

# WOMEN AND YOUTH: A VOICE FOR CHANGE IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

A National Consultation for Women and Youth in Agriculture



**WUSC Caribbean Report**

Wednesday, June 27, 2018  
Garraway Hotel, Roseau,  
Commonwealth of Dominica

# “Women and Youth: A Voice for Change in the Agriculture Sector”

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## Executive Summary

World University Service of Canada and the Dominica Youth Business Trust (DYBT) hosted a consultation on “Voice for Change in the Agriculture Sector” in June, 2018. The event gathered participants from the Government of Dominica, and a variety of actors in the agriculture sector including producer groups, women’s groups, financial institutions, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs). Women and youth were well represented and their voices central to the event.

The consultation opened with presentations around current programming in the agricultural sector, including an overview of WUSC’s PROPEL and DEAR projects.

Speaking on behalf of the Government of Dominica, the Hon. Justina Charles, Minister for Youth, Sports and Constituency Empowerment, provided the information that this consultation was influencing a cabinet paper that would identify the challenges of the agricultural sector and provide policy recommendations. This proposed paper would build on the Prime Minister’s vision to make Dominica a climate resilient country, a plan which has significant impact on the agricultural sector.

Dr. Reginald Thomas, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries continued to reinforce the Government of Dominica’s desire to engage with those in the agriculture sector, particularly women and youth. He identified some of the challenges facing women in the sector, praised their resilience and confirmed the government’s ongoing focus on agriculture and commitment to supporting women’s engagement.

The consultation participants identified challenges to entry into the agricultural sector, especially for youth, and brainstormed possible solutions. Students from Dominica State College, continuing the youth focus, brought in the need to integrate modern technology to agriculture and aquaculture practices.

Dylan Williams, a young farmer and Vice President of the Dominica Organic Agriculture Movement (DOAM) linked agricultural practice, including certified organic farming, with the eco-tourism potential of Dominica.

In order to delve deeper into the challenges facing women and youth in the sector, the participants were divided into groups to discuss topics, which included: gender equality, food security, capacity building and best practices. The group work was followed by presentations from farmers groups, which added practical experience and solutions to the discussion. Building on the participatory discussions, a technical panel provided insight, shared information about the services available in the sector and provided some suggestions as to possible outcomes from the consultation.

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## ***OPENING CEREMONY, WELCOME & BRIEF REMARKS***

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The Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Mc Marara Joseph, Business Development Officer at DYBT opened the consultation with the singing of the national anthem and a prayer led by Mrs. Dian Laronde, Operation Management System Administrator, Dominica Youth Business Trust (DYBT)

The Honourable Minister, Justina Charles; the Permanent Secretary, Dr. Reginald Thomas; Mr. Munish Persaud and Dr. Nadia Pacquette-Anselm of WUSC Caribbean; Mrs Kerry-Ann Remie Timothy, Coordinator DYBT; the Chief Youth Development Officer, Mr. John Roach; agricultural stakeholders, participants and the media were present.

### **Welcome Remarks – Mr. Munish Persaud, PROPEL – Deputy Projector Director**

Mr. Persaud outlined the “Voice for Change in the Agriculture Sector” an initiative supported by the Dominica Youth Business Trust (DYBT), the Government of Dominica and PROPEL (Promotion of Regional Opportunities for Produce through Enterprises and Linkages).

Mr. Persaud spoke about Canada’s engagement in the Caribbean and WUSC’s role in two specific projects in Dominica, PROPEL and the Dominica Emergency Agriculture Recovery Program (DEAR).

PROPEL is a \$20 million Canadian project funded by donors and the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and implemented by World University Service of Canada (WUSC). The DEAR project has \$166,000 Canadian from private donors and the Government of Canada, which provided support following Hurricane Maria.

The DEAR project was timely and possible due to the ongoing engagement in Dominica through the PROPEL project. PROPEL works with producers, private sector buyers, government, other value chain buyers and business service providers to facilitate the safe, effective and efficient movement of fresh produce from the farm level to market.

PROPEL’s has four (4) cross-cutting themes:

1. Women
2. Youth
3. Environment
4. Governance

The consultation serves as an intersection of all four. The presence of women and youth at the consultation and hearing their voices is vital. Both women and youth have, on an ongoing basis, been carrying out situational analysis of their own agricultural context. Professionals such as agronomists

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should take note of the women and youth perspective given the holistic nature of their importance. The realities facing women and youth in agriculture are not well understood.

Mr. Persaud implored all to listen to the presentations and asked that attendees pay attention to how the various presentations relate to them and that in partnership the issues of women and youth in agriculture could be addressed. Women and youth must be engaged as empowered partners. He asserted that their presentations would help get a feel about the future of agriculture in Dominica. He concluded by expressing hope that together their voice would be heard and that changes would be made.

The Master of Ceremonies then invited the Honourable Minister for Youth Affairs, Mrs. Justina Charles to give some remarks.

### **Honourable Justina Charles, Minister for Youth Affairs, Sports and Constituency Empowerment**

Honourable Minister Justina Charles expressed her gratitude to be in attendance as the Minister responsible for Youth. She thanked the Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Joseph and recognized the official guests' present including all women representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, the 4H Coordinator and the wide cross-section of participants, women and young people engaged in the agricultural sector.

She acknowledged the importance of the consultation in an era where more emphasis is placed on youth and women in agriculture, saying that it is also critical to prioritize the areas (regions) that have been heavily impacted - more so after the passage of Hurricane Maria which caused massive destruction.

