1. Context: the unique role of Chefs in linking Agriculture, Tourism and Cuisine

Chefs and culinary professionals have a unique part to play in agricultural development: they connect local producers and consumers and understand food origin and history. They can promote local cuisine and provide consumers and tourists with the best of local products.

The food tourism represents a very important and growing economic sector in many parts of the world. Gastronomy represents an opportunity to revitalize and diversify tourism, to promote local economic development and to involve different professional sectors.

This leading role of gastronomy in the choice of destination and tourism consumption has resulted in the growth of gastronomic offerings based on high-quality local products and the consolidation of a separate market for food tourism.

Too often Western menus dominate hotels, resorts, restaurants and cafes in the hotels in the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean. Small food operators and even supermarkets are full of imported items. Consequently the demand continues for food to be imported to service the unchanging menus and diets and local farmers and processors are not supported.

However, increasingly, there is growing interest and recognition by some hotel properties of the high value of the regions’ cuisine in its tourism package as a cultural point of difference. Where the cuisine goes, agriculture follows, so the further development and strengthening of local cuisine formats represents a new opportunity to enhance the tourism brand, reduce food imports and further engage the various actors - farmers, fishermen, agroprocessors, and artisanal producers - in the tourism industry.

In order to seize the opportunities in tourist-related markets, we need to address some challenges such as upgrading farmers’ supply chains to larger hotels and resorts, stimulating demand through familiarization of chefs, bartenders and mixologists with recipes and promoting ways to more creatively utilize local produce, and strengthen market information sharing and coordination between the hospitality sector and producers. Training courses and opportunities for exchanges among Chefs and culinary professionals, across the Pacific and the Caribbean and Latin America are also fundamental to develop capacity for strengthening linkages with the agriculture sector.
2. **Background**

**The Caribbean context**

Across the Caribbean region, the culinary profession has evolved from an expatriate-focused sector (with foreign hotel owners, foreign chefs, and foreign-trained local chefs) to a sophisticated profession, which includes Caribbean Executive Chefs, Chefs and Caterers, Mixologists and Bartenders and Food Stylists.

Culinary Associations exist in several countries, and in Barbados for example, there is also a permanent Culinary Team (the only one in the Caribbean), trained to do promotions for Barbadian food, in-store demos, and promotions abroad. The team comprises some 30 chefs plus pastry chefs and bartenders.

Several cookbooks also exist across the Caribbean, two of the most recent being *Barbados B’un B’un and Nyam Jamaica* by Culinary writer Rosemary Parkinson. Restaurant guides, such as Cre Ole in Trinidad & Tobago are “must have’s” for every hotel room.

Social media is used extensively to promote Caribbean cuisine, with recipes available online, as well as several YouTube videos teaching the basics of cooking indigenous foods, produced by Caribbean personalities. International chefs also celebrate Caribbean cuisine and classes, taught by Caribbean chefs, are also featured in stores such as WholeFoods and UK multiples (Sainsbury’s and Tesco). In Barbados, the <https://caribbeancookingchannel.com> was also recently launched and pulls on content from across the Region. <https://popupgourmetjamaica.com> is Jamaica’s premier portal to the island’s cuisine. It features descriptions of Jamaica’s culinary talent, recipes, a restaurant guide, culinary tours and information on the annual Taste of the Caribbean Competition.

The youths are not left out. Chef Peter Edey of Barbados runs a Junior Duelling Challenge (now in its 10th year) with secondary schools, and a Caribbean Duelling Challenge has been launched with several Caribbean countries.

While there have been attempts at national and regional levels to form associations of chefs, initiatives have not been sustainable or linked in an integral way with farmers, local processors or fisher folk with a development perspective. There are many challenges to be addressed, including documentation of successes and lessons learnt, professionalization and training across the industry, building of brands, deeper involvement of youth, sensitization of the general public, infrastructural supports for postharvest handling and market access for both farmers, fishers and culinary professionals alike, and the establishment of a Community of Practice among culinary professionals which would bring benefits to members and facilitate linkages to local production, sustainability food and nutrition security at both national and regional levels.

**The Pacific Context**

The 1st Pacific Agribusiness Forum organised by CTA, PIPSO and SPC to which key Caribbean organisations participated was held in Fiji on 1-3 July 2015.

The Fiji Forum acknowledged the key role that chefs can play in developing national and regional agritourism. There was acknowledgement that the role of chefs in agritourism is still in its infancy and needed to be developed further, particularly in getting hotels and tourist hot spots to not only utilise local produce and products but integrate local cuisine and fanfare so that there is a culinary fusion of traditional and contemporary foods and meals. It was further acknowledged that in order to promote local agriculture, farmers must be key partners in the agritourism programme by having them participate in events and showcase their products and build on opportunities. This would define culinary tourism based on the ‘Farm to Table’ concept and further develop key relationships between the farming and culinary communities so that more locally-sourced foods are on the menu.
The Fiji Forum noted that the countries and the region are producing some good chefs but that work is needed in two areas: (i) for individuals are wanting to become chefs and work in restaurants and hotels: identification of the career path options, in particular options which ensure greater awareness, appreciation and utilization of local produce and foods into menus; and (ii) for individuals who are trained chefs: identification of entrepreneurial opportunities for establishment of their own businesses and strengthening of support networks for their professional development.

