

CARICOM Agriculture Youth Advisory Body

Prepared for the

Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED)

Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP)

Regional Policy Framework

Strengthening Market Access and Procurement of Caribbean Agricultural Products

Supporting Implementation of the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy

Version 1.3 - Consultation-Integrated Draft for COTED Consideration

31 August 2026 Revision status: Incorporates recommendations submitted by Dr. Jessica Agnew of Virginia Tech University, CAHFSA technical recommendations, and consultation evidence from Sessions 1-3 of the CAYAB Regional Consultation and Validation Series. Consultation support does not constitute formal adoption. This draft remains subject to technical validation and the appropriate CARICOM decision-making processes.

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Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP)

A Regional Market Access and Procurement Framework for CARICOM

Preamble

Recognizing the importance of agriculture to food and nutrition security, economic development, rural livelihoods, and environmental sustainability across the Caribbean Community;

Recognizing the commitment of CARICOM Heads of Government to implement the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy;

Recognizing that sustainable agricultural transformation requires both increased production and strengthened market access;

Acknowledging the diversity of procurement systems and institutional arrangements across Member States;

Affirming the importance of nationally led implementation supported by regional cooperation;

The Local Agriculture First Policy is established as a Regional Policy Framework to guide Member States in strengthening market access and procurement systems for Caribbean agricultural products.

Foreword

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has identified food and nutrition security as a strategic regional priority through the implementation of the **25 by 25 + 5 Strategy**, which seeks to reduce the Region's food import bill by increasing agricultural production, strengthening regional trade, enhancing resilience and supporting sustainable economic growth.

Achieving these objectives requires more than increasing agricultural production. It also requires efficient market systems that connect producers with reliable and sustainable demand. Strengthening market access and procurement systems is therefore essential to improving the competitiveness of Caribbean agriculture, encouraging investment and expanding opportunities for farmers, fisherfolk, agro-processors, cooperatives and agribusiness enterprises.

The **Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP)** has been developed as a complementary regional policy to support these objectives. It provides policy guidance to assist Member States in strengthening market access for locally and regionally produced agricultural goods through nationally led procurement systems and coordinated market development. In doing so, the Policy supports the implementation of the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy by strengthening the demand side of Caribbean agrifood systems while remaining consistent with existing national policies, regional strategies and international commitments.

Recognizing the diversity of legal, institutional and procurement systems across the Community, the Policy is intended to provide a flexible approach that Member States may adapt to their respective national circumstances. Its implementation is expected to be nationally led, supported by regional cooperation, institutional collaboration and stakeholder engagement.

The Policy complements existing regional and national initiatives relating to agricultural production, climate-smart agriculture, food safety, agricultural research, digital agriculture and youth development by strengthening market coordination, procurement systems, supplier development and opportunities for locally and regionally produced agricultural goods.

The development of the Local Agriculture First Policy reflects the commitment of the CARICOM Agriculture Youth Advisory Body (CAYAB) to contribute to regional agricultural policy through practical, evidence-based proposals that support the Community's long-term food security and development objectives. It also reflects the value of regional consultation and collaboration in developing policies that are responsive to the needs and priorities of Member States.

It is anticipated that this Policy will serve as a practical resource for Member States as they continue to strengthen procurement systems, improve market access and advance a more resilient, competitive and food-secure Caribbean.

Executive Summary

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has committed to strengthening regional food and nutrition security through implementation of the **25 by 25 + 5 Strategy**, recognizing that increased agricultural production, stronger regional trade and more resilient food systems are essential to reducing the Region's dependence on imported food and supporting sustainable economic development.

While significant progress has been made in expanding agricultural production, limited market access continues to constrain the growth and competitiveness of Caribbean agriculture. Many farmers, fisherfolk, agro-processors, cooperatives and agribusiness enterprises face inconsistent demand, fragmented supply chains, limited market coordination and barriers to institutional markets. These constraints discourage investment, limit enterprise growth and reduce the economic benefits of increased agricultural production.

The **Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP)** has been developed to address these challenges by providing regional policy guidance that supports Member States in strengthening market access through procurement and coordinated market development. The Policy encourages greater utilization of locally and regionally produced agricultural goods through nationally led procurement systems that remain consistent with national legislation, procurement frameworks and applicable regional and international obligations.