Agriculture is a priority area for the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica. The importance of food security and the implications of a thriving agricultural sector were taken into account. The Minister recognized the DYBT for the tremendous work they have been doing and thanked PROPEL for partnering with DYBT to host this event today.

Honourable Charles expressed admiration for the work that DYBT has been doing with young people. Now they are able to position and engage themselves in agriculture and other sectors and more importantly, provide training to others, as well as access to finance to begin their own businesses.

Due to the impact of Hurricane Maria, many lessons were learnt from the experience. Honourable Charles suggested that some retrospection should be done with the way that agriculture is handled - the times when the agriculture sector is most likely to be impacted negatively and what can be done to minimize such conditions on the sector.

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Agriculture is one of the main pillars of any nation and thus it is of great importance to Dominica to alleviate poverty, reduce the high import bill and to be sustainable to the extent of exporting regionally and internationally through high quality branding, packaging and production.

The Minister advocated for the capitalization of resources and for the selling of agriculture as a lucrative business to help alleviate poverty in Dominica. Consequently, she suggested that women make a difference; therefore, the Government’s support for women and youth in agriculture is much anticipated.

The Honourable Charles reiterated the words of the Honourable Prime Minister regarding making Dominica the first climate resilient country in the world. She stated that agriculture is an important sector in that area in terms of production, processes and other areas.

In addition, she highlighted the objective of the event was to put together a Cabinet Paper on the visions, challenges, and to make recommendations for the sector. She implored participants to look at this as a policy direction to meet the need of the target population.

## **Poem Recital**

A winning poem entitled – “*The Importance of Agriculture in My Country*” (2016-2017) – from the Agri-Business Society of the West Indies Competition written by Daniel Tanish was presented by Chrismael Telemacque.

## **Dr. Reginald Thomas, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries**

Dr. Reginald Thomas, the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries extended his greetings and apologized on behalf of Minister Austrie who was unable to attend the consultation. He stated that women contribute immensely to food and nutrition security in Dominica.

He explained that globally women and youth contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Goals – SDGs 1 & 2:

SDG #1 – end poverty in all its forms everywhere

SDG #2 - end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Youth also play an important role in economic development.

The participants were presented with some historical information which showed that the agriculture sector has performed exceedingly well when women were involved. Whether it is at the farm level, agro-processing or market level, to name a few, women played a crucial role in agriculture and the rural economy. Aggregate data shows that women comprise about 43% of the agricultural labour force; they

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produce about 60 – 80% of the world’s food and are inherently better stewards of the environment than men.

The PS posited that investing in women was the best thing to do and a smart way to reduce poverty and inequality. He pointed out that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and the Government of Dominica have undertaken a new approach to agriculture, policy and strategies. This approach acts as a pillar of the economic, political and social development of women and youth. This makes gender equality a priority for the benefit of the Dominican society.

Reference was made by the PS to the recently concluded ‘Meet the Farmers’ consultation held in the seven agriculture regions. He stated that out of a total of 891 attendees, a large proportion of that group were women and that the ministry was aware of their many issues and challenges which are:

- Labour or lack thereof;
- Low productivity;
- Relatively high cost of services, fertilizer and other inputs;
- Suitable lands for agriculture;
- Irrigation;
- Capital; and
- Market access.

If women and youth were provided with equal access to resources it could greatly improve rural livelihood and economic development while contributing to the GDP. Women and youth are the future. Given the aging farming population in Dominica, there is a great need to modernize agriculture - to make it more technologically inclined to young people. Agriculture needs civil and agricultural engineers, marketing experts, food scientists, technologists and risk management experts if they hope to achieve a resilient agricultural sector.

Agriculture should no longer be seen only as using a cutlass or a fork. The introduction of modern technologies such as hydroponics, rainwater harvesting technology, vertical agriculture, aquaponics, and use of precision farming to optimize farming systems offer avenues which can be utilised.

The PS noted that Hurricane Maria’s destruction of the agriculture sector equated to ECD 149.2 million in damages and total losses of about ECD 335 million dollars. However, farmers immediately went back to their farms and demonstrated resilience. He expressed his gratitude towards both the women and youth for their contribution. The women’s groups contributed significantly to the ministry’s successful implementation of the ‘grow-to-eat’ program post-Maria, and seventy percent of the seeds and seedling production were distributed to women.

PS Thomas affirmed that it was an exciting time in agriculture and that Maria has given the opportunity to do things in a better and more climate-resilient way. He reported that the Government of Dominica has identified agriculture as the major engine of growth and poverty reduction. More so, he revealed that even in engagements with the World Bank, whereby a sixty-five million dollar agriculture resilient

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programme was signed, twenty percent of the interventions will be geared towards the engagement of women.

The Permanent Secretary stated the Ministry recognises the benefits from women and youth in agriculture and has commenced engaging women and youth. Ministry commitments include:

1. The Toloman Women Farmers in Delices – attempts are being made to get them up and running;
2. The Good Hope Cassava Farmers are engaged and trying to get their cassava processing facilities back on track with the assistance of the Ministry;
3. Presently engaging the youth through a survey that was being conducted by the Ministry’s extension services in trying to get the number of youth and women involved, their acreages and their crops in order to develop programmes with the types of interventions that will address the concerns arising from the results of the survey.

