

Caribbean Region

Nations allied with the ROC in the Caribbean region include the Dominican Republic, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Saint Christopher and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Because of geographical constraints faced by these island nations, all have small economies that have found it difficult to navigate the tides of free trade and globalization. However, economic reform during the past several years, regional cooperation through the Organization of Caribbean States and the Central Bank of the Caribbean, vigorous tourism development, and attraction of foreign capital (using instruments such as economic citizenship policies, whereby persons making substantial investments or other contributions to economies may be granted citizenship which they might not otherwise be eligible for) have yielded positive economic results and promoted economic integration and social development.

The ICDF executed 24 projects in the Caribbean region this year. Because agriculture remains the predominant economic activity in the region, the ICDF continued to improve agricultural productivity and diversity in the majority of its projects. Additionally, to promote business and trade development, industry service teams and trade personnel were dispatched to provide consulting for local businesses; Taiwanese firms were given assistance in uncovering feasible business investments and developing partnerships in the region; and a new lending program for micro-businesses was met with excitement. The ICDF also continued its work in environ-

mental improvement and medical services (which are closely interrelated in all countries, but perhaps especially in the Caribbean region), and youth scholarships in the Caribbean.

Key ICDF projects and development foci in the Caribbean region in 2001 are described below.

Agricultural Development

Apart from the Dominican Republic and Haiti, which have some mineral exports, the Caribbean nations the ICDF cooperates with derive most of their foreign exchange earnings from sales of bananas, sugar, spices, coffee and cacao. These commodities have high production costs and are subject to extreme variations in prices. As a result, they are often buffeted in international markets. With the elimination of US, British and EU import quotas on bananas and sugar, Caribbean nations face the brunt of international competition, and it is expected that





their agricultural sectors will suffer. Agricultural upgrade and diversification are therefore important in ICDF agricultural assistance policies in the region.

ICDF technical missions in the region this year helped farmers diversify their operations in several ways. New fruits, vegetables and garden plants were cultivated; assistance was given in processing raw agricultural products to tap wider agribusiness potential; new livestock and aquaculture practices were introduced; and technical missions helped local farmers improve sales by developing new channels to tourist hotels, supermarkets and cruise ships.

The diminutive geographic areas of these nations limit their agricultural production. This not only restricts production of food products for export, but also that of important staple crops for consumption by local populations. Because of this, the ICDF has worked to increase rice production and yield in the region in projects in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

In some respects these Caribbean nations are similar to the ROC during its early development. That is, they are island nations with limited natural resources that are developing beyond agricultural economies (the ROC is significantly larger than most of them, although Haiti and the Dominican Republic are comparably sized). With these similarities in mind, the ICDF invited agricultural officials from Caribbean nations to join their fellows from other

nations the ICDF cooperates with at the Agricultural Policy and Rural Development International Conference in 2001. Speakers and attendees at the colloquium, jointly sponsored by National Taiwan University, discussed how agricultural policies could best be planned in conjunction with overall national economic development, modernization and transformation.

Micro-credit

Caribbean micro-enterprises with only 1-5 employees constitute large proportions economic development in the region, but find themselves in problematic economic positions. Because of their small size, they rarely have notable collateral and their incomes are not high, and thus they have difficulty securing loans to purchase equipment and improve their services. Therefore, these minuscule businesses have trouble growing, and contributing to expanding employment and economic growth.

The Micro-Credit Project in the Eastern Caribbean Region

This project will help allay difficulties micro-enterprises in Dominica, Grenada, St. Christopher and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have in obtaining funds for business expansion. Dominica and St. Christopher and Nevis signed lending contracts in 2001, while Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines were to sign soon thereafter.



In addition to the Micro-Credit Project in the Eastern Caribbean Region, the ICDF has small farmholder financing schemes under way in Dominica, St. Christopher and Nevis, and Grenada providing financial assistance to small farmholders who are participating in technical mission subprojects.

Medical and Environmental Projects

Some Caribbean nations suffer from poor sanitation and water supplies, which can result in dangerous living conditions, the spread of diseases such as malaria and dengue fever (both spread by mosquitoes, which can flourish in uncontrolled or unclean water supplies), and sicknesses caused by poor water quality (such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery). Water and soil conservation, and development of sources of potable water, are thus matters of urgent importance in the region.

ICDF water and natural resources projects in the region include financing of new equipment for wells and a pumping station in the Péionville water supply project, which will improve the water supply and reduce water-borne diseases in Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and forestation projects, such as the Bamboo Planting Project in Haiti, which is providing bamboo-cultivation assistance to farmers and national park personnel, with the aims of preventing soil erosion and conserving water resources.

In addition to the disease problems noted above, the number of HIV-infected citizens in the Caribbean has risen sharply. There is concern that if these health issues cannot be brought under control, tourism will be negatively impacted. In conjunction with the environmental and water supply projects noted above, the ICDF's ongoing Medical Equipment Donation Project in Four Eastern Caribbean Nations is addressing these concerns, and meeting basic humanitarian needs.

Medical Equipment Donation Project in Four Eastern Caribbean Nations

The ICDF has donated US\$100,000 worth of medical equipment each to Dominica, Grenada, St. Christopher and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This project is helping these nations improve their medical equipment and the functioning of their hospitals and clinics (including those in remote areas), and raising the overall quality of community medical services.



ICDF Caribbean Region Projects, 2001

Dominica

- Field and horticultural crop extension project
- Micro-Credit Project
- Small farmholder financing scheme
- Scholarships for elementary and middle school students

Dominican Republic

- Rice improvement and yield increase project
- Horticultural crop cultivation and bamboo construction project
- Aquaculture development project
- Industrial technology cooperation project
- Program for modernizing the National Congress and the Office of the Comptroller General
- Free processing zone project

Grenada

- Horticulture project
- Agricultural product processing project
- Trade project
- Small farmholder financing scheme
- Overseas volunteers project
- Scholarships for elementary and middle school students

Haiti

- Rice yield improvement demonstration and training project
- Bamboo cultivation and processing project
- Drinking water distribution project in Péionville
- Micro-credit and investment program

Saint Christopher and Nevis

- Fruit and vegetable project
- Micro-Credit Project
- Small farmholder financing scheme
- Overseas volunteers project
- Scholarships for elementary and middle school students

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

- Horticultural crop development project
- Livestock extension project
- Infrastructure lending project
- Scholarships for elementary and middle school students
- Overseas volunteers project