

Linking research with policy

PRESS RELEASE

The Caribbean Region must build stronger linkages between scientific research and policymaking if farmers are to become more innovative in meeting future market demands.

This was the message from Mr. Richardson Andrews, Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Agency for Reconstruction and Development (ARD), to participants at a Regional Workshop on 'Innovation and Foresight for Repositioning Caribbean Agriculture'.

Organized by the ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology (CCST), the four-day Workshop brings together scientists, academics and public officers from the Caribbean.

"Linking research to policy is important if we are to harness our intellectual capacity," Mr. Andrews said, noting that this requires a forum where policy makers and researchers can interact. Stronger linkages also require a more organized approach to "storage and retrieval" to ensure previous scientific research informs future endeavors, Mr. Andrews said. "Caribbean people in general can learn a lot from what has already been done," he said. Climate change implications, land degradation, desertification and water shortages, among other trends, are creating new challenges for farmers worldwide. The Workshop was convened to develop strategies to boost agricultural competitiveness, improve food and nutrition security and contribute to poverty alleviation in the Caribbean.

Mr. Ian Ivey of Next Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago, referring to agriculture as the most disconnected, fragmented industry in the world, said farmers have survived on "hope" for too long. Instead of relying on tradition, farmers need to make decisions based on what consumers prefer, Mr. Ivey said.

He said there is need for a "big shift in thinking" in the Caribbean. Rather than focusing on becoming more efficient to compete with larger developed countries, Caribbean farmers must become more unique. "Know your priority niche," he said; and utilize such trends as Fair Trade and 100 percent pure and natural.

The Workshop is also examining ways to strengthen regional partnerships to advocate increased investments in science and technology and innovation for Caribbean agriculture and rural development, as well as more training in agricultural sciences.

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