### ***VOTE OF THANKS***

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#### **Mrs. Kerry-Ann Remie Timothy, Coordinator, DYBT**

Mrs. Remie Timothy, the Coordinator of DYBT, on behalf of the organizers of the national consultation, extended a heartfelt thank you to all those present and to WUSC Caribbean for their timely intervention in organizing the consultation in support of the DYBT.

She wished well to the women, youth, panellists and other stakeholders who would be spending the day at the consultation.

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As a transition to the next sessions, participants were asked to choose a partner and given a challenge to identify, in one-on-one discussions, one challenge that young persons face as well as a solution to that challenge.

## RESULT OF EXERCISE OF CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOLUTIONS:

CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
There was something inculcated from young age that agriculture is all about cutlass and dirt	From an early age it is critical to educate children about agriculture and its benefits
Accessibility to getting farming lands	The Aid Bank has been encouraging the leasing of lands and has been working with Lands and Surveys Department to approach land owners to get commitment letters of 5-year loan duration to be able to access farming lands
Irrigation (of organic crops, since there is no access to a river)	Overseas buyer - Set up of a partnership – Provision of large water containers which could be used for getting water from DOWASCO lines to irrigate the crops
Finance (to fence goats)	Collect loose material from Maria to provide storage thereby cutting down on initial costs

## YOUTH PRESENTATION: VISION, CHALLENGES, ACTIONS AND SOLUTIONS

### 1. Presentation from the Dominica State College

Two students – Ms. Gisel Paul from the village of Penville, a first year student and Kimmel Wayland, a second year student from the village of Bellevue Chopin - made a presentation on behalf of the Dominica State College. They presented their challenges and visions faced in agriculture.

Mr. Wayland stated that the agriculture industry is developing and so it is necessary to keep up to date with the fast-growing realm of technology. He then listed a few steps of his own to achieve this:

- Training young people to partake and keep up to date with practices and cultures in agriculture. He stressed that agriculture is not only involved in planting; the industry should be promoted to young people;
- Gender inequality aspect – agriculture should not just be seen as a man’s job;
- Vision is crucial to be able to move forward in the industry;
- There are opportunities for everybody as long as they were educated.

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Gizel touched on the following challenges:

- Resources and material are limited – there are not enough machines, tools and material at the college - she had to settle for working in smaller group of students as a result of this challenge;
- Learning by doing and being exposed to opportunities would be better for students;
- Hurricane Maria took away their nursery and their poultry pens and so new students may not be able to experience or have the facility for practical research and experience if help was not received quickly.

Some of the proposed actions to be taken and solutions to the challenges faced are:

- To intensify the training at the college;
- Poultry production: the provision of a poultry pen;
- Incubation;
- Small stock husbandry;
- Aquaculture;
- Aquaponics and other forms of agriculture;
- The management aspect of the agriculture industry should be explained more to students so that they are aware of investment potentials, as well as record keeping.

In response to the MOC’s question as to why he chose to work in agriculture, Kimmel asked Mr. Joseph why he chose to breathe. He explained that breathing was not a choice, but something compulsory. Likewise, agriculture is compulsory; it is a vital aspect in young people’s lives.

## 2. Presentation from DOAM

Mr. Dylan Williams is a young farmer who has been practicing farming for the past ten years. He comes from the village of Bellevue Chopin, and is a former Public Relations Officer (PRO) and now Vice President (VP) of the Dominica Organic Agriculture Movement (DOAM).

Mr. Williams presented the vision of the organization. Its vision consists of “minimizing pollution and damage to the environment through the maintenance and development of viable existing landscape features and adequate habitat for wildlife with regard to endangered species and thus considering the wider, social and ecological impact of agricultural production systems”.

He went on to give some historical perspectives citing that Dominica has relied on agriculture, in particular on banana crop production, for export as a mainstay of the economy. Dominica’s economic and agricultural history consisted of mono-cropping starting with sugar production some 300 years ago and continuing with coffee, limes, vanilla and banana - all the production relied on the country’s natural resources.

Mono-cropping has reduced crop diversity and increased vulnerability to disasters and the international markets; while at the same time, a considerable portion of the foreign exchange earned from the export

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of crops has gone into financing imports of food items. Hence, this has led to limiting the focus of extension services, such as bank, credit and other infrastructural programmes.

The decision-making of farmers has been weakened, thereby leaving them less adaptable to change. Consequently, in an attempt to cushion the effects of the decline of the banana industry, Mr. Williams stated that government redoubled its efforts at building a viable tourism industry. However, since Dominica does not have the standard tourist attributes of white sandy beaches for which the Caribbean is best known, he told participants that the tourism strategy for Dominica had to be based on the emerging niche of eco-tourism.

Eco-tourism, he pointed out, demands sustainable use of natural resources and is in fact the type of conscious tourism that fits in well with agriculture - even better when agriculture is practiced organically.

Mr. Williams pinpointed that the marriage of organic agriculture with eco-tourism/wellness tourism is an ideal mix for sustainable use of Dominica's natural resources and attainment of organic island concept. This new concept for the island will collate with eco- and agro- tourism opportunities into a high impact image of the country. Under this concept, standards of operation will be implemented for the primary food production through the handling operation all the way up to the final processing. The development and implementation of these standards would reduce the discomfort of the market for producers.

