



Country	Barbados
Institution(s)	MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY
Tipo	Government



## LARC/20/2

Transforming food systems for healthy diets for all

The consumption of healthy foods and an appropriate diet play a vital role in the prevention of diseases, improvement in the quality of life and the reduction of premature death. Barbados has been facing an increasing obesity crisis which is scientifically linked to the lack of exercise, poor diet and limited nutrition intake, all of which are also contributing factors to the increasing incidences of non-communicable diseases. The social and economic impacts are significant with increasing amounts of resources being required to treat individuals with these medical conditions. In this way, human, societal and economic health are inextricably linked.

The introduction of Covid 19 further highlighted the vulnerabilities with which Governments and all of humanity faces. Initially, the airborne virus appeared to affect in greater occurrences, individuals over a certain age and those with chronic medical conditions such as cancer, diabetes, auto-immune and other diseases. As the virus spread around the globe to affect all individuals regardless of age and medical status, individuals affected by these non-communicable diseases and obesity remained in the high risk category for likelihood of infection. Covid 19 also highlighted the importance of addressing food insecurity and the need to grow more local nutritious food, which should result in increased employment and income generation for new entrants to the farming community.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), The Government of Barbados therefore recognizes the urgent need to take action through its review of fiscal policies, institutional and legislative framework in order to improve

the quality and quantity of healthy nutritious food made available, as well as to increase their consumption in the school environments and general population.

The Government of Barbados proposes to:

1. Review fiscal policies to discourage consumption of high fat, high sugar and highly processed food (e.g. impose restrictions on the sale of these items in schools).
2. Review national nutrition labelling requirements through a consultative process with all stakeholders.
3. Increase the production and availability of affordable locally grown healthy food.
4. Provide statistical information to support this initiative.
5. Reduce food imports and create jobs in farming through the increase in food production.
6. Include all major stakeholders in a multi-sectoral Task Force (TF) to guide and improve the health of Barbadian citizens. This TF would include IICA, the FAO and the Ministries responsible for Education, Agriculture and Health.

As the world mobilizes to control and ultimately eradicate the deadly COVID 19 the lessons relating to health and food security must not be forgotten. Our international partners the FAO, PAHO, UNICEF and IICA have a valuable contribution to make in supporting and guiding Barbados in the transformation of its food systems to achieve healthy foods and diets for all.





Barbados is particularly in urgent need of support from the FAO in the areas of:

(1) the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of regulations and policy instruments that promote healthy eating for all;

(2) promoting the development and implementation of public policies that contribute to Food Security and Nutrition;

(3) mobilization of resources to support countries in the development of policies and innovations for healthy eating with an emphasis on the contribution of science and technology; and

(4) strengthening its national system of agricultural and rural statistics to inform this food system transformation.

The issue of food safety is an area that perhaps is inadequately covered in this paper (LARC/20/2). Barbados is in the process of reviewing the institutional, legislative and programmatic basis for national food safety control, this being an activity that needs to be lead jointly by the Ministries responsible for Health and Agriculture if it is to work. We acknowledge the work done on agricultural health and food control legislation and look forward to further support of the FAO on this initiative, such as preparation of regulations and operationalization of the regulatory support systems.

Caribbean governments, from the early stages of the pandemic, were quickly able to recognize the risk associated with the COVID-19 health crisis becoming a food security crisis due to our vulnerability as small, isolated, high food importing countries. This makes it imperative for strategic self-reliance to be recognized in our agricultural and trade policies, if we are to be able to assure that our people have access to food, even in the face of unimaginable external shocks. FAO has an important role in supporting and guiding the region in this respect.

Finally, we note that the transformation of the current food system into one that is sustainable and nutrition-sensitive, requires careful planning on the basis of good data. Barbados, like several of the other countries of the Caribbean, is in urgent need of support to strengthen the national system of agricultural and rural statistics. The support needed in the region is similar to the one offered by FAO through the Initiative 50 by 2030. However, none of the CARICOM Member States, except Haiti, is eligible for the Initiative.

Given the difficulty in obtaining financial resources for Statistics as a public good, it is recommended that FAO establish specific programs to support the National Statistical System of the Small Islands Developing States (SIDSs).



