



# Caribbean Agro-Economic Society

## NEWSLETTER

October, 2005

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### Jamaican Group Meets at Brown's Town

Donald Palmer, CAES Jamaica country representative organised a very lively symposium entitled "The likely impact of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy on the Jamaican Agricultural Sector" at Brown's Town, St. Ann on Saturday 30 July 2005. The omens were not propitious. Heavy rains, thunder and waterlogged roads greeted those who drove out from Kingston. Also much of the route was shrouded in thick mist reminding drivers that most of the district is around 600m above sea level.

The Principal of Brown's Town Community College, James Walsh, greeted attendants with the information that farming in the area had declined dramatically as tourism had grown on the North Coast, which is only a few miles from Brown's Town.

The symposium got underway with Donald Palmer giving an overview of the Jamaican agricultural sector. Then came the first of the two feature speakers, CAES member Dr. Ballyram of CFNI who addressed the audience on the symposium topic.

"Bally" was quite optimistic about the prospects for Jamaican agriculture under the CSME, but this optimism was not shared by some of the other attendants. This sparked a very lively debate which the Chairperson, Sandra Ferrigan, Senior Lecturer at Brown's Town Community College struggled to control. Audience members complained about the top down approach to planning at the CARICOM level and also the lack of priority given to agriculture at the Georgetown headquarters.

CAES Executive Member, Wendel Parham explained CARDI's NCCARD initiative (National Coordinating Committees for Agricultural Research and Development) which attempts to bring together the actors at the national level to feed into the planning process. The relevance of the Regional Transformation Programme (RTP) was also questioned, but this was also being questioned at higher levels, hence the deliberations and consultations currently taking place which are expected to lead to a repositioning of the RTP (The Jagdeo Initiative).

The second feature address was given by Dr. Rosalea Hamilton, CEO, Institute of Law and Economics, who is also a well known radio personality in Jamaica. This address was entitled "Challenges and opportunities facing Caribbean agriculture in a globalised economy". Rosalea was quite candid in her observations (well supported with facts and quotes) that developed countries do not seem to care much for developing countries agriculture. It has been agreed that non-tariff barriers must come down and preferences must be terminated. However, well over half of the world trade in agricultural commodities is protected or preference. It appears that only the small proportion of this which is exported from the developing countries is under pressure to adhere to the new rules.

President of the CAES, Bruce Lauckner, indicated that he was very encouraged by the liveliness of the meeting even though attendance was lower than might have been because of the opening of the Denbigh Show on the same day. He hoped that those present, who were not

members, would join the CAES and organise more activities.

The audience responded by requesting a symposium on the Jagdeo Initiative as soon as it becomes available to the public. This was agreed by Donald and Bruce. It looks as if the seeds for a vibrant Jamaican sub-group of CAES have been sown.

On the drive away from Brown's Town, the sun broke strongly through the clouds revealing a green lush countryside.

However, when the mist lifted it could be observed that most of the agricultural lands were abandoned; lets hope that the Jagdeo Initiative moves some of the eggs back out of the tourism basket.

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### **How Much Would You Pay to Remain a Member?**

#### **US\$100 per annum or more??**

An article in the June 2005 CAES Newsletter presented a proposal from Tropical Agriculture and invited urgent comments. There were no comments. Perhaps this is because members did not understand the implications of the proposal.

At present, the UWI Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension (DAEE) publishes both the proceedings of our conferences and our journal Farm and Business. The journal Tropical Agriculture (TA) has offered to take over these publications and to merge Farm and Business into Tropical Agriculture.

The choices open to us are:

1. To continue publishing our own proceedings and journal
2. To continue publishing our proceedings and merge our journal with TA
3. To ask TA to publish our proceedings and merge our journal with TA

Other combinations may be possible, but members can grasp the possibilities. If TA were to take over our proceedings in any way, we would try to ensure that the increase in membership fees would be small.

But even if we continue to publish our proceedings we may have to increase fees as staff changes in the DAEE may mean that some of the 'free services' we have been enjoying will have to be bought in. We can try to keep this to a minimum.

If we merge Farm and Business with TA then we would be ensuring that our society is associated with a prestigious international journal; papers published in TA have a reasonable citation rate, so members publishing in this new medium would have a fair chance of getting citation. At present, TA does not publish many papers in the area of agricultural economics, but it would like to start doing so.

However, the present subscription rate to TA is over US\$200 per annum. We would need to negotiate a rate for our members which might be more affordable. We would then become a society (like many international societies) whose members receive a regular journal (TA is published four times per year).

But we couldn't operate as at present, where some members only pay if they come to the biannual conference and then only pay for one year.

**So the question is:**

Should we merge Farm and Business with TA? Yes or No

If so, how much would you be prepared to pay for the annual dues to CAES?

- (a) US\$100
- (b) US\$150
- (c) US\$200
- (d) Some other amount

Please let us know, otherwise the executive will not be able to make an informed recommendation to our members at our meeting in Puerto Rico next year.

