

NATURAL RESOURCES SYSTEMS PROGRAMME
PROJECT REPORT¹

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Lessons learnt: Working to influence CARICOM.
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Promoting an holistic approach to agrochemical management in the Caribbean

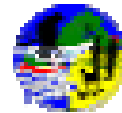
Final Technical Report Annex A



DFID Natural Resources Systems Programme



CGPC



LESSONS LEARNT: WORKING TO INFLUENCE CARICOM

DFID NRSP PROJECT R8364

LESSONS LEARNT

A. WORKING TO INFLUENCE CARICOM

Caribbean countries are highly dependent on agricultural production. The emergence of food safety and the related tightening of export market requirements, along with demands from multilateral environmental agreement, have placed a burden on small economies to improve agro chemical management. Given the limited human and financial resources available in small economies, the need for improved agro chemical management must be well presented to policy makers and taken to the highest political levels, to attract a commitment.

It is for this reason, that the project sought the endorsement of CARICOM for a Strategy to improve the management of agro chemicals. CARICOM is responsible for facilitating meetings of Ministers of the Caribbean States to discuss policies with the following objectives:

- To improve standards of living and work;
- Full employment of labour and other factors of production;
- Accelerated, coordinated and sustained economic development and convergence;
- Expansion of trade and economic relations with third States;
- Enhanced levels of international competitiveness;
- Organisation for increased production and productivity;
- Achievement of a greater measure of economic leverage and effectiveness of Member States in dealing with third States, groups of States and entities of any description;
- Enhanced co-ordination of Member States' foreign and [foreign] economic policies; and
- Enhanced functional co-operation.

The strategy for improved agrochemicals management that was promoted by the Coordinating Group of Pesticides Control Boards (CGPC) recommends ten key management practices to improve agrochemicals management and translates the recommendations into national and regional actions. Never before, did the CGPC make a presentation to CARICOM, nor was the issue of agrochemical management raised in their meetings. It was therefore a learning experience for CGPC. One of the partners, the Caribbean Environment and Health Institute (CEHI) is an organization of CARICOM which was helpful in making the necessary contact with the Secretariat.

Perhaps the most important lesson that was learnt was the need for support from nearly all participants at the CARICOM meetings in order to achieve endorsement of a proposal. The CGPC which was familiar with the contents of the strategy, represented

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approximately 65% of the CARICOM member states and this hampered communication in non-member states. Once this was recognized, a one day workshop was organized to facilitate interaction with all member states as well as additional regional organizations participating in CARICOM meetings. During the workshop, the CARICOM Secretariat verified that there was support at the level of national governments and provided guidance on how to present the paper to CARICOM. Two countries became members of CGPC and all countries that were not members of CGPC were willing to assist to promote the strategy at the national level.

An avenue was created for CGPC to present follow up papers at CARICOM. The need for strengthening relationships among national and regional support organization was underscored.

For years, CGPC members recognized the need for additional support to agricultural management. However, at the national level technocrats and consumers make demands on other matters such as health, poverty and education seemed to outweigh in importance. Technocrats concluded that policy makers were more influenced by economists, political or legal minds that were too far removed from implementation. CGPC members were now empowered to recommend policy change on behalf of the rural poor with whom they work closely from day to day.

There is conflicting views on the need for pesticides management separate and apart from pest management and integrated pest management to reduce pesticides use. This is partially because of the emphasis placed on the benefits of pesticides to increase productivity in agriculture. With the emergence of multilateral environmental agreements, and the need for chemical management, the project facilitated discussions on management of chemicals including pesticides. Governments are likely to be more open to inter-ministerial coordination which could assist the holistic approach being promoted by the project.

Much more can be achieved at the national level where there is an agency with full time staff to promote the strategy than in countries where only part time focus is given to agro chemical management. This accounts for slower development of the National Plan of Action in St. Lucia than in Jamaica. At the national level also, the promotion is better handled by professional communicators who are familiar with press releases as was the case with the Jamaica Information Service in Jamaica.

B. DEVELOPING CAPACITY FOR NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

It was demonstrated through the workshops held during the life of the project, that the approached used to develop National Plans of Action could vary from one state to another. In the case of Jamaica, where there is a relatively well developed agency for pesticide management, and several other agencies involved in some way with varying aspects of agrochemical management, the approach was taken to address the priority issue which did not represent any conflict of leadership with other agencies. The other

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recommendations of the strategies were developed into separate National Plans of Action with lead agencies from various ministries (e.g. Good Agricultural Practice, JAS and Jamaica Bureau of Standards and Poison Information Network through the University of Technology) On the other hand, for smaller countries, all the recommendations may be manageable in on National Plan of Action and may also include chemicals that are not agro-chemicals to meet international obligations. These plans may be activated in one ministry.

Again a workshop such as the Train of Trainers Workshop on National Plan of Action facilitated interaction and exchange of experiences across the Caribbean. CGPC members were empowered to develop National Plans of Action.

MONITORING UPTAKE OF THE STRATEGY

Communication among the states of the CARICOM can be expensive, especially for conducting surveys. The project attempted a survey using the fax as the source of contact. High level policy makers were slow to respond to questionnaires and often passed the questionnaires to lower level technocrats who were the implementers of the project. In this project, response from technocrats would not be a true evaluation of the project since they were fully aware of the strategy and could not write on behalf of policy makers.

As a result, no meaningful analysis of the survey was possible at the end of the one year project. However, there were indicators of uptake of the strategy which included, the cabinet submission in St. Lucia, implementation of import fees in St. Kitts, revision of regional registration of pesticides and initiation of National Plans of Action in Jamaica