The Policy complements the implementation of the **CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy** by strengthening the connection between production and markets. It is not intended to replace existing regional or national initiatives relating to agricultural production, climate-smart

agriculture, food safety, research, digital agriculture or youth development. Rather, it provides a common policy approach for improving procurement systems, supplier participation, market coordination and institutional purchasing.

The overarching goal of the Policy is to strengthen food security, agricultural competitiveness and economic resilience by creating more reliable and predictable market opportunities for Caribbean agricultural products. To achieve this goal, Member States are encouraged to:

- strengthen market access for farmers, fisherfolk, agro-processors, cooperatives and agribusiness enterprises;
- increase the utilization of Caribbean agricultural products within national procurement systems, where appropriate;
- strengthen supplier development, certification and quality assurance;
- improve coordination across agricultural value chains;
- enhance aggregation, logistics, storage and market information systems; and
- promote inclusive participation by youth, women, cooperatives and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

Implementation of the Policy is intended to be nationally led and regionally supported. Member States retain primary responsibility for adapting and implementing the Policy within their respective legal, institutional and procurement frameworks. Regional cooperation will support implementation through policy dialogue, technical cooperation, knowledge sharing and collaboration among governments, regional institutions, producer organizations, the private sector, academia and development partners. Within its advisory mandate, the CARICOM Agriculture Youth Advisory Body (CAYAB) will support stakeholder engagement, policy dialogue and youth participation.

The Policy provides a flexible regional framework that allows Member States to determine implementation approaches appropriate to their national circumstances while advancing shared regional objectives. Progress should be monitored through existing national and regional reporting mechanisms, supported by periodic review and the exchange of good practices to encourage continuous improvement.

The Local Agriculture First Policy provides Member States with practical regional policy guidance for strengthening procurement systems, improving market access and expanding opportunities for Caribbean agricultural products. Through nationally led implementation and regional cooperation, the Policy contributes to stronger agricultural value chains, increased competitiveness and the successful implementation of the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy.

1. Introduction of Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP)

A Regional Market Access and Procurement Framework for CARICOM

1.1 Introduction

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has identified food and nutrition security as a strategic regional priority through the implementation of the **25 by 25 + 5 Strategy**, which seeks to reduce the Region's food import bill by increasing agricultural production, strengthening regional trade, enhancing food security and improving resilience.

The Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP) has been developed to support these objectives by providing regional policy guidance for strengthening market access for Caribbean agricultural products through procurement and coordinated market development. The Policy supports Member States in strengthening national procurement systems, improving market coordination, supporting supplier development and expanding opportunities for Caribbean agricultural products.

Recognizing the diversity of legal, institutional and procurement systems across the Community, the Policy is intended to provide a flexible approach that Member States may adapt to their respective national circumstances while promoting common principles of market access, transparency, competitiveness, food safety and regional cooperation.

The Policy has been developed through regional consultation and reflects the contributions of governments, regional institutions, producer organizations, the private sector, academia, development partners and youth representatives.

1.2 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of the Local Agriculture First Policy is to provide regional policy guidance that supports Member States in strengthening national procurement systems and expanding market opportunities for Caribbean agricultural products.

The Policy seeks to improve market access by promoting procurement practices that encourage the utilization of safe, competitive and high-quality Caribbean agricultural products while supporting national agricultural development objectives and the implementation of the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy.

1.3 Policy Goal

The goal of the Policy is to strengthen food security, agricultural competitiveness and economic resilience across CARICOM by improving market access for Caribbean agricultural products through nationally led procurement systems and coordinated market development.

1.4 Intended Users

The Policy is intended to guide a broad range of stakeholders involved in agricultural development and public procurement, including:

- Governments of CARICOM Member States;
- Ministries responsible for agriculture, finance, trade, education, health, tourism and public procurement;

- Public procurement authorities;
- Regional institutions;
- Producer organizations and cooperatives;
- Farmers, fisherfolk, livestock producers and agro-processors;
- Private-sector buyers and distributors;
- Academic and research institutions; and
- Development partners supporting regional agricultural transformation.

1.5 Scope of the Policy

The Policy provides regional guidance on strengthening market access and procurement systems for Caribbean agricultural products.

The Policy addresses the following areas:

- Institutional procurement;
- Supplier development and certification;
- National aggregation systems;
- Cold chain and logistics;
- Digital procurement and market information systems;
- Market transparency; and
- Monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement.

