

Introductory Remarks

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CABI

American and Caribbean Member Countries Regional Consultation

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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

Firstly, let me take this opportunity to thank our host, the Government of Costa Rica through the Vice Minister of Agriculture – Honourable Jose Joaquin Salazar and Madam Lic. Arle Vargas – Deputy Director of the NPPO Costa Rica. We are honoured by your presence and on behalf of us all, I would like to offer our sincere thanks for the warm welcome and for hosting us.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this American and Caribbean Member Countries Regional Consultation. As always, it is a great honour to be amongst friends and colleagues once again - I am extremely delighted to see such a strong turnout of CABI Member country representatives and development partners.

At the last consultation, held in Barbados, we welcomed Barbados to CABI membership. I had also hoped that we would be welcoming Costa Rica at this meeting today. Although it has not happened we are in discussion and we hope they will be joining us soon!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A country's progress depends fundamentally on the country itself directing its own national agenda. Actions taken without buy in by countries often turn out to be unsustainable. Success therefore requires that consensus building by all stakeholders be part of the agenda. As a membership

organisation, that believes in partnership, we are here to share our vision, to set priorities together and to forge a consensus about how to go forward.

These triennial consultation meetings have therefore become an important activity for CABI. Driven by the priorities of its 48 member countries, these meetings give you - CABI members, an opportunity to influence the organization's agenda and for CABI to listen to and engage directly with you. Ownership of our work by our member countries is very important to us and is one of our unique key strengths.

This particular consultation is the last of three that we have had between 2015 and 2016. In October 2015, we held the first consultation in Zambia for the Africa region, and in November we held the second consultation in KL for the Asia Pacific Region. The outcomes of these meetings will be fed into CABI's Review Conference, to be held in the UK in July 2016 – and they will help to guide the organization's overall priorities and strategy for the coming years. So we look forward in seeing you in London.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have seen many new faces so for those of you who may not be very familiar with CABI, you will be hearing more about us (and some of our success stories) from our CEO, Dr Trevor Nicholls and my colleagues present here but I just want to say that as an organisation, CABI is not that huge compared to the likes of the CG, FAO etc - in terms of staff numbers and turnover - but in, our over 100 years of existence, we have always punched above our weight when it comes to long-term impact – and the fact that we are still around and going strong after so many years attests to that! Some of you will have read our 100 years history where our achievements since 1908 are well documented.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This region has a lot share to with the rest of the world. Although food security and agriculture in general remains a key challenge especially in the Caribbean, over the past 20 years, Latin America has significantly increased its production and share in global agricultural trade and has the potential of becoming a food superpower. The region is also regarded as one of the world's biodiversity "hotspots" supporting some 7000 species of endemic plants and 779 endemic vertebrates. Sadly much of this diversity is getting lost - 67 out of 76 land mammal species (88%) have become extinct in the last 20,000 years, including all 3 known primates. This species loss can be attributed to the impacts of IAS and so if nothing is done to manage current invasions more species will be lost with knock-on impacts on a range of other sectors like tourism and livelihoods.

The region's experience shows clearly that agriculture and related activities play a key role in the development process, and that a healthy growing agricultural sector is essential to improving livelihoods. Continued growth will, however, require more knowledge so we will need to be more innovative. More interactions between the private and public sector will be needed in training to upgrade farmers' skills.

To this end, South-South and triangular co-operation and new forms of public-private partnerships have become more prominent lately as vehicles for development, complementing North-South forms of co-operation. CABI has member countries in all parts of the world and so as an organization, CABI is well placed to promote and facilitate south-south and triangular development cooperation across its member countries. And so we are looking at strategic and operational opportunities for expanding such approaches.

For example, Plantwise which was in its infancy just three years ago when we last met, is now a global programme in over 34 countries. As you know, it originated in plant clinics in South America – specifically in Bolivia. Learnings in one country or region is shared, modified and applied elsewhere. And is an entry point for how extension systems can be strengthened. Another area is commodity crops. Many commodity crops are found across several regions. This is another area of strength for CABI.

An example is the control of coffee berry borer in Latin America where parasitoids from Africa have been beneficial in managing the pest.

Talking about the use of biological control agents from 1 region in another region, CABI is working through the application of the Nagoya protocol on access and benefit sharing and you will be hearing how we are helping to implement the Protocol.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As you will see from the theme of this Consultation – *Improving Livelihoods through Knowledge Solutions and Partnerships* – we are hoping to identify ways of working with you to support our MCs in their quest to address the challenges that confront them in realizing food security.

At the last regional consultation held in 2012, CABI was mandated by you to provide support in SEVEN priority areas. These were:

1. Trade and market access
2. Knowledge management, communication and use
3. Plant health
4. Biodiversity and invasive species management
5. Climate smart agriculture
6. Institutional capacity building
7. Publication of, and access to, authoritative information resources

The priority areas helped us to shape CABI's Medium Term Strategy 2014-16, and you will hear from my Colleagues of the significant progress that has been made in addressing these priority areas jointly by CABI, yourselves and other partners.

So as in previous occasions, this consultation is aimed to help align CABI's work more effectively with regional needs and strategic plans, and to develop mutually agreed programmes. More specifically, the objectives are to:

1. Review progress achieved in the priority areas identified in 2012.
2. Identify new emerging regional priorities

3. Agree on action plans by linking regional priorities with CABI's capabilities and strategies and identifying synergies among partners

We have also selected a number of emerging key strategic areas such as open data & mobile information delivery, issues emerging with the implementation of the Plantwise programme, CABI's role in facilitating trade and market access, and lastly, CABI's Policy on Access and Benefit Sharing under the Nagoya Protocol.

As I conclude – as an organisation, we believe in beneficial and smart partnerships, leveraging on the progress that has been made and adding value to ongoing work in the countries. So apart from Member Country and prospective Member Country delegates, representatives of our strategic partners are attending this meeting. Interactions with them will provide us with good opportunities to secure the buy-in, commitment and support we greatly need to pursue the proposals emanating from this Consultation.

Finally, I would like to thank my CABI colleagues led Dr. Qiaoqiao Zhang, who have worked tirelessly over many weeks and to you all, for finding the time to attend. We are very much looking forward to listen to your contributions and the outcomes of the Consultations.

Mucho Gracias - Thank you very much.