He identified some of the problems that his organization has established:

- i. Access to land: the abundance of available state lands, which could be leased by the government to young farmers for agricultural production, is sustainable. The majority of such lands are situated along ridges and rivers which flow into the ocean.
- ii. Access to labour: he called for the days of “koudoument” to be brought back in order to raise agricultural production. He also proposed to move away from mono-cropping as Dominica is unable to compete with the rest of the world in terms of production volumes.
- iii. Access to markets: organic agriculture produce is the best opportunity for niche marketing in terms of quality. He also advised of the setting up of a model organic farm system for knowledge transfer.
- iv. Access to inputs: Mr. Williams advocated for organic fertilizer given the vast availability of such in Dominica and the setting up of an input station in each of the seven agricultural districts in Dominica. He raised the awareness of pelletizing machines for women whom he claimed would make it easier for them to spread the organic fertilizer.
- v. Finally, the set up of a revolving fund was perceived as the way for farmers to be able to access financial resources. This could be done through a marketing distribution program whereby a percentage of sales could be fed back and be available to farmers.
- vi. With regards to education, it is important to educate the youth and women in agriculture in terms of sustainable agriculture in order to preserve and protect the land and soil.

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Mr. Williams ended his presentation by disclosing that the government had received sixty-five million dollars for agricultural intervention, eleven of which was to be used for inputs. The young farmer expressed concern that such a sum could possibly be used for chemical fertilizers and suggested that the government should be petitioned to instead put 60-70% of this sum towards organic fertilizers.

According to Mr. Williams, organic farming is the fastest growing industry in the world. Organic agriculture products fetch higher prices and therefore bring more profit. Farmers who are interested in organic produce could go into agro-processing and turn their products into valuable products.

### **COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR**

In response to a question as to whether the inputs would become an integral part of the agriculture plan, the PROPEL representative's response was that the intention was to put forward strategies and recommendations which could be put forward to assist the government.

Another participant's view was that in Dominica it was all about education of the farmers regarding organic farming, and that since organic fertilizers were for the most part unavailable in Dominica, conventional fertilizers were continuously being used.

Mention was made of a study having been done using conventional versus organic fertilizers on banana plants. Results indicate that the use of a quarter pail of conventional fertilizer would equate to 3-4 pounds of organic fertilizer (which is less than a quarter pail) and so it demonstrated that the quantity required is lower in terms of the organic fertilizers.

In terms of policy, the representative for DOAM raised the point about a strategy, which DOAM has been attempting to work with the government – a technical cooperation project between FAO, Government of Dominica and DOAM.

The desire was expressed to get someone to assess the agricultural sector and develop an Organic Agricultural Act. A call for partnering with the DYBT and PROPEL was made - both could fit right into the Organic Island concept. The challenge of the 2005 organic island concept which was provided to the government could be taken up.

In terms of making agriculture a business and in line with policy, the point was made about the many challenges that farmers face when getting into organic farming.

It was also concluded that price for organic inputs was said to be way above the price of conventional inputs such as fertilizers.

## WOMEN’S PRESENTATION: VISION, CHALLENGES, ACTIONS AND SOLUTIONS

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### 1. Group work

Participants formed six (6) groups. Each group was asked to appoint a leader, a transcriber and to name the group. The groups were then asked to list three issues for discussion, one of which would be presented.

The following is the result of the groups’ plenary discussion:

<b>GROUP/NAME: GROUP 1 – IAWASI –THANKSGIVING (KALINAGO)</b>
<b>TOPIC :</b> Capacity Building for women in Agriculture for the execution of best practices utilizing factors of production to maximize benefits
<b>POINTS/SOLUTIONS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Operating a farm in a way that is more manageable / profitable in order for it to be run more efficiently</li><li>-Modern women in agriculture – using their strengths positively and utilizing other resources for labour, equipment, usage, marketing, record keeping, etc.</li><li>-Time management</li><li>-Training in data management for base line information</li><li>-Farm management software</li><li>-Training in organic agriculture best practices</li><li>-Educate women on innovative forms of agriculture consistent with the UN Sustainable Development Goals</li><li>-Women’s fora for sharing ideas and empowering each other</li><li>-Accounting (proper accounting procedures should be put in place)</li><li>-Training in equipment usage, e.g., tillers, brush cutter, chainsaw</li><li>-More awareness of the science of agriculture</li></ul>
<b>COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Make interventions to support women amongst donor and government regulators more collaborative so as not to duplicate efforts</li><li>- Formalize the interventions</li><li>- Know who takes the lead and whether there would be implementation aspects</li><li>- Reorganize and look at the networks that already exist or existed before</li><li>- Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the training capacity</li></ul>

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<b>GROUP/NAME: GROUP 2 – MARIA</b>
<b>TOPIC : Gender Equity</b>
<p><b>POINTS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Access to Finance</li> <li>* Use of technology</li> <li>* Distribution of labour</li> <li>* Balancing the participation of women and men in agricultural activities and the equitable distribution of information within the family household</li> </ul> <p><b>SOLUTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Preferential support for women – specific terms for loans directed at women – Implementing strategies for women not to be discriminated</li> <li>* Institutions should allocate financial resources to the women involved in agriculture</li> <li>* Increase access to machinery for both men and women</li> <li>* Modification of machinery (some machines are heavier than others)</li> <li>* The technology must be suitable to both and both should be able to access it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Both representatives from the NDFD and the AID bank confirmed having policies in place for women</li> </ul>
<b>GROUP/NAME: GROUP 3 – QUEEN BEES</b>
<b>TOPIC : Challenges That Women Face In Farming</b>
<p><b>POINTS:</b></p> <p>Gender profiling of the occupation of farming. It is considered a “male” thing. They use the phrase “female farmer”. Men are just called “farmers”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Difficulty to find labour. Men develop the attitude of not working for a woman. It belittles them.</li> <li>✓ Even when the woman is a partner to the farmer, she is not considered a part of the system. All the work women do on the side is undervalued, or just not valued or appreciated.</li> </ul> <p><b>Solutions:</b></p> <p>Moving away from “Women farmers” to “women/youth in farming”</p> <p>Focusing on farm families. It involves the participation of all members. It values the contribution of each family member inclusive of the woman.</p> <p>Promoting the work and activities of women involved in agriculture, e.g. Expo, Panel Discussions and Forums.</p> <p>Requesting labour through an agency – Labour Agency.</p>
<p><b>COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR:</b></p> <p>An impressive view on women being good welders</p> <p>Female students at the college are doing very well</p> <p>International organizations insist that women should benefit from any type of financing available</p>

