The Testimony of an External Observer

Bruce Lauckner

CARDI
This school has been a very educational experience

- The diverse Caribbean (English, French, Dutch, Spanish) are very close but very far apart
- Martinique and Guadeloupe are part of a chain of islands
- All the other Lesser Antilles are former U.K. colonies
Martinique and Guadeloupe have very similar (identical) agronomic conditions to their neighbours (particularly Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada). But socially, politically there are huge differences.

We are aware of the F.W.I. interest in Agro-ecology and have taken part in some of the discussions on the CAWAI network. CAWAI = Caribbean Network for Agro-ecology and Innovation.
One of the learning experiences for me has been the different types of agro-ecology systems described. However, many of the systems described here would not work in the English speaking Caribbean.

Our agriculture has these features:

- Most farms are very small (5ha is "large")
- Usually there is little or no farm mechanisation
- Emphasis is on improving food security
"Our" challenges are:

1. Getting farmers to produce a regular supply
2. Land availability
3. Soil degradation (erosion, loss of nutrient status)
4. Pest and disease problems
5. Climate problems (floods, droughts etc.)
6. Labour
Various agro-ecological systems are in use or have been tried

1. Mixed cropping
2. Mulching
3. Shade crops (trees)
4. Organic systems (traditional system for small farmer)
5. Large organic systems (have often failed)
6. Cut and carry systems (for livestock)
The term "agro-ecology" is not in common use in the CARDI Member Countries, but the following agro-ecological systems are often found:

- IPM
- Minimum tillage
- Intensive and semi-intensive livestock production systems
- Organic fertilisers
- Mulching
When we consider agricultural development we go beyond crop and animal production. For example, I have not heard the terms below, during this meeting, but we have them at the forefront of our considerations.

1. Market demands
2. Export requirements
3. Post harvest
4. Value chain
AN AGRO-ECOLOGY SCHOOL FOR THE CARICOM COUNTRIES

- We need more exposure to agro-ecological concepts
- At the farmer, extension, teacher level
- At the policy maker level (these react to the public)
- Don’t start with the academics
OUTLINE OF AN AGRO-ECOLOGY ‘SCHOOL’ FOR ALL THE CARIBBEAN

1. Concepts (simply explained)
2. A few case studies from elsewhere (with the understanding that these may or may not fit)
3. Some systems in use (which may not be recognised as agroecological systems)
4. Interact with farmers and teachers to design new systems to be tested
5. Build in concepts of conservation (including use of local species, landraces, animal types)
Merci beaucoup

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME