



CAES Caribbean
Agro-Economic
Society

Farm & Business

The Journal of the
Caribbean Agro-Economic Society

Theme:

**“Mitigating Climate Change Effects to
Ensure Food Security”**

Vol. 8, No. 1, July 2016

ISSN 1019—035 X



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

CARLISLE A. PEMBERTON, Retired Professor,
Department of Agricultural Economics & Farm Management,
The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine,
The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Compton Bourne, *UWI, St. Augustine, The Republic of Trinidad & Tobago*
Carlton G. Davis, *University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, USA*
Vernon Eidman, *University of Minnesota, St. Paul, USA*
Holman Williams, *UWI, St. Augustine, The Republic of Trinidad & Tobago*

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Govind Seepersad, *UWI, St. Augustine, The Republic of Trinidad & Tobago*
Edward A. Evans, *UF/IFAS, University of Florida, Homestead Florida, USA*
Isabella Francis-Granderson, *UWI, St. Augustine, The Republic of Trinidad & Tobago*

Cover Design: **Kavita Butkoon**

ISSN 1019 – 035 X

Remarks by the Honourable Governor of U.S. Virgin Islands

Mr. Kenneth Mapp

at the Opening Ceremony of 31st West Indies Agricultural Economics Conference,
9th Aug 2015 at the Buccaneer Hotel, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.



Dr. David Hall, President of the University of the Virgin Islands, the Honourable Carlos Robles Commissioner of Agriculture at the Department of Agriculture, Dr. Carlisle Pemberton of the University of the West Indies, Dr. Garcia, Master of Ceremonies Mr. Kofi Boateng. I'll also would to acknowledge the former Commissioner of Agriculture Dr. Petersen, our farmer, guests and participants of the Conference. Good morning and welcome to the Virgin Islands and St. Croix in particular.

When I received the invitation to attend the Agricultural Economics Conference we did not have a lot to conversations about me attending. Lieutenant Governor Potter and I during our campaign talked about the importance of agriculture to the economy of the Virgin Islands and our administration's commitment to growing the agriculture industry in the territory. Earlier this year, I was invited by the U.S. Department of Interior to attend a conference in Guam on Climate and Global Change. When I returned to the Virgin Islands and reported to the people of the Virgin Islands, I learned and recognized in that conference that Climate or Global Change that communities must prepare themselves for the effects of change in the environment. In the case of the Virgin Islands, we look at how higher temperatures affect our children, our senior citizens, how it affects fires in our islands and the government's response, how does rising sea levels affect our plan for capital projects, our ports, docks, waterfronts and how does it affect this administration and our industry in terms of farming, livestock, lack of water, lack of growth of food and food stock to support farms.

The outlay of the conference in Guam and how it would affect or benefit the people of the Virgin Islands will be seen sharing a part of a seven (7) million dollar pot to do as vulnerability assessment so that the government and the private sector and Dr. Hall with the assistance of the University of the Virgin Islands in how do we plan and put in place strategies and procedures on how we are going to deal with the changes in the environment and Climate Change. Therefore when temperature reaches over 90 degrees, how does the Department of Human Services respond to senior citizens and children? What notices or public educational campaigns do we give to parents that they are aware of their children playing in the heat will have a health effect? How do we look for senior citizens that are vulnerable in their homes that may not have appropriate attendant care and do not have access to air conditioning to ensure

they are properly hydrated or brought to centres to ensure they are protected from the environment? How do we plan a 200 Million dollar improvement Charlotte Amalie Waterfront and recognize that rising water levels may affect it 10 – 20 years from now and so; how do we develop an infrastructure to protect our assets? How does it affect policies at the department of agriculture to ensure we immobilize sufficient water and food and assistance to our farmers to ensure that we are surviving through the change of rising temperature in this part of the world? My federal programmes coordinators has been dispatched last week in furtherance of the conference in Guam with the Department of Interior this week in terms of how do we move closer to getting the aspects and foundation of this vulnerability assessment study to be put in place and to be paid for and done so that all of us in the territory can understand and recognize that there is a change in our environment and how to respond appropriately for these issues.

With respect to agriculture it is an industry and a science that I know as a child. I'm a product of our grandparents in St. Croix, my grandmother and grandfather who managed and operated a successful farm on St. Croix. My grandparents had 13 children that worked that farm. And when we were sent back from New York at age five in 1961 with my grandmother the farm was thriving and as a five years old I learned very quickly what you had to do with sheep, goats, cows, pigs, ducks, chickens and in terms of my grandmother planting her fruits and vegetables and preparing and taking care of the soil and getting the products out so that on Saturday her goods could be sent to the market in Christiansted to be sold so we could eat. And the rule on the farm was really very simple if you didn't work you couldn't eat. This is how we got our food and certainly supermarkets came in 1960 but for all intents and purposes our eggs and dairy products and vegetables and fruits and meats and poultry and my uncles going on the bay side on Saturday morning is how we got fish. Now this was a young man coming out of Brooklyn at five years old and learning to live off of the land and they only say and tell you that story to tell you all our passion in this administration for agriculture farming and fishing. So what are we going to do?

