

# Implementing Sustainable Farming Practices in Trinidad's Northern Range Communities (EcoAgriCulture) Project

Research and Capacity-building issues for  
mainstreaming sustainable farming practices in  
T&T

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Auzonville Conference Centre, Tunapuna

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<http://tcf sustainablefarming.weebly.com/>

# EcoAgriCulture Project

## Background

- Objective is to assist farming communities and stakeholders in addressing some of the key issues related to implementing and adopting good farming practices in T&T
- Issues outlined are based primarily on the experiences of the EcoAgriCulture Project
- Focus is on implementing and adopting sustainable farming practices at the small scale (<10 ha) and community level
- Framed in the context of national and regional agriculture and related issues



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## Defining Sustainable Farming Practices (SFPs)



Focus on short term economic sustainability equally important. Practices should be economically beneficial to farmers

Livelihood opportunities must be economically and socially attractive to keep persons involved in agriculture

Practices should reflect awareness of impact on the surrounding environment

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## Farming Practices

What we found:

- A strong desire among farmers to better understand the economic impacts of practices that are being promoted
- Farmers generally appreciate the long-term benefits of SFPs
- Farmers are concerned about the short-term costs associated with transitioning to more sustainable farming



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## Farming Practices

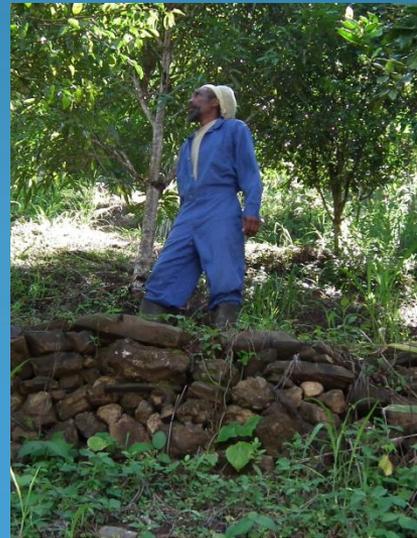
### Needs

- **Evidence based case studies** on the benefits and costs of adopting SFPs
  - Benefits described in a manner relevant to farmer
- Case studies should highlight success and challenges, and how these were overcome

Quddus  
Muhammed,  
Caura Valley  
Farmer



Bruce  
Herbert,  
Maracas  
Valley  
Farmer



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## Farming Practices

### Needs

- Projects for engaging farmers in **on-farm research** to generate case study data
- **Adopt FFS approach** where farmers contribute part of their land for linking practices to farm production costs



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## Farming Practices

### Needs

- Requisite for this is continuous technical support for farmers

- **Opportunities for public private partnerships** for example collaboration between civil society and MFPMLA extension services

- **Opportunities for engaging in research that is done in the context of real-world and daily issues** that the farmer has to manage



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## Farming Practices

### Needs

- Livelihood sustainability needs to consider the changing variables that affect agriculture
- Adaptation and resilience of farming systems to climate and other environmental changes is still largely unexplored



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## Farming Practices

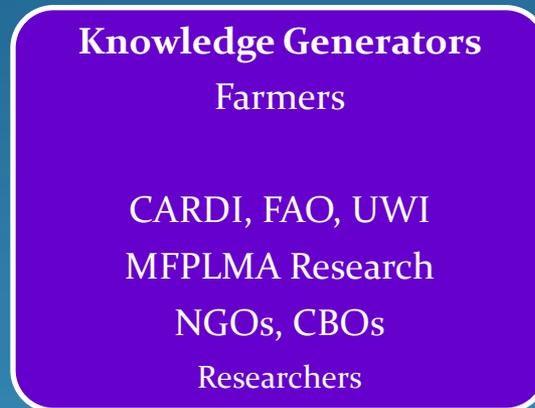
### Needs

- **Research:** investigate crop suitability based on conditions such as soil moisture, evapotranspiration rates and rainfall amount and duration
- **Research:** investigate crops which help to achieve key conservation objectives
- Opportunities for **long term partnership projects** involving farmers and research institutions e.g. CARDI, UWI, MFPLMA, CANARI

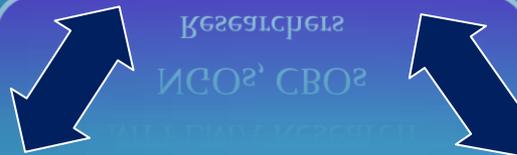
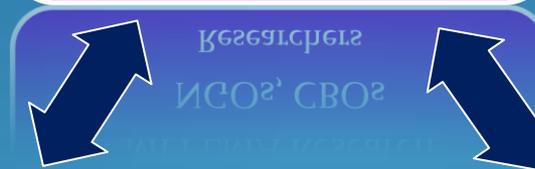
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## Sharing and Networking Among Actors

Sharing experiences on the adoption of SFPs is an effective way of promoting the use of these practices



Successful, long term, and countrywide adoption of SFPs requires effective communication and sharing among actors



