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REGIONAL COOPERATION IN TRADE INFORMATION
IN THE CARIBBEAN

Preliminary considerations on guidelines
for the participation of non-CARICOM countries
in the CARICOM Trade Information System
(CTIS)



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INTRODUCTION

This document is prepared for submission to the Seventh Session of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC) in compliance with the Secretariat's mandates. It has been sent to the CARICOM Secretariat and the guidelines presented will be subject to technical revisions in order to reflect the outcome of consultations between the two Secretariats. Endorsement by the CDCC of the present documents is seen as a positive step in the direction of strengthening national trade information systems and a means of promoting increased trade in and among Caribbean countries.

The first section contains the legal background of the initiative of a Trade Information System; and the second part of the document contains the guidelines themselves.

A. Mandate

In Resolution 9(VI) adopted at its Sixth Session, the CDCC expressed its conviction that economic co-operation among the countries of the subregion would result in increased intra-regional trade, stressed the need for exploring more fully measures for the removal of trade-impeding factors, and decided that higher priority should be given to activities in support of the stimulation of trade information exchange among CDCC countries and the preparation of an inventory of industrial products for the CDCC countries. As a result the work programme for 1982-1983 (E/CEPAL/CDCC/78/Rev.1) includes, as its first output on international trade, the preparation of guidelines for the participation of non-CARICOM countries in the CARICOM/ITC Regional Trade Information project; and the Caribbean Information System programme element, in addition to its planned outputs - viz., the establishment of the statistical data bank, continued publication of CARISPLAN abstracts and various training activities such as seminars and workshops - proposed that efforts be made to include all non-CARICOM CDCC countries in the framework of the CARICOM/ITC Trade Information System project. The establishment or strengthening of linkages between national trade information systems or services are seen as contributing to the

promotion and development of national external trade with other countries, both within and without the Caribbean region.

B. Background

1. Previous Mandates

As early as its Third Session in 1978^{1/}, the CDCC had requested the Secretariat to carry out a study on the establishment in the short term of a "Caribbean Office of Trade Information" which would serve as a channel to provide reciprocal information on production surpluses and shortfalls within the Caribbean region and would constitute a focal point to meet common trade information needs of Caribbean countries, including information which countries could not yet afford individually to identify, obtain, store, classify, process and disseminate to their own target audiences.

In 1979, at the Fourth Session of the CDCC^{2/}, the Dominican Republic confirmed its offer to host the Caribbean Trade Information Centre (CTIC).

In 1980, at the Fifth Session of the CDCC^{3/}, the Committee agreed that this project should include all CDCC member countries and it was pointed out that in as much as a similar project was being initiated at the CARICOM level, the Secretariat should ensure the necessary co-ordination between the two projects.

2. ITC (UNCTAD/GATT) Report

With regard to the specific proposal on the carrying out of a study relating to the establishment of a Caribbean Office on Trade Information, the International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/GATT) provided the services of one of its Senior Trade Information Advisers to prepare a "Report on a Feasibility Study for a Caribbean Trade Information System" which pointed

^{1/} Belize, 12-18 April 1978, see report (E/CEPAL/CDCC/44, Rev.1 24 April 1978).

^{2/} Paramaribo, Suriname, 21-27 March 1979, (E/CEPAL/CDCC/54, Rev.1, 4 April 1979).

^{3/} Kingston, Jamaica, 4-10 June 1980, (E/CEPAL/G. 1133 or E/CEPAL/CDCC/68, Rev.2, 30 September 1980).

out the need to strengthen or set-up national and/or subregional trade information systems for which further studies were needed. This should not preclude a close look at the already existing facilities in the subregion, which might indicate that more intense exchange of information between national centres could assist in achieving these objectives, or might alternatively lead to the conclusion that national centres presently in operation could be upgraded.

3. The CARICOM/ITC Regional Project

Studies undertaken by a joint ITC/CARICOM mission to the latter organisation's member states in March/April 1980 pointed out once more the need for developing a comprehensive trade information system to deal with requirements throughout the subregion. A specific project proposal was formulated in this connection.

Already in 1978/1979 ITC had recommended the implementation of an assistance programme in this field based on (a) the setting up of a Subregional Advisory Team, (b) the development of a common trade information processing system, (c) the implementation of a subregional training programme in trade information; and (d) the establishment of a market intelligence system. Due note was taken then of the overall programme in the area of trade information outlined for all Caribbean countries within the framework of the CDCC.

The 1980 project proposal's guidelines focused on two main elements:

- a) development of national trade information capabilities; and
- b) building up the capability at CARICOM by the establishment of a CARICOM Trade Information Office.

Those guidelines did not negate the possibility of including other CDCC countries in the future and emphasised that there were a number of areas in which co-operation with other subregional organisations was possible to enhance the project's effectiveness. In this connection, the relevant programmes of CEPAL are the

Caribbean Documentation Centre, and its efforts in the area of information planning and economic development and the CDCC mandates related to trade and development in the Caribbean.

During the first phase of the project (1981-1982), the major problems were the lack of facilities and resources (physical and sometimes staff) necessary for establishing the Trade Information System Units in the CARICOM member participating countries and at the CARICOM Secretariat.

Very little progress has been observed in the implementation of the information exchange programme that should have encompassed the preparation of company profiles, the setting up of a commercial intelligence system, trade statistics and the beginning of a joint bibliographic data base.

The second phase of the project, for which funds are provided through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), should concentrate on the strengthening of the national trade information services, which are still lacking.

4. General Role of the CDCC Secretariat

On the basis of its mandates and past experiences, the CDCC Secretariat is seen to act mainly as a link among national and subregional Trade Information System (TIS) creating the necessary network for systematic exchange of information. The timing for this network to become operational must be subject to scrutiny and is undoubtedly conditioned by the level and capability of the national TIS. That explains the apparent delay in complying with mandates received more than four years ago.

