

Agriculture Policy Programme (APP)

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in Brief



Women from Aranaputa in Guyana's hinterland, using local cassava to make bread for the school feeding programme (Photo: Ravana Gildharie)

reaching out. . . to the backbone and future pillars of agriculture

There is enough evidence (IFPRI, FAO, IICA, etc.) which confirms that women are the backbone of small scale food production, food processing, food vending, and as well household food security, early child nutrition, health and education. Typically, women and youth tend to be 'lumped' as a stakeholder or beneficiary group in interventions for agriculture, enterprise building and rural development. There is a small, but growing appreciation that this strategy is not the best or even second best to addressing the

specific development needs of women and youth along the agriculture value chain. While these two groups share similar challenges, their disadvantages do not always stem from similar origins. Youth come pro-loaded with energy, ideas, time etc., while women are often described as loaded with a double burden associated with their distinct yet linked social and economic responsibilities.

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The APP, Women and Youth

The Caribbean Action - APP is ultimately aimed at ensuring that small producers, including women and youth, in CARIFORUM, are directly involved and benefit from market demand and economic development. The APP explicitly recognises the importance of targeting women and youth in an effort to achieve development at the level of micro and small enterprises. Rural women and youth in particular, are singled out as essential to the social and economic fabric of rural communities. Women and youth must therefore be absolute and fully involved partners in efforts to build vibrant and economically rural communities.

The focus on youth and rural territories is in line with the overall regional development thrust which emphasizes improved engagement and participation of civil partners in the sustainability of the Caribbean food economy.

The benefits from engaging and empowering both women and youth are endless and have multiplier effects for the wider society. The APP therefore seeks to respond to the things that matter most, to many if not all CARIFORUM governments and stakeholders in these times of stagnant socio-economic development, i.e., increased output, increased employment and levels of farm/enterprise incomes, reduction in the levels of poverty, and a better standard of life experienced by smallholders, micro-enterprises, women and youth.

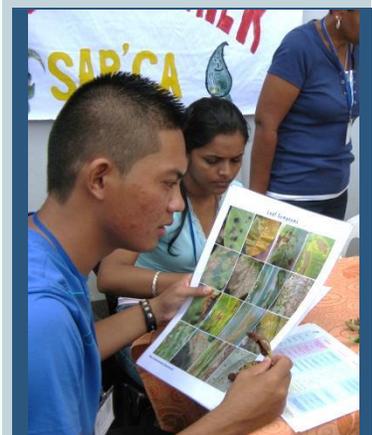
The onus is on us, the APP partners, collaborators and stakeholders themselves, to ensure that we choose the right track, that we stay on the right track and that our actions go directly to the root of the needs of small producers and entrepreneurs!



Issue #2 ~ Aug-Sept 2013

APP - reaching out to:

- **Small producers & entrepreneurs to empower them to better represent their interests in policy & development initiatives;**
- **National Policy makers to enhance their capacity to support small producers & entrepreneurs;**
- **Regional development institutions to enable them to more effectively guide, facilitate and support national development.**



Young Surinamese farmers being trained to become 'plant doctors'
(Photo: Maureen Silos)

Why focus on Youth & Women as two distinct strategic groups?

Although **Youth** and **Women** face similar challenges and have similar needs in starting and sustaining a livelihood, their situations are different and hence they need to be engaged differently. Some notable differences:

- Youth come pre-loaded with ideas, drive, energy, time, etc.;
- Women are loaded with responsibility, described as the double burden linked to their social and economic roles.
- Youth are just 'starting out';
- Women have already started out, often under challenging conditions as they struggle to balance their 'double burden';
- Youth need to gather experiences from diverse sources to zero-in on a career choice and build a portfolio;
- Women need to garner and draw heavily from their resources and resourcefulness to build a stable business and ensure household security;

In-spite of a long history of agriculture policy-making, women and youth still face challenges in 'breaking-into' the policy process and value chain still exist. In CARIFORUM, women and youth, as two strategic and distinct groups of stakeholders are not sufficiently integrated and mainstreamed into policy processes, professional bodies/networks, value-chain activities.

The generic approach built on just 'inviting and including' them in interventions has failed; the traditional gender approach needs an urgent upgrade since it is not explicitly oriented to youth!

This justifies the need to:

- (a) directly involve women and youth in policy dialogue, formulation and implementation processes,
- (b) define distinct women in agriculture and youth in agriculture policies, strategies and programs that are directly linked to their specific challenges, and
- (c) create target-specific policy instruments and facilities that cater to their specific development needs.

It is in the best interests of Governments and development agencies to make this a standard operating procedure to enhance policy relevance, stakeholder ownership, implementation success and sustainability of the initial project investment (whether an externally funded project or not).

Failure to recognize this development imperative could render the best designed project ineffective!

