

CARICOM warned of potential food crisis

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, April 21, 2008 - The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries are being advised to work together if they want to survive the global food shortage affecting people across the entire world.

CARICOM Secretary-General Edwin Carrington said with the shortage of food now a global reality there may well come a time when, even though they have the money, Caribbean countries may not find food to buy.

"We have a virtual crisis situation on our hands. All hands must now come on deck - governments, private sector and civil society in partnership. We are going to have to change our consumption habit. It may appear difficult but we have to," he said, speaking ahead of the June 6 to 7 Regional Agriculture Investment Forum.

He added that the region's US\$3 billion food import bill could be lowered with investments in agriculture.

Meantime, Guyana's President and lead CARICOM Head of Government for Agriculture, Bharrat Jagdeo, stressed that the event is not a "knee jerk reaction" to the rising food prices across the globe.

He added that for too long there has been talk about maximising the potential of agriculture but this has not come to reality.

Mr Jagdeo said it is now time to put measures in place to attract more investors to the sector, adding that agriculture has a central role to play in regional countries seeking to reap the rewards of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

Chairman of the Task Force to plan the Forum and former executive of Grace Kennedy in Jamaica, James Moss-Solomon, added that the Caribbean has to develop the mechanisms to deal with the increasing challenges with regard to food security.

The Regional Agriculture Investment Forum takes place in Guyana, and will bring together private investors from the Caribbean and elsewhere; fund managers and venture capitalists seeking to diversify their portfolio; bankers with clients operating in the agriculture sector and companies seeking strategic alliances with other businesses.



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