



St. Vincent and the Grenadines Tripartite Committee Meeting Report

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Introduction

CAMI Project Coordinator Mr. Adrian Trotman, spoke about the importance of the tripartite meeting in his brief introduction. He emphasized that the main purpose of the committee is to continue and expand on the philosophy and activities surrounding the CAMI project.

Presentation

In his presentation he started out by giving some insight as to what the project CAMI is all about. He stated that The Caribbean Agrometeorological Initiative project (CAMI) is funded by the European Union's ACP Science and Technology programme, in partnership with CIMH, WMO, CARDI and ten meteorological services from the Caribbean. He highlighted that the main objective of the project is to increase and sustain agricultural productivity at the farm level in the Caribbean region, through improved applications of weather and climate information, using an integrated and coordinated approach.

He identified the activities of the project, which include weather data rescue (to facilitate any analyses), training workshops in rainfall and temperature analysis, rainfall prediction and interpretation, crop, irrigation, pests and diseases simulation models, producing weather bulletins and newsletters.

Mr. Trotman mentioned the need for sufficient competent staff at the National Meteorological services, dedicated to Agrometeorology, as being necessary to deliver information requested by farmers and extension officers. He identified a need for adequate human resources and structural changes at the National Meteorological Service (of the Airport Authority) to support weather and climate services for agriculture, and the necessary financial support for the training of the staff in this area.

Another key point mentioned was with regards to collaboration and data sharing between the organisations. To deal with this issue, he recommends that certain policies and protocols be put in place between government departments to encourage collaboration and data sharing of agrometeorological data.

Recognizing that communication and cooperation is a problem between the different stakeholder groups, a mid-term evaluation report on CAMI suggested the formation of a Tripartite Committee in each country. It is recommended the group comprise of a representative from the National Meteorological Services that would lead the process, the Extension Services of the Ministry of Agriculture and a farmers group, such as CAFAN, with meetings held bi-monthly or quarterly.

The focus changed to that of food security and climate change and the research programme Global Environmental Change and Food Systems (GECAFS – www.gecafs.org), launched in 2001 and completed in 2011. Mr. Trotman stated that the programme focused on understanding the links between food security and global environmental change, so as to be able to help policy makers and managers find the best options for reducing vulnerability of food systems to environmental change, while minimizing further environmental degradation.

Discussion/ Concerns

- An issue raised by the Meteorological Service was the fact that National Agrometeorological Bulletins were prepared, but there was no feedback as to whether or not they were received by the farmers, and if received, whether or not they were satisfied with the contents of the bulletin.
- An issue with the interpretation of the information in the bulletin arose, as the farmers complained that they often could not understand its contents. Some suggestions were made for training for the Agricultural Extension staff, so that they would be able to assist the farmers more. There is also the need to adapt the language a bit more to the level of the farmer.
- It was discovered that most of the farmers never even saw the bulletin, and it was suggested for a suitable location to be found in which to place them.
- A request for more graphs and charts in the bulletin, making it more pictorial, with reduced reading to get messages across.
- Another issue which was raised by a participant is the need to enhance the climate data used so that they are taken in all agro-ecological zones in the country and at consistent intervals at each of the stations. There is also the need for enhancing the quality and detail of the biological data.
- A request for forums to be held at least twice a year with the farmers; at the beginning of the dry and wet season.
- A request for alerts to be sent via text messaging, which requires some discussion with the mobile service providers.

Conclusion

The meeting proved to be quite beneficial to all as it was geared towards the sustainability of the philosophy and activities after CAMI has ended.

Participants expressed the need for and commitment to the Committee, noting that the committee should meet often – at least quarterly.