



Food sovereignty replaces food security as major Caribbean theme

ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada (ACM) - Changing tactics to suit today's circumstances, Caribbean government are to focus more on food sovereignty than food security following lessons learned from recent international crises including the September 11 attacks when a ban on air travel triggered a chicken meat shortage in some parts of the region.

Dr. Arlington Chesney, Director of the Trinidad-based Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) said Thursday that regional agriculture ministers meeting in Grenada this week are undertaking a comprehensive review of the sector in a bid to raise its profile and contribution to economies including the change of policy from efforts to achieve food security to food sovereignty.

Giving an example to participants at a Regional Media Experts Seminar, Dr. Chesney pointed to the fact that American authorities had shut down the national airspace fearing more attacks on US installations on September 11th, saying that the failure of aircraft to bring hatching eggs to poultry farmers in the Caribbean had created a meat shortage that should not be repeated.

The three-day workshop, part of the 2010 edition of Caribbean Week of Agriculture, is organized by the Netherlands-based Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), CARDI and the Association of Caribbean Media Workers (ACM), both headquartered in Trinidad.

"Most of our hatching eggs come from Georgia in the US. When we talk of sovereignty, it is about the ability of the region to produce food for itself", Dr. Chesney said.

He defined food security as the ability of countries to buy food. He said governments want to place more cultivation emphasis on tubers and root crops like ground provisions, saying there are lessons to be learned from the current wheat crisis in Russia that should result in a reduction in dependence on wheat flour imports.

Three recent global crises, the food, fuel and financial meltdown, have forced a new thinking among regional leaders regarding agriculture, the CARDI boss said, adding that authorities now want increased efforts placed on cattle and small stock farming and hikes in the production of fruits and vegetables to ensure food sovereignty.

Harking back to the food crisis in 2008, he pointed to food riots in Haiti and attempts to hijack food trucks in Trinidad, saying the region has no choice but to take steps to mitigate such crises.