



Investing in Agrotourism Development in the Caribbean Region



Agrotourism Seminar Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) 2013 Thursday October 10, 2013

Background

Global trends (including food and dining trends; climate change and green economies; nutrition, health and wellness; and the conservation of heritage) are all driving growth in AgroTourism. Current market research indicates a preference by tourists for a product and an experience that are authentic, linked to local foods, culture and heritage in a destination, and a willingness to pro-actively select and pay a premium price for such an experience. The top dining trends also show that internationally recognized hotel brands and restaurant chains as well as world-renowned chefs, are investing in their local agricultural and food sectors as part of their response to Climate Change impacts, and are experimenting with exotic tropical flavours and colours in foods typical of the Caribbean Region.

In its purest sense, AgroTourism refers to travel which combines rural settings with products of agricultural operations – all within a tourism experience that is paid for by visitors. Agrotourism provides “rural experiences” to travelers with the goal of generating revenues for farmers and surrounding communities. These experiences typically include a wide range of attractions and activities that take place in agricultural areas. Important ingredients of such “rural experiences” include open spaces, low levels of urban or industrial development, and opportunities for visitors to directly experience agricultural, pastoral, and natural environments, as well as crafts, culinary products and local culture.

Agrotourism Linkages refer to the transactions and trading arrangements that take place along the Tourism Value Chain not only at the level of rural agro-industry, and also within complex trade and distribution networks, across distance and time, between the agricultural sector and the tourism and foodservice sectors at national, regional and international levels.

Importance of Agrotourism in the Caribbean Region

The issue of strengthening the links between agriculture and tourism has been on the Region's political and economic development agendas for a considerable time. The potential to improve the value added from tourism through increasing the level of trade in fresh and processed foods and other domestically produced goods and services is a goal that is shared by policy makers and the private sector, in both the agriculture and tourism sectors.

Forging agriculture-tourism linkages capitalizes on the inherent ability of the tourism sector to diversify the Caribbean economy, stimulate entrepreneurship, catalyze investment and assist in wider social development in our rural communities. Such linkages offer unprecedented opportunities to shore up agricultural production, stimulate the rapid growth in "new" agriculture, create employment along the Tourism Value Chain, and build resilience and sustainability of Caribbean economies. The latter is particularly critical for reducing the high levels of leakage of foreign exchange from tourism (as much as 90% in the Bahamas and 50% in Barbados), preserving patrimony and cultural identity, enhancing food and nutrition security and reducing poverty in local communities, and promoting local awareness and good practices with respect to climate change and environmental issues.

IICA's Work in Agrotourism

Since 2002, IICA has had a focussed programme on Agrotourism in the Caribbean Region, as part of a larger hemispheric programme in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The major achievements since 2002 have been:

- Building partnerships and alliances at public and private sector levels at both national and regional levels, with the objective of strengthening the policy and institutional framework in support of agrotourism trade linkages and rural tourism.

The most significant achievements in this regard have been (1) IICA's membership on the Board of Directors and on the Sustainable Tourism Committee of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) for the past 9 years and (2) the endorsement of a Regional Agrotourism Sector Development Plan by the Ministers of the Caribbean Region in 2012;

- Establishment of strong alliances with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association, CARICOM Secretariat, OECS Secretariat, OAS, CDE, Commonwealth Secretariat, and the CTA;
- Facilitating knowledge transfer and supporting training and skills development through the documentation of success stories and Best Practices in the Caribbean and Latin America; publication of manuals, videos, webinars; and development and

management of an online distance learning course on Agro-EcoTourism (in both Spanish and English which to date, has trained over 600 students);

- Facilitation of business and investment opportunities in Caribbean countries and access to tourism markets, by conducting evaluations and diagnostic assessments of existing and potential agrotourism sites and attractions; preparing project proposals for investment; networking farmers, processors and entrepreneurs with hotels and foodservice buyers; and hosting workshops and seminars.

Collaboration with the Pacific Region on Agrotourism

Like the Caribbean Region, the two productive sectors - agriculture and tourism - seem to offer the best opportunities for inclusive economic growth in several Pacific Island Countries (PICs) and therefore the promotion of linkages between tourism and agriculture should help create economic opportunities, build resilience in rural communities and enhance sustainable development in both tourism and agriculture sectors.¹

Historically, the tourism industry in the South Pacific has primarily marketed itself on sun, sand and sea. Cuisine has not had a front and center position, with most chefs deferring to western menu formats in order to accommodate perceived visitor tastes. However, there is growing interest in South Pacific cuisine and the recognition by some hotel properties of the high value of the regions cuisine in its tourism package as a cultural point of difference.

Where cuisine goes, agriculture follows, so the further development and strengthening of local cuisine represents a new opportunity to enhance the tourism brand, reduce food imports by sourcing more to local farmers groups and to further engage all Pacific Islanders in the tourism industry.

IICA and the CTA are currently working with the South Pacific Commission (SPC), Women in Business In Development form Samoa and other private and international partners to develop proposals aimed at promoting and strengthening the links between organic agriculture and tourism in the Pacific Islands and promoting exchange of best practices between the Caribbean and the Pacific regions as a strategy for economic diversification, regional trade and employment creation.