The Policy complements existing regional and national initiatives relating to agricultural production, climate-smart agriculture, food safety, agricultural research, digital agriculture and youth development by strengthening market access and procurement systems for Caribbean agricultural products. It does not replace or supersede existing policies, programs or institutional mandates.

2. Definitions

2.1 Purpose

The following definitions apply to the interpretation and implementation of the **Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP)**. These definitions are intended to promote a common understanding of key concepts among Member States while allowing flexibility for implementation within national legal and institutional frameworks.

Unless otherwise specified, terms used in this Policy shall be interpreted in accordance with applicable national legislation and relevant CARICOM agreements.

2.2 Definitions

Agricultural Value Chain

The interconnected sequence of activities involved in the production, harvesting, processing, storage, transportation, marketing, distribution, and consumption of agricultural products.

Agribusiness

Any enterprise engaged in the production, processing, storage, distribution, marketing, or sale of agricultural products and related services.

Caribbean Agricultural Products

Agricultural, fisheries, livestock, forestry, and agro-processed products that are produced, cultivated, harvested, reared, caught, or substantially processed within a CARICOM Member State in accordance with applicable national legislation and regional standards.

Cold Chain Infrastructure

The facilities, equipment, technologies, and logistics systems used to maintain appropriate temperature conditions throughout the storage, transportation, and distribution of Caribbean agricultural products to preserve quality, safety, and shelf life.

Competitively Priced

Products that are offered at prices that represent fair market value while taking into consideration quality, availability, reliability of supply, food safety requirements, and the broader economic and social benefits of local and regional procurement.

Development Partners

Regional and international organizations, financial institutions, donor agencies, and technical cooperation partners that support agricultural development, food security, trade, and rural transformation within CARICOM.

Food Safety Standards

National, regional, and internationally recognized standards governing the production, handling, processing, transportation, storage, and sale of food intended to protect public health and facilitate market access.

Institutional Buyer

A public or private organization that procures food or agricultural products in significant quantities for operational purposes.

Examples include:

- Government Ministries and Departments

- Public Hospitals
- Schools and Educational Institutions
- Correctional Facilities
- Defence and Security Services
- Tourism Establishments
- Hotels and Resorts
- Supermarkets
- Food Distributors
- Agro-processors

Institutional Procurement

The acquisition of goods and services by public institutions and participating private organizations through established procurement systems.

Local Agricultural Products

Caribbean agricultural products produced within the Member State in which procurement is taking place.

Market Access

The ability of producers and agribusinesses to consistently supply agricultural products to institutional, commercial, national, regional, and international markets under fair, transparent, and competitive conditions.

Member State

A Member State of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

National Aggregation Hub

A nationally designated facility or coordinated system that aggregates, grades, stores, packs, and distributes Caribbean agricultural products to improve supply chain efficiency and facilitate access to institutional and commercial markets.

Policy

The **Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP): A Regional Market Access and Procurement Framework for CARICOM**.

Unless otherwise indicated, references to "the Policy" throughout this document refer to the Local Agriculture First Policy.

Policy Guidance Framework

A regional policy instrument that establishes principles, objectives, and guidance to assist Member States in strengthening national policies and programs while allowing flexibility for national adaptation and implementation.

Procurement Authority

The national public body responsible for administering, regulating, or overseeing public procurement processes within a Member State.

Producer

Any farmer, fisherfolk, livestock producer, forester, agro-processor, cooperative, producer organization, or agribusiness engaged in the production or supply of Caribbean agricultural products.

Regional Agricultural Products

Caribbean agricultural products originating from another CARICOM Member State.

Regional Cooperation

Collaboration among Member States and regional institutions to strengthen agricultural development, food security, trade, knowledge sharing, technical cooperation, and implementation of common regional priorities.

Supplier

A producer or legally recognized entity that supplies Caribbean agricultural products to institutional or commercial buyers.

Certified Supplier

A supplier whose compliance with the food-safety, quality, traceability, production, business and other regulatory requirements applicable to a specified market has been verified or certified by the competent national authority or another body formally recognized under national law. Certification shall identify its scope, applicable standard, assessment frequency and validity. Regional use or mutual recognition remains subject to agreed CARICOM arrangements and the requirements of the importing or procuring Member State.

