

ANTIGUA Y BARBUDA ANNUAL REPORT – 2004

1. INTRODUCTION

Antigua and Barbuda was a producer of sugar from sugar cane until the 1960's the production of sugar began to decline and the focus shifted from agriculture to tourism. This production of sugar ended in the seventies and the contribution of agriculture to the GDP has taken a downward turn.

Today, Antigua and Barbuda is a main transport hub for air and sea traffic, and has a thriving tourism industry. This presents numerous opportunities for agricultural production to be geared towards feeding of residents and visitors. However, the linkages between the sectors have not been as strong as they could be. This continues to be a vast untapped market for Antiguan and Barbadian producers and processors. Apart from the food and condiments that are produced, gifts and souvenirs can also be produced in the agriculture sector.

There is also a growing concern about food safety issues, so production systems must be geared towards producing more food and of a higher quality while addressing food safety issues. Improving the systems of production will put producers and processors in a better position to compete with imported produce. Facing these challenges and embracing the opportunities of they afford was the focus of the IICA office in Antigua and Barbuda.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this reporting period, the Office focused its efforts on complying with the mandates on agriculture and rural life as embodied in the Medium Term Plan and the National Technical Cooperation Agenda developed through consultations in 2002 with stakeholders in Antigua and Barbuda and reviewed in late 2003. The review was done for continuing relevance of the National Agenda to the changing needs of the sector in the country. The work of the Antigua and Barbuda office also incorporated the Caribbean Regional Agenda and the work plan of the “Alliance for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu”, Summit of the Americas Mandates and the Bavaro Declaration.

Facilitating Competitiveness And Global Trade

Trade liberalization presents a special challenge to small developing states like Antigua and Barbuda. In addition, the country is also faced with the implementation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy by 2006. IICA has facilitated the country’s preparation to meet these commitments through the following interventions:

- June 29-30: workshop on Technical Barriers to Trade for agro-processors and producers, thereby leading to an increase in knowledge base of agro-processors and producers in these matters.
- November 24-25: workshop on “Strategies for Survival of Agro-processing Enterprises in Antigua and Barbuda” for agro-processors and producers. Participants were trained in entrepreneurship, and have improved their capacity to conduct profitable enterprises. Also presented was the final report on “Analysis of the Agro-Industrial Potential of Antigua and Barbuda” that was prepared by IICA. The report examined the challenges to agro-processing and looked at opportunities and specialty markets that should be targeted for Antigua and Barbuda thus strengthening the capacity of the agro-industry to broaden their markets.
- July 16: workshop on “Youths facing the challenges of trade liberalization and CSME”, for members of the Antigua and Barbuda Agricultural Forum for Youth.
- August 18: workshop on “Producers facing the challenges of trade liberalization and CSME”, for members of the Wadadli Herbs and Spices Cooperative.
- June 14-15: Assisted one member of Beekeeper’s Cooperative to attend training workshop in Nevis on soap making and other products as a result strengthening the capacity of the Cooperative to widen the range of its products.

Promoting Food Safety and Agricultural Health

In IICA's effort to promote the modernization of the agricultural health and food safety systems of its member countries, amidst outbreaks of food borne diseases, the office in Antigua and Barbuda supported the following:

- Technical assistance to finalize an emergency preparedness plan for plant health, in the Ministry of Agriculture.
- July 7-8: capacity building in pest identification and management for technical officers and farmers, in collaboration with CARDI.
- July 9: conduct training in surveys for pests of economic importance
- Jun-Nov: technical assistance to the National Food Safety Committee members involved in consultations to discuss draft Acts which will set up the necessary legal framework for improved agricultural health and food safety. Draft terms of reference and developed a draft guidance document for moving towards an AHFS entity. Committee received support for development and strengthening of AHFS system.
- Under the IICA SPS Initiative, five persons were assisted to attend SPS meetings in Geneva in March, June and October.
- In collaboration with the SPS Committee a seminar was held on Sensitisation to SPS for technical officers in the Ministries of Agriculture Health and Trade, as well as, some private sector persons.
- August 18: members of the Wadadli Herbs and Spices Cooperative were trained in Good Agricultural Practices and have applied the principles in production and management of their enterprises.

