



Caribbean Agro-Economic Society

NEWSLETTER

December, 2005

26th West Indies Agricultural Conference to be held in Puerto Rico

Our biannual meeting during 2006 will be held jointly with the 42nd meeting of the Caribbean Food Crops Society at the Inter-Continental Hotel, Isla Verde, Carolina, Puerto Rico from July 9 to 15, 2006.

The theme of the joint meeting will be “Food safety and value added production and marketing of tropical crops”.

CAES members are invited to submit oral or poster presentations related to the above theme or anything else relevant to economics, extension or trade with respect to crops, livestock, fisheries or the environment.

The programme will include sessions related to the main theme, sessions for the CAES and also the following activities:

1. Invasive alien species workshop – sponsored by the Tropical/Subtropical Agricultural Research (T-STAR) programme of the Universities of Florida, Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

2. Workshop on water quality in the Caribbean.
3. Half-day sessions on tropical root and tuber crops.
4. Puerto Rico farmers’ forum.
5. Second meeting of directors of agricultural research programmes (experiment stations) of the Caribbean region.
6. General presentations of CFCS members on their areas of expertise such as horticulture, agronomy, crop protection, animal science.

In addition, a special session will be devoted to the poster presentations.

It is expected that around 300 persons will be attending the meeting; because of the varied interests and number of people expected most sessions will be parallel.

The conference fees and hotel rates are still being negotiated. The most likely hotel room rate at the Inter-Continental will be

around US\$129 plus taxes. This is well below the usual room rates for this hotel, but for those participants who would prefer more economical accommodation, negotiations are taking place to provide specially priced rates at other locations. These will either be within walking distance or transportation will be provided.

The conference centre at the Inter-Continental Hotel is located in an area with numerous shops, restaurants and other attractions. It is almost adjacent to San Juan International Airport. The historic downtown area is easily reached by frequent reliable and inexpensive public bus service or by taxi.

The CAES Executive has determined that for the CAES sessions, all persons presenting papers or posters must deliver in CD or diskette, the full text of the paper before the presentation is made. Persons who do not do this will not be allowed to make their presentations at the meeting. The Caribbean Food Crops Society has

made the same requirements for its members. This is important as the subsequent meetings of both the CFCS and the CAES will be in 2007 (see below) and we will need to get our proceedings published earlier than usual.

An official call for papers will be sent out shortly. Meanwhile, members who are planning to travel to Puerto Rico are reminded that the usual entry procedures to the USA apply for admission to Puerto Rico. Please ensure that your passport and/or visa are up to date, especially as the authorities may not admit persons whose documents are not valid for at least 6 months after the date of entry. Also note that persons who need to obtain or renew a US visa may need to start this process very early as many US Embassies and Consulates are operating an appointment system and appointments may need to be made several weeks or even months in advance.

Don't forget to keep checking our website www.caestt.com.

After Puerto Rico in 2006, Belize in 2007?

The 8th Meeting of the Latin America and Caribbean Association of Agricultural Economics (ALACEA) will be held in Belize in 2007 and the CAES has been invited to make this another joint meeting, after our joint meeting with CFCS in 2006.

Of course we would not normally be meeting in 2007, so we will need to discuss this at our General Meeting in Puerto Rico. However, the CAES Executive is in favour of holding this joint meeting in 2007. Our Belize representative Yvette Alonso, is very active in the organisation of the ALACEA meeting and our Past President, Carlisle Pemberton is currently the President of ALACEA.

If we do decide to break our normal sequence of biannual meetings then some more decisions will be needed. After Belize

2007 will we reconvene again in 2008, then 2010, 2012 etc., or wait until 2009, then 2011, 2013 etc.?

Also in Puerto Rico we will be considering our draft revised constitution which for the first time recognises that our AGMs are in fact BGMs (Biannual General Meetings) with officers elected for 2-year terms. But what should we do if we elect officers for 2 years in 2006 and then we don't meet in 2008? The executive will be thinking about all these things, but of course the actual decisions will be made by the members at the Puerto Rico meeting.