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<b>GROUP/NAME: GROUP 4 – MARY</b>
<b>TOPIC :</b> The Challenges to the food security in Dominica following Maria
<p><b>POINTS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Shortage of indigenous food supply after Maria for :</li> <li>Families</li> <li>Communities</li> <li>Nations</li> </ul>
<p><b>FAMILY ISSUES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Inadequate food supply</li> <li>B. Inadequate root crops</li> <li>C. Quick buys from supermarket</li> </ul> <p><b>SOLUTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Proper storage of dry goods – 4 weeks of storage and proper water-tight storage</li> <li>B. Inadequate planting of resilient crops (root) coinciding with the hurricane season</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data of production of root crop available</li> <li>Availability of water</li> <li>Availability and access to potable water</li> </ul>
<p><b>NATIONAL LEVEL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culture of self-reliance and empowerment</li> <li>In keeping with our food supply encourage women to grow crops of their preference</li> <li>-Fruit flour</li> <li>-Root crop flour</li> <li>-Herbal flour</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMENT FROM THE FLOOR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To have the same synergy and business acumen in own country</li> <li>Going forward to be far more secure following a disaster</li> </ul>
<b>GROUP/NAME: GROUP 5 – OCTAVIA’S GROUP</b>
<b>TOPIC :</b> Challenge/Issues in agriculture
<p><b>POINTS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Labour – Setting smart goals approach - What is needed to get proper labour - who are the labourers</li> <li>- Giving a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay</li> <li>- Women leaders in community to rally other women</li> <li>- Land availability</li> </ul> <p><b>SOLUTION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seek hourly contracts</li> <li>- Seek job contracts</li> <li>- Seek people who are willing to work</li> <li>- Put a database in place</li> <li>- Adopt an NEP model to create a farming programme through the Village Council – 15% proceeds to councils</li> <li>- Women farmers group work on members’ farms (Koudmein approach)</li> </ul>

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- Monthly farm meetings - Employment with benefits – wages and social security paid; incentives (holidays, overtime work,); paid sick leave; meals; work hours: 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. or 7:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
<b>COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR:</b>
- Skilled labour is a requirement; - Farms must be certified
<b>GROUP/NAME: GROUP 6 – WAYIA – Women and Youth in Agriculture</b>
<b>TOPIC : Challenge/Issues in agriculture</b>
<b>POINTS:</b>
*Lack of innovation for women in terms of physical intensity of farming and use of machinery
*Women getting equipment best suited to their figure
*Men take advantage of women – they in turn need to get more knowledgeable
<b>SOLUTION:</b>
* The main issue found which contributes to the problem is a lack of proper guaranteed markets for mono-crop farmers and the exploitation of the female farm managers;
*Provision of guaranteed markets for our female farmers would encourage more women to become more active and innovative in agriculture. This would push for manufacturers to provide more ‘female friendly’ tools and machinery.
* Special loan facilities should be available to women to hire labour
* Female farm managers are more likely to get exploited by their workers if they are not active in the farm work. Women are encouraged to ‘know their work’ first before hiring labour.

## 2 Presentation by Central Farmers Group

Niqueze Mc Pherson and Dawn Francis took up the presentation:

Their involvement

- Engagement, training and education of women, youth and individuals in sustainable agriculture practices
  - Occupational Health and Safety
  - Team Dynamics
  - Land Care
  - Farmers Field School
- Introduction of new technologies in agriculture
  - Aquaculture (hydroponics and aquaponics)
  - Syntropic agriculture
- Improvement of the livelihood of the farming community
- AGRICULTURE BUSINESS
  - Food production
  - Agro processing
  - Agro Eco-Tourism

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- Creation of linkages and relationships with
  - The Government of Dominica (Ministry)
  - Other farmers’ groups
  - Non Governmental Organizations
  - Funders and Financial institutions

## Their Vision of Agriculture in Dominica

-Enabling environment will be created for

- AGRICULTURE BUSINESS

- Food production
- Agro processing
- Agro Eco-Tourism



### Actions

- Establishment of an innovative Centre
- Incorporation of Agriculture in the education curriculum from pre-school
- Providing full bonded scholarships for tertiary students to engage in agriculture studies at their university of choice
- Dexia should become the marketing agency for farmers for all crops

### Solutions

- This centre will cater for the needs of agro processors
- Ensure sustainability of the sector
- Increase in more qualified individuals within the sector
- A sure market for food production

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## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

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The Panel Moderator, Dr. Nadia Pacquette-Anselm, WUSC Caribbean PROPEL–OECS/Barbados Coordinator and Chairperson informed the participants that she would be coordinating the discussion and then introduced the panellists. Each panellist gave a five-minute presentation pertaining to women and youth involvement in the agriculture sector.