Strengthening Rural Communities

In order to achieve IICA's vision of strengthening rural communities, the Office gave technical support for:

- The launch of the Bethesda Rural Women Group, October 15th 2004. The aim of the group is to empower unemployed women in the Bethesda community.
- Preparation of two project proposals for the CFNI/PAHO/USDA Small Grants Program 2004.
- Attendance to Strategic Planning workshop held on December 1-3 in St. Lucia for one member of Bethesda Rural Women Group.
- Attendance to Conference on Information Strategies for the Repositioning of Agriculture in the Caribbean held on November 29-30 in St. Lucia for one member of the Antigua and Barbuda Agricultural Forum for Youth.

Hemispheric Integration

The Institute's work with its strategic partners was strengthened at the national level by the following:

- Support to the constituents of the Alliance for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu, namely, CABA, CAFY and CNRWP/CANROP
- Support to the Jagedeo Initiative by facilitating attendance of two persons to the two regional meetings held in September and December in Trinidad.

Developing Human Capital

The Office promoted the development of human capital, a necessary component of promoting rural prosperity, through the following training activities:

- June 7-July 2: In collaboration with CARDI, MOA, GARDC and Israel (MASHAV), assisted with planning and coordination of training workshops in pressurized irrigation technology and vegetable production. Regional extension officers received training that will strengthen their capabilities for delivery to farming communities.
- October 6-9: CRISP sponsored entrepreneurship workshop on "Charting a course to higher profits for Caribbean Entrepreneurs" for youths, agro-processors and producers.
- October 11 and 12: Group Organization and Management workshops.

Environment Management

Environmental protection is an integral part of the Institute's vision to promote sustainable development of agriculture, food security and prosperity of rural communities. To support this, the following interventions were made:

- February 9-10: training workshop in organic production and business management and establishment of demonstration farm plot.
- April 15: Assessment of options to organic production in Antigua, to build capacity among producers involved in organic production.
- Technical assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture and Pesticides Control Board, to develop a project profile for Environmental Management of Agro-chemicals in CGPC member countries.

Institutional Modernization

In a cooperation style that is focused on national priorities established with national authorities and in a commitment to public accountability of the results of its work, the Office presented copies of the 2003 Annual Report to the Minister of Agriculture and Permanent Secretary on February 6 and to a wider stakeholder group on February 26.

3. THE STATE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIFE IN ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA IN 2004

3.1 Recent Performance in the Expanded Agricultural Sector

In the reporting period, the contribution of agriculture to GDP continues to remain below 4% according to the most recent figures from the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. Overall, the crop sub-sector did not perform well, due in large part to higher than average rainfall through most months of 2004. The rains delayed land preparation, caused flooding and waterlogging of agricultural areas and increased the incidence of plant diseases and weeds. Fruit production was also hampered, as there was not the customary long dry period to initiate flowering and fruit set. The value of these losses has not been quantified. Rainfall data collected in the main agricultural areas showed peak rainfall of over 125cm in May and October. The agro-processing or value added sub-sector was also affected by the unavailability of local raw materials; most of the raw material used had to be imported. High costs of agri-inputs and labour continue to make the price of fresh produce and processed products very expensive. In the last five years, there has been an increase in backyard gardens to reduce the costs of food to householders; how this affects the market for these commodities has not been assessed.

On the other hand, in the livestock sub-sector, production was maintained and improved, as there was an abundance of forage available. However, wet weather hampered the Veterinary and Livestock Division's Sorghum Programme and the targeted hectares were not planted in 2004. The problem of landless farmers who let their livestock roam in rural areas continues to be a major challenge to crop production and the FAO Amblyoma Tick Eradication Program.

3.2 Critical issues in the international and national context that impact agriculture and rural life

The main impact from international markets affecting the sector is the ongoing trade negotiations at WTO, EU-ACP and FTAA. Measures presently in place to protect the local producers will be removed to allow for trade liberalization and the cost of local production will rise. This will pass on to the processors who will have to pay more for their raw materials. As a result of this, local producers and processors will have to compete on freshness, quality and unique and/or creative attributes to remain on the market. Being a net importer of food, with very limited exports, Antigua and Barbuda provides a ready market for countries diversifying away from trade with the European markets. This is already evident with banana producing countries such as Dominica, where the volume of imported fresh produce has been rising over the last ten years.

