

Remarks by The Honourable Indar Weir, MBA, M.P.
Minister of Agriculture and Food Security at the
Caribbean Nutrition Conference 2018
Tour of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security'
Medicinal Plants Gardens - June 8, 2018

It is indeed a pleasure and an honour to speak to you on the occasion of the Caribbean Nutrition Conference 2018. It is my understanding that the region we live in has the dubious honour of having the highest rate of non-communicable diseases in the Americas. It is also thought, that these alarming rates are positively correlated with inter alia, poor diet and nutrition.

I note that whilst there has been much activity as it relates to the link between agriculture and tourism, the nexus between agriculture and health and wellness has not been pursued with the said vigor (at least from my perspective)

Ladies and gentlemen I am sure that we all agree that agriculture is critical for good health, agriculture produces food and fibre for human consumption thus the availability

and consumption of healthy nutritious food can considerably reduce the prevalence of non-communicable diseases as well as other maladies, concomitantly the absence of healthy nutritious foods can contribute to malnutrition.

As Minister of Agriculture, it is my intention to intensify efforts to strengthen the linkages between agriculture and health and wellness. To this end, I support the thrust by the Ministry to encourage householders to grow their own food, this effort is focused on providing householders with fresh fruits and vegetables devoid of excessive amounts of pesticides and chemical fertilizers as well as providing them with a measure of physical activity which is also an important facet of maintaining good health.

Ladies and gentlemen, whilst the traditional agricultural crops will be promoted it is the intention of the government (as you would have seen in our manifesto and heard in the

throne speech) to pursue efforts in the area of medical marijuana. To this end the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will soon be embarking on, and putting in place the requisite mechanisms to realize this objective. I shall elaborate on this area at a later date.

Having noted the evident link between agriculture and health via the increased intake of healthy fresh and nutritious foods one of the challenges we face is having food available in quantities and at affordable prices for our people.

As I drive around the island I note the large tracts of idle arable land, which must be returned to production if we are to supply our citizens with healthy foods at affordable prices; it is therefore the intention of the government to put measures in place that will encourage the return of these lands to production and discourage the tendency to leave

lands idle for protracted periods and then endeavor to have the usage changed from agriculture to other areas of activity.

The Government will also seek to provide incentives to farmers in relevant areas such as the use of renewable forms of energy, which can demonstrate a direct link with agriculture as well as reduced prices to the consumer.

In closing, I wish to thank you for having me this morning and I look forward to further participation in activities aimed at fostering and enhancing all possible linkages between agriculture and health and wellness.

I wish you an informative and enjoyable tour of our medicinal plants gardens and a successful Caribbean Nutrition Conference 2018.