



**FEASIBILITY STUDY ON SUPPORTING WOMEN TRADERS IN THE
EASTERN CARIBBEAN**

Study Commissioned by the UNIFEM Caribbean Office

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Executive Summary	

UNIFEM's Caribbean Office has placed emphasis on the economic security of women and has been seeking to reduce their high rates of poverty in the region. In this study, UNIFEM is seeking to obtain an updated understanding of the situation of women traders from Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, engaged in the inter-regional trade in agricultural produce, and how they will function within the CSME.

The overall trend in the small trafficker inter-island trade in agricultural produce has been its continuous decline since 1985 from about 1200 traders, to less than 300 today. The trade of small inter-island traders, of whom the majority were and still are women, was negatively affected by agricultural pests and loss of shipping facilities to the Barbados market. This brought an end to their trading activity in St. Lucia, and loss of the Barbados market for traders from Dominica. The active inter-island trader population of Dominica, now at 200, exclusively targets the island markets to its north. After declines in their number in St. Vincent, active traders now number about 25 persons. A few sell bananas to Trinidad and Tobago, but the majority strive to preserve their market in Barbados.

These traders have demonstrated a high degree of resourcefulness, risk-taking and innovation. Those trading in Barbados have formed themselves into a company in order to have their produce transported by a vessel that they jointly charter. However, members retain individual responsibility and control over sourcing and marketing of their goods. Dominican hucksters operating in Guadeloupe seasonally buy contain-loads of grapefruits from Belize or Jamaica and re-export them to Guadeloupe, in order to preserve their market against competition from Cuba. They make root tubers attractive to French consumers by peeling, washing and packaging these foods for ease of use.

Hucksters and traffickers, as they are variously known in Dominica and St. Vincent, are among a range of itinerant vendors found within the informal sector. Typical economic policy making in the Caribbean has largely ignored that sector and left its "strugglers" to their own devices. When the number of vendors grows too quickly, the state contains and regulates their activities. The small inter-island traders have sometimes been facilitated by regional policy, at other times they have suffered its negative impacts.

The economic framework within which traffickers and hucksters will operate in future years will be the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) which does not make any provisions for their welfare. While some officials are optimistic about its impact, due to their faith in the resourcefulness of these traders, the traffickers themselves are unsure. They have not been identified as stakeholders in the process and therefore efforts have not been made by the framers of the CSME to educate them on its nature, possible effects, or their role in its implementation. Many small traders are hopeful, but some live in fear, with good reason.

The trade of hucksters from Dominica has been challenged in the past seven years by a national economic crisis brought on by relentless liberalization of the banana industry. Among its effects have been the erosion of once favourable terms on which hucksters obtained fresh produce from farmers. Just as the island began to emerge from the

economic slump, adverse weather caused landslides that isolated six rural communities, from which hucksters normally obtain produce. In the same week an earthquake, that measured 6.0 on the Richter scale, damaged the town of Portsmouth from which the majority of hucksters export their goods.

The traffickers of St. Vincent have been similarly affected by liberalization of their banana industry. As jobs are lost and economic hardships increase the need to retain their trading niche has become even more urgent. Yet they were not identified as economic agents in the search for new markets for farmers. A state corporation was instituted and the role that traffickers have had for decades was overlooked. These traffickers now face competition from that local entity paying cash to farmers, from whom they seek credit, and exporting to the same Barbados market that they have taken fought so hard to retain.

One major problem for the inter-island traders is the high proportion of produce spoilage experienced due to lack of refrigeration on the inter-island vessels and at market places. While good post harvest handling methods, preparation, and packaging to market standards are recommended, their impact on reducing spoilage is marginal in comparison to the investments in time, labour, infrastructure, and materials. Key to garnering greater returns on the sale of produce, is the need for them to arrive at destinations in as good a condition as when loaded onto the vessels.

The main intervention which would assist all traffickers and hucksters is the provision of vessels having refrigeration. Another helpful intervention would be easier access to existing credit on terms worked out to fit the needs of individual hucksters. The agencies to which traffickers and hucksters are likely to apply need to rethink their current strategy in light of prevailing circumstances. Hucksters and traffickers have perfected the art of finding markets. Left to themselves they always find a way to sell. But they do need the means of transporting goods from point to point, and reduction of spoilage in the process makes the difference between profit and loss.

Stronger linkages between these entrepreneurs, state, farmers, and local institutions would be of benefit to all concerned. National data collection and compilation of statistics on the volume and value of the small inter-island trade would enlighten planners on the extent of their investments and productivity and sensitize everyone to inefficiencies in the system. Elevating their economic status nationally could lead to special provisions for enabling their trade to flourish, farmers to have more outlets for their produce, and their contributions to foreign exchange earnings to increase. The linkages that this informal sector has with the formal economy span banking, transportation on land, sea and air, government departments, agricultural production and ancillary services, employment and savings. Family well-being, networks of support, and social stability are all linked to the trading activities of these hard working women and men.

UNIFEM is committed to enhancing the environment in which the traffickers and hucksters work without jeopardizing their ownership and control of their businesses. UNIFEM seeks to engage relevant agencies in the realization of this goal.

FEASIBILITY STUDY ON SUPPORTING WOMEN TRADERS IN THE OECS

Introduction

UNIFEM's Caribbean Office (in implementing the Programme of Action for the advancement of women determined by the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995) has placed emphasis on the economic security of women and has been seeking to reduce their high rates of poverty in the region, through its strategies of advocacy, brokering, and capacity building. In order to support women as productive actors UNIFEM has proposed, in its current programme cycle, to obtain an updated understanding of the situation of women traders from Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, engaged in the inter-regional trade in agricultural produce.

The study will form the basis for discussions on how regional institutions and development agencies may support this sector of workers - given the importance of their self-reliant initiatives to employment creation, revenue generation, regional food security and sovereignty, and agricultural diversity. This study seeks to shed light on the implications of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) for these women, whose business activities have been regional in scope for, at least, the past fifty years.

The CARICOM Single Market and Economy responds to increased economic and trade liberalization and globalisation in the region. It conforms to the international trade rules set by the World Trade Organisation, of which Caribbean states are members. The CSME is also in line with the hemispheric Free Trade Area of the Americas, and the inter-regional Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union - trade liberalization agreements in which CARICOM countries are currently negotiating their stake.

The articles of the CSME seek to integrate the markets and factors of production of participating countries into one seamless economic space. While the **right to establish business enterprises** in CARICOM countries by nationals of the region is guaranteed in the CSME no corresponding **right** to live and work is offered to individuals who are not establishing a business. A select group of Caribbean persons (artists, managers, media workers, musicians, sports persons, supervisors and other service providers, University of the West Indies graduates), in the first instance, have been granted **freedom to move** within the region. It is unclear that the inter-island small traders are counted among the other service providers and UNIFEM is curious to understand how the women who currently participate in, what is officially treated as, the informal regional agricultural trade will be affected by the provisions of the CSME.

UNIFEM's feasibility study traces how the situation of these women have changed since it was first recorded by UNECLAC after the end of the United Nations Decade for Women. The study then assesses the context in which the women traders currently operate, and makes recommendations for interventions that may be made directly in support of the women traders. UNIFEM is committed to a programme of work, designed

in concert with other developmental agents, which will conduce to creating the best opportunities for, and enhancing capacities of these women within the CSME.

Review and Summary of the findings of the ECLAC research carried out under the project “Women in Development and Trade in the Caribbean” between 1987 and 1989

Summary

ECLAC’s project “Women in Development and Trade in the Caribbean” sought to address lack of data on women’s economic contribution to development. It concentrated first on collection of statistical data and mapping trends in women’s regional level agricultural trading activities. The pilot study of the inter-island Women Agricultural Traders began with research on the Women Traders in Trinidad and Tobago and was undertaken “in order to gain a better knowledge of the situation, importance and true participation of women in productive activities.”

That first study was completed in 1985 by Daphne Phillips, and was followed by another conducted by Monique Lagro, on the Women Traders in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Upon its completion in 1988, UNECLAC was able, in 1989, to implement a regional socio-economic survey of the inter-island traders of the Caribbean. That survey focused on two main areas: the suitcase trade in light goods and apparel by women in the northern and southern islands of the Caribbean, and the inter-island trade in fresh agricultural produce by women of the Windward Islands.

At the time of the UNECLAC research a significant part of inter-island agricultural trade was carried out in the informal sector, which comprises all unregistered commercial and non-commercial enterprises or economic activities that are usually family-owned, small-scale, labour intensive, and rely heavily on indigenous resources. The survey showed that several hundred persons traded in small amounts of diverse products on their own account. Their produce was shipped in schooners or other small vessels, and the traders traveled on the boat with their produce or journeyed by air.

According to the UNECLAC 1990 report the total number of small traders (men and women) in the Windward Islands was estimated at 1,264 in 1988. The number of traders in Dominica declined from 1,089 in 1985 to 467 in 1986. Data collected from shipping bills of January-February 1987, 1988, and 1989, showed the number of active Dominican traders who regularly exported agricultural produce during those periods to have been 195 in 1987, 222 in 1988, and 119 in 1989. Interviews conducted in St. Vincent and the Grenadines suggested that the size of the trading population grew from about 30 in the 1940s to over 400 in the 1980s but a large number of traffickers ceased to operate after 1983.

UNECLAC’s research concluded that hucksters, traffickers and speculators constituted a dynamic sector of entrepreneurs in the informal sector of the region’s economies but in spite of the fact that they contributed to employment creation and the nutritional status of the region, they were virtually ignored by government programmes and policies which promoted export in the formal sectors without any attention to the role of small traders.

One glaring indication of this inattention was the lack of statistics compiled nationally on the volume and value of their trade, despite the robust activities of these traders at seaports in the Windward Islands.

The UNECLAC studies were therefore unable to provide an accurate or even estimated economic value of investments or earnings in regional agricultural trade by that sub-sector. However they yielded qualitative insights that informed ECLAC's design and establishment of a database intended to correct the lack of accurate statistical information about the economic share of small-account inter-island agricultural trade. The proposed pilot was never implemented. Also, continued categorization of this trade as informal has meant that it was not delineated in national data collection and therefore the relevant inputs for maintenance of the regional (UNECLAC) database were never forthcoming.

Review

Traffickers are defined as individuals who enter and leave Caribbean countries with agricultural goods for sale, but are not classified as traders or exporters. In Dominica, small inter-island traders in agricultural produce are called hucksters but they are known as speculators or traffickers in St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago. These small traders made very little use of formal credit facilities, and used simple technology. Operating on an individualistic basis, they organised and supervised their trade, and traveled for at least three days per week on their business trips. Traffickers relied on family members and their children when they needed additional labour, or hired temporary unskilled labour under informal arrangements. Traffickers made use of the services of carriers, truck drivers, crate makers, customs brokers, shippers and other technical intermediaries, most of whom were male. The work of the traders was physically heavy, and mentally high pressure. They suffered high percentages of produce spoilage, realized small and insecure profits, despite changing their destinations according to market conditions.

Although Daphne Phillips set out to study women traders in Trinidad and Tobago, her research quickly became a study of some CARICOM traders as well, since women from other Caribbean territories were the majority of female traffickers in agricultural products openly selling in the markets of Trinidad. The traffickers found in Port of Spain's Central Market were mainly women from Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Trinidadian traffickers in the market largely catered to the acquired tastes of the local public and traveled outside the region to source the goods to satisfy them. On the other hand women small farmers from Tobago came to Port of Spain to traffic their agricultural surpluses. Sometimes, in order to maintain their supply to customers, they purchased from overseas traffickers, for resale, the very items that they transported from Tobago to Trinidad.

Women from Guyana were the least in number among those trading in Trinidad's Central market. The Guyanese mainly traded in gold jewelry. The proceeds were used to buy food, clothing and hardware items for resale in Guyana. The Guyanese women attracted the Trinidad and Tobago buyers with their cheap prices. When not selling gold they

traded in all kinds of merchandise, “whatever could fetch a price.” They tended to be in their twenties - younger than the average trader, expressed fear of the police, and traded in larger numbers in Tobago than in Trinidad.

The regional framework which legitimized these women’s trade in agricultural produce in Trinidad was the CARICOM Agreement - in which concessions were given to regional traders to dispose of ground provisions and fruits only, on Wednesdays and Fridays at the Central Market in space provided. Caribbean women have traded in agricultural goods across the islands even before any formal bilateral or regional agreements were in place. During the second half of the twentieth century they were the majority of traders and their participation in the trade appeared to have peaked in the mid 1980s.

The Vincentians and Grenadians usually operated within the CARICOM Agreement, which included all the then 13 member territories. Guyanese women were usually not operating within the CARICOM Agreement but, like women from Trinidad and Tobago, had created their own niche of employment. Through this informal sector trading behaviour Trinidad became the nucleus of informal economic activity involving St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Guyana. The close economic interaction was built on social linkages deriving from earlier male migration to Trinidad and Tobago in search of employment in the oilfields.

Grenadian traffickers

Information on Grenadian women traffickers in agricultural produce appeared the least available¹ in the UNECLAC studies. In 1985, Grenadian women traders operating in Trinidad counted it their primary market. A few traffickers accompanied their produce on the small schooners to Trinidad, but the practice was prohibited by Trinidad and Tobago for reasons of passenger safety, therefore the larger number of traffickers traveled by air and arrived in time to receive their produce at the wharf. Half of the Grenadian traffickers traveled to Trinidad four times a month, while 30.5% did so twice a month.