As a consequence of the reviewed past experiences, it is also deemed important for concrete guidelines to be established for the participation or access of non-CARICOM countries to the subregional network of information, in order to start building regional capabilities.

The CDCC Secretariat has therefore been seeking co-ordination with CARICOM and has offered to expand the coverage of the publications on trade opportunities and the commodities bulletin by providing information on non-CARICOM, CEPAL and CDCC countries, and by translating these publications to Spanish and French. Joint analysis of the common format to be used in collecting and presenting the information should be carried out.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS ON GUIDELINES
FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF NON-CARICOM COUNTRIES
IN THE CARICOM TRADE INFORMATION SYSTEM
(CTIS)

A. Structure and Functions of a
Caribbean Trade Information System
(CARISTRADe)

1. Structure

The Caribbean Trade Information System (CARISTRADe) is conceptualised as a sectoral information network whose sources at the country level are the information units in the several national systems - Export Promotion Boards or Industrial Development Corporations on the public sector side, and/or Chambers of Commerce or Producer's Associations on the side of private sector. These units constitute the national focal points on which the regional system relies as suppliers and demanders of information.

The institutional approach at the national level has to be flexible, in the sense that both public and private sector organisations are involved in trade promotion activities. In many instances efforts are limited and dispersed, and various governments and private agencies handle diverse aspects of trading activities - usually along product sector or functional lines. This will require careful co-ordination at the national level, and the designation of national focal points that are both appropriate and consistent with the corresponding government policies.

At the subregional level the CARICOM Trade Information Office (CTIO) would be the catalyst of national focal points for its member states, the CDCC Secretariat would be the catalyst for national focal points of CDCC non-CARICOM countries - mainly the non-English-speaking Caribbean nations: Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. Possibilities of including information on the French-speaking territories should be considered on two accounts: their undeniable Caribbean character, and the market potential they represent for CARICOM and CDCC countries. Currently existing or planned, subregional trade information systems and services (at CDB, CFC and the ECCM/OECS Secretariat) shall

be integrated to the CARISTRADe to serve their own objectives and to avoid duplication of efforts.

In such cases, the CARISTRADe will receive and disseminate relevant information through the corresponding subregional organisations and deal directly with national TIS only in product/market areas that exceed the scope of these organisations.

The CDCC Secretariat would thus be a catalyst for:

- a) providing CDCC countries trade information they may require on:
 - i) the several countries in the Caribbean Basin,
 - ii) other extra-Caribbean Latin American markets; and
 - iii) world markets.
- b) Linking the Caribbean Trade Information System to other regional and world trade information systems by routing to them, the Caribbean countries' requests for information. This does not preclude that the CARICOM's CTIO may address itself directly to those other systems, provided only that it informs the CDCC Secretariat.
- c) Providing other CEPAL countries with information on Caribbean markets.

The long-range structure expected to result from the proposed network could comprise the following elements (see Diagram 1):

- (a) At the national level - The designated trade information units (NIU), co-ordinated in each country by a national trade information focal point (NFP).
- (b) At the subregional level - Subregional focal points (SFP), covering different geographical areas and different users grouped along functional lines.
- (c) At the regional level^{4/} - The whole network encompassing the plurality of participating national units, subregional and

^{4/} "Region" is deemed to comprise the whole Caribbean, as covered by the CDCC.

national focal points each of which would have a high degree of autonomy. This network would be monitored through a catalytic agent that would be the centre of the CARISTRADe.

The system should adopt a flexible framework to permit maximum capability for direct contact between the different components. It should centralize in the subregional focal points the planning and development of the sub-systems, with decentralized information input and services to users. The decentralization of information input and services should allow for a better exploitation of the trade documentation in each country and give more adequate service to users.