Café Marioposa Building Agro Tourism Linkages

About 30 members and friends of CAES journeyed into the Lopinot Valley on 5 November for a lunch organised by Trinidad and Tobago CAES country representative Edric Harry.

The venue was Café Mariposa where we were greeted by members of the Guerrero family, Anthony and Bianca, who are running the eco-tourism establishment very near to the historic Lopinot Complex.

A sumptuous meal of many dishes included cassava with pommecythe dip, christophene pie, potato salad, rice, chicken, fish, pastelles, salad and ham bread. This was all washed down with sorrel, ginger beer and fruit punch and also some Reunite wine sourced at Tru Value supermarket before setting out up the valley.

As desert of nutty pie and Christmas cake with coffee was served, we were serenaded by local parandero Martin Gomez. Martin sang to his own cuatro having explained that parang season in Lopinot lasted 12 months. His repertoire included several parang pieces, but also many other tunes including Sparrow's 'Drunk and Disorderly' and a piece in Spanish which was, according to Martin, not parang but from Central America.

Then Martin amazed us by giving the most comprehensive history of Lopinot in less than 10 minutes. I am sure that the historian

present, Rita Pemberton (wife of our Director of Publications and Past President, Carlisle), would have been prepared to award Martin a Ph.D for his scholarly and very rapidly spoken history which included plenty of academic interpretation.

Count Lopinot was a French aristocrat who left St. Dominique (now Haiti) with his slaves and moved to Jamaica. Like many other French planters, he was persuaded to come to Trinidad soon after British rule replaced Spanish. Lopinot and his slaves eventually reached the area that now bears his name in 1806, allegedly by boat on the Arouca River (which these days is scarcely knee deep). Lopinot died in 1819 and the graves of him and his wife can be visited to this day.

Like most other areas in Trinidad, slavery did not last too long in Lopinot as Emancipation came just over 30 years after the founding of the village. But this relatively short period was brutal and the prison where slaves were sent for minor offences still stands in the ground of the Lopinot Complex. More serious offences, meant torture or execution and a cashew tree served as the torture rock and gallows.

Martin Gomez lamented that the complex with estate house and prison is under restoration as a government project. Frustration sounded in his voice at the slow pace of the work.

After slavery a few East Indian indentured labourers came to Lopinot and after serving their indentureship, they were given lands in Soriah Village which somehow (and most unusually for Trinidad) has had its name corrupted to the English sounding Surrey Village.

In the 1940s, the government of the day hatched a plan to flood the Caura Valley, which lies some miles to the west of Lopinot. The residents of Caura were removed and some were allocated lands at Lopinot. The Caura church of St. Veronica was also carried stone by stone over the hills and reconstructed in Lopinot.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the afternoon was when Anthony Guerrero invited us to visit his fish farm. Anthony has one acre of cocoa and coffee; most of the cocoa and coffee in Lopinot is now abandoned ("the young people get good money for working on government projects"), but Guerrero still has half his land under bearing trees. The other half is taken up with a most impressive fish pond stocked with red talapia and with a teaching facility where students come daily from all over Trinidad to be taught in a farming field school type setting.

Anthony Guerrero plans to use more of his fish, cocoa and coffee in his eco-tourism restaurant. He is also planning a simple resort and some rustic bedroom accommodation is under construction. This will be a wonderful agro/eco-tourism site, a pity that a great (but overgrown) hiking trail to the Arima Valley is being bulldozed to make a vehicular road. Who will benefit from this is not clear, but certainly the eco-tourists who Guerrero is hoping to attract would rather hike close to nature than drive.

Ironically, the Caura Valley from which many of the Lopinot residents were removed and where the dam was never built, has over the last 10-15 years become a hive of agricultural activity. Let's hope that Guerrero's efforts keep at least some agriculture going in the Lopinot Valley.

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