The 1987 survey recorded 39 women and 20 men from Grenada who were active. Seventy-one percent of this group was under 31 years of age. Several received help with their trading activities from family members but this was not necessarily free of charge. A total of 59.9% of the Grenadian traffickers were in some form of intimate union and most had children. The Grenadians comprised the youngest of all the traffickers from the Windward Islands, most of them had been trading for less than five years and had an activity cycle of 2 – 4 days.

The men seemed to be the most recent entrants and appeared to have the most formal education among all traffickers from the four islands. They had had previous employment as labourers, carpenters, masons or farmers before taking up trafficking in agricultural

¹ The UN ECLAC 1990 study “The Agricultural Traders of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Dominica and St. Lucia” contains very little information. “A 1988 Draft Report on Women Traders in Grenada” is referenced but the document was not available to this current UNIFEM research.

produce. Male income derived from two-way trade was the sole source of income and ranged between EC\$200–EC\$500 per week. Half of the male traffickers grew some of the produce that they marketed and sourced their additional produce from among 3 – 5 suppliers.

The women tended to have as many as twelve supplies and usually did not grow any produce. They did not engage in reverse trade and reported lower earnings. They tended to combine inter-island trading with some other form of work, and where this was not the case they had a small measure of support from other sources. The women were usually over thirty, had been trading for more than five years and had entered the trade with experience in agricultural wage labour. A few had been domestics. The older women had had little formal education, had more than six children each, and many were not in any form of union at the time of the survey.

Traffickers of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Women from St. Vincent and the Grenadines began to enter the resurgent inter-island agricultural trade during the early 1980s. Factors prompting their entry into that market included the surplus of agricultural produce, withdrawal of male traders from trafficking, a new focus on the domestic market by the SVG Marketing Corporation, existence of established social networks among the territories, a degree of modernization in the means of transport, the small capital investment required, and limited employment opportunities for women in St. Vincent.

The 1987 study of traffickers from St Vincent and the Grenadines found that compared to their male counterparts women dominated the regional inter-island trade during the decade of the 1980s. In 1981 they transported, by schooners and other small vessels, an estimated share of between 80% and 90% of 16,752, 162 lbs² of vegetables, fruits, ground provisions, and plantains to regional markets. Some 462 women traded primarily in Trinidad and Tobago, secondly in Barbados, and thirdly in Martinique and St. Martin. Such was the growing volume of their trade that by 1985 the Central Planning Unit made a case for a special storage facility for the traffickers.

The Vincentian women did not carry on a reverse trade in goods from Trinidad for resale in their home countries. Many of them had no other source of support and several paid another family member, or friend to care for their children while they traded overseas. They had an activity cycle of one full week whether the destination was Trinidad or Barbados. Although their activities were within the framework of the CARICOM Agreement, the space provided for their work was inadequate and unhygienic. Some of the women sold in the open air, whatever the weather conditions. The women traffickers identified limited selling space, and poor facilities for personal hygiene, as their main challenges in the markets.

² Monique Lagro, page 6, quoting Report of the Central Planning Unit: “A storage facility for the traffickers of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.”

Devaluation of Trinidad and Tobago currency in 1985 caused a drop in the traffickers' earnings. These were eroded further by increasingly restrictive national and regional trading requirements, and increased competition from exporters in the formal sector. Their lower earnings affected their supply markets and led to a shrinking market for selling their goods. The traders had previously accepted high degrees of spoilage and small profit margins as factors of the trade. Its regularity as a means of employment and self-sufficiency mediated the poor facilities on wharves, on the boats, and in terminal markets. Despite shifting to different markets the situation of the women traffickers deteriorated during 1988.

The women traffickers faced severe difficulties penetrating new markets, and their inability to adjust and adapt themselves successfully to a trading environment that had become more hostile, led by the end of the 1980s to a noticeable decline in their participation in the inter-island agricultural trade with Trinidad and Tobago. The women of St. Vincent and the Grenadines began to shift their base of operations to Barbados where the currency exchange was still stable. A small group of traders traveled to Carriacou, Martinique, and St. Martin. In order to by-pass Customs, some traders took small vessels to Martinique from the Grenadines, then returned by boat at the leeward side of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. These tactics lengthened their activity cycle, increased risks of spoilage, took up more energy, required more intermediary contacts, and ate into their earnings. It meant additional work for the same amount of income and was therefore unprofitable. The number of traders declined.

Traffickers of St. Lucia

Information on this group is also limited in the various research reports. Twenty female traffickers were recorded marketing their goods in Barbados in the sample surveyed for UNECLAC during 1989³. No males appeared to be trafficking from St. Lucia to Barbados at that time. None of these women were under 21 years but a few were over the age of 46 years: their average age was 43.9 years. Among these traffickers only 5% had had formal education, and most had had some form of employment before joining the inter-island trade in agricultural produce. They all earned more than EC\$200 per week from trafficking and seemed to earn the highest incomes among traffickers from the four Windward Islands. An earlier study (by Dr. Christine Barrow, now Professor) suggested that the actual profits made by these women varied between US\$17.00 – US\$35.00 per trip. Thirty per cent of the St. Lucians had another modest source of income.

Two of the women traveled twice per month but the others made five trips or more in the same period. Three of the twenty women had been in the trade for less than five years. The St. Lucians traded in plantains, grapefruits, oranges, mandarins, bananas, plums, coconuts, and occasionally, ginger. All of their produce was sourced from a range of three to five small farmers. Three women grew some of the fruits that they marketed in Barbados. Some of them occasionally traveled to Martinique. The St. Lucians appeared

³ This information on the St. Lucian traffickers was gleaned from tables included in the report. That study noted unavailability of information in some areas. There is almost no descriptive information. This may be attributed to a declining trend in the St. Lucian trade.

to be involved in reverse trade of a very small quantity of durable goods which they normally sold to friend and family members. 27.1% of the St. Lucians had an organized business and 10% membership in an Association. None of them marketed produce to the formal sector in Barbados.

The Hucksters of Dominica

Dominican hucksters traded in a large number of markets which included Guadeloupe, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, Tortolla, St. Martin, St. Thomas, Martinique, St. Lucia and Barbados. A small group of about 13 traders also ventured into Puerto Rico. Some hucksters traded in more than one Leeward island market, but most concentrated on a particular island. Some hucksters shipped produce but did not travel overseas themselves, having family members who received and sold their produce at destinations. The proportion of female hucksters who traded from Roseau in 1987 was 56%, and 82% in 1989. Among hucksters who traded in Portsmouth 57% were female in 1987, and 66% in 1989.

Of the 119 Dominican hucksters who were active in 1989, 53 traded in St. Martin and participated in the UNECLAC survey of March and April 1989. Women numbered 43 and 10 were men. Participation of women in huckstering was high and seemed to be on the increase. More than three-quarters of the Dominican hucksters who traded in St. Martin had been in the trade for more than four years. Although the Dominican hucksters, male and female alike, had an average age of 41.5 years, they were among the oldest traders of the four Windward Islands. There were no traders under age 20 and the oldest was 73 years. Only 8.4% of the hucksters had attended secondary school. Younger women who had entered into the trade after Hurricane David in 1979 had not had more schooling than the older hucksters. The majority of hucksters had children older than 12 years of age.

Hucksters were very reluctant to reveal their profits. Most of the Dominican hucksters had had previous employment and had been in the trade for more than 10 years, yet they declared the lowest weekly incomes and only 21% admitted to having additional incomes from other jobs and from financial support. Dominican hucksters estimated that on average they worked at least 10 hours a day. They had much shorter selling hours at the Marigot market in St. Martin than those who sold in Guadeloupe. The activity cycle for St. Martin was five to eight days and involved one-day stops in islands en route. The activity cycle was one week for those operating in Guadeloupe based on their choice, but was two weeks for those selling in Barbados due to shipping arrangements.

While many Dominican hucksters did not report receiving help from anyone with their trading activities, they relied on female relatives to care for their children during their absence. There were also some trading couples. In such instances the men stayed at home to organize the ordering, purchasing and paying of farmers, while the women did the selling overseas. The couple often did the packing jointly. The men looked after the children.

Dominican hucksters traded in a larger variety of ground provisions, fruits and vegetables than other Windward Island traders. Most of the men grew some of the produce they sold but also had about 6 –7 suppliers, while women generally dealt with about five. After the mid 1980s the mango-seed weevil, and to a lesser extent the West Indian fruit fly affected the volume and variety of produce that could be traded in several markets used by Dominicans.

Conclusions of the Studies

The UNECLAC studies confirmed that traders were generally affected by common problems of poor market conditions, a high degree of spoilage and some theft of their produce. This combined with high overhead costs to keep earnings low in comparison to the efforts invested. Lack of credit, exchange rate and foreign exchange limits, and difficulties at customs were also of concern. Only the hucksters of Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines each had an association at the time of the study, and not everyone belonged to them, thus for traffickers as a whole the levels of self-organisation were low. The grueling nature of their work put the health of many at risk, but traders' employment alternatives were few to none. Despite their very concrete recommendations for resolving their problems, in the absence of a bargaining mechanism, they lacked political and economic power to effect the desired improvements.

The major recommendation was that a pilot project be mounted in which traders would be pooled together in small groups with the aim of tackling the many problems they encountered in their work. The long-term objectives of the project were to increase traders' control over conditions affecting their businesses, and to elevate their social and economic position. Better access to financial resources and technical assistance, improved working conditions, security at markets, and more cooperation at ports of entry were envisioned as important benefits of the project. Greater levels of organisation were also deemed conducive to their welfare.

The database created by UNECLAC, to inform national and regional policy making in the interest of the small traders, suffered from data collection deficiencies at national level which were never rectified. Similarly the proposed project was never implemented.

Assessment of the current context in which women traders operate

Limitations of the Study

The lack of central statistical data needed to construct an appreciation of the economic situation and contribution of traffickers in general, and women traffickers in particular, encountered in the course of the UNECLAC research (1989) persists and characterizes the current UNIFEM study (2004). While many policy makers and planners acknowledge the role of these small traders, as with other aspects of the informal sector, few provisions have been made at the macro level to facilitate or enhance their trade. Thus statistics indicating the volume and value of the trade is still not available nationally and

quantifying the impact of the traffickers on economic life in the region will require more detailed research than was anticipated at the outset of this study.

Information is available in its raw form at the level of certificates issued at the phytosanitary units, and licenses issued by the Ministries of Agriculture in the country of origin of the traffickers. Although this information is available over an extended period it is not collated by central statistical offices in a form that allows identification of active and regular traffickers. The information available at central statistics allows mapping of the aggregate volume of each agricultural produce exported from one CARICOM country to another but it does not reveal the contribution of traffickers. Central statistics in receiving countries also do not identify produce brought in by small traffickers - only the general gross imports per produce per country on a yearly basis. Customs and immigration records of taxes paid on goods in these receiving countries would be another source of raw data on the traffickers, as would be ships' manifests. The considerable time required to piece through thousands of forms in order to identify active traffickers is a task for follow-up research.

Overview

The overall trend in the small trafficker inter-island trade in agricultural produce is its continued decline since the last UNECLAC survey some fifteen years ago. While a few traders have clung valiantly to this form of employment the appearance of agricultural pests, followed by reduced shipping services, in addition to the factors recorded by UNECLAC, conspired to undermine the viability of the trade for many entrepreneurs over the past ten years. Another significant trend is the cooperation of Customs and Immigration officers⁴.

The trade of small inter-island traffickers was negatively affected between 1986 and 1996 by the prevalence of a number of agricultural pests. For example mango-seed weevil infestation had spread across Barbados, Dominica, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Montserrat, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines by mid 1995. The pink mealy bug devastated Grenada during 1996 – 97 and infestation was evident in several other countries. The West Indian fruit fly was also among the irritants to the trade. The various pests reduced the availability of produce. It also led to restrictions on the entry of goods into some established markets. A number of bilateral agreements designed to protect receiving countries were concluded between islands in order to address the issue of pests. These had the effect of changing the terms under which produce from one island entered into the market of another. Many of the small informal traders lacked the capacity to adjust to the new conditions and were edged out by the competitive opportunities created for larger commercial traders.

The Stella S 2, one of the more reliable schooners plying the sea between Barbados and the Windward Islands, was sold in the late 1990s, and with its sale the primary shipping facility for small traders was lost. The Stella S 1 and the Stella S 2, operated by Eric

⁴ Plant Protection Quarantine officers and particular officers of the Ministry of Agriculture in Dominica and St. Vincent were also commended by traffickers for their positive and helpful attitudes.

Hassle and Son Ltd had done yeoman's service for traffickers from Dominica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines targeting the Barbados market for almost two decades. Declines in the number of traders and in the volume of this trade became evident for all the Windward Islands following the loss of Stella S 2. While this cancelled out the Barbados market for most Dominican hucksters, the Vincentians exerted themselves to retain it.