### LARC/20/3

*Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies*

Agriculture has historically been the driver for Barbados's development and as a means of economic empowerment during the years of the sugar industry. However, in recent times, other sectors have taken prominence and the country has seen a change in the mind-set of persons about the viability of the sector as a profitable business and source of income. While hunger is not an endemic problem in Barbados, due to falls in agricultural production in the country, food insecurity is a very present threat to Barbados as a net importing food country.

The advent of COVID-19 has brought into sharp context the need for supporting the agricultural sector both as a means of food security and as viable enterprises given the devastating impact on the traditionally strong tourism sector. Similarly, climate change and climate events represent an ever present threat to Barbados' agriculture sector. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Government of Barbados by extension, recognizes the need to transform agriculture from the simplistic point of a subsistence endeavour to one which gives economic empowerment to rural communities through the development of sustainable initiatives and programmes.





The flagship national programme aimed at achieving the goals of sustainability, resilience and prosperity in the sector is the "Farmers' Empowerment and Enfranchisement Drive" (FEED) programme. The aim of this programme is to create a multitude of opportunities in the agricultural sector to 2000 farmers and other agricultural entrepreneurs. The programme is aimed at facilitating both an increase in agricultural production and the expansion of agro-processing and other value chain activities to ultimately reduce food imports and increase wealth generation through agricultural activities for those involved. The FEED programme is also aimed at giving special support to otherwise neglected portions of society. As part of the programme, 60 acres of land has been allotted to the Rastafarian community to engage in organic farming and other sustainable agricultural and agro-processing activities. Similarly, women and the youth will also be targeted as special interest groups.

Given the broad scope of the FEED programme and other planned initiatives for the development of the sector, support from the FAO is critical to:

- Facilitate the transfer of technologies and know how that promote competitive and sustainable value chains
- Identify priority value chains and formulate strategies for their development and in particular government's role in serving as a catalyst to drive private sector investment in this area.
- Obtain South-South support to speedily implement solutions to the region's shared issues
- Strengthen the capacities and capabilities of statistical services
- Advise on the relevant instruments and mechanisms which may be used to facilitate private sector investment in inclusive growth within agriculture
- Enhance the effectiveness of national participation in relevant international bodies.

Barbados has reviewed, with interest, information on the Corporate Hand-in-Hand programme which is in line with the results being sought through the implementation of the FEED programme. It is further agreed that using an evidence based and data informed approach to designing and monitoring actions to lift persons out of poverty.

However, some clarity will be needed on the support which will be given to countries in the Caribbean through this programme. Similarly, for the GIS data platform that is part of the FAO's Hand in Hand programme and which can provide useful support in disseminating rich and timely geo-data including information on water, land soils, green-house gases and others.

Barbados has started some work in the area of soil fertility mapping but like other countries in the Caribbean region, there is a lack of robust geo-data information due to a lack of capacity and resources. It is recommended that FAO support the Caribbean to develop the necessary methodological tools to collect and use geospatial data for evidence-based policies.



#### LARC/20/4

##### *Sustainable and Climate Resilient Agriculture*

Climate change disproportionately affects people and farming communities living in conditions of poverty and vulnerability. Their ability to recover after adverse events is low, as well as their chances of acting preventively to reduce damage and loss, and adapt their livelihoods. Barbados, as a Caribbean country falls firmly under the category of being one of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and as such is susceptible to the generally recognized vulnerabilities of SIDS.

Given the particular vulnerability of the Caribbean SIDS to the impacts of Climate Change, we strongly support the priority of this area of work within the Region.

Government already has major initiatives and or projects to expand and increase the local agricultural sector through the provision of support and training and introduction of hundreds of new farmers into the industry. The targets of this initiative include women, youth and





other vulnerable groups. While the goal of the plan is to introduce the availability of food on the island and hence increase both food security and food safety, the financial support which the Government is able to offer these new farmers is limited.

There are several potential initiatives which the Ministry would wish to implement but cannot due to technical, financial and other capacity constraints and would benefit with support from the FAO. These include:

- Improving soil health and land restoration
- Water Quality and Availability: Barbados is a water scarce country. Typically, production occurs under rain-fed and open field conditions. The availability of irrigation water and ground water protection are key issues in Barbados.
- Protection of the National Ecosystem and Bio-diversity: This includes the development of a national policy and management plan for preserving the flora and fauna.
- Forage conservation techniques and the development of drought resistant forages.
- Communal Biogas Digesters: The aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and produce energy.
- Natural Disaster Management: Barbados is vulnerable to a diversity of natural hazards including hurricanes, flooding, droughts, storm surges, epidemics and even earthquakes and tsunamis. The development of an early warning system and climate services for agriculture is a crucial area that needs to be strengthened in Barbados, to provide such information to small-scale producers to enable them to act in a timely manner and increase their adaptive capacity.

Accordingly, Barbados wishes that particular note be made of the following:

- Increased investments in Risk Analysis, Early Warning and Anticipatory Action are now ever more important to better address the increasingly systemic na-

ture of disaster risks. Public and private financial mechanisms should be also designed/re-designed in a way that they can be adaptive to anticipated, actual and residual impacts—whether it's an entire value chain, clusters of community farms, or an entire stretch of fishing communities.

- Barbados is one of the world's most water-stressed countries. Support from FAO in informing agricultural water use policies and investment plans and in facilitating the adoption of the technologies that increase water availability and efficiency, is critical for Barbados as well as for several other water-stressed countries in the sub-region.
- Support required for advancing the reuse of appropriately treated effluent water from sewerage treatment facilities for irrigation purposes.
- Support in investigating the feasibility of mixed land use options as it pertains to the energy-agriculture nexus, in particular the use of solar PV panels on agricultural lands simultaneously with operations such as horticulture, aquaponics, vegetables and livestock. Also, the use of floating solar PV systems on reservoir surfaces to help reduce evaporation.
- Promoting soil health and improving bio-diversity are also critical areas of action in Barbados.
- More than 90% of Barbados' territorial space is ocean. Sustainable management of marine resources is an imperative while at the same time protecting the livelihoods of those who depend on the Blue Economy. Barbados has an ambitious plan to expand its Marine Management Areas to about 30% of their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Sustainable fisheries must co-exist in the context of a Blue economy. Lateral thinking, inter-sectoral collaboration and leap-frogging on the experience of others will be essential elements in achieving the social and environmental benefits that are needed.

We also take the opportunity to underline the following facts:





- There is an outstanding request that was submitted by the CRFM to FAO almost 2 years ago requesting the use of the Nansen vessel in the Caribbean to support work on Marine spatial planning and marine resources surveys. This is critical to planning, implementing and monitoring Blue Economy strategies in the region and specifically in Barbados. We look forward to a positive response to this request.
- Expertise in water management and in soil management is critical to the Caribbean but access to such FAO expertise is too limited. We are not currently able to get the support that we need.
- We recognize the need for Barbados to be more influential in the major international bodies developing global policies on sustainable management of natural resources. FAO is well placed to provide the technical support and guidance necessary to promote this.



## LARC/20/5

### *Results and Priorities for FAO in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region*

The Government of Barbados is highly appreciative of the work undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations throughout the years in contributing to the development of agriculture and fisheries in Barbados and the region as a whole. This country is especially grateful for the assistance granted to facilitate the preparation of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Legislation, as well as contribution made towards the development of key value chains.

Barbados is committed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To this end the country has secured technical support from the FAO for a project designed to enhance the statistical programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, through the development of a Strategic Plan for Agriculture and Rural Statistics (SPARS). Barbados wishes to thank the FAO for its support on this project, which at its conclusion will result in a framework for effectively monitoring the achievements

of the indicators for the SDGs as it relates to the agriculture sector. It will furthermore ensure the availability of adequate and timely data to facilitate evidence-based policy formulation and decision-making.

Given the further decline in investment into the sector, the provision of technical assistance by donor agencies, such as the FAO can serve as an instrument for accelerating agricultural development and increasing food production. The manpower and material inputs provided can yield benefits in potentially all aspects of agricultural and rural development, including research, training and extension, irrigation and mechanization, processing and marketing.

The Government of Barbados is supportive of the areas of strategic focus identified by the FAO, which are in keeping with some of those for Barbados. We furthermore support the three regional initiatives being proposed and agree with the decision to have these more closely aligned with the achievement of the SDGs. We believe these will be useful for focusing the work of the FAO in the region. We wish that it be recognized however that these initiatives are likely to be interpreted differently across LAC.

The country also welcomes plans to facilitate partnerships between producers and food companies, procurers and consumers, as well as for the establishment of an Office for Innovation. Barbados would be interested in having further details provided on the proposal for operationalization of this office and the means by which support will be provided through this Office to the initiatives being pursued by the countries in the Caribbean.



## LARC/20/8

### *Improving FAO's Capacities to Serve Member Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean*

Barbados possesses many of the typical characteristics of a Small Island Development State (SIDS), including li-





mitated natural resources, vulnerability to natural disasters, highly open economy, high-cost and uncompetitive production systems, limited production and consumption capacity, and limited technical and financial capacity to respond to major challenges.

The country is in addition a net food importing country, with a food import bill that exceeds USD 338 annually, approximately 66% of which can be attributed to processed foods. The increasing dependency on imported foods has resulted in a shift in food consumption patterns away from locally produced fruits, vegetables and legumes, to energy-dense diets, high in sodium, sugars and saturated fats.

As a result, the country is experiencing increased incidences of chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes, hypertension, stroke, heart disease and cancer, which is placing a burden on the budget required for the treatment of these diseases. This situation has become one of even greater concern, given reports indicating that 31% of children are either obese or overweight, with one in five individuals having diabetes. This has given recognition to the need for increased emphasis to be placed on the food and nutrition security. Efforts have therefore been intensified in an effort to increase domestic production, in an effort to ensure the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The economy of Barbados is one that is highly dependent on the tourism industry. This industry, as well as the hospitality industry, have been hard hit by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has redounded to the economy of the country as a whole. This has extended not only to the decline in employment, but also in terms of domestic market access for the sale of agricultural products. This has meant that less financing is now available for a sector that has suffered from under investment for quite a number of years. Furthermore, according to a CARICOM survey impacts on food security appear to be worsening, with a quarter reporting eating less than usual or going a whole day without eating, compared to 15% in April.

Despite the negatives, there are also positives that can accrue to the agriculture sector from the COVID pande-

mic. This includes the renewed emphasis by the country on increasing domestic production as a means of reducing foreign exchange outflows, as well as increasing foreign exchange inflows through exports. To achieve this, the Government of Barbados, through its Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), will be pursuing measures targeted at enhancing the competitiveness and productivity of the domestic agriculture sector.

### Barbados' Priority Focus

The Government of Barbados wishes that it be noted that as part of its efforts to improve food and nutrition security in the country, emphasis will be placed on enhancing production, competitiveness and productivity within the agriculture sector. To achieve this, it is proposed that priority action at the national level will include the following:

- Enhanced emphasis on research, development and innovation
- Improved Agricultural health and food safety systems and protocols
- Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience
- Increased use of climate smart agricultural practices and technologies, as well as other forms of technology to facilitate improved efficiencies and modernisation of the sector
- Improved Soil and Water management practices
- Agro-processing and development of industries along the value chain
- Trans-Boundary/transnational and cross-sectoral linkages for sustainable agricultural production
- Improved Information, Communications and Knowledge Transfer.

Access to adequate financing and technical support is important for facilitating growth in the agriculture sector. Given the economic situation currently faced by the country and the lack of/very limited investment in the sector, access to donor financing and technical assistance will be imperative for assisting the country with meeting its objectives.





There is a recognition throughout the Caribbean, that there has been under-investment in agriculture. A strengthened agricultural sector is key to building economic resilience; creating employment, particularly for women and youth; and in safeguarding food security. The support of FAO to the countries of the sub-region is of the highest level of importance. Barbados recognises however that there are limited financial resources now available to the FAO to provide the level of technical assistance required. It is therefore necessary to ensure that optimal use is made of existing resources.

