

**THE MICRO PERSPECTIVE OF
AGRICULTURAL RISKS AND
THE IMPACT ON LIVELIHOOD
VULNERABILITY AND FOOD
SECURITY: *A CARIBBEAN FARMERS
ORGANIZATIONS' PERSPECTIVE***

Jethro T. Greene
Chief Coordinator
Caribbean Farmers Network (CaFAN)
Tel: 784 453 1004
Email: ectadsvg@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

- ◉ CaFAN members (over 500,000) are predominantly small farmers scattered throughout the Caribbean, and are most vulnerable to agricultural risks, hence our participation in this forum. Agriculture risk issues for many of our farmers remain the main obstacle to improving income and quality of life. This is particularly important for us since our farmers are called upon to be the core of food security in the Caribbean region.

CAFAN BACKGROUND

- ◉ Mission: *to enhance Caribbean food security, health and wellness through proper nutrition, foreign exchange earnings/savings and value addition by repositioning agriculture through the capacity building of farmers and the institutional strengthening of farmers organisations*
- ◉ CaFAN looks at providing affordable food across the region instead of cheap food. By doing this, we establish agriculture as a practical business to ensure the growth and sustainability of the sector and at the same time encourage young people to be a part of it.
- ◉ CaFAN membership is over 500,000 farmers across 20 Farmers Organisations in 13 Caribbean countries
- ◉ Secretariat - Eastern Caribbean Trading Agriculture and Development Organisation (ECTAD) based in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

OVERVIEW OF AGRICULTURAL RISKS

- Growing crops are deceptively simple because plants can withstand immense neglect and still produce tolerable yields. The complexity of crop production is only revealed when farmers attempt to develop high intensive production systems. The risks inherent in agricultural production arise because of the numerous factors that affect crop production many of which are intertwined. Agricultural risks can be mitigated if there is good working knowledge of these factors and how they influence each other. If farmers are not able to adequately manage these variables within the time constraints of planting, then they run the risk of producing low yields and poor quality food at high uncompetitive costs. If practical, cost-effective approaches are used to apply sound scientific principles to farming, then it is entirely possible for farmers to reduce many of the risks associated with agricultural production and consequently agricultural marketing bearing in mind the policy support.