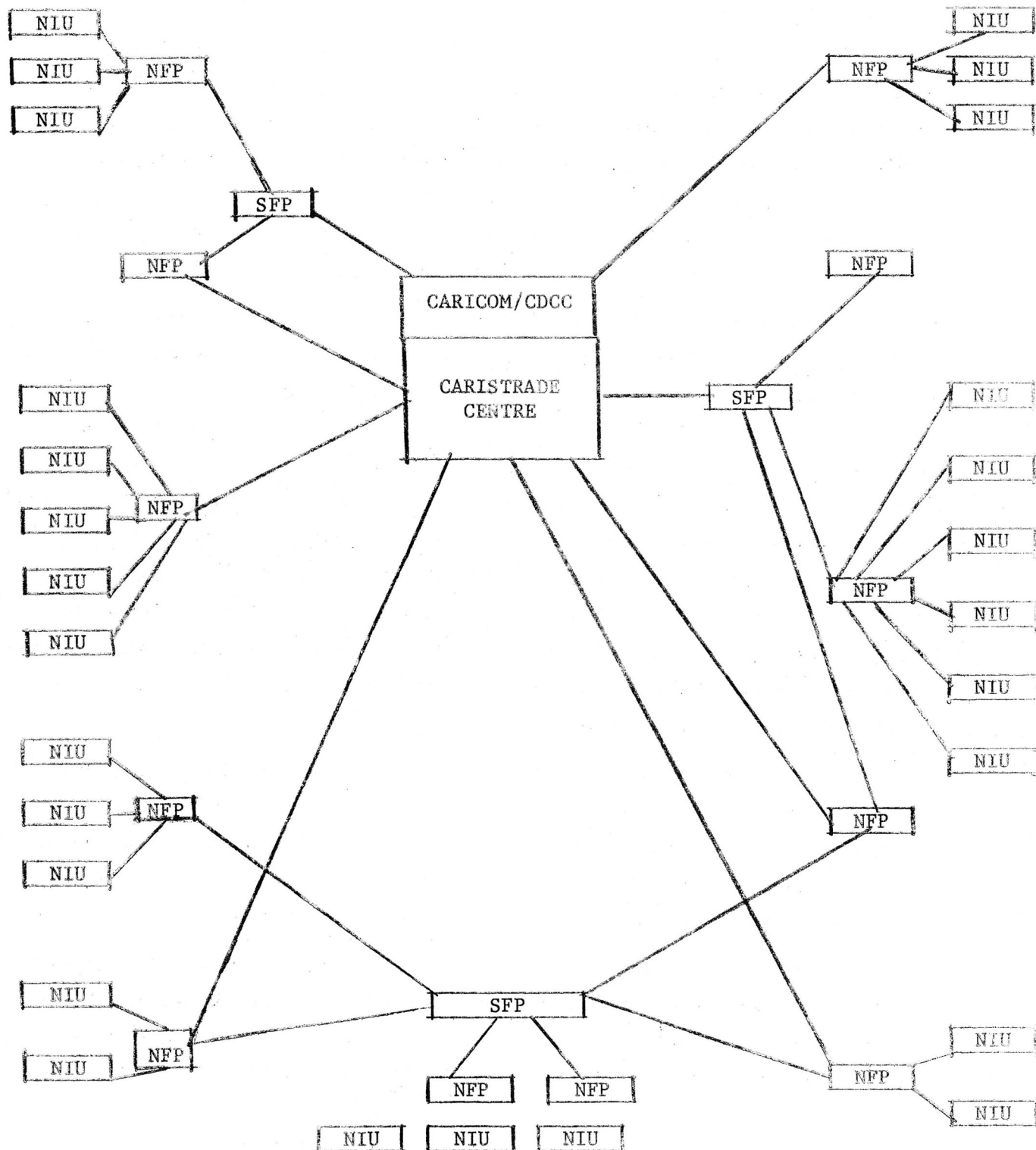
The framework of "co-ordinated-decentralized" structure will require a high degree of participation and co-operation from the system components. It would appear that at present such participation has to be promoted and strengthened. It is for this purpose that a monitoring, catalytic agent is seen as crucial for the effective working of the network. Such functions are initially envisaged as undertaken by a jointly operated programme agreed on between the CDCC and CARICOM Secretariats. The varying degrees of assistance required by CARICOM member countries, especially the LDCs in respect of institution-building and training, as distinct from the level of development of trade information achieved at the national level in other Caribbean non-CARICOM countries calls for a more intensive subregional component at the CARICOM level.

If, on the operation of this programme, a more permanent institution were to be seen as necessary, provisions would have to be made for a CARISTRADe centre, which could be physically located in any of the countries of the region. In this connection it might be useful to follow up the offer of the Dominican Republic made at two CDCC meetings.

An additional consideration in this respect is the wholly integrated concept of information encompassed in the Caribbean Documentation Centre (CDC), which is gradually being implemented by the CDCC Secretariat. (See Diagrams 2 and 3).

DIAGRAM 1

CARISTRADe NETWORK - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



NIU - National Trade Information Units
NFP - National Focal Points
SFP - Subregional Focal Points