In addition, the fisheries sub-sector has not been able to export most of the fish products due to new trade requirements that were introduced with the formation of the European Union. The fisheries sub-sector was once the area with the largest contribution to agriculture via exports and this has been lost. However with the coming on stream of the fisheries complexes this potential may once again be realized.

At the national level, the new government administration is seeking to begin a school meals programme shortly and this represents an opportunity for local producers and processors to provide necessary ingredients for the meals. Further, the current focus on cotton production and pineapple, represents opportunities for crops that are already well adapted to local climatic conditions to benefit by increasing supply to fulfill demands; at present demand is far greater than supply for these crops. Cotton has a guaranteed export market with the Japanese. In regards to livestock, the focus on chicken production, once realized by increased local production will allow for import substitution and reduce the country's large volume of import. In general, local production should be geared towards meeting more of the food requirements of the population and its visitors and thereby allowing the sector to realize its fullest potential. Other opportunities for the sector arise from the proposed Land Rationalisation Programme, whereby long term leases on agricultural lands will be made available, to enable producers to secure credit for expansion of their operations and an increased thrust for small and medium scale agro-processing enterprises to utilize more of what is produced locally. Some challenges that need to be addressed are competition for land water and labour for agriculture with the tourism and real estate developments; also, insufficient infrastructure and lack of improved technology for agricultural production.

4. SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL AGENDA

The National Agenda is the areas where IICA will partner stakeholders in the sector to develop agriculture over the period 2002-2006 and developed in consultations with stakeholders. The National Agenda is reviewed annually to take into consideration the changing needs of the sector. In the review consideration was given to the Agro-2003-2015 Plan of Action. The target areas are as outlined in the following:

i) Policy, Trade and Integration

The goal is to enhance the capacity of the agriculture sector to participate in national discussions and consultations on trade policy and to promote positive and timely response by stakeholders to market opportunities.

ii) Trade and Agribusiness Development

The goal is to create a facilitating environment for the agribusiness sector and with a focus on the value-added sub-sector. Accordingly, Antigua and Barbuda has identified as a priority the need to address the poor development of this sector.

iii) Sustainable Rural Development

The goal is to contribute to improvements in the standards of living in farming communities or other rural areas through economic activities, which provide higher levels of incomes i.e. value-added rural enterprises and /or higher levels of production per unit cost in primary commodities.

iv) Agricultural Health and Food Safety

The goal is for an efficient and effective agricultural health and food safety system of strategic importance to Antigua and Barbuda, due to its high dependence on the tourist industry and the high importation of fresh fruits and vegetables. There is therefore a high demand for national food quality and standards systems that can stand up to international scrutiny on the one hand and the high risk of incidence of exotic pests and diseases.

The following are support areas:

▪ **Horizontal Technical Cooperation:**

Antigua and Barbuda would like to benefit from experiences in Caribbean and Latin American countries, in selected areas; micro-enterprises for rural agriculture dependent areas; successful technology development and transfer mechanisms for small developing economies; arrangements or policies to encourage linkages between agriculture and tourism and/or agriculture and processing. Networking with established laboratories in the area of agricultural health and food safety will be necessary.

▪ **Technology and Innovation**

The goal is to develop an agro-processing sub-sector using the best technological options for product development, productivity and competitiveness. The priority is given to technologies foreseen for cottage type industries.

▪ **Training and Education**

The goal is to have adequate capacities along the agri-food chain to manage the sustainable development of agriculture.

5. RESULTS OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION FOR 2004

5.1 FACILITATING COMPETIVENESS AND GLOBAL TRADE

The challenges of global trade dictates that local producers must improve the quality and standard of their produce and products that are sold on the local market, as these are displayed along with imported produce and products and must be equal to or better than the competitor. The interventions by the IICA office afforded building of capacity and capability of local producers and processors to compete successfully on the market.