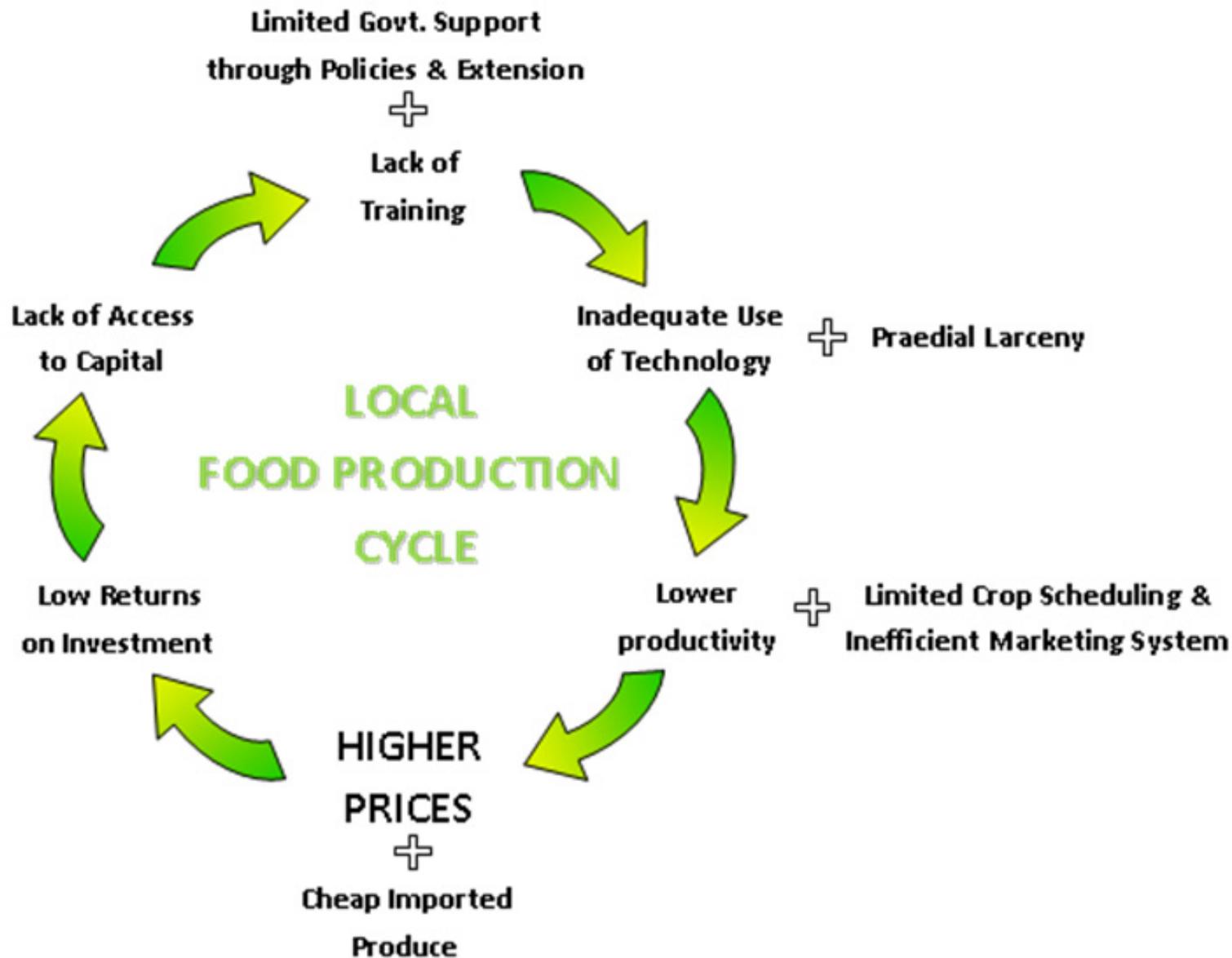
GENERAL AGRICULTURAL RISKS

- ◉ Small size of holdings
- ◉ Non-Communicable Diseases on the rampant
- ◉ Negative mentality about farming
- ◉ Poor infrastructure and farm input such as poor access to roads, storage, etc
- ◉ Unfavourable market prices for farmers
- ◉ Natural Disasters impact on productivity

RISKS FACTORS AFFECTING CROP PRODUCTION

- Crop rotation, Proper land preparation, Selecting appropriate varieties, Seeding methods, Fertilizer application (Organic and Inorganic), Seedling production, Balanced plan nutrition, Mulching, Weed management, Integrated pest management
- **Vulnerability of Smallholder Farmers**
 - Farmers lack sufficient scientific knowledge.
 - Extension is unable to adequately service the volume of farmers and the variety of crops grown.
 - Research priorities in agriculture in small-island states are too often are guided by precision and not cost and practicality.
 - Poor production and storage practices lead to greater spoilage.
 - Limited access to capital to upgrade farms & strengthen farmers' knowledge base.
 - Smallholder farmers generally are not early adapters to new techniques and technologies.

AGRICULTURAL RISKS & FOOD SECURITY



DEMAND FOR AGRICULTURE RISK MANAGEMENT

- ◉ Technical and financial resources to build up our regional capacity to mitigate, manage and prevent agriculture risks
- ◉ Strengthen human resource capabilities to handle agriculture risks, especially since it is predicted that many of our Caribbean countries will become more vulnerable to climate change risks
- ◉ Risk insurance for small farmers against events beyond their control
- ◉ Protected agriculture
- ◉ Increase Use of Science & Technology in Open Field Production - YES!
- ◉ Adopt a consumer-driven approach to agricultural marketing.
- ◉ Adopting emerging techniques and technologies through appropriate research is necessary if there is to be continual growth in the agricultural sector.

MAJOR CHALLENGES TO AGRICULTURAL RISK MANAGEMENT

- ◉ Getting Gov't to create a more facilitating environment for private sector input and investment in agriculture
- ◉ Getting Gov't to create a facilitating environment for small farmers to be trained and equipped to be seen as independent small business persons
- ◉ Top-down approach to farmer training. Currently this is researcher-driven activity and not a farmer-driven activity.
- ◉ Differentiating between intensive crop production & backyard gardening will be critical to the adoption of new techniques. People who have been in farming from childhood have many emotional ties to farming which make them innately reluctant to approaching agriculture as a science.

CHALLENGES CONTINUED

- ◉ Developing GAPs that are specific to micro-climate, land terrain and pests and diseases prevalent to country/area. The Caribbean has a diverse biogeography and so approaches to food production will vary dependent on these factors.
- ◉ Getting farmers to recognise that agricultural marketing is no longer producer-driven, but rather is driven by the consumer.
- ◉ The cultural aspects of small island states must be taken into account because it is a major factor in why many projects and programme that work flawlessly in large countries fail in small developing nations.
- ◉ Re-orienting farmers organisations to break their dependence on government handouts and offer more capacity building services to members.

SUPPLY OF RISK MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

- ◉ No organized insurance are available for our Caribbean farmers
- ◉ We have just started making some progress in getting our farming agriculture sector fully integrated into disaster management systems
- ◉ Our Climate Change Centre is doing some climate change impact studies on small farmers in the Caribbean
- ◉ Government of the region are having discussion on a regional food plan
- ◉ Our regional disaster management agency (CDEMA) mandate has been broaden to create strategic linkages for our CaFAN network that sits on the Agriculture Sub-Committee

FUTURE DIRECTION

- ◉ Promote environmentally friendly farming and marketing practices
- ◉ Empower farmers to be independent business persons
- ◉ Build capacity of farmer organisations to meet the needs of agriculture in the 21st century.
- ◉ Coordinate more agricultural production workshops and field seminars for farmers. Success of workshops and field seminars is determined primarily by assessing the adoption of new techniques by farmers.
- ◉ Develop national & regional GAPs that are specific to micro-climate, land terrain and pests and diseases prevalent to country/area.
- ◉ Use GAP certification to identify low-risk farmers
- ◉ Negotiate crop insurance, financing and marketing contracts for low-risk farmers

CONCLUSION

- ◉ If we could develop and institutionalize these systems of Good Agriculture Practices where we can certify farmers using a star rating system, it may then allow regular insurance companies to show more interest in insurance at the farmers level
- ◉ CaFAN is currently mobilizing support both technical and financial to strengthen and implement our farmers organization's disaster and risk management strategy, and we look forward to working with all partners and stakeholders