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## Sharing and Networking Among Actors

What we found:

- Relationships tend to be strong among farmers
- Farmer to farmer interaction represents a major form of information transfer
  - Information sharing is more effective when farmers speak directly to each other
  - Farmers ask for the information that they are interested in
- Relationships between farmer and extension workers vary and depends on how relationship is contextualized
- Transfer of knowledge from research institution to farmer is limited

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## Sharing and Networking Among Actors

### Needs:

- Demonstration of a farming method in practice in the context of other 'real-world' issues is a power tool for promoting SFPs
  - **Opportunity:** Farm to farm visits – local and regional (e.g. IICA). Options for facilitating these?
  - Farmer exchanges can be facilitated through Farmer's Networks
  - **Research:** Social and governance issues that
    - (i) cause the breakdown of Farmer Networks,
    - (ii) requisites for the success of farmer networks



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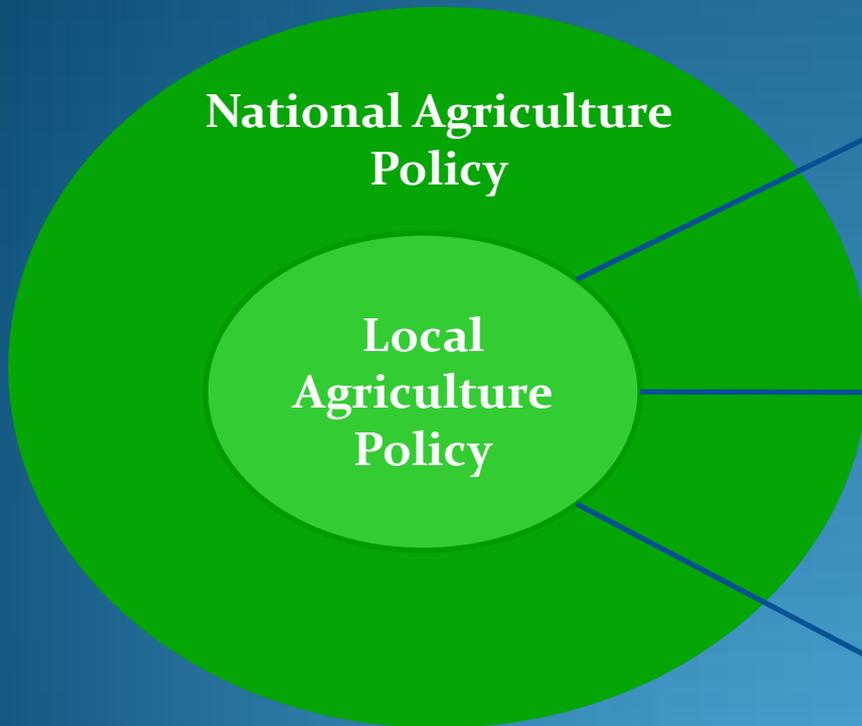
## Sharing and Networking Among Actors

### Needs:

- Extension services are the link between research institutions and farmers
- In practice this linkage is very weak
  - Knowledge generated by project and research institutions are inaccessible to farmers
- **Research:** Formalized partnerships between research institutions and extension services. Is there an appropriate extension partnership framework?
- **Research:** Mapping of the linkages among actors, and identifying reasons for weak or absent linkages.
  - Understanding linkages towards creating appropriate partnership frameworks

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*Policy – process, content and practice*

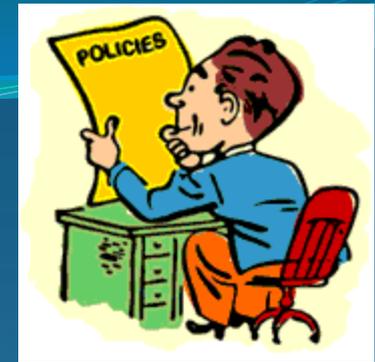


Farmer-led and reflecting goals and aspirations for farming - flexible formulations

Policy regulation and enforcement a key concern - who will manage?

Capacity needs and other enabling factors of Farmers Organisations for policy regulation and enforcement

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## *Policy – process, content and practice*

- National Policy in support of the long term adoption and mainstreaming of SFPs
  - Where are SFPs on the political priority agenda of the gov't?
  - How to raise the profile of SFPs in the gov't?
  - How to move from projectised basis to nationwide basis?
  - Are policies cross sectoral to effectively address the sustainability aspect?
  - How can gov't incentivize farmers to adopt SFPs?
  - Consumer information on relating farming practices to health issues

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## Summary

- Significant effort needs to be placed on strengthening the institutional framework supporting agriculture
  - Communication and cooperation is a key challenge for organizations in T&T
- Strengthen/ implement mechanisms that help to ensure good governance
  - Accountability, transparency, inclusiveness
- Responsibility for adoption and implementation of SFPs is ultimately the farmers'
  - Needs strong and long-term system of technical and resource support to build farmers
  - And a long term strategic goal for agriculture

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Thank You.

Questions?