DIAGRAM 2

CARIBBEAN INFORMATION SYSTEM

IDEAL FRAMEWORK

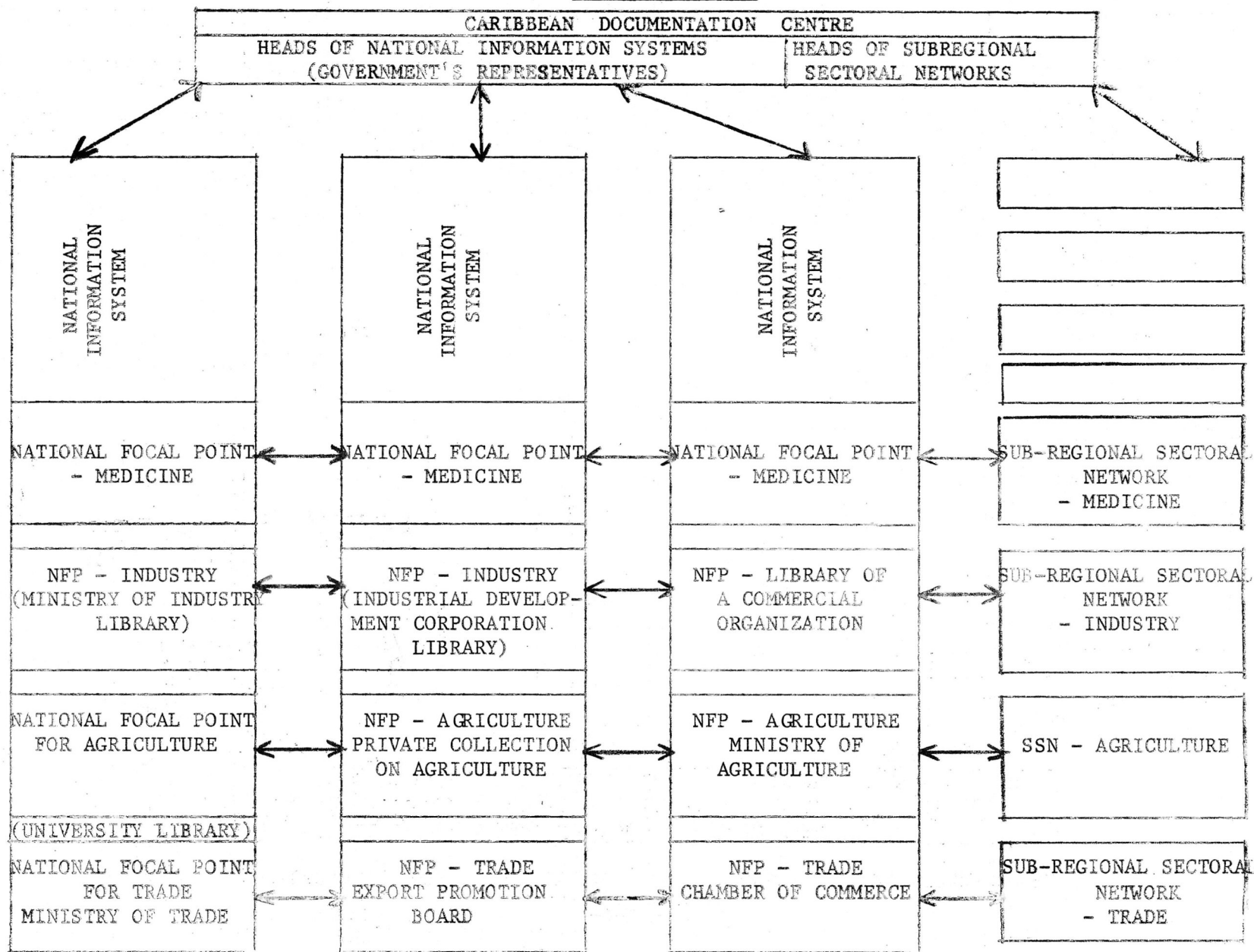
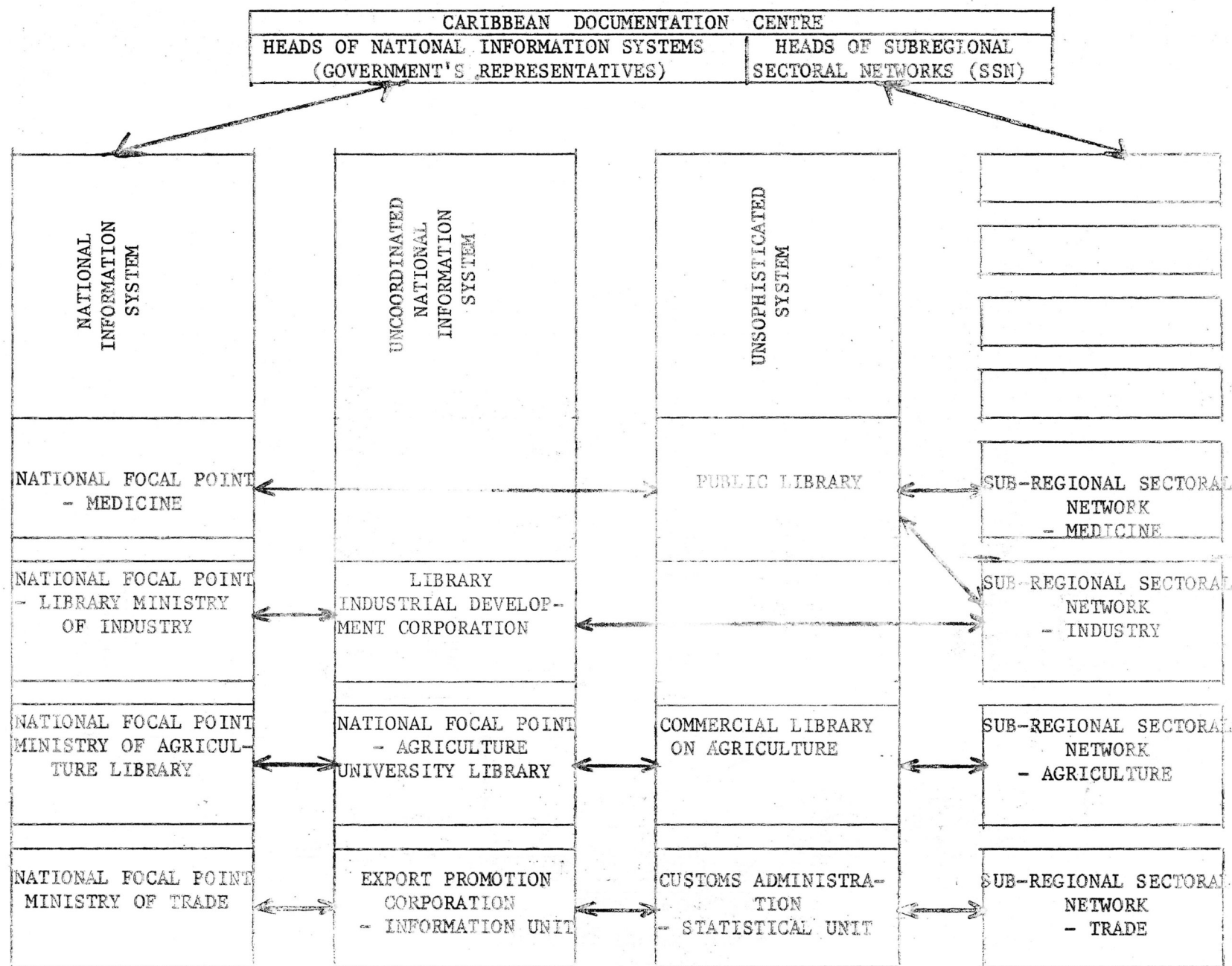


DIAGRAM 3

CARIBBEAN INFORMATION SYSTEM - PRESENT VIABLE FRAMEWORK



Under this system "the aggregation of subregional sectoral networks and national information systems... servicing the CDCC member governments as an advisory body constitutes the Caribbean Information System (CIS)"^{5/}. Guidelines for the establishment of such a sectoral system have been prepared by the CDCC Secretariat in the case of agriculture^{6/}. Three levels are clearly distinguished: a regional-global one - that is the Caribbean Information System as institutionalized in the Caribbean Documentation Centre (CDC); the sectoral one - which in the case of trade would be the proposed Trade Information Network System (CARISTRADe); and the national one.