Competent Authority

A national public authority legally responsible for food safety, animal health, plant health, inspection, certification, laboratory oversight or related sanitary and phytosanitary functions.

Progressive Food-Safety Compliance Pathway

A risk-based, proportionate pathway that supports suppliers to progress from registration and foundational Good Agricultural Practices and Good Hygiene Practices, through verified food-safety and traceability systems, toward certification required for institutional, intra-regional or export markets.

Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures

Measures applied to protect human, animal or plant life or health, including food-safety, veterinary and phytosanitary requirements, inspections, testing, certification and documentation, consistent with national law and applicable regional and international obligations.

Supplier Certification

The process through which suppliers demonstrate compliance with applicable national requirements relating to food safety, quality assurance, traceability, production standards, and regulatory compliance.

Sustainable Procurement

Procurement practices that consider economic, environmental, and social outcomes while promoting fair competition, responsible resource use, food security, and long-term agricultural sustainability.

Traceability

The ability to identify, monitor, and document the movement of Caribbean agricultural products throughout the supply chain from production to final consumption.

Youth Agribusiness

An agribusiness that is owned, managed, or principally operated by young people in accordance with the nationally or regionally accepted definition of youth.

2.3 Interpretation

For the purposes of this Policy:

1. References to **Caribbean agricultural products** include both locally produced and regionally produced agricultural products.
2. References to **procurement** include both public procurement and other institutional procurement arrangements unless otherwise specified.
3. References to **Member States** recognize that implementation shall be undertaken in accordance with national legislation, procurement rules, and institutional arrangements.
4. Nothing in this Policy shall be interpreted as replacing or superseding national procurement legislation, trade obligations, or existing regional agreements.

3. Regional Context

3.1 The Caribbean Agrifood Landscape

Agriculture remains a strategic pillar of economic and social development across the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The sector contributes to food and nutrition security, employment, rural livelihoods, environmental stewardship, export earnings and broader national development objectives. Across the Region, Member States continue to invest in agricultural production, fisheries, livestock, agro-processing, climate resilience, innovation and entrepreneurship to strengthen domestic food production and reduce dependence on imported food.

Despite these investments, the Caribbean remains highly dependent on imported food and vulnerable to external shocks, including disruptions to global supply chains, climate-related disasters, inflationary pressures and increasing transportation costs. These challenges have reinforced the importance of strengthening regional food systems and improving the resilience of Caribbean agriculture.

Recognizing these challenges, CARICOM Heads of Government adopted the **25 by 25 + 5 Strategy**, committing Member States to reducing the Region's food import bill through increased agricultural production, stronger regional trade, improved value chains and greater resilience. Achieving these objectives requires coordinated action across the agrifood system, including production, distribution, marketing and procurement.

3.2 The Market Access Challenge

While increased agricultural production remains essential to achieving regional food security, production alone cannot deliver sustainable agricultural transformation.

Across the Caribbean, many farmers, fisherfolk, livestock producers, agro-processors, cooperatives and agribusiness enterprises continue to face barriers in accessing reliable and predictable markets. Fragmented supply chains, inconsistent institutional demand, limited coordination between producers and buyers, inadequate aggregation and distribution systems, post-harvest losses, inconsistent quality assurance and limited market information continue to constrain agricultural competitiveness.

These constraints reduce producer confidence, discourage investment, limit enterprise development and weaken the Region's ability to maximize the economic benefits of increased agricultural production.

3.3 Procurement as a Strategic Policy Instrument

Public procurement represents an important policy instrument through which governments can support national development objectives while strengthening domestic agricultural markets.

Public institutions—including schools, hospitals, correctional facilities, defence forces and other government agencies—procure significant quantities of food each year. Similarly, tourism

establishments, supermarkets, food distributors, processors and other institutional buyers represent substantial and consistent sources of market demand.

Procurement systems that facilitate greater participation by domestic suppliers, while maintaining transparency, competition, value for money and compliance with food safety requirements, can create more predictable markets, encourage investment, strengthen agricultural value chains and improve rural livelihoods.

Strengthening procurement systems therefore represents an important opportunity to improve market access while supporting broader food security and agricultural development objectives.