Some Issues	Women (females over 25)	Youth (male/female 25 & under)
Securing/Generating employment (jobs)	Limitations mainly associated with skill, education attainment, nature of the job (in terms of impacting child care/home duties) etc. Labour laws still not modern or flexible to dual demands on women hence why most women opt to pursue temporary jobs or towards self-employment.	Challenge is usually linked to 'lack of experience', which is a vicious circle, since youth need to get jobs in order to build job experience. The ideas, energy and drive of Youth need to be guided and honed through 'jobs' that shepherd and mentor them to become good entrepreneurs, professionals, managers and/or advocates.
Accessing financing (credit, capital etc.) for entrepreneurship and business development	Laws that limit ownership of assets make it difficult, but not impossible for women to access credit. They are considered 'responsible adults' and often have access to special credit windows designed especially for women. However, MSMEs are dominated by women, so since they are already inclined and involved, the best intervention would be to enhance their capacity to succeed.	Limited employment and credit history and ownership of assets (land, house etc.) make it highly unlikely for youth to even apply for credit on their own merit. Special credit facilities for youth are far and few in-between. This needs to be corrected and built-into the traditional 'financial management' programs.
Innovation & technology	Advances in field, processing and IC technologies have the potential to mitigate the difficulties faced by women and youth alike. They are also more inclined to adopt and even adapt innovation to suit their circumstances. Support in this area offers good scope and opportunities for engaging women and youth more directly and meaningfully along all aspects of the agri-food value chain. The challenge continues to be to ensure that the available technology is appropriate to the scale at which they operate and can manage.	Youth are ripe with ideas, but their challenge is usually linked to their being 'too young and not having enough exposure; etc.). They need to be provided with the opportunity to get that exposure.
Participating in new thinking, policy advice, etc.	Women have an inherent tendency towards 'trial & error' in venturing into new. This and the experiences that they would have generated would add value in policy and strategy dialogue for solutions-oriented actions.	



Women in Agriculture are generally very responsive to embracing innovation. Pomeroon women involved in shade house cultivation in Guyana (Photo: Ravena Gildharie, 2012)

FYI!

Youth in CARIFORUM countries, who are not engaged in legal and gainful economic activities and are unemployed are increasingly at risk. In these challenging socio-economic times that they find themselves, they can easily be influenced to engage in criminal activities - a burning issue in all countries! Note: close to 50% of the unemployed in Trinidad and Tobago are in the age cohort of 15-29 years, and I think an estimated 38% are between 35 and 50 years!

The United Nations define youth as young male and female persons 'between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. This definition was made during preparations for the International Youth Year (1985) and endorsed by the General Assembly (A/36/215 and resolution 36/28, 1981).



Youth in Agriculture (YiA) at a CAFAN Workshop being exited, energized and empowered to get involved in developing and implementing policies for more effective youth entrepreneurs (Photos: Brent heophile/CaRAPN)



YiA (Youth in Agriculture) ~ meeting their greatest need!

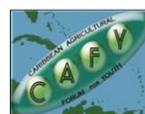
Entrepreneurship and enterprise development - major concerns for youth in agriculture (YiA).

At a recent CaFAN workshop in St. Vincent, improving YiA business efficiency was hinged on improved capacity-building and technical competence of youth entrepreneurs. Leveraging low-cost/low-demanding avenues for mobilising available resources to create or develop their business ideas was also seen as a pre-requisite for youth entrepreneurs. This is especially important given the financial constraints and limited capacity of Caribbean governments to single-handedly sustain these types of critically needed interventions.

Governments can't do it all or even do most of what is needed. This places pressure and responsibility on youth themselves to mobilise their own support, and as well on the institutions that currently and plan to support youth. These needs include:

1. creating entrepreneurship incubation centres, supported by development organizations as part of a technical cooperative framework;
2. building capacity for business through training (planning and management) and risk management;
3. providing continuous mentoring and follow-up to youth entrepreneurs.

Some Youth Networks in the Caribbean



<https://www.facebook.com/CarAgriYouthForum>

Caribbean Agricultural Forum for Youth (CAFY), is an agricultural forum for youth supported by IICA, open to all Caribbean nationals and youth groups and associations with an interest in agriculture and related fields.



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Saint-Lucia-Agriculture-Forum-for-Youth/274038609367030?ref=hl>

Saint Lucia Agriculture Forum for Youth (SLAFY), a national chapter of CAFY, is a non-profit, NGOs which seeks to promote, assist, lobby & advise YiA in St. Lucia. SLAFY is a fully volunteer organisation of members who are 35 years old and younger.



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/abs.uwi/>

UWI AgriBusiness Society (ABS), comprising Faculty of Food and Agriculture of UWI St. Augustine students who seek to improve the enabling conditions for agripreneurs by empowering students through practical and theoretical learning, professional development, networking and service.