For trade an intermediate subregional level appears **necessary** in order to reflect the prevailing trade arrangements and structure of the region.

The division of functions between the CDC and the CARISTRADe may vary if there is a physical focal point at the regional level or if the CARISTRADe network is monitored through a joint CDCC/CARICOM joint programme.

An outline of the functions expected to be undertaken by the CARISTRADe follows - as an itemized guide for the preparation of the proposed CDCC/CARICOM joint programme.

^{5/} W. Primus, "The Caribbean Documentation Centre and Regional Co-operation for Information", in Regional co-operation for access to information in the Caribbean, CEPAL/CARIB 78/5, 10 October 1978.

^{6/} Albertus, Ursula (UNESCO Consultant), Caribbean Information System Guidelines for the Establishment of Sectoral Systems (Agriculture), CEPAL/CARIB 78/6, October 1978.

2. Functions

The principal function of the CARISTRADe is to obtain and distribute trade information related specifically to: supply and demand of goods and services; prices of products selected from the world main markets; transfer of technological information on international trade; and other information leading to direct trade exchanges between suppliers from the Caribbean and importing countries from the world markets.^{7/}

At first the system may concentrate on the trade of products; after it is fully operational in this area, information on services will be initiated.

At the CARICOM subregional level the CARICOM Trade Information Office (CTIO), once it is operational, should, according to its approved terms of reference^{8/}, be responsible for undertaking the following functions, on which co-ordinated activities with the CDCC Secretariat are contemplated:

- (a) Commercial intelligence system - the CTIO will receive supply/market/shipping intelligence from counterpart national and subregional trade information services within CARICOM and from outside markets. Accordingly the CDCC Secretariat will route to the CTIO requests from CDCC non-CARICOM members and will supply the CTIO with the commercial intelligence information that CARICOM requires and CDCC non-CARICOM countries provide. There would be need for a common questionnaire to be devised by the CARICOM and CDCC Secretariats in order to have similar and comparable information available.

^{7/} For a detailed presentation of the CARISTRADe functions, see Appendix A - That outline should provide the basis for the proposed CARICOM/CDCC Programme.

^{8/} Project RLA/79/053 - CARICOM Trade Information System.

The primary objective of the commercial intelligence system is to match relevant export offers from Caribbean countries with purchase requirements both within and outside the region. These trade opportunities are to be disseminated selectively to the national trade information focal points and to counterpart trade information services outside the subregion. Conversely it should also assist in matching Caribbean import requirements with the more convenient supply offers both in and out of the region.

The means of communication to be used for the system are not yet defined and will be conditioned to the resources available. Use of a telex network on the basis of existing government facilities in each country, at CARICOM and CDCC Secretariats, its transmission through the Caribbean News Agency (CANA) or an automated computerized system are three of many alternatives, technically feasible but with varying operational costs. Feasibility studies on these alternatives should be conducted on the basis of governments' concrete offers to strengthen the national focal points.

(b) Company profiles

On the basis of a variety of sources, a data base is to be established and updated by the CTIO and CDCC's Caribbean Documentation Centre (CDC/CEPAL). The sources for these company profiles include the above mentioned commercial intelligence system, national trade statistics compiled in the CDCC Statistical Data Bank, research and surveys by national public and private trade promotion organizations, other international organization's projects such as the current ITC/CDB Supply/Demand Study, and work of the CARICOM and CDCC Secretariats. This data base will consist of profiles of export and import firms in the

Caribbean. The CTIO will undertake the reproduction and distribution of these profiles (probably on microfiche) to the focal points in each CARICOM country and the CDC/CEPAL will (in turn) make this information available to its CDCC non-CARICOM members. The CDCC Secretariat will undertake the collection of information on firms of CDCC non-CARICOM countries and make it available to the CTIO. At first it will rely on existing surveys and company profiles but, eventually, could undertake their preparation in the cases where they are not readily available. This would be undertaken by a national focal point which would do the actual research. Provision for technical and financial assistance for this purpose should be subject to negotiation with individual countries and other international specialized agencies working in this field.

Additionally, through access to outside sources, particularly other ITC regional and world-wide programmes, information on pertinent firms in non-Caribbean countries would also be included in their data base. To avoid duplicating the data base by having its entire contents stored both at CTIO and at the CDCC Secretariat, a functional distribution should be made provided adequate and expedient communication links are established between the two. The availability of computer facilities at the CEPAL Port of Spain Subregional Office would indicate the convenience of storing the information there until similar facilities are available at the CTIO.

There will nevertheless, be a desirable duplication - that is overlapping sets of data on trade, company profiles, marketing and shipping data - in order to permit the two catalytic points in the network to provide efficient and prompt response. This overlapping need not be costly and can be

achieved by exchange of records (which could be on diskette form of compatible computer services).

(c) Statistical information

Trade statistics at present being sent to the CARICOM and CDCC Secretariats by national central statistical offices and/or trade promotion organizations, in the form of computer printouts or otherwise, will be introduced in the Caribbean Statistical Data Bank at the CEPAL Subregional Office. Computer printouts of the resulting subregional and national tables will be made available to CDCC countries' focal points either directly - especially in the case of non-CARICOM members - or through the CTIO.

The improvement of national trade statistics reports - both in format and frequency - and co-ordination of their contents to suit the information requirements of the system will require that staff of the CARICOM and CDCC Secretariats continue to upgrade their training and advisory activities in this field in a more co-ordinated way.

Through exchange programmes with other Latin American and international information systems extra subregional statistical data will be available and disseminated. The introduction of extra-regional data on the Data Bank will be given priority following the requirements of research projects being conducted by the Secretariat and requests received from the CTIO and the focal points.

