

# CAISNews

*"An electronic newsletter of the Caribbean Agricultural Information Service (CAIS) to improve access to agricultural information in the Caribbean Region"*

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## **Introduction**

CAISNews focuses on activities associated with developing the capacity in information and communications management in the Caribbean region. Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) are important to us in the field on information science as such, two articles in this issue will report on ICT activities. Please remember that CAISNews is also available on the CAIS website [www.caisnet.org](http://www.caisnet.org) Many thanks to you our readers who sent feedback and remember your contributions are important in making this our newsletter. Let's keep communicating!

## **Agriculture, Gender and Information (ICTs)**

The Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA) holds annual consultative meetings to discuss ICT issues and policies related to African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. This year the meeting held in September 2002 focused on the topic "Gender". How are issues of Gender and ICTs linked? The facts show that women are greater in numbers in the total agricultural working population, however are marginalised with respect to access to ICTs for economic and social empowerment. Hence, the meeting studied the impact of ICT from a gender perspective and tried to identify ways in which ICTs can help empower rural women. Claudette de Freitas, Information Resources Manager and CAIS Regional Coordinator from CARDI Headquarters attended this meeting. Claudette said the following on the consultation "In juxtaposing the issues of gender, agriculture and ICTs, the meeting was successful in forcing participants to shift perspectives and recognise how the synergies associated with integrating these issues can assist us to solve development problems". An extract is provided below from the ISNAR Briefing Paper 55 with full article at <http://www.isnar.cgiar.org/publications/briefing/bp55.htm> or read more on the event website <http://www.agricta.org/observatory2002/index.htm>

### **Priority areas for gender, ICTs, and agriculture**

**Mainstreaming.** Gender must be mainstreamed in all development activities, from formulation and design through to implementation and evaluation. Ensuring the participation of poor rural women in these processes is key.

**Policy.** National policy on rural issues and ICTs should give high priority to actions that promote gender equity and provide an enabling environment for rural women to improve their livelihood opportunities.

**Access.** Affordable ICT infrastructure and support services must be brought to rural areas. Access to this infrastructure should be based on community priorities as well as local gender-sensitive principles.

**Content.** The knowledge of rural women is a valuable resource and driver of local livelihoods. Women have specific information and communication needs that should be explicitly recognized—and acted upon. The creation and exchange of local and locally relevant content by rural women themselves or customized to their needs (in local languages for example) should be top priority.

**Human capacities.** Education and learning opportunities should be made available to all rural women and men to realize the “education for all” principle. Girls and women should receive priority in ICT and related skill-development schemes, to ensure their active participation in rural development and in the information society.

**The real challenge is to converge efforts on gender, ICTs, and agriculture for rural development. By adopting these actions and priorities, poor rural women will finally be able to use ICTs in ways that improve food security and provide sustainable livelihoods and ultimately the quality of life in rural areas.**

*Extract from ISNAR Briefing paper No. 55  
September 2002*

### **Caribbean ICT Roundtable**

The second event which examined Information and Communication Technology (ICT) issues, was the Caribbean ICT Roundtable held in Barbados between 28-30 October 2002. The roundtable was organised by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA). The main purpose of the roundtable was to assess the needs and contents of a regional strategy for ICT development, and determine the next steps. The event also provided a forum for networking, and promotion of regional ICT projects and programs. Over 60 persons represented governments, private sector and civil society, regional and donor organisations, NGOs and institutions of higher education and a range of ICT professionals. Claudette de Freitas and Kelly Belgrove of CARDI Headquarters and the CAIS Secretariat attended the Roundtable. The English, French and Spanish speaking Caribbean were well represented with the appropriate translation facilities in place to allow total participation. There was a pre-event online discussion, which served as an

icebreaker/ introductory platform for the participants. Ideas on the pattern of the discussion were also exchanged. Feel free to visit the website <http://www.icamericas.net/workshops/caribbean> for further information and literature on ICTs.

The participants agreed to the formation of an open, permanent, virtual, **Caribbean ICT Working Group** committed to regional ICT development in the regional. This group will liaise with the various stakeholders and facilitate their input to define programs and activities. You are invited to join the online discussion.

## Second FAO COAIM

COAIM – Consultation on Agricultural Information Management, is a biannual inter-governmental meeting bringing together policy makers, funding agencies and other stakeholders in the fields of agricultural information. This second FAO organised consultation was held in September at FAO Headquarters. The FAO programme and the status of ongoing activities were outlined. However a number of representatives present raised concern about FAO's work at the bilateral level to provide support for countries national efforts in information management. Also raised was the need to provide information in languages other than English, in particular Spanish. There was a general call for increased emphasis on indigenous knowledge, integrating old and new technologies, and increasing the investment in agricultural information. Developing countries representation was generally low and the Caribbean countries were notably absent. Outside of the plenary session there were simultaneous events which examined in more details issues such as available agricultural technologies, gender and information management, rural radio, food security and ICTs in eradication of poverty. The CTA hosted a side event, which examined issues and options for senior managers. Further information on the consultation can be found [http://www.fao.org/coaim/index\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/coaim/index_en.htm)

## CAIS in the Countries

### *Barbados*

The Agricultural Information Service (AIS) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development submitted a proposal to the Secretariat for the development of their Question and Answer Service (QAS). Kelly Belgrove of the Secretariat met with Mark Byer and Samuel Inniss to review the proposal and discuss the future projects.

## Publications and Websites

### Websites

[www.claa.org](http://www.claa.org)

This website is the Caribbean Latin America Action who is preparing for the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Miami conference on the Caribbean basin.

[http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/topics/ebusiness/ecommerce/erural/index.htt](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/topics/ebusiness/ecommerce/erural/index.htt)

Information Society as Key Enabler for Rural development to be held on 25-26 November 2003 in Valencia

[www.online-information.co.uk](http://www.online-information.co.uk)

Provides information on the world's no.1 event for information professionals, librarians, researchers and knowledge managers that will be held 3-5 December 2002 at the Olympia Grand Hall, London, UK.

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