

**FEATURE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE HON. INDAR WEIR, M.P.,  
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY SEMINAR HELD  
BY THE INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION  
ON AGRICULTURE (IICA) ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 2018  
IN THE MINISTRY'S CONFERENCE ROOM**

The Hon. Dale Marshall, M.P., Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

Mrs. Ena Harvey, IICA's Representative to Barbados

Dr. Godfrey Xuereb, PAHO/WHO Representative

Dr. Lystra Fletcher-Paul, FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator for the Caribbean

Mr. Stephen O'Malley, Resident Coordinator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Mr. Juan Carlos De la Hoz Vina, Representative Inter-American Development Bank

Ambassador Linda S. Taglialatela, Chief of the US. Mission to Barbados, the OECS, US Embassy of Barbados.

H.E. Ambassador Mikael Barfod, Head of Delegation, European Union of OECS

Permanent Secretaries

Mr. Lennox Chandler, Chief Agricultural Officer

Heads of Sections

Specially Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

I am especially pleased to address you this morning on the occasion of the Annual Accountability Seminar held by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. This is my first opportunity to address agricultural stakeholders since coming to office and I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you and especially Ministry Officials for the warm welcome that I have received.

I am told that this accountability seminar provides IICA with the opportunity to meet and engage with its stakeholders on an annual basis; to report and update them on some of the results of their technical cooperation activities as part of its mission to encourage, promote and support member states in their individual efforts to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being. For the seventy six (76) years that IICA has been in existence in Latin America and the Caribbean,

Barbados has been fortunate to have IICA operating on its shores for the past forty (40) years contributing to the Agri-food and rural sectors.

IICA's mission in those early years remains relevant today as it continues to respond to the new demands of the agricultural sector in Barbados. Its presence over the last two decades has been marked by a strong emphasis on strengthening national and regional Agricultural Health and Food Safety Systems; promoting the involvement of youth in agribusiness with National Vocational Qualification training and certification; hosting of an annual Youth Farm Summer Programme since 2012; supporting value chain development for the iconic Barbados Blackbelly Sheep; Agro-tourism linkages and more recently, introducing Innovation and Technology for sustainable and climate smart agriculture.

I wish to thank and commend IICA for the sterling work it has successfully undertaken over the years, working in partnership with the Ministry and other stakeholders to implement its programmes. I note with interest that this seminar will highlight some of the strides made to improve the production of the Barbados blackbelly sheep and the advances achieved with the beekeeping programme. I therefore eagerly

look forward to hearing IICA's Accountability Report on these activities and its priorities for future work and collaboration with this Ministry.

As we know, agriculture plays a key role in the development and prosperity of a country in helping to alleviate poverty and achieve food security. The Committee on World Food Security (2012) defines food security as a situation "when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". Indeed, food security is an immediate and future priority for all countries worldwide and it presents a constant challenge for Barbados, a country with scarce natural resources, in its efforts to meet the food and nutritional needs of its population.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we seek to develop food security initiatives, I want us to ensure that our efforts are coordinated, clear and collaborative so that ultimately, we can achieve success. I want to emphasize that it is fundamental to sustainable development that all farmers be at the centre of policy-making and new strategies because they are the source of our food security and are responsible for producing the food we eat. However, achieving food security with the availability, accessibility and affordability of sufficient food for all is a

responsibility that must be shared by governments, researchers, businesses and civil society.

My Government recognizes that a thriving and productive agricultural sector is important to national food security and vital to the economic and social development of our country. We will therefore seek to provide new entrants to the sector with incentives, capitalize the industry and devise innovative approaches to cultivation and production to ensure that agriculture becomes a viable career option for young people.

Food security is not only about the quantity of food we consume, it is also about the quality and diversity of that food. Traditionally, nutrition security has been viewed as the realm of the health professionals. However, farmers have always been the first nutrient providers and will continue to perform a vital role in the entire agri-food chain in order to address the nutritional challenge. If progress is to be made in the drive for adequate food, good nutrition, good health and sustainable growth, then these three sectors, farming, nutrition and health must work together.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all know that agriculture is highly sensitive to climate and that any changes to our temperatures and weather patterns threaten the future of farming and agriculture as we know it. You will recall the severe drought situation in Barbados a few years ago, when the crops, animals and the poultry industry in particular, suffered immensely from the dry and hot conditions precipitated by climate change. Achieving food security in the face of climate change is therefore one of our greatest challenges as our critical resources, primarily water, energy and land become increasingly scarce.

It has been suggested that agriculture has become part of the problem of global warming resulting in climate change through the use of fertilizers, ruminant digestion, fuel use and land clearing for agriculture. There is therefore the view that we in the agricultural sector must be part of the solution to climate change by adopting practices that are “climate smart”. Climate smart means agriculture that sustainably increases productivity and resilience to environmental pressures while finding ways to reduce its environmental impact by lowering its own greenhouse gas emissions without compromising food security.

Given the expected changes in temperature precipitation and the influx of pests associated with climate change, the global community is called upon to increase investment in research, development and technologies to improve the sustainability of food systems everywhere. It will be incumbent upon all agricultural stakeholders to build the resilience of local food systems which will be critical to averting large-scale future shortages and ensuring food security and good nutrition for all.

Before concluding, I must share with you my Government's intention to make provision for the production of marijuana and other plants for medicinal purposes. Indeed, more and more countries are passing laws providing for the use of marijuana as a medicine to treat a range of medical complaints including headaches, muscle spasm, nausea from cancer chemotherapy, poor appetite and nerve pain. I strongly support the strict monitoring of the drug so as to discourage any rampant misuse as I am aware that its status is still shrouded in controversy and remains illegal in some countries.

Across the region, marijuana has emerged as an issue of social and economic significance and will become a subject for discussion at the upcoming CARICOM Summit to be held in Jamaica in July 2018. I know that St. Vincent and the Grenadines has legalized marijuana while

Jamaica has decriminalized small quantities as well as made provision for research. Indeed, my team here at the Ministry is currently engaged in the preparation of a comprehensive paper on the benefits of medicinal plants and the potential value chain to be derived from them.

In closing, I trust that IICA Barbados will continue to support the Government of Barbados in the promotion of sustainable livelihood through agriculture and thus, help to realize the vision of a bright future for Barbados. I wish the Institute continued success in the future.

Thank You.