Recommendations also included the promotion of local food fairs or food festivals; promotion of agriculture and entrepreneurship at the level of primary schools; development of tours by inbound tourism operators to local farming/culinary communities; extension of food linkages to the local cultural and creative industries; and strengthening linkages between farmers, fishers and chefs.

Recommendations of the Forum for Caribbean-Pacific and Indian Ocean (ACP SIDS) included:

1. Strengthening Caribbean-Pacific visibility, including a marketing presence at each other’s regional Agribusiness Forums and similar events, including business industry visits to the regions. Special efforts can be made towards developing ACP SIDS projects for funding within the ACP-EU private sector envelope;

2. Sharing of relevant Work Plan activities between the Caribbean and Pacific (and other ACP SIDS regions) that promote agritourism events;

3. Establishment of an online repository(s) for case studies, best practices and tools promoting agribusiness and tourism-related markets, and linking this to similar repositories in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and elsewhere. A coordinated approach will be used to link the online sites supporting the Agritourism Strategy;

4. Launch of a “Chefs for Development” Platform where best practices in promoting local cuisine with local food can be shared

H.E. Roy Mickey JOY, Ambassador of Vanuatu to the EU proposed that the “Chefs for Development” platform should be a feature of the meals served at the upcoming Commonwealth Summit in 2017 in Vanuatu, as part of the strategy to raise awareness amongst Heads of State on the linkages between food and cuisine and the development component and the need of branding the SIDS on the values of quality food destination. This initiative should also be considered for Papua New Guinea in the lead up to 2018 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC which will culminate with a Summit to be attended by the Leaders of its 21 member economies.

3. Objective of the meeting

To promote and strengthen the links between Chefs and hospitality sector and tourism in the Pacific Islands and between the Caribbean and the Pacific regions as a strategy for economic diversification, regional trade and employment creation.

Expected Outputs
- A proposed structure for a Caribbean Culinary Alliance Identification of potential projects and partnerships at regional and national levels
- A framework of cooperation for Chefs for Development and identification of potential projects and partnerships across SIDS
- Action plan for the next 6 months

Process: A task force will be formed composed of Chefs from Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean as well as CTA, IICA and other interested partners to coordinate the implementation.
CHEFS FOR DEVELOPMENT and CARIBBEAN CULINARY ALLIANCE

The Chefs: Linking Agriculture, tourism and cuisine
IICA Office, Baobab Tower, St. Michael, Barbados
7 November 2015, 8h30-16h00

PROGRAMME

A Culinary Alliance of the Caribbean and the Chefs for Development Network

This meeting will discuss the status of alliances of culinary professionals in the Caribbean and Pacific Regions and potential collaborations in the Food Tourism industry. Success stories and lessons learned will be shared by representatives of the hotel and culinary sectors in the Caribbean, the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

The exchanges will feed the Chefs for Development initiative and platform launched by CTA and partners at the 1st Pacific Agribusiness Forum on 3rd July 2015.

Introduction (5mn each): Will provide the context, basis for each project and expectations.
- Caribbean Culinary Alliance, Ena Harvey, IICA
- Chefs for Development for SIDS, Isolina Boto, CTA

Chair: Vassel Stewart, CABA

Presenters (10mn each)

- Ena Harvey, IICA Agrotourism Specialist and Bonita Morgan, CTO
  A Food Tourism Strategy for the Caribbean Region

- Key factors in the establishment of a sustainable Culinary Alliance for the Caribbean Region and across SIDS
  Michelle Smith-Mayers, BHTA
- **Youth and careers in the Culinary Sector - Junior Chef Competitions in Barbados and the Caribbean**
  *Peter Edey, Chef*

- **Experiences in linking cuisine with local culture**
  *Robert Oliver, Chef, Pacific*

  **Chef from Seychelles**
  *Richard Mathiot, Executive Chef, Seychelles*

- **Barbados Agricultural Society / Organic Growers and Producers Association**
  *A Farmers’ Perspective on supplying the local hotel and supermarket sector*

- **Slow Food Chef Alliance**
  *Rhea Gilkes, Slow Food Barbados Chef*

**Discussion moderated by** Roxanne Waithé, Agrotourism Specialist, IICA

LUNCH (Featuring locally-sourced organic products)

**Working Group Sessions (1 hour)**

The working Group sessions will be divided in two groups:

(i) Caribbean Culinary Alliance and  
(ii) SIDS Chefs for Development Platform

**Main areas to discuss** will provide a proposed structure to the CA and CFD as well as potential joint projects and concrete actions.

- Building and documenting the evidence base on identified gaps  
- Build and strengthen strategic partnerships  
- Capacity building and learning

**Debate in plenary and action plan (1hour)**

**Participants:** 50 of which 30 represent Chefs and Culinary Professionals