



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER AT THE TENTH REGIONAL PLANNERS FORUM ON AGRICULTURE IN THE CARIBBEAN

#### REGIONAL PLANNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE FOR ON-GOING INITIATIVES & MAKE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE APP PROGRAMME AS IT COMES TO A CLOSE

**Gros Islet, Saint Lucia, September 26-27, 2016** – The Caribbean Action under the Agricultural Policy Programme (APP) is all about working together to strengthen agriculture in the Caribbean. The APP is certainly not the first agriculture project in the Caribbean and it won't be the last. Many organizations and projects have previously contributed advances in the industry and have generated solid platforms upon which even greater gains can be achieved. That understanding has been central to the APP's success.

On September 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, the CARICOM Secretariat (CCS) will host the **Tenth Regional Planners Forum (RPF) on Agriculture** at the Bay Gardens Inn in Saint Lucia. At the forum, participants will discuss initiatives supported under the APP, at the regional, industry and national levels. The meeting will review the recent work and findings of key Regional Coordination mechanisms in Caribbean agriculture, i.e., the Agriculture Food and Nutrition Cluster (AFNC), Priority Commodity Groups and Thematic Groups, as well as determine the next steps, in relation to the support provided to the development of national policies and strategies and the continuity of the RPF itself, after the APP project comes to an end in December 2016.

Prior to the APP there was limited capacity and opportunity for strategic planning and collaboration between Member States and the agricultural support agencies in advancing a regional agricultural agenda. The APP has successfully brought these parties together physically, virtually and practically. Today, regular monthly meetings of the AFNC are occurring with excellent representation by all parties and planners from the various Ministries of Agriculture around the Region are contributing to the process of supporting approved regional initiatives for the growth and development of the sector, through the RPF and other specific mechanisms that support targeted sectors and thematic areas.

Over the last two years, since the approval of the Ministers of Agriculture of prioritisation of regional interventions in the commodity groups (Roots and Tubers, Small Ruminants, Herbs & Spices and Fisheries), and establishment of Thematic Groups (TGs) on Agricultural Health and Food Safety, Research and Human Resources Development, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management and Business Development to address the constraints to agriculture, there have been several undertakings with focused initiatives in the Member States and at the regional level. Much of the work has been supported by the APP and is delivering the valuable research and technical studies upon which strong and useful policies and strategies have been and are being created. Beyond that, the APP has also worked with individual countries to generate national plans, policies and strategies for agriculture, aligned to the Region's Community Agricultural Policy, Food and Nutrition Security Policy and the priority commodities

As the APP programme comes to a close at the end of the year, Gregg Rawlins, the IICA Co-ordinator for Regional Integration in the Caribbean Region, has some concerns that he wishes to see addressed. "Important interventions have started but not yet yielded the full results", he said at the Technical Advisory Committee meeting of the APP in August. "We need to be very clear about what is required going forward. My concern is that when the project comes to an end, this collaboration will stop. We don't want that to happen. We need to be clear how and who will be involved in carrying these initiatives forward after the APP."

It is with that challenge in mind that the planners and stakeholders will meet at the Tenth RPF to discuss what has been done but also to ensure that there is a positive action plan for the way forward and commitment of all parties to maintain the momentum of the RPF and its major role in determining the recommendations to the policy makers for greater agricultural output, increased intra- and extra-regional trade and reduction of the food import bill, which now exceeds four billion US dollars.

The CARICOM Secretariat has developed the Agenda for the 10<sup>th</sup> RPF taking into account that Ministers of Agriculture will be meeting at the Sixty Second Special Meeting of the Council of Trade and Economic Development (COTED) – Agriculture which will be held in the Cayman Islands, 24-28 October, 2016 during the Fourteenth Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA), under the theme ‘Investing in Food and Agriculture’. Planners attending the 10<sup>th</sup> RPF while assessing the progress made in the commodity groups, the thematic areas and in their respective countries national policies, will be encouraged to focus their interventions on making recommendations to Ministers on the next steps, major of which will be the appropriate policy framework to secure investments, promulgate the interventions to all stakeholders and endorse the new initiatives in regional coordinating mechanisms that will serve *inter alia* to monitor and evaluate the developmental activities.

**For More Information** on the 10<sup>th</sup> RPF please email Nisa Surujbally, Programme Manager at [nisa.surujbally@caricom.org](mailto:nisa.surujbally@caricom.org) and/or Ronnie Brathwaite, Deputy Programme Manager, Agriculture Development Programme, CARICOM Secretariat at [ronnie.brathwaite@caricom.org](mailto:ronnie.brathwaite@caricom.org).



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