3.4 Alignment with Regional Priorities

The Local Agriculture First Policy has been developed to complement existing regional and national initiatives supporting agricultural transformation. The Policy supports the implementation of the **CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy**, the **Regional Youth in Agriculture Strategy**, the **CARICOM E-Agriculture Strategy (2025–2030)**, regional food and nutrition security priorities and relevant national agricultural development policies.

The Policy recognizes the important contributions of existing regional initiatives relating to agricultural production, climate-smart agriculture, seed systems, food safety, agricultural research, digital agriculture, youth development and resilience. These initiatives continue to be implemented under their respective institutional mandates and remain fundamental to the Region's agricultural transformation.

Within this broader policy landscape, the Local Agriculture First Policy contributes by strengthening market access through improved procurement systems, market coordination, supplier participation and institutional purchasing.

3.5 Policy Context

The continued transformation of Caribbean agriculture requires stronger linkages between production and markets. Increasing agricultural production without corresponding improvements in market access limits opportunities for producers, constrains private investment and reduces the effectiveness of broader agricultural development initiatives.

The Local Agriculture First Policy responds to this challenge by providing Member States with regional policy guidance for strengthening procurement systems, improving market coordination, supporting supplier development and expanding opportunities for Caribbean agricultural products.

By strengthening market access while supporting nationally led implementation, the Policy contributes to stronger food systems, increased agricultural competitiveness and the successful implementation of the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy.

4. Policy Purpose

4.1 Purpose of the Policy

The Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP) provides regional policy guidance to strengthen market access for Caribbean agricultural products through procurement policies and market development measures that increase demand, improve market coordination and support the implementation of the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy.

The Policy supports Member States in strengthening national procurement systems, supplier development, market coordination and opportunities for Caribbean agricultural products within public and institutional procurement.

Recognizing the diversity of legal, institutional and procurement systems across the Community, the Policy is intended to be implemented through nationally led approaches that are consistent with each Member State's legal, institutional and economic circumstances while promoting common regional principles of market access, transparency, competitiveness, food safety and regional cooperation.

4.2 Policy Goal

The goal of the Policy is to strengthen food security, agricultural competitiveness and economic resilience across CARICOM by improving market access for Caribbean agricultural products through stronger national procurement systems and coordinated market development.

4.3 Policy Objectives

The Policy establishes the following objectives:

Strengthen Market Access

Strengthen opportunities for Caribbean agricultural producers to participate in public, institutional and commercial procurement systems.

Increase Demand for Caribbean Agricultural Products

Encourage procurement practices that increase the utilization of Caribbean agricultural products where they are available, competitively priced and meet applicable food safety, quality and procurement requirements.

Support National Procurement Systems

Support Member States in strengthening procurement policies, procedures and institutional arrangements that facilitate greater participation by Caribbean agricultural suppliers.

Improve Market Coordination

Improve coordination among producers, aggregators, processors, distributors, institutional buyers and other participants across agricultural value chains.

Promote Supplier Development

Promote supplier readiness through business development, production planning, market information, procurement literacy, mentorship and capacity development that improve competitiveness and buyer confidence.

Institutionalize Food Safety, Quality and SPS Systems for Market Access

Support harmonized, risk-based food-safety, traceability, laboratory and supplier-assurance systems that enable youth and other small agri-enterprises to safely access national institutional and intra-regional markets. These systems should include proportionate compliance pathways, competent-authority oversight, affordable testing, traceability and recall capability, practical food-safety training and, where formally agreed, mutual recognition of requirements across CARICOM.

Strengthen Agricultural Competitiveness

Strengthen investment, innovation, enterprise development and productivity growth through stronger and more predictable market opportunities.

Promote Inclusive Participation

Promote equitable opportunities for youth, women, persons with disabilities, cooperatives, family farmers, fisherfolk and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to participate in procurement systems and agricultural markets, using lawful and transparent participation measures appropriate to each Member State.

Support Regional Food Security

Support implementation of the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy through stronger market systems and increased utilization of Caribbean agricultural products.