- The Government has committed to the development agro-industry in Antigua and Barbuda. To this end, members of the Agro-processors Association benefited from two workshops hosted by IICA in collaboration with the Chemistry and Food technology Division in the Ministry of Agriculture, with facilitators from IICA ECS Representative and regional specialists, Gilberts Agricultural and Rural Development Center, National Development Foundation, OECS Export Development Unit, Bureau of Standards and a number of private sector persons. The first workshop was held June 29-30 on “Technical Barriers to Trade”. The second workshop was held on November 24-25 on “Strategies for Survival of Agro-processing Enterprises in Antigua and Barbuda”. Both workshops looked at various aspects of requirements of the market, challenges and opportunities presented by trade liberalization, the CSME and standards for labeling and packaging. Strategies for better business management and entrepreneurship were also covered. Also presented at the workshops were the findings of a study by IICA on “Analysis of the Agro-Industrial Potential of Antigua and Barbuda”. The report examined challenges to agro-processing, as well as opportunities and niche markets and the potential of various products. The Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture delivered remarks at both events.
- In order to further empower the people of Antigua and Barbuda to prepare for globalization, two seminars were organized by IICA and the Ministry of Agriculture on “Youths Facing the Challenges of Trade Liberalization and CSME” for members of the Agricultural Forum for Youth and “Producers Facing the Challenges of Trade Liberalization and CSME” for members of the Wadadli Herbs and Spices Cooperatives. Members of the CSME Unit in the Division of Trade, Ministry of Finance and the Economy were the facilitators.
- A member of the Antigua and Barbuda Beekeepers Cooperative was sponsored to attend a workshop in Nevis hosted by their local association on soap making and other products in order to diversify the bee products. Training received has been shared with other members of the group. This will also enhance their income earning capacity by expanding the range of products available for sale.

5.2 PROMOTING FOOD SAFETY AND AGRICULTURAL HEALTH

The recent outbreaks of food borne diseases have highlighted the importance of modernization of agricultural health and food safety systems in countries. Antigua and Barbuda is particularly vulnerable, aside from being a small developing country, it is also a transit hub for air and sea traffic in the Caribbean and the flow of people and goods present numerous opportunities for the potential spread of diseases in human, animal and plants. Additionally, the importance of tourism to the country and the need for ensuring safe food and water for citizens and visitors alike make it imperative that the plant health, animal health and food safety issues are adequately addressed. The Institute supported the modernization of these systems via the following interventions.

- Technical assistance provided to the Plant Protection Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture to finalize an “Emergency Preparedness Plan for Plant Health”. The plan has been added as a schedule in a draft Plant Health Act currently being developed.
- Technical assistance was also given to the National Food Safety Committee as it held consultations to discuss draft Acts for Animal Health, Plant Health and Food Safety; whereby the necessary legal framework can be established to truly modernize agricultural health and food safety systems in Antigua and Barbuda.
- The office sponsored attendance to the three meetings held on the World Trade Organization Sanitary and Phytosanitary Committee in Geneva, under the IICA SPS Initiative. As well as, facilitated regular meetings of the national SPS Committee and a “SPS Awareness and Sensitization” seminar held for thirty-five senior public sector persons and key private sector persons. The seminar looked at the SPS Agreements, the work of the national SPS Committee and reported on the SPSC meetings in Geneva. The issues raised by the persons attending the meeting will help to shape the national SPS agenda.
- Under the Strengthening Agricultural Quarantine Services (SAQS) project that ended early in this reporting period, the Ministry of Agriculture was the beneficiary of a computer system and software for Risk Analysis. This computer and software will greatly enhance the capability of the Ministry of Agriculture to assess risks to the animal health, plant health and food safety systems, as well as to improve the delivery of high quality quarantine services. In addition, two persons, one from plant health and the other from animal health received training in the use of the software. Two private sector persons were supported to attend a regional meeting to develop accreditation programs for private animal and plant health professionals to conduct regulatory functions under government supervision.
- IICA conducted a training workshop in collaboration with CARDI, for technical officers in the Plant Protection Unit, Agricultural Extension Division and producers on Pest Identification and Management for

Selected Crops; and training in Survey Techniques for Pests of Quarantine Importance. The training served to improve the skills of technical officers and producers in management of pests in a sustainable manner that would not compromise the health of consumers nor damage the environment.