Advancing Regional Initiatives in AgroTourism Trade Linkages and Rural Tourism

The Agrotourism Investment Seminar at the CWA will seek to advance the implementation of the Regional Strategic Development Plan for Agrotourism. The Plan seeks to provide a

¹ Tuifa'asisina Steve Rogers, Luseane Taufa. Report on a scoping mission to Samoa and Tonga. Agriculture and Tourism linkages in Pacific Island countries. FAO 2012

mechanism for managing and increasing the local development impact of tourism and agriculture. It seeks to create a collaborative and inclusive national and regional planning and implementation network that can drive trade and new business between the two sectors.

The Three Broad Components of the Plan are:

- Component #1: Development of an Institutional and Policy Framework for Facilitating Linkages between Agriculture and Tourism
- Component #2: Measures to Increase Trade of Agricultural Goods into the Tourism and Hospitality Sector
- Component #3: Rural/Culinary Tourism: Product Development And Promotion

Proposals will be presented by IICA, the OECS Secretariat, the Caribbean Tourism Organisation and private investors on these components. In addition, proposals for Caribbean-Pacific collaboration on agrotourism will be presented.

Other initiatives in the pipeline include rural tourism developments in cocoa in 7 Caribbean countries, and national rural tourism projects in Haiti and St. Kitts & Nevis.

Objectives of the Agrotourism Investment Seminar

1. To share information on the status of implementation of the Regional Development Plan for Agrotourism
2. To present regional and national project proposals and investment opportunities in agrotourism
3. To identify potential donor and investor interests in trade linkages and rural tourism
4. To advance institutional arrangements and proposals for collaboration on agrotourism in the Caribbean and between the Caribbean and Pacific Regions

Participants

- Public sector representatives - Ministries of Agriculture and Tourism
- Hotel and Restaurant association representatives
- Private entrepreneurs
- NGOs, CANROP, CAFY, CABA
- Development banks and donor/ Aid agencies
- Development partners

- Embassy representatives resident in Guyana (USA, Mexico, Brazil, China, Venezuela, *inter alia*)

AGENDA

8:00 – 8:30	Registration
8:30 – 9:30	<p>Welcome and Opening Remarks</p> <p>Welcome Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gregg Rawlins, IICA Coordinator, Regional Integration -Caribbean Region & Representative in Trinidad and Tobago</i> • <i>Leela Ramoutar, Specialist, Private Sector Facilitation, CARICOM Secretariat</i> • <i>Michael Hailu, Director, CTA</i> <p>Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Minister, Pacific Region Indranauth Haralsingh, Director, Guyana Tourism Authority</i>
9:30 – 11:00	<p>Promoting a Regional Agrotourism Framework</p> <p>This session will focus on the Regional Strategy for Agrotourism in the Caribbean Region. It will discuss proposals presented for development of the institutional framework at regional and sub-regional levels, notably marketing the Caribbean as a “Foodie” destination, and linking the Caribbean with the Pacific Region through agrotourism best practices.</p> <p>Chair: Gregg Rawlins, IICA</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Establishing a Regional Agrotourism Resource Centre for the Caribbean</i> <i>Ena Harvey, IICA Management Coordinator-Caribbean & Agrotourism Specialist</i> • <i>OECS Proposals for Agrotourism Development</i> <i>George Alcee, Agricultural Economist, OECS Secretariat</i> • <i>Caribbean Food Tourism Strategy</i> <i>Gail Henry, CTO Sustainable Tourism Specialist</i> • <i>Developing a Caribbean-Pacific Agrotourism partnership – Towards SIDS 2014</i> <i>Isolina Boto, CTA and Pacific Team</i>
11: 00 – 11:15	DISCUSSION
11:15 – 11:30	COFFEE BREAK
11:30 – 12:30	<p>Agrotourism Developments at National Level</p> <p>This session will focus on specific project proposals being developed in Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago and St. Kitts & Nevis.</p> <p>Chair: Ignatius Jean, IICA Representative, Jamaica</p> <p>Speakers:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Tourism Project - Haiti <i>Alain Thermil, IICA Specialist; Ministry of Tourism Haiti; Ministry of Agriculture, Haiti</i> • Hope Bay Farm Integrated Agrotourism Project, Tobago <i>Vassel Stewart, CABA</i> • Rural Tourism on Cocoa Plantations <i>Alison Godwin, Grande Agrotourism, Trinidad</i> • Agrotourism Linkages – St. Kitts & Nevis experience <i>Augustine Merchant, IICA Coordinator, St. Kitts & Nevis</i>
12:30 – 13:30	LUNCH
13:30 – 15:00	<p>Perspectives from development partners on support to agrotourism and Caribbean-Pacific Collaboration</p> <p>This session will focus on donors interested in investing in sustainable rural development, particularly through participation in the value chain development for tourism and initiatives in the pipeline to support agrotourism development at national and international levels.</p> <p>Chair: Luther St. Ville, Operations Officer, Agriculture and Rural Development, Caribbean Development Bank</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in Aquaculture production for the Caribbean tourism industry <i>Francisco de la Torre, USB-USSEC & Ena Harvey, IICA</i> • Building businesses and livelihoods through sustainable trade finance <i>Representative, Finance Alliance for Sustainable Trade</i> • Tourism Development Support Services <i>Gail Henry, Caribbean Tourism Organisation</i>
15:00 – 16:30	DISCUSSION and CLOSING SESSION