If you need more information, please refer to the article in the June 2005 Newsletter.

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**TITBITS**

1. Subscriptions. Those who still have not sent US\$25 for 2005 please do so as soon as possible. Our treasurer Andrew Jacque has moved back to the Ministry of Agriculture, but if you send/give you money to our secretary Sarojini Ragbir she will pass it to Andrew. Sarojini's address is Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.
2. Puerto Rico meeting. Bruce Lauckner and Carlisle Pemberton are travelling to Puerto Rico on 5/6 October where they will team up with Carmen Alamo (our CAES Representative in Puerto Rico). They will meet Dr. Alberto Beale, Chairman of the Caribbean Food Crops Society to discuss next year's joint meeting which will be held from 9-15 July 2006. Together with Dr. Beale, the CAES

- team will meeting with Professor John Fernández Van Cleave, Dean of Agriculture of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), the host for the joint meeting. They will also meet Dr. Gladys González, Associate Dean of Agriculture for Academic Affairs and Dr. Jorge A. González-Soto, Director for the Agriculture Economics and Rural Sociology Department.
3. History of the CAES. Dr. Rita Pemberton has accepted the contract to research our history. Her report is due in 18 months time.
4. We still have no contact information for Randolph Mark (Grenada) or Desmond Kentish (Antigua and Barbuda).

***Don't forget to keep checking our website***  
[www.caestt.com](http://www.caestt.com).

## Trinidad Group Field Trip

On Friday June 17 the Trinidad and Tobago Representative of CAES, Edric Henry organised an enjoyable excursion to two industrial plants of the Nutrimix Group of Companies. About 25 persons participated in the excursion travelling by maxi taxi, Ministry of Agriculture Land Cruiser and by personal transport.

The first stop was at the brand new Nutrimix Flour Mill at Point Lisas. This mill was commissioned in August 2004 and their flour product has already captured 30% of the Trinidad and Tobago market.

We were shown round the plant by Manish Mehrotra, Vice President and Chief Miller, a native of India who has worked in the flour industry all over world.

We started in the video room where we saw a video of a flour mill in Switzerland where the same technology as the Trinidad mill is in use (except that the Swiss mill at 8 years of age is not quite as modern). This was a useful introduction for the mill tour turned out to be very noisy and it wasn't easy for everyone to hear Mr. Mehrotra's very knowledgeable commentary; but the similarity between the plant visited and the one we had just seen on film was quite close, as the equipment in the Trinidad mill was imported from Switzerland.

The most striking thing about the plant was the level of automation. Everything was run by Mr. Mehrotra from a computer terminal which was linked to hardware in the USA. Apart from Mr. Mehrotra, there were virtually no employees at all and certainly no one was in the areas where the actual milling took place. A few people were employed to help package the end product.

Like the Swiss parent mill, the plant in Trinidad had a small high-tech bakery, where a few more (highly-skilled) persons are employed. The purpose of the bakery is to take samples from the production line and ensure that quality is maintained for the baking needs of downstream industries and of the domestic use of the flour.

The plant was an eye opener to all who visited. An imposing landmark (clearly visible in the surrounding area) which incurred very high initial capital costs; the operational costs on the other hand are minimal. A very small wage bill, cheap Trinidad energy and modern electronic communication.

After a brief lunch stop, the vehicles then drove to the chicken processing plant of Nutrina Farms at Marabella. Here we were met by Mr. Ronnie Mohammed the son of Mr. Haroon Mohammed who built the Nutrina empire.

This plant was built in 1988 and unlike the flour mill is quite labour intensive. There is a throughput of 35,000 birds a day (the capacity is higher, 1 bird per second which would give over 80,000 if run for 24 hours).

Perhaps this plant was not for the squeamish and certainly not for the vegetarian. An endless line of dead chickens moves along conveyor belts getting cut up, gutted and finally packaged. Everywhere employees are continually cleaning the plant and the surroundings and others watch that the chickens arrive at each point just in the right way (for example to ensure that the head is cut off cleanly and accurately).

Two very different agro-processing operations; one importing raw materials and not using much labour. The other providing jobs for farmers and factory workers. On the other hand, whereas those not already buying Nutrimix Flour might stop, on the next visit to the supermarket, and pull a pack off the shelf; the sight of hundreds of birds being butchered did not encourage us to stop at the KFC and Royal Castle outlets which were on our route back to the highway.

## EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Know your Executive Members. Send them an e-mail. Here are the details.

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**The Caribbean Agro Economic Society**  
*Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension*  
*Faculty of Science and Agriculture*  
*The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine*

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## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Title (Dr. / Mr. / Mrs. / Ms. or Other): \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name (given name first): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (include international code): \_\_\_\_\_

Fax (include international code): \_\_\_\_\_

Email 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Email 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

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### FOR OFFICIAL USE

Membership fee received:                      Yes                       No

Membership Number: \_\_\_\_\_