#### **Barbados endorses the Programmatic Approach:**

This has always been the approach adopted for the Country Programming Framework (CPF) process. We are pleased with the discussions and the engagement of the Sub-Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (SLC Office) with the various agencies and Departments and especially with the Ministry of Agriculture, as part of a collaborative effort to construct an impactful programme that is well coordinated with other agencies and development partners.

The Government of Barbados strongly supports the UN-Reform which is another important factor driving more coherent and programmatic support to countries.

#### **Operational Efficiencies:**

The need for the strengthening of operational and administrative capacities for resource mobilization is recognized and understandable. It is however recommended that the strengthening should be facilitate through the provision of extra budgetary resources and not the regular programme resources. The strengthening should not be done at the expense of the support that all countries should be receiving from FAO, regardless of the volume of resources it mobilizes for FAO implementation.

While Barbados understands the rationale behind FAO's decentralization policy we take this opportunity to express concern regarding access to some critical areas of technical expertise. It should be recognized that many countries in the Caribbean do not have a dedicated country office. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the Multi-Country Office is adequately staffed to effectively

manage the programmes across the Seven (7) countries covered by the office.

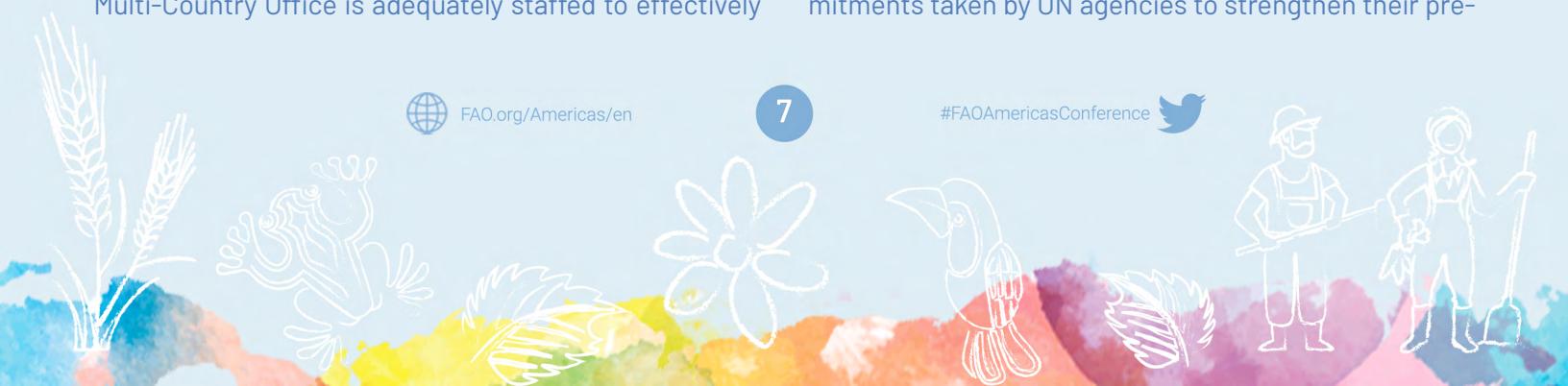
#### **Technical networks of excellence:**

The wealth of FAO's technical expertise underlies its value to the Caribbean. Therefore facilitating technical excellence through the reinforcement of technical networks is necessary. It should however be recognized that there are large differences among sub-regions. In particular, the Caribbean is distinctive in terms of size, climate vulnerability, institutions, legislative frameworks, language, and culture. It is essential that the sub-regional office be empowered to serve the sub-region while at the same time being an integral part of a regional pool of knowledge that ensures robust opinions and analyses. Some key competencies that Barbados would wish to see fully immersed within the Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean reality include: water management, soil management, food safety, as well as animal health and production.