The six (6) panellists were:

1. Mr. Kent Coipel, Technical Specialist, IICA
2. Mr. Paul Baron, President of the National Youth Council
3. Ms. Vanya David, President Dominica National Council of Women
4. Mr. Matthias Alexander, Dominica State College
5. Mr. Delroy Williams, representative of the Division of Agriculture
6. Ms. Bertilia Bethel, representative of the Dominica Agricultural Industrial and Development Bank

### **1. Mr. Kent Coipel, Technical Specialist IICA**

Mr. Coipel expressed gratitude to the initiative and thanked the DYBT for inviting IICA to be part of the discussion, as well as for having been given the opportunity to make some recommendations.

He started his presentation by examining the issue of resilience. It is not a new topic, but post Maria presented an opportunity for reflection. The practice of resilience applies to youth and women in agriculture offering a mechanism for rolling out a strategy.

The need to define agriculture within the context of what was desired was also raised by Mr. Coipel. He made the statement that agriculture was still very important as per its contribution to GDP and foreign exchange earning as well as for the improvement of rural life; but more importantly, for food security.

As for the youth, there is an aging farmers’ population, and so there is the need to address the core problem that youth are not interested in participating in agriculture. There is a lack of extensive youth participation in the industry not only nationally but also regionally. Youth are more involved in advocacy.

Mr. Coipel cited the negative perception of agriculture by many, adding that there were things to pay attention to, especially to certain hindrances which have caused the lack of involvement of youth in agriculture, including financial opportunities

- “Not a level playing field “– opportunities are not equally distributed
- Lack of farm training and apprenticeship (which should be linked with training programmes).

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He suggested that it was important to create a way to make the youth feel passionate - a lack of support kills the passion. Consequently, he suggested that the youth should complete their school degree with a business plan; mentorship aspect is also crucial.

Mr. Coipel listed IICA's involvement in agriculture over the years:

- From 2002, IICA supported youth organizations such as NAYA – National Association of Youth in Agriculture
- Formed the Caribbean Agriculture forum for youth and from that established national chapters, in that case for Dominica – NAYA

He said the reasoning was to get youth to come together, not just on island, but on a regional scene to address some of their issues.

Some considerations for output as it pertains to youth in agriculture were given:-

- Linking social media to agriculture (young people are knowledgeable about social media)
- Improving the image of agriculture as a business
- Strengthening higher education in agriculture (both tertiary and diversified skills)
- Specialization in the various agricultural fields (i.e., organic systems)
- Redefining the skill sets required to develop the industry (some of which can be service driven thereby engaging young people in entrepreneurship)
- Greater use of ICTs
- Continue the empowering of young people and involving them in decision making such as policy development and implementation; conceptualization plan; putting agriculture in the school curriculum (starting from the primary schools)
- Continue with public investment in agriculture
- Facilitate the process of making land and credit available
- The need to make agriculture more profitable

Mr. Coipel endorsed IICA as a women-based organization citing that IICA has worked very closely with women in agriculture and based on statistics, 43% of agriculture labour force are women. He said that for most developing countries there was an increase in output because of the involvement of women in agriculture. Given the various types of shifts in agriculture, there is much more subsistence-based agriculture, especially in the areas like the South Sahara Desert and Latin America.

IICA has worked very closely in trying to set up linkages and networks of women involved in agriculture. As such, there is a network called CANROP for Rural Women in Agriculture – which is a platform for discussion for sharing best practices and for identifying the challenges.

The representative reiterated that IICA has supported the involvement of women as well as youth.

Outputs for women in agriculture were presented:

- \*Increase awareness in accessing lands
- \*Support the increase of Farm Families' concept to increase productivity

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\*Climate Smart Technologies

\*The value chain – range of products and services

Mr. Coipel concluded by shedding light on the ideals and the realities. He expressed hope that more policy level personnel could be present and together create the platform for further discussion.

## 2. Paul Baron, President of National Youth Council

Mr. Baron extended his greetings to all present. He said that other than being a participant at the workshop, the purpose for his attendance was to represent the voice of Dominica’s youth to really take from the consultation the solutions that have been provided. These, he said, could be utilized at levels of the National Youth Council and various stakeholders to influence and promote change for young people in Dominica.

Mr. Baron said his purpose was to see how best they could locate benefits, since the vast majority of young people which they would have liked to meet were outside the perimeter of the room.

According to Mr. Baron, when policies are drawn up, every effort should be made to impact young people who play a strategic role in agriculture on the island.

The point was made that agriculture monies were not taxable. It is a viable option for employment, especially in the rural communities from the north to the south-eastern district, representing the agrarian belt with the north-east yielding the highest potential in terms of arable farm lands.

Extension Officers can play a critical role in the lives of young people being their first point of contact: visiting the communities, providing hands-on approaches and coming together as a group; identifying a crop, preparing young people to benefit from opportunities and not be left behind were other points made.

Mr. Baron’s expressed view was that the NYC was committed to that and he thanked the organizers for making it possible for him to be here today to have that discussion. He stressed the need to improve the lives of young people and add value by being there at the point when they are most needed.

*He ended with this quote – “Success is where opportunity meets preparation” and so he emphasized the need to prepare.*

The Panel Moderator thanked Mr. Baron for highlighting the interest of youth, while citing that there was a need to develop the interest of youth, and their greater involvement. She went on to add that this requires partnership and continuous support of the young people.

