



Communiqué

4th Meeting of the OECS Council of Ministers of Agriculture

NIS Conference Room

Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Tuesday July 25, 2017

Introduction

The Fourth Meeting of the OECS Council of Agricultural Ministers was convened at the NIS Conference Room in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines on Tuesday, July 25th 2017 under the chairmanship of Hon. Arthur Nibbs, Minister of Agriculture for Antigua and Barbuda, who was re-elected for another term.

In attendance at the Meeting were OECS Ministers of Agriculture, representatives of regional agriculture agencies and a delegation from the OECS Commission.

In the main, discussions focused on:

- (a) Sustainable agriculture and adoption of regional best practices;
- (b) Support for the Agri-Shipping Initiative;
- (c) Parliamentary Front Against Hunger
- (d) Agency Support to the Agriculture Plan of Action (APOA); and
- (e) Review of Focal Points for the APOA.

(a) Sustainable agriculture and adoption of regional best practices

The Meeting requested that the OECS Commission examine the mechanisms of possible support in the area of sustainable agriculture in the OECS through the Global Action Plan launched in Rome.

Ministers agreed that a coordinated approach be taken in developing FAO/IICA country programming frameworks and that common elements among Member States be earmarked for regional action.

The Council of Ministers also underscored the importance of a holistic sub regional plan to ensure congruency amongst national plans and efficient utilisation of scarce resources.

(b) Support for the Agri-Shipping Initiative

The Meeting received a report from Minister of Agriculture in St Vincent and the Grenadines, Hon. Saboto Caesar; and General Manager of Bunny Imports and Exports Ltd, Mr. Jai Rampersaud.

Minister Caesar underscored that the tentative initiative is not meant to displace existing regional trade but to serve as a means to position the region to capitalize on new opportunities and to

better exploit underserved markets within the region and elsewhere. Minister Caesar also outlined the need to partner with, and secure the support of, private sector entities such as Winfresh Ltd and Bunny Imports and Exports Ltd.

The Council favourably received the presentations from Minister Caesar and Bunny Imports and Exports Limited and sought to address outstanding matters such as support systems, mechanisms for information sharing and a review of the general approach to crop production in the sub region.

(c) Parliamentary Front Against Hunger

Minister Caesar informed the Meeting that St Vincent and the Grenadines is receiving support from the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) towards the establishment of a Caribbean Secretariat for a Parliamentary Front Against Hunger. Minister Caesar encouraged Member States to set up national Parliamentary Fronts in support of this initiative.

The Meeting recommended that consideration be given to using the OECS Parliamentary Assembly as a mechanism of fast tracking the establishment of support at a regional level.

(d) Agency Support to the Agriculture Plan of Action (APOA)

The Agricultural Council of Ministers commended the work of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) towards the implementation of the APOA in OECS Member States, as well as the support rendered to the OECS Commission.

The Meeting recommended that the OECS Commission facilitate a coordination meeting among Ministers to discuss priority items to be included on the Agenda of the FAO 35th Regional Conference which is scheduled to be held in the Bahamas in March, 2018.

The Meeting also recognised the support of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) towards the implementation of APOA in the region.

Ministers outlined the need for a progress review of the APOA and recommended that an examination of gaps and new opportunities from support agencies such as FAO, IICA and CARDI be included.

(e) Focal Points for the Agriculture Plan of Action (APOA)

The Meeting agreed to retain agricultural Permanent Secretaries as the substantive focal points for the APOA to ensure the appropriate oversight. The Permanent Secretary will be supported by a designated officer who will be responsible for operational matters. Member States will submit the names of selected designated officers to the OECS Commission.

Presentations were made to the Fourth Meeting of the OECS Council of Agricultural Ministers by the OECS Commission, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute and Bunny Imports and Exports Ltd.