

Expanding Caribbean Business in the  
Global Marketplace

**OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH**



## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Philip Williams

Executive Director  
Caribbean Export

I remain conscious of the need for the Agency to have a clear sense of direction – a succinct, but simple mission and vision, a few clear objectives and a medium-term strategy for achieving its objectives, mission and vision.

Our current challenge is to develop a strategy for moving the Agency forward during the next few years. This challenge is multi-faceted, but includes the following: (1) a re-branding of Caribbean Export in a way that connects with both its public and private sector stakeholders and clients; (2) a roadmap, not only one that identifies the objectives to be achieved, but one that incorporates a mechanism for evaluating when the objectives have been satisfactorily achieved; and, (3) internal alignment which provides the flexibility needed for effective execution of programmes and communication of our accomplishments to our various publics regionally and internationally.

“Expanding Caribbean Business in the Global Marketplace” represents the first step in the process to develop an Agency Strategic Plan. This document is a position paper, a snapshot of the Agency’s priorities and direction. It seeks to inform stakeholders – member states, CARICOM Secretariat, CARIFORUM Directorate, OECS Secretariat, our exporter and investor clients, national promotional and business support organisations, international and regional development partners and the general public – about the work of Caribbean Export and our current priorities and directions.

This document offers a summary of how we plan to proceed in our work programme for 2010 – 2013.

We hope that this initial document will be the subject of discussion by you, our stakeholders, whose views will be sought during the coming months as we work to expand this material into a full-fledged strategic plan for Caribbean Export for the period 2010-2013. In addition to further consultation with stakeholders, we will draw on specialised international inputs to help position the Agency’s trade and investment promotion role in the context of current and anticipated global developments. Funding indications from regional and international sources will also provide a reality check in terms of what strategies it will be possible for us to pursue, given our likely resource capacity.

We welcome your contribution to the efforts of Caribbean Export to better meet the trade and investment promotion needs of the businesses in the 15 member states of CARIFORUM.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific countries
ACS	Association of Caribbean States
BSO	Business Support Organisation
CAIPA	Caribbean Association of Investment Promotion Agencies
CARIBISNET	Caribbean Business and Investment Support Network
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARIFORUM	Caribbean Forum of ACP States
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEDP	CARICOM Export Development Project
CRTDP	CARICOM Regional Trade Development Programme
CSME	Caribbean Single Market and Economy
DR	Dominican Republic
OECS-EDU	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States – Export Development Unit
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
FCOR	French Caribbean Outermost Region
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IP	Intellectual Property
IPA	Investment Promotion Agency
OCTs	Overseas Countries and Territories
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
TPO	Trade Promotion Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

The uncertainty in the global economic environment and sluggish or negative regional economic growth make it imperative that the small economies of the Caribbean become more competitive. These global realities have impacted the region in significant ways: increasing the price of food and fuel, diminishing income from key economic sectors such as tourism, and reducing foreign investment, development aid and remittances. The cumulative impact of these threatens the development of the Region in the short term.

Commitments under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have also modified the trade relationships between the Caribbean and our traditional trading partners. In particular, the gradual erosion of preferential access to traditional markets has emphasised the need for Caribbean countries to enter into reciprocal bi-lateral arrangements. Over the last few years, Caribbean countries have therefore begun the process of re-negotiating agreements with some of their major trading partners. The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) is now in place with the European Union and there are plans to negotiate new trade agreements with Canada and the United States of America.

The implementation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) also opens many doors and provides untapped opportunities for trade in goods and services, both regionally and in promoting a more cohesive and integrated approach in the global marketplace. Most successful exporting countries have first developed nearby regional markets before venturing into more distant markets. Similarly, much foreign direct investment can be derived from markets nearby and even from the deepening of investment by existing foreign investors.

Most Caribbean businesses are small or medium sized enterprises (SMEs). They generally lack the

modern management and business processes that promote efficiency, product quality and cost competitiveness. Their development and ability to take advantage of opportunities and technological advances are also hampered by limited exposure to standards, market requirements and best practices in their fields. Addressing these issues is therefore essential if they are to survive and thrive in the globalised environment. This also helps to increase employment and economic activity in their individual countries and in the region as a whole.