(d) Joint Bibliographic Data Base

A collective inventory of documentary sources of information will be undertaken at the subregional level starting with the CARICOM and CDCC Secretariats and national trade promotion organizations (which ideally should also be the system's national focal points). Later other regional documentary sources such as ECCM/OECS, CDB, CFC,

CAIC, etc., will be incorporated. This joint bibliographic data base will answer enquiries in much the same manner that the CDC's CARISPLAN satisfies information needs in the areas of planning and development. The centralized processing of bibliographic worksheets provided by participating CARICOM trade information focal points will be undertaken by the CTIO and/or sent to the CDCC's CDC. This latter system will incorporate similar information of non-CARICOM countries and of other sources to which it has access through the Latin American Documentation Centre (CLADES) and other UN organizations. Their information will be sent upon request to the CTIO in English. This system should also be linked to similar activities at ITC Headquarters and in other regions - particularly those undertaken within the framework of ITC's regional trade information system in Latin America (based in Lima, Perú). A regular distribution of the bibliographic information contained by the data base - either through a bulletin of abstracts or distribution of available worksheets - and a documents copy service are essential for this data base to meet its objective. The CDCC Secretariat's experience in preparing the CARISPLAN abstracts and the CDC Current Awareness Bulletin point to the fruitful co-operation that can be established in this area. Since the simple inclusion of trade as one of the topics covered by CEPAL/CDC at present will not satisfy the specialized needs of the users which a trade information system is to serve, consideration will have to be given to the resources necessary for this aspect of the CARISTRADe before it can be implemented. Whether it is located at CARICOM or at CDCC Secretariat and services not only the CARICOM members but all possible Caribbean subscribers, this is an on-going permanent-type of

activity that will require a commitment on the part of the users - in the sense of contribution to its establishment and later sustained operation.

(e) Other Trade Information Services

In the CARICOM subregion the CTIO and the CARICOM Secretariat are seen as providing other trade information services to its members. These refer mainly to the following two aspects:

(i) institutional strengthening and building of the national focal points or trade information units; and

(ii) training of national personnel.

In the other CDCC non-CARICOM countries, the ITC should be the source of direct assistance in those areas where the operation of the CARISTRAD shows the need for strengthening the local institutional framework.

Some of the training needs of the CARICOM subregion are now being monitored by a Regional Committee on training in export promotion to which the CDCC Secretariat has been invited as an observer. This committee is in the process of developing four training modules which it has identified as covering the needs of its members. The usage and development of case studies in workshop situations has been favoured in the past. The CDCC Secretariat could act as a catalyst for horizontal co-operation and exchange of experiences among CARICOM and non-CARICOM members, when these CARICOM-sponsored training activities take place.

Conversely, for those training activities being carried out at the national level in CDCC non-CARICOM countries - in many instances with the assistance of the ITC - the CDCC Secretariat could provide CARICOM case studies and resource people in order to promote a more integrated Caribbean approach to international trading.

Additionally, the CDCC Secretariat, through its CDC is in a good position to participate in training activities geared towards fostering information handling capability either by providing resource persons in the area of information and documentation, or by including participants from the trade information units in its regular training activities which are mainly intended for librarians and information specialists.

(f) Publications

Once the CTIO periodical publications are regularly produced (to date only two issues of a Commodities Newsletter and a Trade Opportunities Bulletin have been released by CARICOM), the CDCC Secretariat will undertake their distribution to its non-CARICOM members. Preparation of a common trilingual (English, Spanish and French) format should be adopted.

This would not only facilitate distribution to all CDCC members but would enable a wider circulation outside the region where trade opportunities for Caribbean commodities are sought. The CDCC Secretariat would undertake the provision of information for these bulletins, as is provided by CDCC non-CARICOM focal points.

On the bibliographical side CDC will immediately include the TIS focal points on its distribution list of CARISPLAN Abstracts and Current Awareness Bulletins.

Should a specialized bibliographic trade bulletin be established, it would be necessary to establish mechanisms to ensure the participation of all Caribbean countries.

B. Trade Information Flow

1. The role of the National Trade Information Units

The trade information flow to be applied by CARISTRADe follows a sequence originating with the importer or exporter whether it is a commercial trading concern, a producer or a state enterprise; from there it goes to the national trade information units (NIU) which are the intermediate processing mechanisms and act as national focal points,^{9/} from which point the request goes back to the company or enterprise which originated the inquiry.

This flow of trade information to answer specific inquiries is based on the support that the national units receive from the system. Accordingly, they operate on a standardized methodology of supply and demand of information. That is, to be effective the Trade Information System must follow a standard methodological pattern of data collection in the classification by products, companies and countries. Some possible techniques to be used are: registration forms with similar contents and the application of data inputting (filing) that corresponds to a uniform classification both of products and clients. Usage of more than one nomenclature scheme for products traded and terms used leads to confusion and difficulties in the retrieval process. It should be noted that at present there is no common uniform trade classification in use in the Caribbean, although the majority of countries are familiar both with the Brussels Tariff Nomenclature (BTN) and the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC).

Although full details on the role of national focal point units (NFP's) is not a direct concern of these guidelines,^{10/} it is illustrative to list those considered to be its main tasks:

^{9/} In the case of a country with more than one NIU a co-ordinating unit must be designated to act as national focal point (NFP) in the system.

^{10/} Appendix B outlines the main functions expected to be completed by the NFP's.

- linking the national sectoral system to the subregional network;
- co-ordination and support in the organization of the several trade information units that may exist in each country;
- development and maintenance of the mechanisms and instruments for the adequate flow of information inside and outside the country; (user-to unit-to system) in order to satisfy the needs of its "customers" (national exporters and importers);
- promotion and training in the usage of the common methodological pattern both in trade data collection and bibliographical computation. Specific registration must be made of supply information, demand requirements and inquiring companies or enterprises;
- updating and filing the information of exportable production at the levels of sector, product and enterprise, and providing the necessary backward information for the statistical undertakings of the regional system;
- collecting and updating national bibliographical information on trade for its inclusion in the regional bibliographic data base;
- collecting other relevant national information for foreign trade: regulation changes, variations in trade facilitation, tariffs and custom duties, sanitary, quality and other non-tariff controls, exchange controls, etc.;
- collecting information on trade-related national research projects, with the possible inclusion of results summaries or purposes of such research;

- circulating to its "customers" the information bulletins and publications of the system; and
- providing assistance on request, in training activities related to trade promotion that are carried out by the Secretariats within the system.

2. The linkage of national trade information units to the regional system

The flow of information continues from the national processing system - as outlined above - to the regional system through the catalytic focal points and, eventually, returns to the final users of the service, through the national units in the form of periodic bulletins and/or direct response to specific inquiries from exporters and importers.

Due account is taken here of the geographically overlapping and non-all inclusive character of a number of Caribbean institutions which have information facilities and which should be linked to the system as a whole, whether a subgrouping of a larger scheme such as the ECCM/OECS, product-sector oriented such as the CFC, or of a guild type, such as CAIC. This linkage can, in these instances, be two-fold: directly from the customer, i.e. NIU to the system (CTIO in the case of CARICOM members and CDCC in the case of non-CARICOM members) or through the subregional institutions which would transmit the request to the system. The system, in turn, will reply either directly if the query was received directly or through the transmitting body.

In the case of CDCC non-CARICOM countries linkage to the CTIO should preferably be through the CEPAL Subregional Office but direct consultation with CARICOM is possible. In the latter case CTIO should inform CEPAL of the requests received.

3. Co-operation agreements

Due to the importance given to the participation of the Caribbean region in the main trade areas of the world, it is expected that there will be an increase in the quality and quantity of information

of world markets that the system can provide. Co-operation agreements with other regional and international trade information systems and networks is expected. Ordinary services of distribution of supply and demand of information from the whole Caribbean and Latin America are expected to extend and cover the major world trading markets.

C. The role of the private sector

The institutional approach is to be flexible. Co-operation - by servicing and receiving inputs - is to be promoted both with public and private organizations. National Chambers of Commerce, Manufacturer's Associations and other private sector organizations have a role to play in this connection. Their role will vary from country to country, depending on various circumstances, including resources available to the chamber/association, as well as the extent to which public sector organizations have already set up their trade information services and they are effectively used by the business community (importers/exporters). As said before their approach is to be consistent with the corresponding government's policies in this connection albeit reflecting the fact that trade promotion efforts in most Caribbean countries are very limited and dispersed.

Various government and private organizations handle diverse aspects of trade promotion and trade information, usually along traditional product sector (banana, sugar, bauxite, etc.) or functional lines (producers/exporters). This situation requires careful co-ordination in order to avoid duplication of efforts at both the national and subregional levels. The designation of an appropriate organization in each country to serve as the National Focal Point (NFP) should not limit contributions to the regional efforts on the part of private and public, national and regional organizations.

A seminar on trade information held this year sponsored by ITC (UNCTAD/GATT) in co-operation with the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce (CAIC)^{11/} addressed the issue of how private sector chambers/associations could be involved in this effort. Three guidelines were pointed out at this meeting which are worth repeating here, to illustrate the role of the private sector:

^{11/} St. James, Barbados, June 1-11, 1982.

1. Chambers of Commerce and/or Associations of Producers or Manufacturers may stimulate the development of trade information services in the relevant public sector organizations which provide them, by:

- (a) promoting the direct use of these services by the business community; or
- (b) using these services themselves to provide analyzed or interpreted information to their members, and in reply to enquiries from the business community.

2. Chambers/Associations can join forces with public sector organizations to establish joint information services, thus avoiding duplication and making best use of limited resources.

3. Where there is no public sector trade information unit or service, the chambers/associations can fill this gap by providing at least a basic trade information service to their business communities.

The seminar also pointed out that, to the extent to which private chambers of commerce and associations of producers or manufacturers are voluntary membership organizations, their capacity to provide and maintain services including information is related to their ability to attract and retain members. In these circumstances, it was recognized that to provide these services the chambers/associations should seek support from relevant organizations both within the country and outside it at the subregional, regional or world level.

This consideration is to be borne in mind also for the services and activities that multinational non-governmental private associations can carry out. At the seminar it was further recognized that in the case of CAIC its function in trade information^{12/} should take due account

^{12/} This function was dealt with at the above mentioned seminar where the following areas were pointed out:

- (a) Development of a regional data base.
- (b) Establishment of a trade documentation centre/data base
- (c) Dissemination of market information to the national chambers/associations.

of the information services provided throughout the region by the CARICOM Secretariat and other regional and international agencies; this also applies to the provision of training services by CAIC.^{13/}

New modalities for the provision of trade information services and detecting demands of Caribbean products in the different countries are to be improved if the exporters from the region are to widen their markets. Conversely, if Caribbean countries are to maximize the use to their foreign currency expenditure on imports, there is need for greater knowledge of potential suppliers both within and outside the region. The pooling of national efforts in these areas is also subject to innovative co-operation agreements, such as the use of overseas trading representatives of one country to the benefit of several countries which have common trading interests and concerns. It is not only through formal co-operation agreements between ministries and governments that such co-operation can be promoted. Private sector links among Chambers of Commerce or industrial or agricultural producer's guilds and associations are also desirable. The proposed Trade Information System in the final analysis is only a complement to these other broad efforts that must encompass the whole field of trade promotion.

