

Policy Perspectives

Perspectives on resource management and environmental policy from the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES), Faculty of Science and Technology, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados.

The UWI Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) uses **Policy Perspectives**, to share lessons learnt from ongoing research. The interdisciplinary applied research at CERMES emphasizes learning-by-doing through collaboration. The information in **Policy Perspectives** may be used by policy-makers and advisers to strengthen linkages between interdisciplinary research and integrated policy-making in the Caribbean

Generating large-scale impacts in the Caribbean through policy engagement processes – Barbados

The Technical and Advisory Services provided by CERMES to the Food and Agricultural Organization aims to support national public policies by generating opportunities for dialogues, especially in countries going through electoral processes during 2018 in the Caribbean. Through national level analyses and consultations with the main political actors of two Caribbean countries, Grenada and Barbados, it facilitated the identification of the main areas of cooperation and the priority subjects. The intention being that these would be incorporated into existing programming frameworks between the respective Governments and FAO. The expectation was that this would engender greater commitment and engagement of high level decision-makers, independently of the party that wins the elections.

Purpose

The purpose of the initiative is to identify from the political discourses and debates emerging policy

areas that take place in the run up to an election with respect to Barbados' agricultural sector and related areas of food security and nutrition. These are then to be synthesized to identify internal congruency as well as synergies with FAO's Regional Initiatives and Country Program Framework priorities. By doing so, mutually reinforcing platforms for developing support can be identified and become the basis for future engagement and program development in the post-election phase.

Agriculture

Over the last 50 years Barbados has transitioned from a predominantly agriculture based economy to a service based economy. The decline in economic importance can be seen in the decline in arable acreage; in the 1960s there was some 70,000 acres under cultivation, by the 1990s this had dropped to 50,000 and now in the 2010s only some 30,000 is under cultivation.

Concomitantly, Barbados' food import bill has risen to US\$ 337million (2016) whilst local production is worth only US\$22 million. With the rise in imports there has also been a sharp increase in levels of

obesity, 23.1% among adults. Over 60% of imports are consumed by tourism.

There are some 17,000 registered agricultural holdings, over 15,000 of these are 1 acre or less. In other words, in terms of area, the agricultural sector is dominated by subsistence farmers. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries employs directly some 3,800 people, up to 10% of the work force yet it directly contributes on 1.5% to GDP.



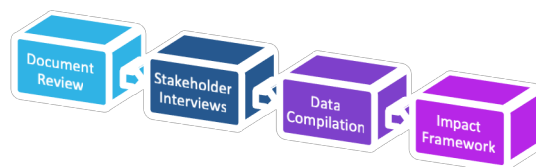
Strategy Environment

The Medium Term Growth Strategy (MTGS) acknowledges the need to jumpstart the Barbadian economy after years of little to no growth and rising public debt. One of the broad objectives of the MGDS is to “Increase food production and nutritional security” which would support agricultural production as well as related domestic industries. In support of this a Food and Nutrition Policy was developed in 2015



Methodology

In order to undertake the identification of key issues and ideas, a four step methodology was employed. This consisted of the review of policy documents, political manifestos and reports.



These were used to guide the dialogue engagement with stakeholders and key informants. The outcomes from the textual content analysis and the interviews have been synthesised to identify overarching themes and challenges faced by the agriculture and food production sector of Barbados.



Policy Themes

Through a process of analysis, dialogue and engagement with stakeholders overarching themes were identified which potentially could inform public policy and define areas of FAO support. These have been group under the following headings.



THEME	KEY POINTS
Local Food Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides nutrition and combats obesity and health related issues • Contributes to food security and sovereignty • Addresses rural poverty issues • Support community-driven projects
Succession Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract Youth into agriculture • Transition from labour intensive – low wage endeavour
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create linkages with tourism, health and education • Develop value chains • Improve access to production and market information • Upgrade the Extension Service
Improve Economic Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote private sector business opportunities • Creates employment opportunities • Increase access to land • Expand range of financial support mechanisms • Address praedial larceny • Reposition the sugar industry • Invest in training and capacity development mechanisms
Science into Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and support uptake of innovative farming technologies • Improve monitoring and evaluation • Promote research and development • Improve laboratory services • Develop 'value added' products
Mitigate Climate Variability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support climate smart agricultural practices and technologies • Explore agricultural weather insurance mechanisms • Develop national disaster recovery programmes

Outcomes

If local food production is to play a more proactive role in the Barbadian economy, then there are serious challenges that will have to be addressed. Measures to encourage access to locally grown, healthy produce are needed if health related issues such as childhood obesity are to be addressed. Encouraging local production and for some of the agricultural sub-sectors of encouraging a transition to a business orientated attitude would also start to address issues of poverty.

The overarching challenge facing stakeholders and the Government of Barbados is how to support and grow the sector to become a vibrant within the economy with the limited resources available. Access and to finance and land are fundamental to agriculture and food production and if approached proactively they could act as levers for increased utilisation of technology and youth entering the sector.

The trend in NCDs related to lifestyle choices and their impact on health and health budgets is a cause

for concern. More effort will be required to coordinate the actions of the Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Education to enable the country to tackle the rising tide of obesity among the young and to maximise the impact of existing efforts.



Food security and sovereignty provides a nexus around which interconnected facets can be linked; nutrition, poverty reduction, zero hunger, employment, export potential and, agri-businesses. Concrete actions such as the encouragement of organic agriculture, upgrading of the Extension Service, implementation of rainwater harvesting as a climate resilient measure, development of a national land use and land management plan, a youth agricultural network, knowledge exchange mechanisms and incentives for kitchen gardens have all been proposed as possible policy interventions.

FAO's own support objectives and its Regional Initiatives help shape the engagement. The Regional Initiatives: Transformation of Food Systems and Reducing Obesity and Overweight; Elimination of rural poverty; Rural Climate Resilience; Rural Governance, all have clear synergies with the emerging dialogue themes identified in the policy dialogue process.



Whilst the policy dialogue process will shape FAOs support to the Government of Barbados, through the Ministries of Agriculture and Food Security and, Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy it can also inform the development of policy of the Government.

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