The small size and relatively limited capacity of our region presents both challenges and opportunities. A very small percentage share of a major market will make a huge difference to most regional exporters and a modest level of investment from a global company could be a significant source of new employment opportunities for the region.

If our Region is to reap benefits from global trade liberalisation and integration, we must enhance our competitiveness; this is true both for exports of our goods and services, as well as for our attractiveness as a destination for foreign investment. In order to do this we must address some of the critical issues which affect the Region's ability to be competitive at policy, institutional and enterprise levels. The Caribbean must urgently remove or reduce disincentives such as high production costs, poor quality infrastructure and ineffective policy and institutional arrangements which adversely affect enterprise development.

It is in this context that Caribbean Export's mandate and role take on a greater level of significance as we seek to provide strategic guidance to the CARIFORUM region in fostering an enabling policy environment, building competitive firms, promoting investment opportunities and strengthening key institutions and networks.

The Caribbean Export Development Agency is the only regional trade and investment promotion agency in the African, Caribbean and Pacific<sup>1</sup> (ACP) group. The Agency was established in 1996 by an Inter-Governmental Agreement as the trade promotion Agency of the 15 Member States of CARIFORUM<sup>2</sup>. At the 14th CARIFORUM Council of Ministers meeting in July 2005, Ministers agreed to an amendment of the Inter-Governmental Agreement to include an investment promotion function in the mandate of Caribbean Export.

Caribbean Export has evolved over the past twenty (20) years from an Implementing Management Unit of the CARICOM Regional Trade Development Programme (CRTDP) as established in 1988, to the CARICOM Export Development Project (CEDP), which in 1996 became the Caribbean Export Development Agency.

Caribbean Export is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Member States from the public and private sectors. The Board is accountable to the CARIFORUM Council of Ministers. The Agency's membership base consists of the fifteen (15) Member States of CARIFORUM. We have also established collaborative links with the French Caribbean Outermost Regions (FCORs), with the English and Dutch Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) and with Cuba.

Our Head Office is located in Barbados and we also have a Sub-Regional Office in the Dominican Republic. Our operations are financed through annual contributions from Member States, donor funds and revenue generated from the Agency's services.

## 2.1. How we work

With a focus on enabling greater competitiveness within the private sector, our Agency has a major role to play in regional development and integration. We partner with both public and private sector agencies at national, sub-regional, regional and international levels which have a mandate to support trade and investment.

At national levels we have been instrumental in forming Caribbean Export Councils in each Member State in order to guide Caribbean Export's work programme. The membership of these Councils is drawn from key trade and investment stakeholders in the public and private sectors. We also work closely with Business Support Organisations (BSOs) to foster an enabling environment within which the private sector can achieve success.

- 1 See further Pacific Islands Trade and Investment Commission NZ <http://www.pitic.org.nz/About+Us.html>
- 2 Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Commonwealth of Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago





# 3 OUR STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

## Our Vision

*Caribbean Export is a catalyst for regional economic prosperity through strategic interventions on export development and trade and investment promotion.*

## Our Mission

*To increase the competitiveness of Caribbean countries by providing quality export development and trade and investment promotion services through effective programme execution and strategic alliances.*

### 3.1 Key Result Areas and Goals

- Fostering an enabling environment – for trade and investment within the region through regional integration, cooperation and advocacy initiatives designed to position the region more effectively in the world economy.
- Enhancing Competitiveness - Increase the competitiveness of firms in CARIFORUM countries in selected sectors through investment, management and product development, market expansion and export diversification.
- Promoting Investment - Promote the Caribbean region as a prime destination for intra and extra-regional investment.
- Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Networking - Enhance the capacity of public and private sector BSOs, particularly sector associations, trade promotion organisations and investment promotion agencies, and support the development of vibrant Caribbean business networks to improve services to clients.

To achieve our goals, Caribbean Export collaborates with a range of partners and stakeholders at national, regional and international levels.