4.4 Expected Policy Outcomes

Implementation of the Policy is expected to contribute to:

- increased utilization of Caribbean agricultural products within national procurement systems;
- stronger and more predictable markets for agricultural producers;
- improved coordination between producers and institutional buyers;
- greater participation of farmers, fisherfolk, processors, cooperatives and agribusiness enterprises in institutional markets;

- enhanced supplier competitiveness through strengthened quality assurance, food safety and certification systems;
- increased investment in national aggregation, logistics and market infrastructure;
- strengthened food security, agricultural resilience and rural economic development; and
- accelerated implementation of the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy.
- improved payment performance, contract reliability and transparency in institutional procurement;
- greater retention and recirculation of procurement expenditure within national and regional economies, subject to economic appraisal;
- more nutritious and culturally appropriate institutional food offerings where locally supplied products meet applicable requirements; and
- stronger regional seed security and access to climate-resilient, locally adapted and indigenous planting material, consistent with plant-health, biosafety and intellectual-property requirements.

4.5 Policy Scope

The Policy provides regional guidance on strengthening procurement systems and market access for Caribbean agricultural products.

The Policy addresses the following areas:

- public and institutional procurement;
 - market access and supplier participation;
 - supplier development and certification;
 - national aggregation systems;
 - cold chain and logistics;
 - digital procurement and market information systems;
 - market transparency; and
 - monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement.
-
- prompt payment, digital invoicing and contract-performance management;
 - nutrition-sensitive and climate-resilient procurement;
 - regional seed security and genetic resilience.

The Policy complements existing regional and national initiatives relating to agricultural production, climate-smart agriculture, food safety, agricultural research, digital agriculture and youth development by strengthening market access and procurement systems for Caribbean agricultural products. It does not replace or supersede existing policies, programs or institutional mandates.

5. Policy Principles

5.1 Introduction

The Local Agriculture First Policy is founded on the following Policy Principles, which guide its interpretation, implementation, and periodic review.

These principles provide a common policy foundation for Member States while recognizing the diversity of legal, institutional, and procurement systems across the Caribbean Community.

5.2 Policy Principles

Principle 1 – Local First

Member States are encouraged to progressively increase the utilization of Caribbean agricultural products within public and institutional procurement systems where such products are available, competitively priced, and meet applicable food safety, quality, and procurement requirements.

Principle 2 – National Leadership and Regional Cooperation

Implementation of the Policy shall be nationally led and regionally supported. Member States retain primary responsibility for strengthening national procurement systems, while regional cooperation should facilitate knowledge sharing, technical collaboration, and policy coordination.

Principle 3 – Fair Competition

Procurement systems should promote open, transparent, equitable, and competitive processes that provide opportunities for qualified suppliers while maintaining value for money and public confidence and remaining consistent with national legislation and applicable international obligations.

Principle 4 – Food Safety and Quality

Procurement systems should promote confidence in Caribbean agricultural products by supporting food safety, quality assurance, supplier certification, and traceability in accordance with national and regional standards.

Principle 5 – Inclusiveness

Member States should promote equitable opportunities for youth, women, persons with disabilities, cooperatives, family farmers, fisherfolk and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to participate in procurement systems and agricultural markets. Physical facilities, transportation, information, registration and digital services should be designed to avoid preventable exclusion and should provide reasonable assisted, accessible and non-digital participation pathways where required.

Principle 6 – Sustainability and Resilience

Procurement and market development should support environmentally sustainable production, climate resilience, efficient resource use, and the long-term resilience of Caribbean agrifood systems.

Principle 7 – Partnership and Collaboration

Implementation of the Policy should promote collaboration among governments, regional institutions, producer organizations, the private sector, academia, civil society, and development partners in support of coordinated agricultural market development.

Principle 8 – Accountability and Transparency

Implementation of the Policy should be supported by transparent procurement processes, evidence-based decision-making, effective monitoring, and public accountability.

Principle 9 – Continuous Improvement

Member States are encouraged to periodically review implementation, share good practices, promote innovation, and strengthen procurement systems in response to changing national and regional circumstances.

5.3 Application of the Principles

These Policy Principles should be applied collectively in the interpretation and implementation of the Policy.

Nothing in these principles shall limit the ability of Member States to adapt the Policy in accordance with their respective legal, institutional, and procurement frameworks.

6. Policy Framework

6.1 Introduction

This section establishes the principal policy provisions through which Member States are encouraged to strengthen market access for Caribbean agricultural products in support of the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy.

The Policy provides regional guidance on procurement, supplier development, market coordination, logistics, digital systems, institutional collaboration and performance monitoring. These policy provisions are intended to support nationally led implementation and may be adapted to national circumstances.