The related problems of decreased supplies, both in the quantities and varieties of agricultural produce, coupled with loss of shipping on some routes were compounded by conditions unfolding with the advance of liberalisation. Small traders faced, not only competition from larger national commercial exporters encroaching on their markets, but also international competition in the form of an abundance of cheaper, faster to prepare food items imported from extra-regional sources. These cheap foods became attractive to the Barbadian consumer in the context of rising costs of living associated with decreasing availability of state provided social services.

Other elements in the decline of trafficking which may be noted are that the traffickers' supplies were also affected by loss of goods due to adverse weather conditions. The past ten years have seen more storms and hurricanes delay shipping, leading to spoilage and/or theft of traffickers' goods. Traffickers, who as a group are not covered by insurance, could not offer stable prices to their customers. With the increase of unemployment brought about by the decline of the banana industry in the Windward Islands, and the instability of the traffickers' market, more people turned to local vending, or to trafficking in non-perishable items over the higher risk agricultural products.

In these circumstances the trade was not easily passed on through families in any of the territories under study, as previously had been the custom. Older women retired and were not replaced by younger family members. Older men simply dropped out or changed employment. A short period of high male hucksters turnover saw a number of younger men increase their participation in a reverse trade in electronic goods before finding more fixed employment in their traditional market territories. The trade is reported to have died out completely in St. Lucia when efforts to concentrate on markets in Martinique proved unsuccessful. Dominicans prioritised the trade in the French and Leeward Islands markets, but it also became for many potential female and male traders, a stepping stone for intra-regional migration in search of work on cruise ships and in hotels (bar, maid and waiter services), construction, and even domestic work and baby sitting in private homes.

Traders from St. Vincent demonstrated great resourcefulness traveling to Dominica to obtain produce not available at home due to agricultural pests, and chartering a vessel to facilitate their concentration on the Barbados market. But their numbers also dwindled as the increased costs associated with these initiatives magnified all the traditional risks and bit into their already low earnings. More recently the few remaining traffickers have achieved a degree of renewed self-organisation for survival through the initiative of one determined woman (see case study). But "Buy Local" campaigns (adopted to counter the economic downturn in the regional tourism sector after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the United States) lowered demand for their produce and caused further

contraction in the Barbados market. Some provisions of the CSME have now opened up the possibilities for competition from newly emerging companies designed to take advantage of new opportunities presented.

A huckster population is still identifiable in Dominica, and a smaller one is evident in St. Vincent and the Grenadines - although they continue to face all the limitations detailed years ago in the ECLAC studies, except at Customs and Immigration. Their livelihoods remain precarious and only the most stout hearted persevere. The decline of the trade is hardly noticed by policy makers and national planners. Surviving traders have changed their produce handling practices to comply with new market standards requirements. Despite international competition, emerging emphasis on healthier lifestyles has renewed awareness of the nutritional value of the foods traffickers offer and this may hold opportunities for survival of the traders' livelihoods, albeit in new forms.

The Trade Context

Prior to CARIFTA the average growth of formal inter-island trade was only 6% per year but this grew rapidly during the latter part of the 1960s, with CARIFTA intra-regional imports rising by 19% each year between 1967 and 1971. Much of the growth, from a value of EC\$95m to EC\$188m, was attributed to regional integration policies such as the Agricultural Marketing Protocol and the Guaranteed Market Scheme of the Caribbean Free Trade Area (CARIFTA), and the succeeding Customs Union which evolved into CARICOM⁵.

CARIFTA was an economic association aimed at freeing selected goods traded among the member countries from customs duties and quotas. The policy was intended only to secure gains from *trade in goods* by participating countries⁶. It thus widened the market for producers in each member country of the region. The Agricultural Marketing Protocol was introduced as a mechanism within CARIFTA for facilitating intra-regional trade in *agricultural* produce. It listed 22 commodities that member countries were restricted from importing from outside the region except when their demands could not be satisfied from regional sources. In allocating supplies of these commodities for the regional market preferential treatment was to be given to the less developed members⁷.

However the guaranteed minimum original price set by the protocol, stimulated increased production in some of the more developed countries due to their existing infrastructural capacity. The gains made by these already more developed countries from liberalization of the region's intra-regional trade started to undermine efforts in regional cooperation and the protocol was abolished in July 1983⁸. But by 1986, the Standing Committee of Ministers of Agriculture mandated the development of a Regional Agricultural Sector Plan which would serve to guide the formulation and implementation of regional

⁵ Monique Lagro. Women Traders in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. 1988. Quoting W. Andrew Axline, Agricultural Policy and Collective Self-Reliance in the Caribbean, p. 24. 1986.

⁶ James Millette. The Caribbean Free Trade Association: the West Indies at the Crossroads

⁷ William Demas. Address to the Caribbean Congress of Labour, Guyana 1972; included in a collection of his papers (1975:42)

⁸ Monique Lagro

programmes and projects at least up to 1991⁹. The Eighth CARICOM Summit then agreed to remove all measures restricting intra-regional trade by the end of the third quarter of 1988¹⁰.

This CARICOM agreement (referred to in the UNECLAC study) gave a new boost to the traffickers' inter-island agricultural trade as immigration and customs officials became more accommodating and facilities, albeit limited, were provided for them in receiving markets. But even as the regional policy framework favoured them the appearance of agricultural pests changed the market dynamics again for traders.

Post 2000 inter-island agricultural trade throughout CARICOM will become more and more regulated by sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards set out in the World Trade Organisation, as these countries participate in fully liberalized trade agreements with trading partners outside of CARICOM. However, only Barbados (as a market for Windward Islands produce) has been enforcing such a regime, through bi-lateral agreements between the exporting countries, since 2001.

These "Guidelines for Trade in Agricultural Produce" set out the terms and conditions under which trade is conducted in relation to commercial shipments of fresh agricultural produce by exporters in the sending country, to importers in Barbados. The agreement places responsibility on the exporting country to ensure that the terms and conditions are met and for the costs attached thereto. Individual travelers are not accommodated by this agreement and are subject to normal quarantine regulations at ports of entry. The small inter-island traders or traffickers are not actually covered by this agreement but their livelihoods have been protected by their Ministries of Agriculture which continues to issue them export licences¹¹.

A sample of the agreement between Barbados and St. Vincent, and between Barbados and Dominica shows the following detailed measures which the exporting country must ensure are carried out when produce is prepared for export.

- ◆ Approved Packhouses and Central Clearing and Cleaning Facility (CCF) according to the terms and conditions set forth
- ◆ An updated list of all packhouses certified free of all pests of importance to Barbados must be provided to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Barbados
- ◆ Produce Quality and Post Harvest Treatments are carried out as specified in the agreement
- ◆ Packaging, storage of produce within the Packhouse, inspection and certification of produce
- ◆ Guidelines for farmers, responsibilities of exporters, and importers in Barbados
- ◆ Transport of Produce to CCF and Port of Exit

⁹ Atherton Martin, "GATT and Agriculture in the Caribbean: Perils and Prospects" in Caribbean Dialogue Special Joint ISER/CPDC issue.

¹⁰ Cecilia Green, The World Market Factory, page 24.

¹¹ With the full liberalization of the trade according to WTO rules licences should no longer be required.

- ◆ Visits by Barbados Officials, the cost of which are borne by the exporting country
- ◆ Certification and decertification of Packhouses
- ◆ Deregistration of traders/importers

Failure to comply with any of the detailed regulations set out under the various heads carries penalties that redound to the detriment of exporters. All traders and commercial exporters are provided with a copy of the Guidelines for Trade in Agricultural Produce. As a result of these guidelines a new class of commercial traders have emerged who ship produce in larger volumes, usually in containers, have established markets in the formal sector, and are relating to a registered importer. It is this group that has fully replaced the small traffickers in St. Lucia.

The new framework in regional marketing of agricultural and other goods will be the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). Agreed to since 1989 and expected to have been operational by 1992, the CSME was legally established in 2002. Although its inception date continues to elude planners, CSME remains a goal for the region - in the context of a fully liberalized and globalised trading environment. CARICOM was formed to allow its members economies to cooperate, harmonise economic policies, increase efficiencies and become more competitive to better meet the challenges of global competition.

One of its policy instruments, the Common External Tariff, set maximum tariffs for non-agricultural products from extra-regional sources at 10%, and 40% on agricultural products. Since its implementation after the mid 1990s CARICOM intra-regional trade has grown to 22% compared with 12% in 1990 and 10% in 1980¹². Although intra-regional imports of food, including live animals for food, dropped from 18.7% in 1994 to 17.8% in 1995, it moved up again to 18.6% in 1999 and reached 19.9% in 2000. It should be noted that Trinidad and Tobago has been the dominant intra-CARICOM exporter during that period, Jamaica has been the largest intra-CARICOM importer and the OECS share of agricultural exports to the region declined.

The structure of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) is set out in Nine Protocols and detailed in 240 articles. There are provisions for the liberalization of trade in all goods and services, facilitation of the movements of capital, integration of the stock exchanges of member countries, establishment of enterprises, and phased movement of people. Areas such as banking and securities, intellectual property, competition, dumping, subsidies, companies and commercial arbitration will be affected. The region's civil service will have to be enhanced and modernized to manage the CSME and a number of mechanisms are to be instituted to enable the attainment of its goals. They include the CARICOM Passport, the Regional Competition Commission, the Caribbean Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality, and the Caribbean Court of Justice.

The Caribbean Court of Justice will be the court of appeal determining matters of Caribbean policies protecting the right to trade, work and invest. It will also have to

¹² CARICOM Statistics: <http://www.caricomstats.org>

ensure justice and fair play in production and trade in goods and services, thereby bringing stability and harmony in the regional economy. Companies will establish commercial presence, individuals will invest directly, and both will trade on the stock exchanges of other members states. The standard and quality of goods and services will have to be raised and regulated in order for the region to compete in the global market. The system of standardization will therefore have to be modernized. Fair and open competition among CARICOM enterprises will have to be promoted and preserved. The Competition Commission will be geared towards conflict resolution among competing companies and the protection of consumers. The free movement of people is intended to enable the use of the best talents and skills in the most productive locations. CARICOM nations will be able to transfer their Social Security benefits as they relocate throughout the region.

Interview of trade officials, technocrats and relevant personnel of regional institutions indicate that in the planning of CSME no special provisions have been made for informal sector entrepreneurs. Matters affecting wage labourers, micro and itinerant business persons have not been addressed in the formulation of CSME and it is uncertain that these will be afforded the same freedom to travel designated for managers, supervisors and other service providers. Regional development policy has usually been made without reference to traffickers and hucksters. The issue of **rights** is therefore significant for this category of persons whose recourse to institutions of CSME, in seeking to find their own niches within it, is limited on the basis of cost, time, and economic or political influence.

For example, CSME Article 59 relates to marketing of Agricultural Products. In effecting this provision member states of the Community are tasked with paying particular attention to market information, intelligence and planning; improved post-harvest technology, risk insurance, and, efficient distribution of services. Ten measures are proposed by which these aims may be accomplished. All of these aims and measures are relevant to traffickers, but they fear that CSME holds no greater promise for them than any other economic or trade policy. Traffickers view the CSME, of which they have a very limited understanding, with a mixture of hope that they may be able to enjoy its benefits, and the trepidation that it might squeeze them out through terms and conditions that they will not be able to meet.

General demographic characteristics of women traders and their trading practices, including levels of net profits and /or losses

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Statistics from the Plant Quarantine Units of St. Vincent and of Barbados indicate that there are approximately 80 registered traffickers for the period spanning the past ten years. However only slightly more than a quarter of this number seem to be active now. The Banana Growers Association recalls that some 30 traffickers used to purchase its bananas for distribution in Barbados and Trinidad. Now only 7 women and 3 men do so.

Among active traders, direct contact was established with 7 women, and 1 man during this study.

The Vincentian traffickers spend five days per week in Barbados in pursuit of their business and the other two days in their country sourcing produce. Some traffickers have resident status and have children living and being schooled in Barbados. Others have visitor status. Some traffickers do not travel. Instead they send their produce to family members in Barbados who conduct the sales and remit the earnings. The traffickers use calculator, pen, and paper in their record keeping. The profits of traffickers trading for 15 – 20 years may be deduced from the investments that they have made in house, land, vehicles, and the education of their children. They are very cognizant of their role in the national economy and their contribution to the maintenance of good health in the region

The research findings suggest that the age of the women traffickers range between 40-65 years. The seven women have a total of 16 children among them of whom 10 girls and 6 are boys. The youngest of these children are in secondary school. Four children were identified as studying either at college or university level. At least 5 of the children – 4 males and 1 female are involved in the business, at both the country of origin and destination point. Among the 16 children, 1 female and 2 males are adamant that they have no intentions of becoming involved in the business because of their perception of its level of difficulty. However the lone male trafficker interviewed, is the son of a longstanding woman trafficker. He is pursuing studies at the Cave Hill campus of the University of the West Indies, but is an agent for his mother's business.

The Traffickers Association of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been functioning at a sub-optimal level during the past ten years. The Quarantine Unit was part of recent efforts to resuscitate the organisation. This led to meetings held March 2003 and 2004, and a recommendation that the association should be restructured. Follow up actions are unclear.

Case Study of Janetta Thomas

Janetta Thomas is middle aged and has been a trafficker for 27 years. She presently resides in South Rivers in St. Vincent, but has Visitor Status in Barbados where she spends 5 days per week in pursuit of her business. She is the mother of three children - two girls and one boy, all of whom have completed their secondary education and are in the process of completing tertiary education. Janetta lives in the family home, which she has renovated. Her other investments are in the name of her children who are all in the process of studying - the two boys in Trinidad, and the girl will be leaving for England in the near future.

Janetta Thomas is a full-time trafficker who has had 6 paid assistants in her employ over the past ten years. They purchase and clean the produce, make and pack the boxes, transport the cargo to the Plant Quarantine Unit where it is stored for shipping to Barbados, her sole destination point. During the 1970s and 1980s, she also trafficked in Trinidad, but due to the devaluation of the Trinidadian dollar, poor marketing facilities,

inadequate space on the boat, which sometimes found her awaiting cargo in Trinidad which never left the docks in St. Vincent, she decided to discontinue trafficking in this country. During this period of trafficking, her children were cared for by her grandmother, as her mother resided in Trinidad. She also recalled a period in the 1980s, for about three years, when mangoes and other crops were attacked by the mango weevil and the mealy bug and there was a restriction on the importation of all cargo from St. Vincent.

During that period, Janetta and other traffickers began traveling to Dominica by the boat Admiral Bay, on Fridays, leaving Dominica on Saturdays and reaching Barbados on Sundays or Mondays with cargoes of tannias, sweet potatoes, yams, dried coconuts, mangoes, pears, and dasheens. This same boat, Janetta now charters for the members of Caribbean International Suppliers Inc. She noted that it was a struggle at that time, but is proud of the contribution of Vincentian traffickers who kept the Barbados market open, and also kept the Dominican agricultural industry flourishing.

Having successfully applied to the Superintendent of Markets, Janetta has rented a space in the market for over 20 years. She sells her produce to the public, and has built up a clientele over the years. A friendly, knowledgeable, and calm looking business woman, Janetta gets on well with both Vincentian and Barbadian traders. Her words, “we live as one” summarizes the relationship which exists among the traders. She notes that everyone sells at the same price, except the Guyanese who have been selling at lower prices, thus causing some problems to the other traders.

Ms. Thomas wholesales and retails produce. A company called Ready Ripe in St. Philip, Barbados, takes her mangoes and pears, whilst local vendors and other regular customers purchase her produce on a weekly basis. Previously, she marketed produce in on the roadsides of Bridgetown, but is no longer engaged in this activity due to the strain on her health. Her books record the volumes she purchases from the farms in St. Vincent, the various costs of transportation and shipping, wages, wholesale and retail prices, and the amount of spoilage. She ships about 100 boxes per week to Barbados.

There are no restrictions to the importation of produce, or difficulties at Customs. However, sometimes there is an infestation of pests which affects mangoes, sour sop and sugar apples, among other crops and this limits importation. She singled out Mr. Hunte, Plant Quarantine Unit, as outstanding in his assistance to the traffickers in the continuation and consolidation of their business.

Janetta is aware of the CSME and believes its advent will mean free trade for everybody. She further believes that the CSME will threaten small importers like herself. She feared that she might not be able to compete with companies such as National Properties Ltd., which has commenced shipping of bananas, mangoes, pears and plantains to Chickmont Foods in Barbados.

She is also of the view that a carefully managed CSME could do something positive for her. Among the benefits she listed are:

- Standardization of the price of goods for small and large companies.
- Improved storage facilities
- Reduction or removal of VAT
- Easier and more timely access to documentation at the ports of entry in order to receive the goods – since they are perishable
- Given that business fluctuates according to seasonality, with gluts and scarcities according to production of Barbadian produce, traffickers could be assisted through opportunities for wholesaling of produce to supermarkets, hotels, and other similar businesses.

Janetta has a broad vision for the industry. She established an organization in February 2004, in Barbados, called the Caribbean International Suppliers Inc., which has approximately 15 members, including 4 men, whose destination is Barbados. It has as its major objective the development of the business through the identification and resolution of common problems which members encounter, so that their profitability may be increased. Issues such as loans, medical and other types of insurance will soon be addressed.

This enterprising trafficker plays a pivotal role in advancing the business of the other traffickers. She collects and prepares the relevant documentation, and after individual markings to identify volumes, and other procedures – such as payment of VAT, environmental taxes, and landing charges are completed, she carries the documents to the shipping agency. Another benefit of the organization is to have their cargo placed in a small container and fork-lifted unto the ship. This procedure provides for proper handling of their produce. As a result of the work which Janetta does, the traffickers are relieved of the burden of collecting and preparing the documents required for shipping the cargo.

The Caribbean International Suppliers Inc. is registered in Barbados, and is in process of also being registered in St. Vincent. An Attorney-at-Law has been retained. The group, including those traffickers who market their produce in the Cheapside Market, meets the on first Wednesday of every month, either at the Fairchild Street Market, where the majority of the traffickers market their produce, or at the Plant Quarantine Unit which is located in Crumpton Street. Issues discussed include:

- Spoilage of cargo and the methods of dealing with this problem
- Storage of cargo¹³
- Packaging of produce to meet required standards.
- Handling of produce so that customers receive highest quality

The company has been formed to coordinate only the sea transportation of their produce. Traffickers retain individual choice and control over the sourcing and sales aspect of their businesses. The company could evolve to do more, when members are ready for such change.

¹³(particularly in light of certain alleged pronouncements by the member of Parliament for the City, that boxes should not be placed on top of the counters, after the Fairchild Street Market has been renovated)

Hucksters of the Commonwealth of Dominica

A huckster, in the traditional sense, is someone who sells on the roadside in Dominica or overseas, trades in small amounts of produce, and whose trading activities are carried out mainly on the basis of experience and commonsense. These persons trade in 4 – 6 different types of produce, but no more than 3 boxes or bales of each. There is no infrastructure which supports their business. Huckstering is an informal sector operation.

The modes of transportation available to hucksters who trade overseas are: Inter-island Vessels, which are the only option in Portsmouth, the second town; and Ocean-going Vessels which dock only at Woodbridge Bay, the harbour near the capital. Inter-island vessels may also be found at Woodbridge Bay. Hucksters exporting produce through Portsmouth used to travel to Antigua, St. Kitts and St. Martin with their produce. Now they often travel by air due to the deteriorating condition of the vessels. Those shipping from Woodbridge Bay send their produce by inter-island vessels to Guadeloupe or Martinique and use the ferry, L'Express des Iles or travel by airplane to meet their goods.

There are no modern facilities for fresh produce storage at any of the ports and no cold storage on the boats. As a general rule produce is loaded and shipped out on the same day so that none remain in either port for more than 24 hours. In cases of stormy weather, a loaded vessel may not put out to sea. Most produce also arrive at their destination after an overnight journey.

There is another category of agricultural trader who is called an exporter. This person trades in volumes of about 18 boxes of each produce, specializes in a limited number of products, trades with a more secure and stable clientele such as supermarkets and hotels, seldom travels to the produce market destination (s) and has some formal of infrastructure. Most exporters are trading in one container load or more and use the Ocean going vessels to ship fresh produce to Barbados, the United Kingdom, and Canada. This level of exporting minimizes the level of hustling involved in getting produced shipped. Some exporters started off as hucksters and still maintain a relationship with DHA.

The number of hucksters in Dominica has been declining since 1990. Although 450 are registered with the Dominica Hucksters Association (DHA) only 200 of them are currently active. The drop in number coincides with the change in the banana regime that has led to a decrease in the number of active small farmers in the island supplying hucksters with produce. Banana cash crop cultivation tended to support the cultivation of other crops as labour and other inputs were shared. As banana holdings declined so did the production of other crops and therefore, the volume and variety of produce available for hucksters markets. Many female hucksters are wives of small farmers. With the decrease in banana production the number of women traveling to overseas markets to sell

agricultural produce from their farms also declined. Export volumes have also declined because farmers are less able to extend credit to hucksters as they did in the past.

The women hucksters are generally in the 30 - 40 years age range but one woman, Ms Olive Isaac, is 75 years (see case study). The majority originate from rural areas. Most women hucksters have had only primary school education but there are also a few hucksters who have tertiary education. One woman has a BSc and pursuing her Masters. The more educated women tend to treat their trade as an organized business. Approximately 50% of active hucksters export produce every week. Some do so every two weeks, others every three weeks, and a few trade monthly according as this is facilitated by shipping schedules or other factors.

Hucksters realize the best earnings when selling a range of items. Many women still focus on retail. Although their share has declined in all markets they continue to ply their trade in the neighbouring French islands and across the Leeward and Virgin Islands. According to one customs broker at least half of the women hucksters actively engage in a reverse trade, mainly in non-perishable food items.

The gender profile of Dominican hucksters has been shifting. The Dominica Banana Producers Limited informed that there is currently a 2:1 ratio of women to men purchasing its bananas for their inter-island trade, but the ratio of women to men is actually higher among hucksters in general. In 1984 women were 98% of hucksters; currently they are about 75 – 80%. Corresponding with the decline in the number of women is the growing presence of men in the trade. For example, in the orientation sessions for prospective entrants held by the DHA this year men have consistently outnumbered women such that at the August 11, 2004 session there were 18 men and not one woman.

Not only are males entering huckstering in greater numbers than before, they are also entering at higher levels of the trade. Men emphasize wholesaling to restaurants, supermarkets and hotels, and are more concerned about minimizing any wastage. In the strict sense they strive to be commercial exporters. There are also male hucksters do travel with their produce and are fully engaged in reverse trade of some form of electronic goods, household hardware items, and clothing. The men entering huckstering are in the age range of early 20s to mid 40s. Many of these younger people who are entering the trade are children of hucksters who have tertiary level education. This is more significant than their age. Male attitudes to loan repayment have improved and it is believed that they are driven into the trade by the economic crisis in Dominica.

Hucksters who stay in the trade for more than 10 years are able to invest in land, houses and vehicles and use such property as collateral to obtain loans to finance their children's higher education. Some invest small businesses in fixed locations, for their children instead of further education because this can be started with smaller amounts of cash. Some hucksters expand their trade to employ others on a long-term basis. A few hucksters invest in agricultural land but usually preference is for houses, which may be rented as these are easier to manage on retirement. Among long-term huckster couples

there is the progression to commercial exporters, and investment in some other form of fixed business that the wife can manage as traveling becomes too stressful on her health.

Dominican hucksters have had a functioning organisation for 20 years. The Dominica Hucksters Association (DHA) began operations in 1984 as a friendly society and was registered as a non-profit company limited by guarantee without share capital in 1995. The Association has five full time employees, one office in the capital Roseau and another in the second town of Portsmouth. These offices double up as space for assembly, distribution and storage of packaging materials. Although these are too small to meet the needs of all, members prefer to do their handling and packing in what they term, “their own” facilities.

The DHA provides the following services to members:

- ◆ Orientation for prospective members
- ◆ Training for experienced members on packaging, pricing and record keeping
- ◆ Negotiating with overseas Government officials on matters affecting members and non-members huckstering in overseas markets
- ◆ Negotiating shipping rates with operators for members
- ◆ Provision of loans for start up, expansion, or packaging materials
- ◆ Collaboration with agencies such as Dominica Export and Import Agency, Bureau of Standards, Produce Chemist Laboratory, Division of Agriculture, Caribbean Agriculture Research and Development Institute, Port Authority.

The DHA has a good relationship with immigration and customs officers and this facilitates hucksters transactions. Due to their busy travel and schedules members attend the quarterly meetings only in times of extreme crisis. The Executive Director of Director has to travel to their markets regularly in order to dialogue with them and monitor their conditions. DHA assists members in obtaining trade visas for travel to Guadeloupe and Martinique, negotiates on their behalf when difficulties arise in foreign markets, and represents their cause with the Government of Dominica and with inter-governmental agencies. The association is also able to support members in the applications for essential services not directly related to their businesses.

Active hucksters have many opportunities for training. Training is available from a range of agencies acting in collaboration with the DHA. Potential hucksters benefit from an orientation session held by the DHA every 6 weeks. The Dominica Export Agency (DEXIA), and a technical officer of the Ministry of Agriculture (MA) assist in this training. The orientation covers plant quarantine requirements, general post harvest techniques, produce quality and packaging standards, and documentation required for marketing. Procedures for applying for loans, good loan management, risk assessment and business decision making are also vital components. The average attendance is about 18 persons per session. Approximately 25% of those who do the orientation enter the trade. At the end of one year about 10% of that group are still trading. The DHA orientation provides a reality check for aspirants and assists them in coming to a decision.

The persons who remain in the trade are usually those who have family members involved that are able to guide them and provide contacts and credit.

DHA, DEXIA, and MA train active hucksters on an ongoing basis in correct packaging and other standards required in their various markets. DEXIA's Citrus Packing Plant is available to huckster for washing and packing, as well as for hot-water treatment of mangoes to guard against the mango seed weevil. DEXIA has stationed a representative in Guadeloupe to deal with matters of immigration, customs, and market issues affecting Dominican hucksters. The Customs department offers training and assistance to hucksters in complying with any new procedures that are introduced and in the correct completion of the Customs Declaration and Certificate of Origin. The National Development Foundation (NDFD) also collaborates in business management training, especially for those accessing their loans.

Inter American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA) has collaborated with the Government of Dominica and the DHA to educate active hucksters on European Union standards to ensure their survival in the markets of Guadeloupe and Martinique. This included proper cleaning to remove all soil residue, packaging and labeling of yams, tannias, and dasheen.

Dominica Rural Enterprise Project (D-REP) has put financial support in the construction of one packing house at Portsmouth in the north of the island and another at Good Hope in the east. Both of these facilities are at the disposal of hucksters. D-REP has also provided grant funding to DHA for sourcing and selling packaging materials to hucksters. The proceeds feed a revolving fund for acquiring new packaging. DHA has been successful in these aspects of the project.

Hucksters have several opportunities to obtain credit. The can be to start up their trade, to buy packaging materials and/or expand their operations. DHA offers EC\$3,000 start up loans. On behalf of members, DHA also prepares requests for larger loans such as are available from the Credit Union, the Agricultural Development Bank, the Dominica Rural Development Programme – a poverty alleviation initiative, and National Development Foundation Micro Business Fund. At August 19, 2004 the national Development Foundation had disbursed EC\$320,705 to 34 hucksters. The NDFD reports that, since the economic downturn, it has received less and less loan applications from hucksters.

The crisis in the national economy has not reduced the range or frequency of services offered to hucksters by any of these institutions but DHA and its collaborators also indicate that hucksters are not attending the training programmes on improved produce handling to the extent that they are offered. It could be speculated that a degree of depression has set in and some hucksters have lost their drive so that they see little value in the training when they can't afford to pay for the packaging materials, or repay the loans.

Best Practices and Strategies for Maximizing their Trading Activities

Hucksters

Strong cooperation among some family members and friends in penetrating and surviving in markets: One example is in Guadeloupe where the authorities are more concerned with correct produce clearance documents rather than a huckster's permit to sell. Hucksters cooperate by having one among them, who is well known at the docks, clear a whole boatload in his or her name. Each person then takes charge of and sells their own goods.

Innovative customer service: to maintain sales of ground provisions in Guadeloupe hucksters peel and wash the produce and prepare ready packs while awaiting buyers at the market. A consumer can purchase a soup pack ready for the pot, or any other desired easy-to-use combination. The Dominica Export Agency (DEXIA) and the DHA collaborate to train hucksters in standard setting for this aspect of their marketing.

Sourcing produce outside of Dominica when necessary: to retain their market share for grapefruits in Guadeloupe, at the end of the season in Dominica hucksters jointly import containers of grapefruits from Jamaica and Belize then repackage them for the market in Guadeloupe. They are up against competition from Cuba which can easily supply container loads to fill any shortfall by the hucksters.

A degree of market specialization according to shelf life of produce: Hucksters targeting Leeward Island markets select a range of goods that certain items may be sold at each port of call and the hardiest produce saved for the furthest markets: St. Maarten, Anguilla, Tortola.

Grading and Packaging: Some hucksters have learnt that they can minimize loss and increase profits by grading and packing produce by size – small, medium and large. This is attractive to supermarkets and the hucksters can spend less time on the roadside.

Reverse trade: Both female and male hucksters bring in a range of non-perishable items of food, clothing, and household goods for sale. This return trade has been the highlight and survival of the hucksters. They set up shops that grow into “full-fledged” businesses.

Infrastructural investment: one huckster has set up a ripening facility and specializes in selling ripe bananas to local supermarkets and cruise ships. Another, now exporter, operates his own packing house for sorting and packaging.

Traffickers

Market intelligence: they capitalize on seasonal demands to maximize their profits. For example limes are brought into Barbados between June and August when it is scarce in

the island. Produce volumes are adjusted for the times when Dominicans flood the market with certain items and create gluts.

Evolving family businesses that span source of produce and the market. Over time a branch of the family becomes resident in Barbados and is able to receive and market the produce sent by those in St. Vincent. This enables sourcing of better quality produce, reliability of supply, increases in volume, and reduction of travel costs. Generally it is the mother and her children who are at the core but other family members may be brought into this business.

Training from Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in St. Vincent: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture has designed a Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) project. Through the Ministry's participation traffickers are able to receive on site training in correct post harvest handling, cleaning and packaging techniques in order to meet the standards required in the market destination.

Some traffickers have formed themselves into a collective company: Caribbean International Suppliers Inc., through which they charter the boat M V Admiral Bay to transport their cargo in a container to Barbados (see case study).

Obstacles confronted, with attention to customs and immigration arrangements, transportation, produce standards, marketing, packaging, cultural attitudes

St. Vincent

Personal: lack of capital to purchase from, or to repay farmers. This leads to a bad credit rating. Inadequate record keeping which leads to inability to accurately estimate costs and actual profits. Lack of capital to meet costs associated with transportation on land and by sea, documents required, rental of market space, insurance against loss of cargo during adverse weather, industrial action or handling damage; national insurance contributions. Traffickers lack technological skills.

National Policy: Linkages between Government departments/institutions are weak. The share of agricultural exports carried by traffickers is not delineated in national statistics. As a result, their needs and concerns are not factored into development planning despite general recognition of their role in the national economy and in preserving health in the region. There is an absence of sustained training. Through the good will of individual officers, traffickers get training assistance and information relevant to their trade from the GAPs, and the Barbados/St. Vincent Guidelines for Trade. They are not encouraged to access available credit, safety nets such as non-contributory National Insurance or medical coverage are not provided, and incentives for sustaining the trade on attrition of older traffickers are not in place.

Market related: goods are stored in inadequate and poor conditions because there is no refrigeration on the vessels used or in markets. This leads to extremely high rates of

spoilage and loss of earnings. Prices fluctuate due to seasonality of produce supply and unreliability of markets but in the absence of refrigerated storage traffickers cannot use their knowledge of these market conditions to capitalize on it.

Dominican Hucksters

Hucksters, like their trafficker counterparts, do not cite problems at customs or immigration in any port of call, neither do they report cultural prejudice as a problem.

Personal: For many hucksters their real problem is the high percentage of produce spoilage which bites into their profits and wastes their labour. This is caused mainly by the lack of refrigeration on boats and at markets. Their low returns are compounded in situations where hucksters suffer from non-payment on sales by agents who manage their goods in receiving markets sometimes.

There is a size of operation below which no real earnings or profits can be realized. Many hucksters are now operating at that marginal level because the extreme economic crisis prevailing in Dominica for several years has meant that hucksters do not have the cash to obtain the needed amounts of produce. The economic crisis has also squeezed out the opportunities for credit from farmers. The higher costs of utilities also means less cash is available to hucksters for buying required packaging and paying for additional labour to do the packing.

Also, due to this economic crisis they are harder pressed to find guarantors for their loan applications, have less capacity to repay loans, pay for transportation on land and sea, or collect earnings from those acting as their agents. Many hucksters therefore do not make use of the many training opportunities and credit facilities available to them although they are aware of their existence and understand that using it could increase their ability to trade, with positive effects on the economy. However they fear the risks associated with loans and this leads to lack of enthusiasm for the business management approach promoted by the DHA. They resist modernizing their practices to meet new market policies, regulations and standards, and do not make the link between regular use of recommended packaging materials and lower levels of product spoilage.

Organisational: Lower institutional capacity than is required by members. DHA is weakened and its influence diluted as successful hucksters 'graduate themselves' from its services. Some hucksters who move away from DHA's advisory services return to the old ways of huckstering and set a bad example for others. This undermines DHA's capacity to enforce standards, for example prohibiting shipment of produce that is below quality or inappropriately packaged. The problem is perpetuated by lack of a clear standard setting and enforceable regime in Dominica or the English speaking markets, apart from Barbados. However during the past 18 months there has been a ban in St. Martin and Antigua on Dominican hucksters who bring sub-standard produce in respect of quality, cleanliness and packaging.

DHA also lacks the capacity to research, penetrate and secure markets on behalf of its members. It is also unable to protect its Commercial Exporters class of members, who supply the regional and extra-regional markets, from claims that produce was received in bad conditions and therefore do not merit payment. DHA lacks the resources to engage personnel to monitor produce received at each market destinations.

DHA has real human, technical and equipment resource limitations regarding collating the data it has on numbers trained and retained in the trade, loans disbursed, loan applications assisted, packaging materials used, volume per product per destination, estimated total investments, value of sales and percentage losses. It is well aware that the AID Bank, Credit Union and National Development Foundation has figures on total loan disbursements to hucksters over a given period, customs brokers can provide information on huckster clients, customs documents are also available.

National policy: There is no non-contributory Social Security for hucksters.

There is no database on the hucksters. The Ministry of Agriculture claims that the informality of the trade prevents reliable record keeping on the number of hucksters, volume and value of their trade per destination. Decision makers also cite that many persons use the trade as a stepping stone to migration thus causing a high turnover of hucksters. This brings inconsistency into the huckstering environment and denies Dominica the benefit of this person's income generating contribution. Transient hucksters help to incline the trade towards an aging profile.

There is no legal framework mandating "inter-island vessels" to obtain any kind of risk insurance, maintain good standards of packing and ventilation, or upkeep their boats for health and safety. This allows boat owners to ignore recommendations made by the DHA. The port in Portsmouth uses an antiquated system that allows shipment of produce in bags, and plantains and bananas on the stem. There are no modern storage facilities for fresh produce at any of the island's ports.

Case Study of Ms Olive Isaac, a Dominican Huckster

Seventy-five year old Olive Isaac of Portsmouth has gone full circle in her huckstering experience. For 21 years she sent produce to Antigua and St. Martin for sale. Then for a slightly longer period she traveled the seas, primarily to Antigua and St. Martin, but also as need arose, to any other markets where sales could be made. Since January 2003 she has returned, due to advancing age, to her first mode of sending produce to an agent for sale. She does not intend to give up the trade - not when one of her daughters has taken up huckstering, one son has invested in transportation which assists her in sourcing supplies, and a grandson now operates one of the "inter-island vessels." Since their business interests intersect, they support each other with needed services, but Ms Olive retains responsibility for her huckstering.

Her entry into huckstering was a quiet one. On a visit to her mother in Antigua she brought some Dominican provisions, which her mother sold. On return to Dominica Olive began sending larger amounts to Antigua for sale. She soon realized that she had to

enter the trade in a big way for it to be profitable. She choose to stay home and operate a bakery while raising her children. At the same time, she employed people to source her supplies in Dominica, and sent grapefruits, oranges, dasheen, sweet potatoes, avocados, plantains and bananas to an agent in Antigua. In that way she kept on huckstering. The occasional visit to Antigua led her to visit Dutch and then French St. Martin, and expanded her business vision. She secured deals with supermarkets and a few select customers, then found an agent in each section to manage her sales.

Once the six children were grown up she took to traveling on her own business but kept a focus on selling to large establishments so that her sales were quickly effected. She participated eagerly in reverse trade and established a store from which to sell the items brought during her travels. She employed staff to assist in her store and shop/bakery but supervised and managed all her operations.

She took the good with the bad, roughed it in the business environment, worked hard, was shrewd, and earned the respect of other female and male hucksters. She assisted other hucksters where possible. When she encountered difficulties with boatmen charging high fees or making sexual advances she changed vessels, or traveled by airplane. For a period of time she chartered a plane. During another trying period she chartered a vessel. Much later, when one of her sons bought an inter-island vessel she traveled on it and kept her trade going.

She has tangled with immigration officers and insisted on her right to trade fruits, provisions, vegetables, over conforming with visa requirements. She has braved sea and sun and rain. She searched for special markets for bananas and plantains which are the most perishable produce. She learnt not to accept peppers or limes picked in rain because they lose their shelf life. She gave credit when she thought it best and suffered losses from this decision on occasion, but she persevered. When lower prices from competitors threatened her business she searched for new markets. She has been willing to adapt to changes in the ways of doing business as it relates to using new packaging material for each trip. This is a real cost in addition to buying produce, paying transportation of produce inland, voyaging by sea, and paying workers. Hucksters have to expand in order to survive.

Illness associated with advancing age has stopped her traveling “all over the Caribbean as a rough rider.” Now she has most of her produce purchased from customers in a certain locality then taken straight to the port, but she also buys from farmers who come to offer goods. An employee packs everything in boxes or bags as specified and oversees their being loaded unto the vessel. Her experience has given her certain skills and with wise decision making her trade remains profitable. She has had to scale back on the store and shop because she can’t manage as many things as she used to in former days. She has always invested in business rather than cultivation of the land that her uncle left to her because she was not able to supervise its use fully. She keeps that land as security for herself and her children. She does not keep abreast of changes in huckstering as she used to in her more active days. That concern she leaves to her daughter who has been a

huckster for several years. Ms Isaac did not complete primary school, but she has been successful at making a living from the primary resources of her island home.

ST. LUCIA

The speculators trade between St. Lucia and Barbados use to include bananas, mangoes, plantains and coconuts. In the late 1980s two agricultural pests, principally the mango weevil, and to a lesser extent the West Indian Fruit Fly, led to a ban on the trafficking of mangoes between the two islands. The pink hibiscus mealy bug infestation in the mid 1990s led to bans on other produce. Other concerns were raised from a plant quarantine standpoint regarding packaging that was repeatedly used. A protocol was therefore put in place specifying that no licence is required for agricultural trade between the two islands, but new packaging must be used with each shipment. Secondly, trade would have to be only in commercial quantities. Thirdly, guidelines specifying the use of packing houses were instituted¹⁴. Many of the small inter-island traders could not meet the conditions laid out within this agreement and began to drop out of the trade. Registered farmers and registered commercial exporters began to carry the inter-island agricultural trade.