### **3. Vanya David, President of Dominica National Council of Women**

Ms. David gave a dictionary definition of agriculture: “[...] as the cultivation of lands and bringing up animals and plants for food.” The largest percentage of persons employed in this sector is women. In this sector, there is an intensive cultivation shifting and clearing of plots for animals, with value added.

Ms. David spoke about the list of registered farmers from November 2017 (post-Maria) to the present and quoted some statistics. Out of approximately 8,000 registered farmers on island, 32% were women and 16% were youth. The other 52% are elderly male and female farmers.

In looking at agriculture in the Dominican context, Ms. David was of the view that agriculture was seen mostly for providing food to feed the family. However, in looking at agriculture in a broader context, her claim was that women at their homes were the ones who feed the family. She highlighted the quote: “when dollars are brought to women, they make it make sense”.

Ms. David recognized that women represent the voice for change. She stressed the importance of the hard work women and youth do and advocated for a shift for women in agriculture and fishing. She also highlighted SDG 5 (to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) which she urged should be included along with SDG 1 and 2 which were earlier quoted.

Ms. David ended by contending that where women fall, the reality of things in general is that a bigger injection of cash flow (financial support) for those in agriculture is needed.

### **4. Matthias Alexander, Dominica State College**

Mr. Alexander presented his views on the practical demonstration of agriculture to the young people of Dominica. Through his teaching, he admitted to having received great satisfaction. He confirmed that over the years, he has encountered many young resourceful individuals who have contributed to the growth of Dominica in all sectors.

He mentioned some of the areas that young farmers have gotten involved in, i.e. green-housing and hydroponics, to name a few. He pinpointed the entrepreneurship programme at the college. Recommendations of youth to farmers are being made continuously. ‘Big G’ was also mentioned – a former student of the college who is currently involved in hot pepper sauce production.

The vision of the DSC was presented; one which has been firm on applying the principle of gender equity. He was adamant that whatever was being done in terms of agriculture at the Dominica State College involves young women as much as young men.

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The college has embarked on a programme to work with young people since they possess the energy to make agriculture into something viable, necessary and rewarding for the country. The success for agriculture lies in the activities of the youth. It is up to the policy-makers and those involved in the technical and research aspects of their projects to guide the training and allocation of youth resource so they can produce efficiently and as effectively as possible.

It was also Mr. Alexander’s belief that there should be the possibility of apportioning the right resources. There should be some collaboration and assessment to decide on the right resources within the field.

A strong base for decision-making that is found in data gathering and information acquisition was also endorsed. According to Mr. Alexander, in order to make a decision in agriculture adequate and accurate information is required.

### **5. Mr. Delroy Williams, Coordinator of National Programme for White Potatoes, representing the Division of Agriculture**

Mr. Williams attended a similar forum sometime in 2004, which led to the formation of NAYA; three of the members of the panel were strategic in the formation of NAYA, himself, Mr. Mathias Alexander and Ms. Bertilia Bethel.

He then set out to share instrumental actions as they relate to the organization citing that although he was representing the Director of Agriculture, he was also invited as the former President of Youth in Agriculture. Mr. Williams stated that in travelling through the Caribbean, Dominica has been viewed as the ‘food basket’ for the Caribbean.

Mr. Williams stated that it was important to highlight the role of women in agriculture and the role that the Division of Agriculture plays as forerunner in getting women engaged in agriculture. Mr. Williams stated that engaging youth and women and their role in agriculture is the main objective, especially in post-Maria circumstances. Agriculture is not only about farming and science, it is also about engaging people as far as possible in the areas of research and business.

Mr. Williams drew attention to the stakeholders’ forum of the Ministry. The majority of attendees have noticeably been women since male farmers tend to send their wives to represent them and their family and so they become receptors of the information. Henceforth, it was his belief that women should be engaged in that role as well since they have a very important multiplier effect.

In relation to youth in agriculture, he conveyed that the Ministry has spent great sums in supporting youth in agriculture and in terms of programmes, he listed the following:

1. Young Farmers programme in (2004 - 2006) - the Ministry engaged a number of young persons having spent over one million dollars in getting them trained and engaged in agriculture.

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2. A number of programmes were supported in collaboration with other ministries and stakeholders such as the Dominica State College programme, a summer attachment programme coordinated by Mr. Alexander where 10-15 young persons were exposed to the various tenets of agriculture from farming to research and business and other areas based on their interest and also based on their preparation for the world of work.
3. The Ministry of Agriculture has also supported the Youth Development Division in its Organic Agriculture Programme held over the years through the management of Mr. Terry Raymond. Through this engagement they were able to train a number of young persons in Organic Agriculture which also brought a spill-over of young persons actively involved in agriculture and other areas.
4. NAYA was supported in its teething stages and in its development through the provision of secretarial services alongside IICA. School agricultural programmes were developed in various primary and secondary schools. NAYA found the following key issues:
  - i. Cost of energy and how to lessen it (especially for persons involved in agro-processing)
  - ii. Use of renewable energy on the farms
  - iii. Rising cost of agricultural lands - there is no price control of the lands
  - iv. Ways of creating land banks where the areas are suitable for agriculture
  - v. Ways of making agriculture meaningful to young people – engaging them to show them how it links other industries
  - vi. To take the opportunity to revisit agriculture

Mr. Williams thanked the organizers and expressed hope that the work will continue and was pleased that through NAYA, youth was still an integral part of agriculture discussions in Dominica.