At the **National level** we collaborate with relevant government ministries and other public and private sector agencies which provide assistance for business, trade or investment development. These include the official trade and investment promotion agencies, sector associations, and other BSOs. We will establish Caribbean Export Councils with stakeholders in all member states.

At the **Regional level**, we collaborate with agencies whose work, mandate and objectives complement ours. Our partners include the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and CARICOM

organisations, sub-regional agencies such as the OECS Export Development Unit (EDU) and inter-governmental agencies, as well as regional public and private sector agencies.

Our partners at the **International level** provide both technical assistance and financial support. The European Union and other bi-lateral organisations provide funding for many of our project and programme initiatives. Through the establishment of private sector led Steering Committees we ensure the relevance of donor funded projects to clients and their successful implementation. We also partner with multilateral and international bodies in areas of mutual interest, while seeking to develop programmes which will contribute to our own sustainability.





Our programme priorities include:

- Fostering an enabling environment
- Enhancing competitiveness
- Promoting investment and
- Strengthening institutional capacity and networking

### 5.1 Fostering an Enabling Environment for Trade and Investment

At Caribbean Export, one of our key priorities is promoting the integration of CARIFORUM countries and using this as a bridge for integration into the global economy. Making trade linkages easier and more effective is at the heart of this integration. It includes enhancing cooperation both within CARIFORUM as well as between CARIFORUM and the FCORs, OCTs, Latin American Countries and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), particularly with countries with which CARIFORUM Member States have bilateral Trade Agreements.

Agreements that affect trade both within and outside the region (EPA, CSME, CARICOM-Canada and CARICOM-DR) provide opportunities for marketing the quality goods and services which the Caribbean offers. Our programmes and projects will support member countries not only in implementing trade agreements, but in exploiting the opportunities presented.

Caribbean Export can help member countries, especially the Less Developed Countries of the OECS, to overcome some of the existing barriers to trade. We can also assist companies and entrepreneurs to understand and take advantage of trade agreements to benefit their individual

businesses and the region as a whole. We are committed to addressing policy issues in two ways. First, we work with other regional and national organisations to create a more favourable regional policy environment. Second, we seek to strengthen organisations and companies so that they can achieve more effective penetration of regional and international markets.

Our support for regional integration, cooperation and advocacy initiatives aimed at positioning the Region more effectively for trade and investment in the world economy includes the following strategies:

- Building awareness of trade policy issues relating to major trade agreements for the CARIFORUM Region through sensitisation workshops, studies and technical assistance in specific sectors, so as to enable businesses to exploit opportunities within these agreements.
- Undertaking trade policy advocacy initiatives for goods and services including collaboration on the development and implementation of a CARIFORUM trade and development programme.
- Promoting cooperation between the CARIFORUM business sector and that of the FCORs and OCTs through joint initiatives and studies aimed at encouraging businesses to maximise intra-Caribbean trade opportunities.
- Improving the enabling and regulatory environment for private sector development, including studies to determine bottlenecks, and stakeholder meetings to determine action.

"A new global and regional trade environment presents the Caribbean countries with critical challenges, but also many opportunities to reposition themselves as a growing and competitive region, translating into significant economic and social gains."

**Yvonne Tsikata,**  
World Bank Director for the Caribbean.

*We anticipate that our initiatives to foster an Enabling Environment for Trade and Investment will result in:*

- Businesses that are empowered and are exploiting the opportunities within trade agreements and are taking advantage of trade and investment opportunities between the sub-regions (CARIFORUM/ FCORs/OCTs).
- Business concerns effectively reflected in trade policy formulation.
- A harmonised and streamlined enabling environment which facilitates private sector development.

## 5.2 Enhancing Competitiveness

Caribbean Export seeks to increase the competitiveness of firms in CARIFORUM countries in priority sectors through investment, market expansion, product development and export diversification. We aim to 'promote CARIFORUM excellence to the world!' We address the constraints in the enabling environment as well as the direct challenges that companies face.

Caribbean Export's strategy is to help companies address shortfalls in business processes that

result in poor product and service quality, low productivity and relatively high production and transport costs. We recognise that the OECS countries have more limited capacity and we seek to work in partnership with the OECS Export Development Unit (EDU) to ensure that they benefit from services offered.