- Members of the Wadadli Herbs and Spices Cooperative received training in Good Agricultural Practices; this was done in collaboration with the Agricultural Extension Division. Being cognizant that much of the herbs grown by the group are used fresh in salads and as garnish, they were particularly keen to receive this training.
- A technical officer in the Ministry of Agriculture was supported to attend a Regional GIS/GPS workshop for Pest and Disease Monitoring and Detection, sponsored by the IICA and USDA/FAS to provide participants with a basic understanding of GIS and its application to agriculture.

5.3 STRENGTHENING RURAL COMMUNITIES

IICA's vision is to strengthen rural communities and to promote prosperity in rural communities. Agricultural activities for the most part, is confined to rural areas, therefore, the promotion of rural prosperity must focus on the development of agriculture whereby rural communities can feed themselves and create employment opportunities and increase their income earning capabilities. To this end the Office in Antigua gave technical support for the following:

- Gave technical support and guidance to the members of the Bethesda Rural Women Group for the launch of their group with an Agro-festival. The event featured an exhibition of products and produce and sale of food; the Ministers of Agriculture, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister delivered remarks at the opening. The Agro-festival was held to observe World Food Day in the village of Bethesda.
- Two projects geared towards the reduction of poverty by increased food production capability for targeted groups, were prepared for the Antigua and Barbuda Agricultural Forum for Youth and Bethesda Rural Women Group and submitted to CFNI/PAHO/USDA for funding under the Small Grants Program 2004.
- One member of the Bethesda Rural women Group was assisted to attend a workshop held in St. Lucia on "Strategic Planning"; while one member of the Agricultural Forum for Youth was assisted to attend a "Conference on Information Strategies for the Repositioning of Agriculture in the Caribbean" also in St. Lucia.

5.4 HEMISPHERIC INTEGRATION

The Institute being a hemispheric institution seeks always to enhance the collaboration between governments, institutions and private sector organizations in the region. The Alliance for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and the Rural Milieu in the Wider Caribbean (The Alliance) with membership from various private sector entities, Forum of Ministers of Agriculture and other regional institutions is a true embodiment of regional and hemispheric integration. At the CARICOM Heads of Government meeting early in 2004 the President of Guyana presented a proposal for repositioning agriculture.

- In support of the “Jagdeo initiative” the office supported the attendance of two persons to attend two regional workshops in Trinidad in September and December. As well as, the office facilitated the attendance of the Minister of Agriculture and a technical officer to attend the meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Agriculture, in Jamaica.
- Technical support was also given to the national constituents of the Alliance namely, the Antigua and Barbuda Agricultural Forum for Youth, CABA and the Bethesda Rural Women Group to develop and implement their work program and to prepare projects for funding.
- Copies of the Agro Plan 2003-2015 were presented to and discussed with the new Ministers of Agriculture, and key technical officers. They gave a commitment to have components of the plan incorporated into the revised sector plan for agriculture and the national agenda.

5.5 DEVELOPING HUMAN CAPTITAL

The development of human capital is a necessary component of promoting rural prosperity, in addition to the foregone interventions the additional activities below further strengthened efforts towards rural prosperity.

- In collaboration with CARDI, MOA, GARDC, and Government of Israel (MASHAV), assisted with the coordination and logistics of two regional training workshops for extension officers in Antigua on “Pressurized Irrigation Technology” and “Vegetable Production”. The officers trained now have improved skills and strengthened their capabilities to deliver programs to the faming communities.
- A workshop on “Charting a Course to Higher Profits for Caribbean Entrepreneurs” was conducted to train youths, agro-processors and producers in skills needed for better management of farm enterprises. Women and youths were the dominant subgroups trained. Funding for the training was received from the CRISP/USAID program.
- Two workshops on “Group Management and Organization”, which targeted the Lettuce Growers Group, Wadadli Herbs and Spices Cooperative, the Beekeepers Cooperative, National Poultry Association

and Agricultural Forum for Youth, were conducted. The training was designed to strengthen the groups and to develop strategies for their continuance and improved organization.

5.6 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Sustainability of agriculture cannot be ensured unless the environment is managed in a manner that ensures the livelihood of future generations. As part of IICA's mandate to promote sustainable development of agriculture, food security and prosperity of rural communities, the following support was given to the sector.