When the Stella S 1 and then Stella S 2 were sold the door closed on the small traffickers because there was no other shipping facility that accommodated the women's needs. A few women tried to concentrate on the markets in Martinique, and in St. Martin but shipping was unreliable and the costs associated with shipping produce and traveling by aircraft were too high. L'Express des Iles operated by Cox and Company takes passengers but not cargo. Inter-Island Supply & Co. Ltd does not transport agricultural produce. Tropical Shipping Line transports only full container loads of agricultural produce. With these new challenges, plus the hazards already associated with trafficking, as older women retired from the trade it did not pass on to the younger more educated generation.

Three male commercial exporters ship hot-water-treated mangoes to Barbados, when they are in season. Bananas and plantains are added to the container to make up any shortfalls in weight. These three men have their own contacts for marketing and move upwards of 10,000 boxes with varying regularity on the M V Admiral Bay to Barbados. Figures compiled by Planning and Statistics from documentation derived from Customs show that from 1998 to 2000 agricultural trade with Barbados was minimal. Some improvements were recorded post 2000 and may be attributed to the trade of the commercial exporters just referenced. The members of the Fresh Producers Association concentrate on markets in the United Kingdom, Canada and St. Martin. The St. Lucia Marketing Board trades with Miami. More recently it has sent bananas to Antigua and on rare occasions sent produce to Martinique. One man sends peppers to Antigua twice per year on LIAT.

¹⁴ This is the same agreement in force between Barbados and other Windward Islands.

Case study of Woman Trafficker from St. Lucia

Ms Cynthia (not her real name) is a 75 year old woman and a resident of New Development, Soufriere who received only a primary education. She is the mother of a 57 year old man, and has four grand children. She was a full-time trafficker for 10 years, (1960-1970). During the course of her trafficking, her son was left in the care of her younger sister. She worked on her own and was the only member of her family who had that occupation. There was no supporting organisation during that time.

Each trip, she trafficked about 1000 mangoes, 1000 oranges, and some bunches of plantains, which she purchased from farmers. The produce was taken to the sea port by bus, at a fixed cost of EC\$10.00. She traveled along with her produce to Barbados, St. Vincent, Grenada, and Trinidad depending on demand. Conditions at Customs and Immigration were welcoming, and no documents were required. There was no need for packaging, and there were no restrictions placed on traffickers.

Ms Cynthia notes that boats were more available during her trading years. Boats such as Federal Palm, Federal Maple, MV Joy, and MV Compton used to transport traffickers and their goods. To her, the journeys to these destinations were smooth and pleasant. Passengers were accommodated in bunkers. Men and women were in separate bunkers. There were 6 women in each bunker. As far as she remembers, the traffickers stayed 7-8 days in the country of destination. She is unsure as to how many traffickers settled in the country of destination during the 10 years that she trafficked.

Cart-men were always waiting at the port to receive the produce, which was sold to local vendors. During the time that Ms Cynthia was a trafficker, she noticed various changes. There was an increase in the exportation of fruits, and male traffickers entered the trade. Actually, she encountered few male traffickers during her time - four or five men collectively from St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Barbados, and Trinidad – but about 20-30 other women traffickers from Vincent. The arrangement at the markets destinations was informal. Friends reserved spaces for sister traffickers.

Ms Cynthia retired involuntarily: she had to give up her job because of illness which led to two surgeries. She could not say for sure that her health problems were related to trafficking. Trafficking was profitable. She was able to invest in a house and land. Finance for these purchases was obtained through trafficking overseas and later trading locally. This has profited her over the years and she has been able to acquire more property and rent them out to residents of her area. Trafficking also enabled her to buy clothes overseas to take home to her family.

Ms Cynthia encourages other persons to take up trafficking as an occupation, but they must keep records. Although she kept records of her profits and/or losses, she believes that proper training in recording keeping would have been an asset. Ms Cynthia has heard about CSME and she thinks that it could be beneficial to traders/traffickers. She advises that traffickers should be made aware of the CSME, and that incentives should be put in place to ensure that produce being exported are of good standard and quality.

Impact of CSME on women traders, including their awareness of the new intra-regional trading arrangements

Hucksters in the Dominica, and traffickers in St. Vincent know very little about the CSME. Some do not know the term at all. A few are also unfamiliar with the word CARICOM. Many Dominicans operate in Guadeloupe and are clear that the Lomé Agreements (now Cotonou) allow them to trade in the French islands as long as they conform to the standards set out. Therefore they think that CSME is similar and are not too concerned. Traffickers in St. Vincent would like to view it with optimism, and hope for beneficial impacts. They have heard stories of the earlier days when shipping was available and the islands shared one currency. The case study from St. Lucia is instructive of the ease with which traffickers traded in the region during the 1960s and 1970s. The CSME benefits anticipated for traffickers is based on that earlier history.

DHA is not optimistic about the benefits of CSME for hucksters because not education programmes are directed to them and their insertion into the regional market. However DHA has tried to do some awareness building among members about CSME and is thinking forward about finding funds or partnerships through which to engage quality control officers at market destinations to monitor and certify product quality in order to preserve existing markets against competition.

One of the customs brokers who services hucksters in Dominica thinks that the CSME could be a big problem for hucksters because it will raise the level of competition locally from exporters. Persons who now provide transportation and supplies to small hucksters will be attracted to exporters who are trading in larger volumes and can pay cash on delivery. These exporters will also compete for packaging materials. Hucksters will have additional labour selecting, grading, and packaging fruit - of which the best would have already gone to exporters.

No CSME information has been prepared specially for hucksters or shared to explain their role in it. Much of the information is targeted at the manufacturing sector. The CSME, which is not yet operational, is designed with the formal business sector in mind, yet many officials are optimistic that it holds potentially good opportunities for traffickers given their resourcefulness and ability to take bold actions in order to continue their businesses. They make reference to the joint actions taken by both traffickers in St. Vincent and Dominica to move contain loads, to charter boats, to find a niche in which to operate.

The Quarantine Unit in St. Vincent is of the view that with the implementation of the CSME it may become easier for governments and shipping agents to agree for traffickers to use less documentation, and for freight charges to be reduced. If government wants to retain the traffickers' market then more professional training might be provided to them. In the best case scenario, with greater freedom of movement, the removal of barriers, and greater access to markets traffickers might take the risk and make bigger investments and take a more business-like approach to their trade. This implies greater coordination and partnership among traffickers and revival of their organisation with a mandate to tap into

extra-regional markets. Thus optimistically, the CSME could be the impetus for penetrating extra-regional markets, maintaining consistency of volume and high quality, accessing training, use of new technologies and practices, and certification that would open up trade with supermarkets and hotels for traffickers.

The Marketing Board saw other possible positive impacts such as stable prices, more communication between the traffickers and the private sector, stronger linkages with the government through establishment of a Desk - with an officer assigned to facilitate their needs; zoning for optimal production to retain the markets accessed by the traffickers - with positive opportunities for farmers; and greater confidence by the Credit Unions and the National Commercial Bank to support the business investments of the traffickers.

An official of the Dominica Export and Import Agency feels that CSME will require hucksters to operate on a broader scale, however all of their current problems related to market conditions will remain if these are not attended. The National Development Foundation anticipates that higher standards will be demanded and in the face of greater competition some hucksters will make more effort to improve packaging and storage of their goods. CSME will also offer them more possibility of using the financial mechanisms across the region to move their money and make loan payments.

The Banana Producers Ltd, and IICA think that huckster certification will become necessary in order for them to protect their market share. In that arrangement hucksters will have to carry an ID card that certifies not only that they are bona fide hucksters, but that they are maintaining produce standards. The thinking about certification is that it could minimize market problems as hucksters approach new customers. NDFD thinks that such certification can incline hucksters towards more education, raise their status, facilitate acquisition of credit in other countries, and data collection. An exporter supports this view and seeks it as a means of hucksters from different countries penetrating markets jointly on the basis of regional integration. The Ministry of Agriculture was of the view that while there will be greater emphasis on standards hucksters will be afforded greater movement across the region.

The latter view was shared by a technocrat of the CSME Unit who asserted that traffickers will have more opportunities than in the past for free movement to conduct their trade -because they now have a right. He asserted further that self-employed persons at all levels, their employees and their family members also enjoy this right. It is recognized that shipping must be treated with urgency if goods are to move freely across the region. He advised that while this need is being addressed traffickers should form links with the Barbadian company that is currently importing fresh produce from St. Vincent, and with its suppliers. He also recommended that traffickers should move towards joint exporting in order to move greater bulk, and identify counterparts in the receiving countries. This would decrease the need to travel, but traders could look for other opportunities, such as agro-processing, in order to remain economically active. They could add value to their current activities and so maintain themselves.

He is convinced that there is a niche market for Caribbean foods which should be researched. Within CSME arrangements the Hotel and Tourism Association should be approached to buy and prepare more local foods. He observed that it should also be recognized that US agricultural goods are different from that of the Caribbean, and that not all persons want to switch to foreign food products - as many consumers are becoming more and more aware of the health risks attached to these foods.

He did not share the view that companies from outside the region would crowd out the traffickers because the small Caribbean market may not be very attractive. He noted the current trend of foreign multi-nationals closing shop and establishing trading depots. One example is British American Tobacco, which has merged its operations with West Indies Company. The inception of the Free Trade Area of the Americas could see the base of production move to Latin America.

An official of the CARICOM Secretariat, like the official at CSME Unit, also pointed to the growing global demand for natural products and the need for Caribbean countries to restructure agricultural production to take advantage of this trend. Caribbean people should also consume more of what the region grows. The benefits he identified are a reduced food import bill, export advantage in these products, and a renewed role of the small farmers who had been the greater proportion of banana producers. This could enhance the opportunities for trade by small traffickers.

The range of opinions offered, negative and positive, imply that the CSME will impact the way in which traffickers and hucksters currently do business. The small inter-island trader has been less in evidence with the advance of trade liberalization in the region. The adjustments that they make will determine whether they survive in the new trading environment that will emerge with the implementation of a CSME.

Specific regional and national policy measures adopted to incorporate the needs and concerns of women traders into the CSME

Several articles of the CSME policies articulated under Agriculture, Trade, Shipping, and Free Movement can be shown to have implications for the livelihoods of traffickers, but at the national and regional level **no measures** have been adopted to incorporate the needs and concerns of women traders into the CSME. If CSME is to avoid eroding the livelihoods of several families in St. Vincent and Dominica, as the protocol for trade with Barbados unwittingly did to traffickers in St. Lucia, urgent attention must be given to this regional aspect of the informal sector.

National and regional policy must regard this form of work as skilled and include traffickers in the category of those named for free movement. Article 46 on Movement of skilled community nationals could then be the mechanism for enhancing their status and creating a facilitating environment in which the 'right' may be enjoyed.

CSME Article 34 which speaks to Removal of Restrictions on the Right of Establishment could provide the opportunity for an entity such as Caribbean International Suppliers Inc to look towards acquiring assets (refrigerated trucks, land) in Barbados in the medium to long-term, in order to increase its supply capacity. National and regional policy would then address the matter of making the requisite capital available on terms that the traffickers can manage. The option to borrow in both countries where the company is registered and to obtain benefits as a regional company should be provided.

Equally, Article 118 Trade Policy, part four, which addresses subsidies for agriculture should factor in the needs of agricultural traffickers. Equally relevant is Article 125 which provides for actions against dumping of developed country goods on the region. Article 44 1(c) which seeks to abolish exchange controls and allow free convertibility of the currencies of member states would be beneficial to traffickers, the majority of whom are women, by simplifying their currency transactions and saving their time.

Article 44 1 (f) - the establishment of economical and efficient land, sea and air transportation services throughout the community is of special interest to traffickers as is the provision of refrigerated shipping. Because of poor transport there is significant loss of agricultural produce in the farm to overseas market process. Loss of freshness, and shelf life, is a hardship that traffickers contend with on every trip. Sometimes the entire shipment of produce is lost. Transport provisions and related Transport Policy article 140 therefore has potential to benefit women traffickers.

The wonderful potential contained in these articles is dampened by two realities. The CSME implementation date has been repeatedly revised for more than a decade, and the work of traffickers continue to be ignored in policy making - which does not place any incentives at the disposal of the informal sector. Traffickers point to the fact that they have not been selected for training and education on the CSME in the way that customs officers are, they are not mentioned in any of the clauses. They have no confidence that if any government intervenes in their activities that it will be to their benefit. Some traffickers have heard the term CSME but have very low awareness of it, and are apprehensive of what it might mean to their lives. Some traffickers even fear that CSME may be disadvantageous to their current status in Barbados. They would like to understand what the relationship between them and CSME would be, and how it will affect their business, so that they may prepare themselves.

