State, implementing and regulatory agencies and stakeholders;
- Consulting and communicating with the national community on the issues involved;
- Reporting to Cabinet every three months.

Proposed Terms of Reference of the Regional Commission on Food and Nutrition Security (RCFNS)

- Formulation/harmonization of policy measures (educational, quality assurance, market location and management etc.), laws, ordinances and regulations and the proposal and implementation of changes in the institutional/administrative framework, processes and procedures of the relevant departments and agencies of the Member States that may be required for the revitalisation of agriculture at all stages of the value chain and the assurance of food and nutrition safety and security, with continuous reviews and modifications as necessary;
- Coordination of the preparation of policy measures on trade-related matters, particularly the harmonization of customs procedures and regulations throughout CARICOM, especially for sub regional trade in agricultural goods and services;
- Taking steps to harmonize agricultural and climate statistics and data collection and analysis systems with uniform criteria for national and regional data bases and linkages between and among them at all levels so as to prepare and provide updates, analysis and recommendations relating to on-going and planned actions in the medium to long term for self reliant sufficient availability of staple food commodities/products, and preparedness for shocks;
- Coordinating the inputs and identifying the additional resources (human, material and financial) that may be needed at regional level by the various stakeholders in achieving the objectives established above;
- Making representation, through COTED and COHSOD, to the CARICOM Heads of Government for additional financial assistance that may be needed from time to time, and the issuance of special orders, regulations or proclamations;
- Ensuring that all policies, as approved and promulgated by the CARICOM Heads of Government, are carried out by the relevant implementing and regulatory agencies and stakeholders;
- Consulting and communicating with the regional community on the issues involved;
- Reporting to COTED and COHSOD every six months and, through them, to the Conference of Heads of Government, once yearly.