- A demonstration plot for organic production was established and training in business management for organic producers conducted to better equip producers interested in organic production to understand the basic requirements of the system and to acquaint them with potential markets.
- A seminar was held to assess options to organic production in Antigua and Barbuda. A number of crops were identified for further study and development with a view to commence production of the same in the near future. Both activities were funded by an IICA/CIDA-CPEC project on "Diversification of Exports in the Caribbean through the Development of Organic Horticulture".
- Technical assistance was provided to the Antigua and Barbuda Pesticides Control Board to develop a project profile for "Environmental Management of Agro-chemicals in CGPC Member Countries".

5.7 INSTITUTIONAL MODERNISATION

In its commitment to public accountability the Office presented copies of the 2003 Annual Report to the Minister of Agriculture and Permanent Secretary. A seminar was held to present the report and work-plan to a wider stakeholder group. The work-plan for 2004 was also presented. General elections were held in March of the reporting year and the reports and work-plan were presented to the new Ministers of Agriculture. Later in the year a meeting was held with key technical officers in the Ministry of Agriculture to revise the National Agenda for Antigua and Barbuda.

5.8 OTHER ACTIVITIES

The staff of the office received training in multimedia presentations at the GARDC. This improved the ability of the staff to deliver high quality presentations to clients. The Technical Specialist also received training in "HACCP Audit" at a workshop coordinated by PAHO and Ministry of Health and social Improvement. As well as, First Aid Procedures for Pesticides Poisoning, organized by the Pesticides Control Board and Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross Society. The Technical Specialist attended a World Meteorological Organization sponsored "Roving Seminar on the Application of Climatic Data for Desertification Control, Drought Preparedness and Management of Sustainable Agriculture"; hosted by the Antigua Meteorological Services. The aim of the

workshop was to train participants to use computer software for predicting and managing periods of adverse weather, especially droughts. The Specialist also participated in a workshop hosted by the Ministry and sponsored by the FAO/CARICOM Food Security Project on “Introduction to Trade Negotiations and Trade Policy Analysis”. The training was targeted at senior technical officers in the Ministry and private sector persons. A presentation on “E-Learning” was delivered to a workshop on “Use of Information Technology in Agribusiness Management” at GARDC.

6. INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION

The major inter-agency cooperation in this reporting period was in collaboration with CARDI, MOA, GARDC, and Government of Israel (MASHAV), assisted with the coordination and logistics of two regional training workshops for extension officers in Antigua on “Pressurized Irrigation Technology” and “Vegetable Production”. As well as the training workshop in collaboration with CARDI, for technical officers in the Plant Protection Unit, Agricultural Extension Division and producers on Pest Identification and Management for Selected Crops; and training in Survey Techniques for Pests of Quarantine Importance. Also technical assistance was provided to the Food Safety Committee on the PAHO “Development of a Legislative Framework Project” in consultations on the draft Acts for Plant Health, Animal Health and Food Safety, as well as, the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act.

7. SUPPORT PROVIDED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL PLANS AND STRATEGIES

The Technical Specialist and the ECS Representative participated in a seminar hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture to review the present Agriculture Sector Plan 2001-2005 and incorporate new areas of focus by the newly elected government. The office in general gave support to the sector by sourcing information, making technical inputs on various committees and facilitating the flow of information relevant to the sector. A meeting was held with key technical officers in the Ministry of Agriculture to revise the National Agenda for Antigua and Barbuda and incorporate the Agro Plan 2003-2015.

8. FUTURE OPPORTUNITES FOR COOPERATION

The government’s focus on the school meals programme, cotton production, pineapple production and poultry rearing represents avenues for training and human resource development that IICA is well poised to support. In the new year the present Medium Term Plan will end and a new one is to be developed, likewise the National Technical Agenda and a new Ministerial mandate will emerge that will set the stage for future work of the office. In addition to these are the Agro 2003-2015 Plan of Action and the Jagdeo Initiative that sets the frameworks for the regional and hemispheric focus. At the national level the office will also respond to the new Sector Plan for Agricultural Development now being developed.