### **6. Ms. Bertilia Bethel, Dominica Agricultural, Industrial and Development (AID) Bank**

Ms. Bethel stated that she will be accessing financial resources for youth and women as well as looking at the challenges that they face in the agricultural sector. The main purpose of the bank is to help anyone who desires to learn more about any form of agricultural interest or enterprise. She emphasized that the bank has improved its relationship with its clients especially farmers

Structural institution for marketing is unavailable and so the bank focuses on marketing – listening to clients before a loan portfolio is put in place. There is a collaborative effort; the bank no longer processes loans in isolation. Past ills affect current farmers.

The bank has been trying to put processes in place to assist both youth and women. The bank currently offers the following:

- Start-up funds directed to youth of up to 50% loan financing.
- Women up to the age of 70 can access financial loans of up to XCD \$30,000 with specific security terms.

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Monitoring of loans is done. This is because some farmers take loans and funds but are not invested much in the farm business. It is important to ensure that funds are being used for reasons stated on the loan application, and monitoring measures are being put in place. Agricultural loans are the highest risk loans and so the bank is very sceptical about giving young people loans.

Bank takes a holistic approach because the entire family is involved.

## **COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

Not all farmers are happy about doing business with the Aid Bank.

There is no allowance for deposit accounts; there is however a sundry account.

The 2% of loan for agriculture is dependent on the MOU signed with the Government.

## ***CLOSING REMARKS***

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Dr. Pacquette-Anselm thanked the panellists and all the presenters and thanked all participants for their lively discussions and participation, as well as DYBT personnel for the hard work in organizing the event.

Dr. Pacquette-Anselm confirmed a report would be circulated. Contributions from the range of stakeholders present were appreciated. Information collected will help WUSC Caribbean implement PROPEL and will also be shared with the Government of Canada as a reference to guide future projects related to agriculture involving women and youth in Dominica.

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### Attendance

	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Organization</b>
1	Kent	Coipel	Technician Specialist	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
2	Dorian	Etienne	Officer in Charge	Caribbean Agriculture Research & Development Institute
3	George	Challenger	Business Development Officer	National Development Foundation of Dominica
4	Brandon	Pacquette	Butcher	Kosher Cuts
5	Nickez	McPherson	Counsellor	Central Universal Farmers Group
6	Miranda	Ackie	Trade Officer	Ministry of Trade
7	Junella	Magloire-Trottman	Rapporteur	Freelance Secretarial
8	Ryan	Anselm	Technical Officer	Ministry of Agriculture
9	Marisa	Stedman	News Announcer	Kairi FM
10	Shirley	Alexander	4-H Coordinator	4-H Coordinator
11	Rhanda	Alexander	Executive Director	JA Dominica
12	Mcmarara	Joseph	Enterprise Development Officer	Dominica Youth Business Trust
13	Aaron	Emanuel	Field Based Facilitator	PROPEL
14	Franky	Phillip	Manager	Daily Fresh
15	Yasmin	John	Research Assistant	Caribbean Agriculture Research & Development Institute
16	John	Roach	Chief Youth Development Officer	Youth Development Division
17	Paul	Baron	President	National Youth Council Development
18	Dana	Scotland	Teacher	Convent High School
19	Kerry-Ann	Remie-Timothy	Coordinator	Dominica Youth Business Trust
20	Doug	Graham	Director	PROPEL/WUSC
21	Nadia	Pacquette-Anselm	Country Coordinator Bds/OECS	PROPEL/WUSC
22	Munish	Persaud	Deputy Director	PROPEL/WUSC
23	Arlene	Gregoire	Comm. Officer	Dominica Bureau of Standards

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24	Delia	Cuffy-Weekes	Agriculture Officer	Dominica National Council of Women
25	Dian	Laronde	Operator Management System Administrator	Dominica Youth Business Trust
26	Tara	Jno Jules	Data entry clerk	Agriculture Division
27	Lornson	Alexander	Farmer	Lornson's Farm
28	Chrismael	Telemaque	Manager	Cyberbox
29	Delroy	Williams	Agriculture Officer	Min. of Agriculture/ NAYA
30	Dave	Francis	Entrepreneur	Central Universal Farmers Group
31	Jon	Job	Farmer	Organic spec
32	Kimmel	Wayland	Student	Dominica State College
33	Sheldon	Royer	Farmer/Barber	Royer's Organic
34	Gizel	Paul	Student	Dominica State College
35	Josephine	Deschausay-Titre	Banker	AID Bank
36	Vanya	David	Social Worker	Dominica National Council of Women
37	Rawle	Leslie	Dean, Faculty of Applied Arts & Technology	Dominica State College
38	Raymond	Vigilant	Entrepreneur	Vigi's Products
39	Allen	Sorhaindo	Farmer	11th Ace Farm
40	Cali	Defoe		CAPCO
41	Bertilia	Bethel	Agricultural Development Officer	AID Bank
42	Mathias	Alexander	Lecturer	Dominica State College
43	Nathaniel	John	Entrepreneur	N&N Products
44	Jennifer	Pascal	Farmer	North East Agriculture Women's Movement
45	Dylan	Williams	Organic Farmer	Dominica Organic Agriculture Movement
46	Miriam	Ormond	Organic Farmer	Dominica Organic Agriculture Movement
47	Milva	Bellot	Manager	Irish Farm Frozen Foods
	Benison	Bellot		
	Vanessa	Winston	President	Dominica Arts & Craft Association