



“Improve Nutrition and Food Security through small holder agriculture”
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The objective of the presentation is to highlight the challenges and successes of small producers within the CaFAN network in improving food and nutrition security in the Caribbean region.

The Caribbean farmers’ Network (CaFAN) comprises approximately 500,000 farmers from 13 Caribbean countries; Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. Haiti’s membership is currently being processed, and Dominican Republic pending. Most members of the network cultivate five acres or less. CaFAN operates a system of farmers clusters groups and organizations with a focal point in each country.

According to the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI), one of the main public health problems in the Caribbean is related to food and nutrition – in the form of Chronic Non Communicable Diseases (CNCDS), accounting for 53% of the deaths in the 1980s and in excess of 57% in the current period. With respect to food availability, data shows serious deficit in staples, especially roots and tubers, vegetables and legumes. These foods are high in fibre, complex carbohydrates and low in calories compared to the imported sources of carbohydrates in the Caribbean such as pasta, refined wheat flour, pastries, etc., and the antioxidant disease or fighting capacity of these foods cannot be estimated.

Over the past five years, CaFAN with its partners, CTA, FAO, CARDI, IICA, MoAs and other EU Agriculture projects has been strengthening the capacity of its member farmers’ organizations to analyze and champion issues that benefit them and the Caribbean community on a whole, such as the linkage of agriculture to nutrition and health, production of roots and tubers, encouraging home and school gardens, and promoting “Grow what you eat, eat what you grow” campaign.

CaFAN has partnered with Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat in the design of a Regional Food and Nutrition Security (RFNS) Policy, which was adopted by Caribbean governments in 2010 – the policy, stressed food availability tied to production and trade; food access; food utilization; and food supply stability. CaFAN is also currently working with CARICOM on the designing of a Caribbean Common Agriculture Policy (CCAPS).

In April 2011, CaFAN and COLEACP/PIP held a two day conference to identify the needs of the network for support from COLEACP in the areas of food safety and traceability. This technical support will be very crucial for CaFAN as it develops its regional marketing programme.

Additionally, CaFAN in July 2011 will hold a regional production and marketing workshop geared at developing a pilot project on joint regional production and marketing programme targeting the regional and extra regional markets with special focus on food and nutrition security. The pilot project will also target a portion of the region’s food import bill, which stands overall at US\$4B. The outcome of this workshop will be a regional project aimed at tackling the food and nutrition security problems on a practical basis in terms of organizing organized production.

CaFAN believes that the food and nutrition security problem is not solely the responsibility of farmers but that of the entire nation. To this end, CaFAN promotes amongst its members the concept of producing affordable food and not cheap food. CaFAN approach is to look at best practice and successes and to build on them. Capacity building and strengthening of small farmers’ organisations and clusters are therefore important in addressing problems relating to food and nutrition security.