#### **Resource Mobilization:**

The criteria for awarding grant financing and eligibility for preferential loans penalize Barbados and some other countries in the Caribbean. The Government of Barbados has been vocal in calling for a change in the criteria for eligibility to consider our unique vulnerability and has been seeking support from the UN system to advocate for this change. The FAO Technical Cooperation Programme can be an important catalyst for mobilizing funds for Barbados. While we question the logic whereby Barbados has a smaller Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) allocation than most other countries, we acknowledge the efforts of SLC and Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) to enable greater access to TCP funding through multi-country projects and also the opportunity to compete for additional TCP allocations. It is however recognized that support to mobilize resources to achieve the SDGs cannot be limited to resources for implementation by FAO. Countries need FAO's support for mobilizing resources even if implemented by the country itself or other partners where appropriate.

**Multi-Country Office (MCO) Reform:** We note the commitments taken by UN agencies to strengthen their pre-





sence and resources to ensure more tailored support to countries covered by the MCO such as SLC. We look forward to an explanation of how FAO is fulfilling this commitment.

**Office of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS:** We note with interest the establishment of this office. We consider SLC as our main point of support. We would like to better understand how the Office of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS will support SLC in serving the Caribbean.



## LARC/20/9

### Innovation and Digital Agriculture

It is widely acknowledged that innovation in agriculture represents a key tenet for sustainable development and can serve as a driver of economic growth. Whether the system of innovation is represented through institutional or technological innovations, the application of these tools remains pivotal to competitiveness and creating efficiencies.

Agriculture, within the Barbados context, is faced with numerous challenges and will heavily rely on innovative solutions to meet and solve these issues. They include but are not limited to, the rigors of climate change (lengthy drought periods and flooding), water scarcity, soil nutrient deficiency, pest invasion and competition from imports. Indeed, these challenges are not peculiar to Barbados but have been documented by several regional nations.

In 2013, the World Bank Institute stated that Governments must play a fundamental role in supplying the economic, social and institutional conditions that foster innovation. This would involve employing effective policies for providing innovators with resources (finances, services and knowledge) by building a suitable support system.

In view of this, Barbados remains fully committed to removing obstacles in regulatory frameworks, including legal, trade, governance and investment barriers, and creating effective linkages among all the creators and users of knowledge.

Some of the technologies which Barbados is currently employing or has identified for future use are:

- **Container/Freight Farming:** Old shipping containers will be reconfigured to provide space for growing certain crops
- **Vertical Farming and Smart Greenhouses:** A wide variety of crops can be grown under smart greenhouses and the use of LED lighting and increased automation can go a long way in increasing yields
- **Drone Technology:** To assist with planting, crop spraying, soil and field analysis and as a security feature to combat praedial larceny
- **Mobile Smartphone Technology:** This can be used for farm management, including the operation of irrigation pumps, lights, temperature control
- **Soil and Water Sensors:** These will be used to determine soil moisture levels and the frequency and quantity of water to be used on crops
- **Solar Powered Pumps:** Can lower the cost of electricity and the price of water for farmers
- **RFID tags:** The use of radio frequency identification (RFID) devices (RFIDs or micro transponders) has advanced the use of technology in livestock identification.

In addition, as an ongoing effort to further develop our human resources and build institutional capacity, personnel from Barbados along with technocrats from other CARICOM Member States, will receive training from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the application of nuclear technology to agriculture.

This project, which contributes to CARICOM's strategic priority of building economic resilience, will provide training and capacity building in the application of Isotopic and radiation techniques for:

- Soil and water management and crop nutrition
- Plant breeding and genetics
- Prevention and control of insect pests through an integrated approach including, when possible, the sterile insect technique (SIT)
- Animal health and production; and
- Food safety and control.





Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced societies to heavily depend on digital technologies. As a consequence, further interest has been generated in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) in transforming food systems and the application to different value-chains.

A regional Information Technology strategy and road-map has been developed by CARICOM. It has also been agreed that a regional digital innovation hub would be established. The support of FAO has been requested with exploring the feasibility for the establishment of this, as well as with the development of the strategy, working in collaboration with other agencies such as the CARICOM Secretariat.

The FAO Sub-Regional Office, working in collaboration with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and in consultation with the CARICOM Secretariat, has furthermore developed a concept note for a sub-regional TCP that aims to enable six (6) focus countries to develop e-Agriculture strategies and develop digital applications to facilitate sustainable and inclusive agriculture.