Statistics, where available, on the volume

Dominica

There are about 200 active hucksters in Dominica two-thirds of whom are women. Most hucksters target a single market unless changing conditions dictate shifts to other markets. The markets for hucksters include Antigua, Guadeloupe, Grenada, Tortola, St. Kitts, St. Maarten, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago. The markets indicated here are important for different numbers of male and female hucksters

but no actual numbers per destination were available. Information on the volume of each item shipped are available by port of departure rather than by market destination.

RECENT SHIPPING BY DOMINICAN HUCKSTERS

Produce	Port of shipping	Year 2002 – 2003	Year 2003 - 2004
Citrus	Woodbridge Bay	720 tons	661 tons
Provisions	Woodbridge Bay	2719 tons	1662 tons
Coconuts	Woodbridge Bay	1306 tons	1276 tons
Fresh Produce	Portsmouth	9276 tons	9781 tons

Source: Port Authorities, Dominica

Notes:

Woodbridge Bay is the location of the main harbour on the outskirts of the capital Roseau

Portsmouth is the second town. Fresh produce means citrus, provisions, coconuts. Provisions include bananas.

Sales records of the Dominica Banana Producers Ltd. Show that two women and one man together purchased an average 20,000 lbs (500 boxes) of bananas weekly for each of the 30 weeks immediately prior to this research.

Based on the knowledge that produce destined for Leeward, and Virgin Island markets are shipped from Portsmouth it can be deduced from the table that in the year 2003 hucksters moved a total **9276 tons** of citrus, provisions and coconuts from Dominica for the people of these islands and increased that figure in the year 2004 to **9781 tons**. During the same period the volumes of the same produce that hucksters moved from Dominica to Guadeloupe were **4845 tons, and 3599 tons** up to August 2004 (time of research).

Data on cif values at ports of entry were not obtained for scrutiny. Transportation of a truckload of hucksters' goods to the port of departure is a minimum of EC\$200. Boxes for packing fruits cost EC\$4.00 each, and sacks EC\$2.00 each. The cost of labour and freight were not obtained. Travel fares for the hucksters range from EC\$270.00 on the ferry, L'Express des Iles to Guadeloupe; and EC\$463.75 to Antigua, EC\$ 823.40 to St. Kitts, EC\$1,099.75 to St. Maarten, on LIAT.

SHIPPING USED BY DOMINICAN HUCKSTERS

Vessel	Destination	Frequency
CMC	Leewards/St Maarten	Mondays
Grace Olive	Guadeloupe/Leewards/ Virgin Islands	Once per week
Grace Marianne	Guadeloupe	Once per week
Aries Dream	Anguilla,	Once per week
Guest Line	Barbados, UK, Canada	Once per week

Source: Caribbean Maritime Agency

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Although the numbers of active traffickers shown below were recorded by the Quarantine Unit for a ten-year period, during the year 2004 some 20 persons, mainly women, were trafficking in Barbados and Trinidad.

TOTAL TRAFFICKERS RECORDED FOR ST. VINCENT 1984 – 2004

	Active	In-active	Barbados	Trinidad	St. Maarten	St. Kitts	Anguilla	Tortola	USA Canada
Female	39	14	11	17	7	1	1	0	2
Male	7	20	5	4	0	0	0	2	0

Sources: Plant Quarantine Units - St. Vincent, and Barbados

The volume of shipping done by Janetta and 14 other traffickers, to Barbados, over a four week period have been compiled from the Bills of Lading.

CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL SUPPLIERS LTD. SHIPMENTS FOR JULY 2004

Produce	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Plantains	826 boxes/ 15570 kg	1129 boxes/ 20332 kg	1036 boxes/ 18648kg	1067 boxes/ 19206 kg
Mangoes	392 boxes/ 7056 kg	392 boxes/ 9630 kg	454 boxes/ 8172 kg	359 boxes/ 6462 kg
Dasheen	11 sacks/330 kg	20 sacks/600 kg	15 sacks/450 kg	13 sacks/390 kg
Eddoes	30 sacks/900kg	27 sacks/810 kg	30 sacks/900 kg	49 sacks/ 1470 kg
Avocado Pears	89 boxes/ 1602 kg	161 boxes/ 2898 kg	215 boxes/ 3570 kg	377 boxes/ 6786 kg
Sweet potatoes	4 boxes/72 kg	00000	00000	13 boxes/234kg
Tannias	12 boxes 216kg	15 boxes/270kg	14 boxes/252kg	14 boxes/252kg
Bananas	000000	26 boxes/ 468 kg	39 boxes/ 702 kg	29 boxes/ 522 kg
Coconuts	42 sacks/ 1260 kg	60 sacks/ 1800 kg	115 sacks/ 3450 kg	73 sacks/ 2190 kg
Ginger	5 sacks/150 kg	4 sacks/120 kg	3 sacks/90 kg	3 sacks/90 kg
Pumpkins	00000	3 sacks/90 kg	1 sack/30 kg	1 sack/30 kg
Mammy-apples	00000	00000	1 sack/30 kg	1 sack/30 kg
Other	00000/00000	00000/00000	4 sacks/90 kg Coals	2 boxes/60 kg Fish Oil

Source: compiled from Bills of Lading by Undene Whittaker, 2004

Using cif values listed by Barbados Statistical Service in BDS\$ for the year 2003, the cash investments made by these traffickers may be estimated for July 2004 as presented in the table below. The cif value of produce ranges from a low of BD\$0.23 per kg pumpkins to a comparative high of BD\$0.90 per kg plantains, with mangoes at BD\$0.45

and avocado pears at BD\$0.42. The estimated total cif value for goods imported July 2004 is **BDS\$57,183.29**.

ESTIMATED CIF VALUE OF PRODUCE IN BDS\$ FOR JULY 2004

Plantains	Man- goes	Dash -een	Edd -oes	Avo- cado Pears	Sweet pota -toes	Tan- nias	Bana -nas	Coco -nuts	Pump -kins
31,160.00	14,145.05	414.99	1,027.73	6,262.03	127.13	371.21	1,527.00	2,113.47	34.68

Notes:

Values were not found for ginger, mammy-apple, coals or fish oil
According to vendors and the shipping agents the goods are not insured against any kind of loss
It is unclear from traffickers whether their various hidden costs (below) are included in this cash value

ECD\$ WEEKLY COSTS INCURRED BY TRAFFICKERS SHIPPING 100 BOXES FROM ST VINCENT JULY 2004

Produce	Transport On land	Sea Freight	Traffickers Airfare	Packaging (1 person)	Employees	Documents
	300.00 - 400.00 (cost to one person)	5,772.00 7,944.00 7,732.00 8,180.00 per wk	367.20 per person	Boxes 400.00 Sacks 200.00		50.00 forms 60.00 (filling out charge)

Source: Traffickers who are members of the Caribbean International Suppliers Inc.

Notes:

Sacks are mandatory packaging for root tubers but are often in short supply
Traffickers are happy to pay Ms Janetta Thomas EC\$60.00 for sourcing and filling out the forms on their behalf (in Dominica hucksters pay a Customs Broker).

In Dominica, the start up minimum cash investment per month is calculated by the DHA at EC\$3,000. If the same figure is used as a guide in the case of St. Vincent, the 15 traffickers can be estimated to be making an initial investment of EC\$45,000 or **BD\$33,333.33** per shipment. Freight alone for the month of July was the equivalent of BD\$21,946.67 compared to the goods cif value of **BD\$57,183.29**. Assuming that the opportunity costs of labour, packaging materials, land transport and airfare are contained in the cif value, the joint earnings of the 15 traffickers, of which the majority are women, are minimal.

When the estimated investment is subjected from the cif value a collective earning of BD\$ 23, 849.96 is possible barring any losses. This amount divided by 15 persons gives an individual earning of BD\$1,590.00 or EC\$2,146.50 – less than the investment needed for the next month’s investments, and provide for their households. This is why some have opted for the practice of sending their goods to an agent (usually a family member such as mother, sister, son). This saves on airfare and provides wages for the person who is doing the selling. That practice also allows these women to stay at home and care for their children.

SAMPLE OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED PER CONSIGNMENT

Department	Documents required	Countries
Ministry of Agriculture	Traders Licence Export Licence	St. Vincent Guadeloupe/St. Vincent
Customs	Customs Export Declaration Certificate CARICOM Certificate of Origin	All countries
Plant Quarantine	Phyto-sanitary Certificate CARICOM Invoice	All Countries All Countries
Shipping Agent	EUR Invoice (European) Bill of Lading	Guadeloupe All countries

Notes: the Export Licence is a one- time cost of EC\$10.00, other documents must be obtained for each trip.

SHIPPING USED BY TRAFFICKERS FROM ST. VINCENT:

Vessel	Destination	Frequency
M V Admiral Bay	Barbados	Mondays
Milanda (Malinda)	Barbados	Wednesdays
Persia 2	Trinidad	Once per week
Stingray	Trinidad	Once per week

Source: Maritime Agency

According to the Banana Growers Association of St. Vincent and the Grenadines 10 traffickers – 7 women and 3 men purchase bananas weekly. In previous years some 30 traffickers bought from them but the number of traffickers now trading is considerably reduced. During the month of July 2004 some 4000 boxes of bananas were purchased by traffickers for the Barbados and Trinidad markets. This brought the Association an income in the region of ECD\$25,000 –30,000 depending on whether the boxes are 33 lbs or 40lbs.

It is of interest that National Properties Ltd., a statutory corporation, was formed by the Government of St. Vincent in April 2004 to source markets for farmers as part of the benefits of CSME. The body is able to pay farmers on a cash-on-delivery basis and exports to Chickmont Foods Barbados. It is also seeking to do business with hotels and supermarkets. Pineapple is fast becoming a commercial export for this company but only the following weekly figures were obtained.

SAMPLE WEEKLY SHIPMENT OF NATIONAL PROPERTIES LTD

Produce	Quantity in Boxes
Bananas	300 – 400
Plantains	100 – 200
Mangoes	50
Avocado Pears	20

Source: National Properties Ltd

Comparison of the weekly exports of the 15 informal traffickers from St. Vincent, with the recently formed statutory corporation demonstrates the resourcefulness and productivity of these small traffickers in the absence of state resources, insurance coverage, technical qualifications, and an institutional base. Risk taking, innovation, hard work and perseverance in the face of meager incremental returns are demonstrated by these traders whose produce suffer as much as 20 - 25% spoilage of their produce. The real and implied inefficiencies of such spoilage are burdens borne by these women and men in the form of lost earnings.

Yet their apparent limitations pale against the investments made by this informal group and the real benefits to the farmers, drivers, wage labourers, departments of government, shipping agents, producers of packaging materials, care givers, family members and consumers in their home country and overseas market, while absorbing the overhead costs associated with the formal business enterprise. These trafficker are providing employment opportunities and preserving good health in the region to an extent that cries out for state recognition and support.

Recommendations on approaches, mechanisms, strategies for catalyzing regional and national policy and programmatic support to women traders

Recognition

Although informal in their operations, when seen from the perspective formal sector, hucksters and traffickers interact with national and regional economies as asserts and not liabilities. When the use of their earning in terms of investments in children's higher education, the provision of employment for themselves and others, their linkages to the formal economy, the investments in other small businesses, acquisitions of land, house, vehicles, and savings is considered their full financial role begins to be recognised.

National policy has normally defined agriculture as cash crop exports. Curiously, the foods of the Caribbean that have sustained many generations of people, are referred to as non-traditional exports. It is common knowledge that hucksters and traffickers have been the inter-island exporters of regional crops such as yams, sweet potatoes, dasheen, eddoes, tannias, bananas, plantains, mangoes, avocado pears, ginger and other food items for more than 50 years. The limited information presented for Dominica and St. Vincent present a startling picture of the extent to which the traffickers impact the health of the Caribbean behind a veil of national economic invisibility.

Had the inputs of traffickers into the economy been clearly demarcated into national accounting, efforts to find markets for farmers (in the face of continued decline of the banana cash crop industry) would have focused on formalising a tripartite arrangement among traffickers, farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture with positive effects on supply, reliability of payments, quality control and efficient business management.

Linkages

It seems that in St. Vincent, stronger and more formal linkages need to be established between the traffickers and a number of institutions. Over and above the commendable efforts of certain individuals within the Ministry of Agriculture, a policy framework is required that takes sufficient account of the traffickers as economic agents and health promoters from the standpoint of “wellness” rather than disease management. Their economic contribution in this respect may be revealed by simply computing the cost of treating one patient for cancer of the colon which is known to be caused by primarily by food that are poor in roughage.

Extension officers, Planning Unit personnel, Bureau of Gender Affairs, Marketing Board, Banana Growers Association, Windward Island Farmers Association, also have a role in creating a more facilitative environment for these stalwarts of regional food security. Traffickers need to be made aware of the various opportunities for obtaining credit, receive business management support, be constantly updated about new market standards required, afforded incentives for obtaining and properly using the packaging materials. Such linkages can lead to greater use of available services by the traffickers and hucksters. Traffickers in St. Vincent do not presently face the economic gloom under which hucksters in Dominica have laboured for the past several years, and which has dampened their use of available services.