While Caribbean Export will continue to provide assistance to the traditional sectors such as handicraft and processed foods, we aim to foster greater innovation and to stimulate the development of high value-added products. We place special emphasis on sectors, niche markets or high value-added products where the region can gain a competitive advantage.

We will continue to support the development of regional sector associations and networks so as to generate greater synergy for the use of limited resources and help them to maximise opportunities for their respective memberships.

### Priority Sector Areas

- Creative Industries:
  - Fashion and Design
  - Music
  - Film and Audio-visual
- Health and Wellness
- Professional services:
  - Management Consultants
  - Architects and Engineers
- Information & Communications Technology
- Handicraft
- Processed Foods
- Alternative Energy
- Sports Tourism

We aim to increase the competitiveness of firms in CARIFORUM countries in selected sectors by:

- Building the knowledge and capacity of companies to competitively produce and deliver selected goods and services for the export market by providing training and technical assistance related to management, standards, market requirements and best practices, so as to enable them to better meet the demands of clients and customers.

to keep companies informed about emerging trends and issues in the international arena.

- Enhancing the operations and competitiveness of CARIFORUM companies through the use of ICT and other innovative solutions so that they are better able to position themselves effectively in the virtual marketplace.

*We anticipate that our initiatives to enhance competitiveness will result in:*

- Increased exports
- Improved collaboration between BSOs and firms, and expanded market access for CARIFORUM goods and services
- Effective utilisation by companies of trade information and market intelligence to increase their access to markets
- Increased benefits to companies through the development of common marketing platforms and cost reduction through cluster activity
- Integrated production processes enabling companies to collaborate in production of goods and services

**"The Caribbean must strive to become more competitive to fully reap the benefits of global trade integration".**

**World Bank Study 2009**

- Building the knowledge and capacity of the Business Support Organisations and Coalitions to provide training and technical assistance which will assist companies to expand market access for CARIFORUM goods and services.
- Exposing CARIFORUM goods and services producers in selected sectors to the regional and global marketplace through trade shows and trade missions.
- Providing financial and technical assistance to promote innovation and exports. Our grant programme has already helped scores of companies to re-tool, develop and implement marketing strategies, and to undertake key initiatives which increased their competitiveness. We will also promote the use of Intellectual Property (IP) as a tool to enhance competitiveness.
- Improving access of companies to market intelligence on trade in the regional and global marketplace through market and product briefs, online databases and directories. Our signature publications – Tradewatch and Tradewins – are increasingly important tools

### 5.3 Promoting Investment

The Caribbean is a Region of widely dispersed countries with small populations. Efforts to promote investment will therefore inevitably encounter unique challenges. Our emphasis will be on activities which are best undertaken at regional or sub-regional rather than at national levels.

Improvements in the business climate will be essential to attract investors and the types of investment that can contribute to sustainable business development. Investment promotion will be particularly important for the development of new export goods and services.



The Caribbean Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (CAIPA) was launched in 2007 to facilitate the collaboration of regional investment promotion agencies (IPAs). Caribbean Export was requested and agreed to host the secretariat of CAIPA. Caribbean Export will facilitate CAIPA's role in providing services which individual IPAs in the Region would not have the resources to access on their own.

We aim to promote the Caribbean as a prime destination for intra and extra-regional investment through:

- Facilitating the operations of CAIPA in promoting a viable investment culture and approach in and among CARIFORUM countries by ensuring CAIPA's institutional capacity and establishing an independent regional dispute arbitration and resolution agency.
- Fostering the development of a regional enabling environment for investment in CARIFORUM countries through addressing issues of standards, protocols and codes of practice. We will also undertake research to identify areas and niche opportunities where the Caribbean can gain competitive advantage.
- Marketing the region as a viable investment destination to attract both investment and investors through the coordination of regional marketing programmes, as well as by providing information on resources

and opportunities which will maximise the competitive advantage of each country.

- Building the capacities of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) through professional technical advice, study tours, benchmarking and training, so that they can be more effective in facilitating investment opportunities by regional and international investors.

*We anticipate that our initiatives to foster investment will result in:*

- Adoption of a clear regional policy that facilitates investment throughout the region
- A cohesive regional approach to investment promotion and resolution of disputes
- Easily accessible information on Caribbean investment opportunities by investors
- Technically advanced companies being attracted to the region
- A competitive advantage in investment promotion by smaller countries in the Region
- Establishment of the image of Caribbean as a world-class investment location

#### 5.4 Strengthening Institutional Capacity, Coordination and Networks

Partnership is a key strategic approach for Caribbean Export, especially with business support organisations (BSOs) which can play a leading role in delivering trade, investment and development services to their membership and clients. BSOs have direct contact with their memberships – whether these are individual entrepreneurs, companies or sector associations and groupings, including trade promotion organisations, investment promotion

agencies, Chambers of Commerce or industrial development corporations. Since the capacity of BSOs varies among countries and sectors, Caribbean Export seeks to assess and address specific needs and concerns and to provide appropriate levels of support.

Caribbean Export recognises the opportunities for business in emerging sectors. We continue to encourage and support new BSO networks and associations and to address operational issues that provide greater access to markets and resources. We have taken the lead in fostering and supporting the development of networks among stakeholder groups at both sector and functional levels.

Collaboration and coordination are essential for maximising the region's limited human and financial resources. We will serve as a clearing-house for information related to trade and investment in the region. We will also work in partnership with sub-regional agencies such as the OECS-EDU to ensure that the concerns of the OECS countries are addressed.

Our Agency also seeks to deepen our engagement with member states by establishing Caribbean Export Councils with stakeholders in member states and collaborating with umbrella bodies where these exist. Councils have so far been established in most Caribbean countries. We encourage our Board members and the Councils to make every effort to ensure that the interests of each member state are addressed.

ICT is a critical tool to facilitate linkages and exchanges of information and best practices. In this regard the Caribbean Investment and Business Support Network (CARIBISNET) is intended to be a web-based network with a dedicated web portal to facilitate information exchange and linkages on trade and business development within the CARIFORUM region, as well as between CARIFORUM and the EU and ACP countries. Our activities for strengthening institutional capacity, coordination and networks include:

- Enabling BSOs to be more effective in delivering export and investment services to their members through enhancing management capacities, facilitating BSOs' participation in promotional and study tours, and helping them to organise sector specific seminars and conferences for selected areas. We will also support existing IPAs and TPOs and promote the establishment of new ones.
- Improving coordination and networking initiatives among BSOs, including membership of Caribbean Export Councils, and also of CARIBISNET. Such networking approaches will facilitate the exchange of best practices and will also contribute to regional integration.
- Supporting the development and growth of sector networks – especially in the selected areas where there is great market potential. This will assist budding networks to take advantage of emerging opportunities, to gain competitive advantage through the sharing of resources and services and to demonstrate early benefits to their membership. In order to maximise export opportunities, we will continue to facilitate matchmaking exercises and to facilitate study tours and trade missions.

*We anticipate that our initiatives to strengthen institutional capacity, coordination and networks will result in:*

- Better coordinated annual work programmes at national level
- Sector networks making significant strides in extra-regional markets
- BSOs and sector networks assisting companies to gain competitive advantage
- Increased investment in emerging areas

At Caribbean Export, our staff reflect the diversity of our CARIFORUM region. Our staff bring a multidisciplinary approach and experience to our programme implementation. We also draw on external consultants to assist us in responding to the specialist needs of our stakeholders and clients.

In addition to the Management Team, each of the technical officers has both sector and country level responsibilities. This arrangement facilitates the use of their technical skills across the region, as well as an integrated approach to activities at the country level.

Information and communication technology will enable our Agency to monitor trends and emerging needs. An integrated client management system will also enable us to streamline our operations so that we can respond effectively to the needs of clients and stakeholders.

We have developed a communication and public relations initiative for "Taking Caribbean Excellence to the World". This will enable our Agency to better promote its work and results to our stakeholders.







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