Thus, in recognizing the importance of digital agriculture as one innovative tool to the sustainability of the sector, Barbados welcomes the opportunity to be part of any e-Agriculture platform that facilitates dialogue, information exchange and sharing of ideas related to the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

To this end, Barbados strongly supports the implementation of the Single CARICOM ICT Space and the CARICOM Digital Agenda 2025, of which, one of the key digital transformation initiatives is resource mobilisation and implementation of the COVID-19 action plan for CARICOM Digital transformation.

Similarly, Barbados also welcomes and supports the establishment of the International Digital Council for Food and Agriculture. Not only would this Council advise governments and other relevant actors but it would also serve to drive the exchange of ideas and experiences and help everyone to harness the opportunities presented by

digitalization. This initiative could be of great benefit to the Caribbean and other developing countries if they are able to effectively engage in the Council and appropriately influence its agenda.

Apart from digital innovation, it should be borne in mind that innovation in a number of domains will be necessary to enable the Caribbean to achieve its goals in terms of revitalizing the agriculture sectors, ensuring sustainable use of natural resources, creating employment and reducing extra-regional food imports.



## LARC/20/10

### *COVID-19 Update and Adjustments to FAO's Regional Priorities to Address Impact on Food Security and Nutrition, and Food Systems*

The CARICOM Secretariat and United Nations World Food Programme has conducted the CARICOM Regional COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods Survey. The Report of that June 2020 Study for Barbados highlighted the following:

- About 62% of respondents experienced job loss or a decline in salaries in their households.
- Impacts on food security appear to be worsening, with a quarter reporting eating less than usual or going a whole day without eating, compared to 15% in April. Respondents who perceive their income as below or well below average income appear to be more severely impacted.
- Approximately 89% of respondents predicted that their livelihoods would be impacted in the future.

The majority of respondents (59%) perceived an increase in prices, while 40% observed no changes in food prices. The survey did not inquire on the extent of price increases or items affected. It was acknowledged that while the survey contributed to a better overview of impacts, the data was not representative, and the use of a web-based questionnaire limited inputs from those without connectivity.





As a net food importing country, estimated to be importing about 80% of its food requirements, and recognising the negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic, could have on the importation of food, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) prepared an emergency food production plan in March 2020. This Plan was targeted at stimulating increased agricultural production and ensuring that there would be little or no disruption in access to adequate quantities of fresh, nutritious foods, at reasonable prices, for the populace of Barbados.

Tourism is Barbados' key economic sector, the country relying heavily on tourism for foreign exchange earnings. The accommodation and food services sector accounts for approximately 17% of economic activity and 13% of total employment. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a decline in activity in the tourism and hospitality industries, with a corresponding decline in earnings and job losses. The performance of the agriculture sector however improved to record a 16% increase in food crop production.

There was however a decline in demand for some agricultural products, namely watermelons and poultry, given the closure of hotels and restaurants, leading to gluts on the market for these commodities. This can have an impact on food and nutritional security given the decline in household income, with persons consuming less than their daily dietary requirements.

In 2015, the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States (CELAC) adopted the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and the Eradication of Hunger 2025 (CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication). This was in response to the surge in undernourishment in the region at the time.

CELAC's Food Security Plan is based on four pillars aiming at guaranteeing the four dimensions of food security: food access, availability, use and stability as follows:

- Pillar 1:** Coordinated strategies for food security through national and regional public policies. Countries shall strengthen their legal and institutional food security frameworks, facilitate trade, avoid losses and food waste and encourage procurement programs.

- Pillar 2:** Timely and sustainable access to safe, adequate, sufficient and nutritious food for all people. Access is the main problem of food security in the region. To address this, the CELAC Plan encourages conditional transfer programs, the improvement of labour markets, and strong support for family farming.
- Pillar 3:** Nutritional wellness for all vulnerable groups. This pillar promotes school feeding programs, with particular emphasis in connecting family farming producers through public purchases, and promoting healthy habits.
- Pillar 4:** Ensuring stability of production and timely response to natural and man-made disasters: The creation and maintenance of food reserves, the consolidation of public stocks for emergencies and a strong component of prevention and disaster management are some of the elements of this pillar

In light of the potential impact of COVID-19 on health and nutrition and given the expected decline in income and the ability of households to consume adequate quantities of good quality food, Barbados recommends that CELAC reactivates its Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Eradication of Hunger (SAN CELAC Plan), adapting it to the new COVID-19 context; and also strengthen political agreements to boost food trade among CELAC countries.

A CARICOM COVID-19 Agri-Food Action Plan has also been approved by Regional Ministers of Agriculture. This regional Plan is targeted at ensuring that CARICOM countries retain a greater level of control over the Region's ability to supply its own agri-food and nutrition requirements, while ensuring that food insecurity by vulnerable groups does not become an issue. A regional Food Security Task Force was established to oversee the implementation of the Plan.

Under this CARICOM Plan, Ministers of Agriculture have undertaken to source financing for the mitigating actions through various means. In addition, it has been determined that there should be deeper engagement with





financial and other support institutions, to explore the possibilities for responding to the pandemic and implementation of the Action Plan.

Interventions identified under the CARICOM COVID-19 Agri-Food Action Plan include:

- The purchase of excess agri-food products for redistribution, as part of social safety net programmes
- Intensify provision of income support and food grants to vulnerable populations to respond to loss of income, closure of school feeding programmes
- The strengthening of Research and Development in key agri-food products and the value chain
- The implementation of National Operational Plans, targeted, *inter alia*, at managing the imports of crops which can be produced nationally and regionally.
- The deepening of Private Sector engagement to facilitate the increased production, procurement and consumption of regionally produced agri-food products, as well as to increase intra-regional trade.
- The creation of a trade and information portal for Member States to access information on agricultural produce availability.

The CARICOM Plan furthermore speaks to the creation of an Information system to manage data and regional agricultural statistics in the medium-term. The overarching aim of this information system is to increase the capacity for food crisis prevention, risk management and support evidenced-based approach to decision making. The Plan also proposes the adoption of measures to facilitate the introduction of greater modern and climate smart technology into the agri-food sector.

Barbados requests the support of the FAO with the development of this information system, as well as with providing technical support to identify and facilitate the introduction of climate smart technology.

Barbados would also wish to encourage the FAO to work with other donor agencies and share its technical expertise in an effort to assist countries with identifying policy instruments and strategies that could assist with improving the sustainability of food systems and food security,

given the situation related to COVID-19. FAO has already started the process of assisting Barbados with the development of value chains and we wish to request that support in this area be strengthened at this time.

There is an existing CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy (RFNSP) for the period 2011 to 2025, which was endorsed by the CARICOM Council on Trade and Economic Development-COTED (Agriculture) in October 2010. This was followed by the CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan in 2011. The goal of this Policy is to ensure long-term food security among CARICOM member states. The policy is grounded in the commitments made by Member States in adhering to the Right to Food Convention as well as those made at the World Food Summit in 2009. National Food and Nutrition Security Policies and Action Plans were subsequently prepared to align with the Regional Policy.

The CARICOM Secretariat has established the CARICOM Action Committee on Food and Nutrition Security for the sharing of best practices and resources through effective interaction, communication, enhanced synergies and capacity-building in Member States. Barbados is grateful for the financial and technical support provided to the CARICOM Secretariat by the FAO for the establishment of the CACFNS Platform. One of the outputs of this platform was a Monitoring and Evaluation Tool, which was developed by the CARICOM Secretariat to assist Member States with the collection of baseline data for more effectively monitoring and implementing their National Food and Nutrition Security Policies.

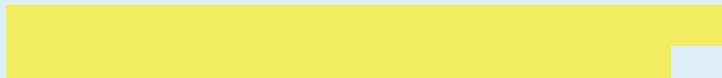
Barbados requests the continued support of the FAO on this initiative and with the implementation of the Food and Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation Tool.





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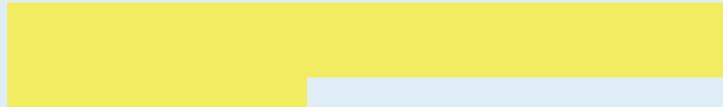
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