Institutional linkages with hucksters appear stronger in Dominica but Plant Protection Quarantine, DEXIA and other agencies have all indicated a wish for even greater and more consistent linkages with the huckster community, to their mutual benefit. Greater interaction between traffickers and their national institutions can stimulate greater interaction between those institutions across the CSME and lead to early identification and resolution of concerns which may arise from time to time. All of those linkages will make more readily available the inputs required for maintaining a database on the number of traffickers operating in each market, the volume and value of their trade, by product, and their yearly contribution to the national economy. Agricultural planning and productivity may be better managed and, the long sort after, diversification programmes achieved.

NDFD is eager to assist hucksters in cost management to help them reduce the incidences of defaulting on payments, and increase access to new funding, as it is cognizant of the cost implications of the new packaging materials required in contrast to former days. However their use will assist in expanding established markets and lead to new ones. For example there is a demand in Anguilla for exotic produce such as golden apples, custard apples, and sugar cane. NDFD is anxious to help huckster begin to manage their trade in a way that integrate children into the business in a less stressful way. Many children are more educated through their parents’ huckstering, yet they see only that it is a lot of work for poor returns. The possibility of building family businesses that keep growing and absorbing different skills is a vision that many have not conceived.

Dominica Banana Producers Ltd has pledged its willingness to discuss produce quality and supply with hucksters and try to influence farmers about those needs, given that hucksters distribute almost 5.5% of its bananas. A small number of farmers are committed the hucksters trade and deliver produce on the day of shipment in an attempt to assist with freshness. This kind of commitment could extend to farmers cultivating crops specifically for new markets penetrated. Ministry of Agriculture and IICA have both indicated a willingness to raise hucksters awareness of CSME if materials are specially prepared with the benefits to hucksters and their responsibility in mind. Current material is very general and seems to target trade areas other than agriculture.

Trust can be nurtured between the informal sector and institutions of government. Traffickers may become more inclined to strengthen their own Association, liaise with the national Chambers of Commerce and other private sector organisations, and represent their interests in national consultations and on committees set up to give voice to civil society.

Safety Nets

Official recognition of the traffickers in national policies should lead to concern for the risks that they take in the course of their work. Risk insurance on their produce, medical coverage, unemployment benefits, and other provisions of social security and national insurance are basic needs that traffickers confront. Dialogue between the traffickers and the agencies mentioned above should lead to approaches for providing these safety nets at costs that are manageable. Systematic and long-term data collection on the product volumes and values of the traffickers' trade can be the basis for elevating their economic status so that they may benefit from business guidance, tax breaks, entrance to markets, representation overseas, and insurance coverage.

Credit

Credit facilities, at various levels, are available to facilitate hucksters in Dominica. The obstacles to maximizing use of these facilities are related to the national economic situation, which seems to have depressed the confidence levels of hucksters and lowered their risk-taking. A public relations programme aimed at encouraging hucksters to take a long-term view of the economic crisis could lead to more use of available credit and access to its benefits. Here the idea of certification, and linking of similar financial institutions with special provisions for small traders across the CSME could be a useful check and balance. Monitoring of hucksters locally by the DHA, and by representatives based in foreign markets would have to be considered in a system worked out jointly with the hucksters.

Similarly in St. Vincent the Credit Unions, National Development Foundation, and the National Commercial Bank are sources of credit. National policy that speaks directly to the role of traffickers in the economic life of the country could inspire confidence both in the traffickers, to approach these funds, and in the administrators, to extend credit.

Transportation

Increased availability of safe, appropriate, and affordable shipping as proposed by CSME could be of benefit to traffickers if a quota of spaces is specially allocated to them. In a worse case scenario refrigerated shipping, which the traffickers need, could remain inaccessible even when it comes into existence due to the presence of larger and more powerful competitors. The extent to which hucksters are willing to go in order to access shipping suggests that quotas will not go unused. It is foreseeable that hucksters would even purchase a container, if the need arose or the viability of such a move became evident. Over and above everything else small traders want the best possible shipping facilities. Farmers are also to be encouraged to sell produce in appropriate packaging at the farm-gate so as to reduce bruising during transportation to the seaports.

Marketing

Itinerant traders have been adept at finding new markets. State institutions can facilitate enhancement of the markets by representing their nationals in a structured way. State vigilance and intervention against dumping of products in the CSME would be an important policy of benefit to traffickers and hucksters as fresh produce will come from other sources. The Caribbean International Suppliers Ltd initiative is one example of the extent to which traffickers are prepared to change their traditionally individualist practice in order to survive in a liberalized environment. The DHA presents another model of organisation with the potential to render more key services to traders if the right support is forthcoming. Packing Houses designed specially for use by traffickers should be a basic part of port infrastructure in Dominica and in St. Vincent. Packing houses at other strategic locations in agricultural zones are also needed.

It will also be incumbent on every participating country of the CSME to provide traffickers, and local vendors, with adequate and appropriate refrigerated storage space in markets. Sometimes fresh produce vendors are offered space more suitable to other items. Sheltered markets are useful for providing storage spaces, personal conveniences, and a place to be during the rainy season. Otherwise the majority of small traders prefer to be in locations of prime pedestrian flows. Town planners and other officials need to rethink the new market structures that are sprouting up across the Caribbean.

Standards

Traffickers understand that compliance with new requirements determines their survival but transportation, refrigerated storage on ships and in markets, are directly related to standards. In Dominica training regarding new standards is fully available to hucksters from a range of agencies acting together but until the cost of produce preparation and packaging is supported in various creative ways this training goes unused because of the traders' view that refrigeration is much more key to produce quality. Designated matching funds, located under the National Indicative Programmes and the OECS Export Promotion Unit, could provide certified hucksters with half the cash needed to purchase packaging materials. In this way the investment risk is shared. Alternatively it could pay for transportation of materials to the ports and for the additional labour required to package the produce.

Interventions that can be made directly in support of communities of women traders

Measure taken to secure the small inter-island trade in agricultural produce could move it closer to formalization and away from the informal sector. UNIFEM is mindful of the high premium these entrepreneurs put on their independent decision-making, self-reliance, flexibility of operation, and the ability to work within their capacities and innovate their own best practices. Good governance is therefore a primary value that UNIFEM brings to any interventions for improving the trading environment for women inter-island traffickers and hucksters. Notwithstanding the fact that the recommendations are informed by the thoughts and suggestions of traffickers and personnel who service them regularly, it is ultimately what the trafficker finds helpful, affordable and adaptable which will garner their support and be embraced.

Commitment, consultation, financing, and implementation will be the core requirements for making this feasibility study more far reaching than the studies instituted a decade and a half ago. Coordinated actions among new institutional actors such as Central Planning Units, Statistical Services, Bureaux of Gender/Women's Affairs, in tandem with agencies that have more experience such as Plant Protection Quarantine, officers of the Ministry of Agriculture, Customs and Immigration, DHA, DEXIA, NDFD, across the two countries are required to make CSME of benefit to traffickers and not undermine their livelihoods.

The following five direct interventions are urgent, implementable, and compatible with the goal of achieving a CARICOM Single Market and Economy. The first is directed at the level of sub-regional, regional and international governmental bodies and agencies. The second seeks action by two national governments in the first instance. The third is directed at national institutions, while the fourth seeks to benefit a traders' organisation. The fifth intervention, already in the planning pipeline, involves a regional agency providing technical assistance directly to traffickers, and other relevant actors in the agricultural community.

1. **Invest in two CARICOM refrigerated vessels specifically for use by inter-island traders.** There is a shortage of affordable good quality shipping appropriate to the needs of traffickers. The five inter-island vessels which carry produce from Dominica to islands along the chain as far up as the Virgin Islands are seen, upon inspection, to be in deplorable condition. In fact during August 2008 the Grace Olive was forbidden from sailing into most of these ports, and put on dry dock pending improvements. The traffickers from St. Vincent actually charter the M V Admiral Bay to bring their produce to Barbados once per week. None of these vessels, including the Milanda, Persia 2, and Stingray have refrigeration, and they all only travel only once per week to traffickers' market destinations.

Under the CSME, a consortium comprising the East Caribbean Central Bank, and the Caribbean Development Bank, and the Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme of Cotonou (to be sustained in the Development Fund of the Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union) in concert with other relevant agencies that provide

financial support to regional development efforts, should invest in two CARICOM refrigerated inter-island vessels specifically for use by inter-island traders.

Their storage spaces should be appropriately designed to take account of the nature of traffickers produce. The vessels can operate very much in the model of the Federal Maple and the Federal Palm of the 1970s. This would address the core problem of high percentages of spoilage, i.e. wastage and business inefficiency, that undermine the earnings of traffickers. The vessels should ply routes to all the islands of the Caribbean, not just CARICOM or English speaking islands. Passenger facilities would be a bonus, but these are not absolutely essential.

2. **Reduce documentation needed for shipping.** The amount of documentation required for each shipment needs to be simplified for these traffickers. In the same way that CSME members can conform to the WTO and phase out licence requirements, so to the other 6 pieces of documentation now mandatory for shipping produce can be condensed into one form which adequately captures the required data for Ministry of Agriculture, Plant Quarantine, Customs and the Shipping Agent. This would be more cost efficient and less time consuming than the current situation where traffickers spend a day going to different locations, and waiting to pay to obtain different forms that they then pay have to be filled out.

3. **Make credit more accessible and affordable.** Existing credit institutions in both Dominica and St. Vincent, together with other relevant agencies and traffickers should re-assess the contribution of traffickers with a view to adjusting existing credit conditions and making loans more accessible to these small traders, on terms that they can meet. This would improve the rate of application and protect against high rates of default.

4. **Establish national databases.** The Dominica Hucksters Association already had an established presence and participated in the UNECLAC research, but was not targeted for capacity building to set up and maintain a database. Some of the same personnel are still with the organisation and advise that such support would enhance DHA services to members, especially in representing their case to inter-governmental and private sector agencies. A resource person could be provided to the Association for a specified period to do the necessary data collection and set up the database. A staff person must understudy the process and acquire the skill to maintain this database which will be the basis of market research, lobbying and advocacy on behalf of hucksters that DHA has never been able to do.

Commitment from sources of information to systematically identify hucksters in their record keeping is required. This can only be sustained within a policy framework that elevates the economic status of hucksters. The traders themselves will also have to be encouraged to keep better records and to share their information. In the context of CSME, this project should have linkages with St. Vincent where an appropriate repository for their database would be identified.

5. **Offer ready-to-use root tuber packages.** A plan is already underway in within the Ministry of Agriculture, working in collaboration with Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI) to vacuum pack root tubers for the regional and other markets. The hucksters from Dominica are already offering peeled produce in a variety of combinations to consumers in Guadeloupe. It may be that with the right support the vacuum packing of dasheen, tania, cassava, and other root tubers may not have to await a centralized government intervention but may be acted upon by a traffickers association or group.

Conclusion

The potential of inter-island trade to become a major foreign exchange earner within the CSME is not insignificant, especially if the vision encompasses the entire island Caribbean and main land masses that rim the Caribbean Sea. Huckstering and trafficking, like any other business enterprise, is not a quick money venture. A long-term perspective has to be taken, a presence established and with persistence and good decision-making the endeavour becomes profitable over time. Hucksters generate foreign exchange, and participate in regional integration. Therefore historical attitudes by some members of the public and certain government officials, that huckstering is not a real trade must change, so that policy making take into account the preservation of this sector of employment while further liberalizing our markets.

Prevailing negative attitudes have led even some traders to raise families in which children are educated to abhor huckstering and trafficking. This practice must change so that children are educated to view small inter-island trading as a valid profession which contributes to economical and social development in the region. Huckstering has had a tremendous social impact in Dominica, where money generated in the trade has strengthened family networks of support so that children were raised with the help of sisters, aunts and grandmothers whose own material needs have been met by its proceeds. Children of hucksters are generally recipients of secondary and tertiary education, of which they have taken full advantage.

Hucksters and traffickers are a steady source of income to their countries and their purchases from farmers are substantial. Hucksters opened up a market for seamoss in the French islands from which seamoss producers benefit. Planning and coordination can strengthen the collaboration among farmers, agro-processors and hucksters and lead to greater production. The Banana Growers have found that hucksters pay better than some established companies and it is mainly hucksters who distribute bananas across the region.

Hucksters have provided their customers in the region with the benefits of our nutritional and traditional Caribbean food. Increasing use of chemical inputs in agriculture tended to move these foods away from earlier organic cultivation, but with the renewed drive towards a healthier lifestyle traffickers and hucksters are visibly in the forefront of contributing to this effort.

Policy makers and technocrats must take a new look at the small inter-island trade and locate it with the CARICOM, CDB, and OECS initiatives to enhance and collect data and compile trade statistics for the region. Traffickers must be made to take their place as business entities in the CSME and the trend of their trade's decline halted. In 1989 about 1200 traffickers and hucksters could be counted in the Windward Islands. In 2004 they number less than 300.

Our more educated and technically trained leaders find national social and economic challenges as intractable today, as did our charismatic leaders of yesterday. These problems have become more acute instead of diminishing. We are at this moment being reminded of our environmental vulnerability. This year wind and water left their mark on several other states of the region. This is happening while globalization and trade liberalization stalk our homes, streets and villages widening the gap between the rich and poor. We are now grasping for the CSME that we left behind in the euphoria and exuberance of nationalism. Our watch word has to be sustainable development of all of the region's peoples. Perhaps we can save what is left of 'the good ole days'. The women hucksters and traffickers remind us of how it can be.