13/ In the area of training CAIC proposed that:

- (a) an analysis of training needs be undertaken by the national chambers/associations.
- (b) existing training programmes be identified.
- (c) detailed training proposals be prepared.

Appendix A

OUTLINE OF FUNCTIONS TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY A CDCC/CARICOM
PROGRAMME ON TRADE INFORMATION^{14/}

Functions of a Caribbean Trade Information Programme

- i. Plan and develop the sectoral system to operate initially on a manual basis but designed for eventual transfer to an automated system;
- ii. In liaison with the CDC, assess the capacity required to function as the Caribbean region Focal Point and submit to the institution to which it is affiliated, the corresponding budgetary request;
- iii. Provide technical assistance for the development of the National Focal Points;
- iv. Promote the day-to-day operations of the sectoral system;
- v. Standardize bibliographic procedures, anticipating and ensuring compatibility with other sectoral systems of the Caribbean Information System (CIS) as they develop;
- vi. Establish and maintain the regional data base in trade, anticipating and ensuring compatibility with other sectoral systems of the CIS, as they develop;
- vii. Provide the Caribbean region input to international and/or regional data banks from those CDCC Member Countries which do not participate yet in international trade information systems;
- viii. Compile the relevant Caribbean TRADE INTELLIGENCE PUBLICATIONS based on the inputs provided by the National Focal Points;

^{14/} On the basis of Caribbean Information System Guidelines for the Establishment of Sectoral Systems (Agriculture) Consultant report by Ursula Albertus (UNESCO), CEPAL/CARIB/78/6, October 1978.

- ix. Establish and maintain a Caribbean Catalogue of trade monographs and a Caribbean List of serials, based on the inputs provided by the National Focal Points;
- x. Compile bibliographies on trade topics (e.g. commodities, market characteristics, etc.) of special concern to the Caribbean region;
- xi. Establish and maintain a register of research completed and research in progress, in and about Caribbean trade based on the data provided by the National Focal Points and obtained from external sources;
- xii. Establish and maintain a directory of market research personnel and institutions (public and private sectors) in the Caribbean, based on the data provided by the National Focal Points and obtained from regional and international agencies;
- xiii. Disseminate within the Caribbean regional abstracts of research findings, prepared and submitted by the National Focal Points;
- xiv. Based on co-operative acquisition and cost-sharing agreements with the different information units of the sectoral system, develop strong data collections in those specialized areas where there is either no need for duplication within the sub-region or where the purchasing costs involved are beyond the budgetary capacity of the individual information units;
- xv. Function as central clearinghouse particularly with regard to these specialized data collections upon which other information units in the sectoral system draw;
- xvi. Co-ordinate at the Caribbean region level referral of enquiries, inter-library loan procedures and other resource-sharing activities;
- xvii. Provide reinforcement services to the participating countries (e.g. data-base searches on behalf of small National Focal Points and information units in the OECS); and

- xviii. In co-ordination with the CDC and other relevant training institutions in the subregion, assess manpower development and user training needs in the field of trade information and plan, organize and conduct the necessary training activities, such as courses, seminars, in-service training, etc.

FUNCTIONS TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY THE NATIONAL FOCAL
POINTS ^{15/}

National Focal Points are expected to:

- i. Act as the national link to the sectoral system;
- ii. Co-ordinate and assist in the organization of the different trade information units existing in the country;
- iii. Develop adequate mechanisms for the flow of trade information at the national level;
- iv. Promote the use of standardized data and bibliographic procedures;
- v. Develop a depository collection of all documents produced at the national level which fall within the scope of the trade sector system;
- vi. Provide the input of national current and retrospective trade documentation into the Caribbean region Focal Point, submitting for each item of information a bibliographic description drawn up according to an agreed-upon standard, identifying the subject content of the item according to agreed-upon parameters;
- vii. Compile the national trade bibliography, catalogues, lists of serials and specialized bibliographies in the field of trade and closely related areas;
- viii. Co-ordinate inter-library loan, co-operative acquisition and other resource-sharing activities at the national level;
- ix. Based on co-operative acquisition and cost-sharing agreements with the trade information units existing in the country, and in co-ordination with the Caribbean region Focal Point, develop a basic collection of reference tools and strengthen resources in subject areas of priority interest to the country;

^{15/} On the basis of Caribbean Information System Guidelines for the Establishment of Sectoral Systems (Agriculture), Consultant report by Ursula Albertus (UNESCO), CEPAL/CARIB/78/6, October 1978.

- x. Function as central clearinghouse for these specialized data collections upon which the other information units of the country draw;
- xi. Prepare and maintain an up-to-date register of trade research projects completed and research in progress at the national level and submit copy of register to the Caribbean region Focal Point;
- xii. Prepare and maintain an up-to-date directory of market research personnel and institutions and submit copy to the Caribbean region Focal Point;
- xiii. Abstract and disseminate research findings to relevant users;
- xiv. Provide information dissemination and referral services at the national level;
- xv. Provide document reproduction and procurement services;
- xvi. With the assistance of the Caribbean region Focal Point, organize and conduct seminars, workshops, courses and other activities aimed at training specialized information personnel and information users; and
- xvii. Promote governmental and public support.

List of Related Reports

- Report of the UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre Consultant on Feasibility Study, Trade Information System. 5 March 1979.
- Report on the CARICOM Trade Information System, by R. Smith-Gillespie and M. Fujimoto (ITC Consultants) and P. Arjoon, Chief of the Export Promotion Section, CARICOM Secretariat, doc. ITC/DTC/277. May 1980.
- (Draft) Report of a Seminar on Trade Information for Chambers of Commerce in the Caribbean, ITC(UNCTAD/GATT) in co-operation with the CAIC. St. James, Barbados, 1-11 June 1982.