



Press Release

Contact: Ayesha London
(T) 202-458-6955
Selwyn King
(T) 868-645-1205/7

8th ANNUAL CARIBBEAN WEEK OF AGRICULTURE BEGINS IN ST. VINCENT

“Innovative Agriculture and Industries- Fueling Sustainable Development”

Kingstown, St. Vincent – October 8, 2008 - “We must never again be lulled into complacency and a false sense of security that so called “cheap” food will always be available.” Dr. the Honorable Christopher Tufton, Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Jamaica emphasized as he spoke during the 8th Meeting of the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu (the Alliance). The Meeting took place in the context of the 8th Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA), *“Innovative Agriculture and Industries – Fueling Sustainable Development,”* in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This year’s event highlights the critical need for technology innovations in advancing the ‘new’ agriculture in the Caribbean.

Touching on the topic of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), Chairman of the Alliance, Minister Tufton stressed that the sustainability of agriculture rests on continuous innovations. He said, “We can only revamp and transform agriculture from its current largely subsistence level, by the application of modern tools and technology to improve productivity.” He reminded the audience that the liberalization of trade puts Caribbean producers in direct competition with the most advanced farmers in Europe and that only innovation and infusion of technology production of agriculture goods can lift productivity and increase competitiveness.

The Alliance which was launched in October 2000, has become a key platform for addressing issues critical to the transformation of a holistic agricultural system and to ensure its economic, social and environmental viability and sustainability. It is a mechanism which brings together stakeholders in the agrifood chain and through which regional policies can be clearly identified, articulated and harmonized and strategies and methodologies developed to facilitate the implementation of feasible programs and projects. Its members include the Caribbean Council for Higher Education in Agriculture (CACHE); Caribbean Agribusiness Association (CABA); Caribbean Cooperative Agricultural Research Program (Procicaribe); Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP); Forum of Ministers of Agriculture of the Caribbean; Caribbean Forum for Youth in Agriculture (CFYA); Caribbean Agricultural Policy Network (CAPN).

During the session, presentations were made on emerging issues and reports of technical workshops included: The Caribbean Agriculture Policy; Challenges for Regional Food Security; Caribbean Renewable Energy and BioEnergy Action Program (CREBAP); Effects of Climate

Change on Agriculture in the Caribbean - Caribbean Community Climate Change Center (ECCC). Reports were also made by constituent members such as; CABA; CANROP; CAFY; CACHE.

During the week, regional Ministers of Agriculture, government officials, representatives from major institutions involved in agriculture and from the private sector and other stakeholders will have an opportunity to interact and continue dialogue on how best to address competitiveness in the face of the challenges of globalization.

The conference, which is intended to serve as a facility for increasing the prominence of agriculture and rural life, ends on Saturday, October 11. It is sponsored by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), FAO, CARICOM, CTA, CARDI and hosted by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with sponsorship from CTA.

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