I want to start by letting you know that in consideration of the conditions that exist today we are meeting with representatives of the US Farm Services this afternoon to make sure we understand what a declaration of emergency should provide. I'm not one high on symbolism and would not sign a state of emergency just to say we signed one. How should it be properly constructed, what would be the resources and the assets provide to all our farmers and the territory. Even beyond just loans from the federal government in terms of low interest because some of our farmers may not be able to support loans and so what do we need to do? In that regard want to thank Senator John McMillan for sponsoring an amendment or appropriation for \$500,000 which is now on my desk that I will approve and will have the budget director a lot to Commission Robles and the Department of Agriculture so that we can bring support and resources to the farming community.

In my budget submission to the legislature earlier this year, one would note that the budget for the Department of Agriculture in fact was increased. We have asked the budget director that any means for allotment to reduce expenditures in the executive branch and we manage our cash flow, not be appended to the department of agriculture. I've said to my commissioner, we met up the lastly I want you to get in the habit of boldly asking. I do not give charges and responsibilities and tasks to the members of the cabinet without a commitment on

my part to make sure we find the resources that they need to do the job. And our business and agriculture in this administration is not going to be one of symbolism.

This week we will be sending a built-in legislature the Agriculture Revolving Fund that we will create and how we're going to fund it beginning in January 1st of 2016 to ensure a minimum of one million dollars to the Department of Agriculture for support services. We are putting up a prohibition in the language in the construction of this fund that not more than 10 percent or \$100,000 could be used for administrative purposes. Thus the Department of Agriculture can have equipment, can purchase water buffaloes, and can provide feed and stock to begin this process that the administration is committed to doing called "Farm to Table" in our school lunch program. We access about eight and a half million dollars annually for our school lunch program. Our school lunch program is filled with sugars and processed food and you can see what happens when you're filled with processed sugars and food and I'm a good example of what you look like and so we have to change that strategy of our school lunch program and provide healthier fresh foods for our children. The good part of that is the federal government is saying to us that the more you move to fresh organic food, fruits and vegetables in the school lunch program, the more federal dollars you can access and that's just a beginning.

As I travel abroad and as I work with Commissioner of Tourism, Beverly Nicholson Dodi, one of the things that we recognize that is very important is when many guests and looking at restaurant who only prepare meals from fresh and organic foods. And so it's going to be important and even part of our strategy in Tourism and growing the economy that we are able to grow fresh organic foods in territory to provide for all public institutions, school lunches, Hospitals, the Head Start programs and the two persons who used the SNAP program or food support subsidies as well as to be able to provide stock and inventory to our restaurants and eateries into territory as we move to fresher and healthier unprocessed and none sugar foods.

So I wish the conference well. I am pleased and honoured for the invitation to be here. We look forward to it the work that will result from this conference so that we can be further guided in the policies and processes we need to pursue in this territory as we begin to launch and grow real or greater food production in the U.S. Virgin Islands to provide a wider range of healthier foods to our territory and to our visitors.

The farming community, please be assured that you have our full support. We will complete this process of assessment in what a declaration of emergency should look like; how it would affect the 0.5 million dollars we will make available to the Department of Agriculture with regards to how they can spend the money and be able to timely acquire the support systems and water and food that they need to supply; but what language this declaration must also have that can lead itself for the response of the federal government. I know that some folks have mentioned that Puerto Rico has already declared a 'State of Emergency' and have access to federal dollars. However, the distinction between the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico is that we are not a member or part or included in the U.S. Drought Monitor System and Puerto Rico is, so that the data collected from the Drought Monitor System when Puerto Rico and jurisdiction reacts to that data and that data and process determines on which bases is a 'State of Emergency' is declared, then results in response to a federal level of support and subsidy from the U.S. Government.

We are not going to look back and say when it should have been done, if it should have been done, make sure we are included and that the proper monitoring devices are deployed throughout the territory but today we are not included so just a general declaration or 'State of Emergency' would not result in just immediate federal dollars in the territory. And I think it is important that we are to point that out but we are going to subsidize that process by making sure we put local dollars on the table and then figure out where we can reach out to our partners at the USDA and the Department of Interior and access additional resources to be able to support the agriculture community and we will often timely and affectively let you know when the results of our efforts.

I look forward to hosting each and every one of you at the government house at 7pm. I will be there and I ask each and every one of you to come and spend some time in the less formal environment and I know you are going to have a productive conference and I want to wish you all well. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here and I look forward to working with you over the course of the next 4 years.

Thank you.