APP Actions that Need and are Needed by Youth	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate the development of national agriculture policies and incentive regimes targeting small producers/entrepreneurs, linked to regional policy/strategies (Policy Component 1.2.) 	<p>All policies directly affect agriculture stakeholders. Even though youth are typically excluded from the policy process, the resulting policies can either make it easier or harder for them to build a career or start a business in agriculture.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen regional statistical capabilities in agriculture and food systems (Policy Component 1.3.) 	<p>Technology is like a magnet that attracts and sustains youth interest. IT in particular is now weaved into all aspects of the agri-value chain. IT-savvy youth can build viable careers and offer much needed services in agriculture without being tied to farming or processing.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop domestic and regional market information and intelligence systems to support small producer/entrepreneur's involvement in value (Enterprise Development Component 3.2.) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen capacities of small producers/entrepreneurs (including women and youth) to utilize appropriate sustainable innovative production systems and technological packages for selected commodities. (R&D Component 2.1) 	<p>Youth have the ideas, energy and drive to start something new! Business offers the enterprising youth both a channel and livelihood opportunity. But they need continuous guidance and support during their start-off and navigation through business & market dynamics. Strengthening their capacity/competence for enterprise development and management is an essential area of support as they build their business and in turn, contribute to the development of their peers, community and wider society.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve, disseminate and facilitate the adoption of agricultural production strategies to mitigate the impact of risk and climate change. (R&D Component 2.3) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve the entrepreneurial, marketing and organizational capacities of small producers/entrepreneurs including women and youth. (Enterprise Development Component 3.1) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve Financing Schemes to Support the Development of Commodity Value Chains involving Smallholders. (Enterprise Development Component 3.3) 	<p>Facilitating access to credit/financing for value chain development is essential to enable and empower youth to perform roles not/inadequately met in value chains, inclusive of but not limited to primary production. This could open up new avenues for business development and empower youth to enter value chains.</p>

APP Log:

What has happened since June/July?

As expected with a project of this technical and partnership scope, regrettably, there have been some delays in formalizing the process to begin implementation. But rest assured, work has been going on in the background to 'hit the ground running' when the formalities are over.

- Negotiations to conclude Partnership Agreements between IICA and CARDI and IICA and CARICOM in the final stages, with official signing and launch scheduled during Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) in 4-12 October, 2013.
- Specific details of Component activities and areas of work plan integration and strategy for joint implementation are being fine-tuned for Year 1 Work Plans.
- A Project Coordinator has been installed and the process for activating the PMU (Project Management Unit) has begun.
- The members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) have been identified and preparations are being made to hold their first formal meetings. The TAC has been meeting periodically to fine-tune the technical actions.
- The partners - IICA, CARDI and CARICOM Secretariat – have:
 - have had joint briefings of the IICA and CARDI country offices in order to better prepare the local offices to support implementation and mobilize stakeholders at the national level. The intention is to define specific Country APP Actions as a tool for specifying clearly what actions will be undertaken through the APP and how these actions will complement ongoing programmes at the country level.
 - IICA, CARDI and CARICOM Secretariat – have established a regular meeting schedule to manage activities associated with the inception phase, i.e., pre-implementation matters that are essential for operationalizing the APP.

What is the plan moving forward?

Building and strengthening Partnerships for effective implementation:

- **Among Implementing Partner Institutions.** CARDI, CARICOM Secretariat and IICA all recognize that their institutions share the same clientele along the food chain. It is therefore now, more than ever, that the institutional partnerships, forged through the APP, remain viable during planning and throughout implementation. Successful inter-agency collaboration will establish a very firm foundation for other current development initiatives that are being implemented simultaneously with the APP and for any future development initiatives in agriculture, food production and nutrition security, especially in light of the projected challenges associated with climate change impacts.
- **Between Implementing Partners and other key institutions:** A strong and connected institutional framework in agriculture is a pre-requisite for making optimal use of limited human and financial resources available to agriculture and for meeting the goals of sustainable development. There is a fairly large number of public, private, civil society and non-governmental institutions, associations, networks and other organised groups directly involved in agricultural development. The benefits of institutional networking need to be embraced in order to harness existing strengths for the benefit of a common stakeholder pool.
- **By partners with stakeholders:** from a purely numbers perspective, micro, small and medium sized producers dominate economic activity in agriculture. They make up the bulk of the farming community; they dominate the small scale/cottage industry food processing, led mostly by women. All the sustainable development literature and experiences emphasize the need to engage and keep stakeholders involved in initiatives designed for their benefit in order to ensure relevance and enhance success rates.
- **Among stakeholders:** simply put: 'united we success; divided we fail'. Because of such large numbers of diverse and dispersed small stakeholders, they themselves would benefit better as a group rather than as an individual.



(Photo: CARDI)

Issue #3/Oct-Nov 2013 will provide information and details on:

- how the APP will be managed
- the strategies that will be used to ensure maximum stakeholder involvement
- the activities to be undertaken in Yr.1



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