6.2 Procurement of Caribbean Agricultural Products

Policy

Member States are encouraged to progressively strengthen the procurement of Caribbean agricultural products through national procurement systems where such products are available, competitively priced, and meet applicable food safety, quality, and procurement requirements. Member States may establish progressive, nationally determined local-content procurement targets after completing supply, legal, fiscal, trade, food-safety and institutional-readiness assessments. Dr. Agnew's recommendation of a 30 per cent institutional procurement target should be treated as an indicative policy option for testing and validation, not as an approved regional mandate.

Recommended Measures

Member States are encouraged to:

- strengthen procurement policies that facilitate the participation of Caribbean agricultural suppliers;
 - identify opportunities to increase the utilization of Caribbean agricultural products within public institutions;
 - improve communication between procuring entities and suppliers;
 - strengthen procurement planning to improve market predictability; and
 - encourage procurement practices that promote reliable and sustainable supply.
 - establish clear, risk-based food-safety and quality specifications for schools, hospitals, correctional facilities and other institutional buyers;
 - train procurement officials to assess supplier compliance, apply proportionate requirements and manage food-safety risks.
-
- publish forward demand schedules and commodity requirements so suppliers can plan production and aggregation;
 - use framework agreements, appropriate contract lotting and transparent evaluation methods to reduce avoidable barriers for qualified small suppliers;
 - establish prompt-payment standards, digital invoicing and procedures for monitoring overdue payments; and
 - apply participation measures for youth, women and persons with disabilities only where consistent with national procurement law and applicable regional and international obligations.
 - establish a transparent, product- and time-specific local-supply shortfall procedure for circumstances in which eligible local or regional supply cannot meet required quantity, quality, safety, price or delivery conditions;
 - record the product, quantity, reason, duration, market assessment and corrective supplier-development or production action associated with each approved exception.

6.3 Supplier Development and Certification

Policy

Member States are encouraged to strengthen supplier development systems that improve the capacity of Caribbean agricultural producers to participate effectively in institutional and

commercial markets. Food safety shall be treated as an enabling system for enterprise development and market access, with requirements proportionate to product risk, enterprise scale and the market being supplied.

Recommended Measures

Member States are encouraged to:

- strengthen supplier registration systems;
 - strengthen food safety certification programs;
 - strengthen quality assurance programs;
 - improve product traceability systems;
 - expand producer training and technical assistance;
 - strengthen enterprise development services; and
 - support supplier readiness for institutional markets.
-
- implement a progressive food-safety compliance pathway from registration and foundational GAP/GHP compliance to verified systems and market-appropriate certification;
 - provide affordable or subsidized access to competent laboratory testing for microbiological hazards, pesticide residues, contaminants and other commodity-specific risks;
 - provide food-safety mentorship, incubation and technical assistance through competent authorities, laboratories, experienced processors and qualified professionals;
 - support simple farm- or processor-to-institution traceability, batch and input records, destination records and withdrawal or recall procedures;
 - prepare suppliers for applicable SPS, veterinary, phytosanitary, import, export and documentation requirements for intra-regional trade.

*An illustrative Supplier Development Framework is provided in **Annex II** to assist Member States in strengthening supplier readiness and certification systems.*

6.4 Market Coordination and National Aggregation

Policy

Member States are encouraged to strengthen market coordination and national aggregation systems that improve market efficiency and strengthen linkages between producers and institutional buyers.

Recommended Measures

Member States are encouraged to:

- establish or strengthen national aggregation hubs;
- improve grading and packing facilities;

- strengthen producer organizations and cooperatives;
 - expand storage infrastructure;
 - improve distribution networks; and
 - strengthen market coordination mechanisms.
-
- require aggregation hubs to apply appropriate GHP/GMP, sanitation, pest-control and cross-contamination controls;
 - maintain temperature controls, traceability records and documented withdrawal or recall procedures; and
 - provide practical compliance support to youth and small suppliers using aggregation facilities.

*An illustrative Market Access Pathway is provided in **Annex IV** to demonstrate the interaction between producers, aggregation systems, logistics, procurement and institutional markets.*

6.5 Cold Chain and Logistics

Policy

Member States are encouraged to strengthen national cold chain infrastructure and logistics systems that improve the movement of Caribbean agricultural products from producers to markets.

Recommended Measures

Member States are encouraged to:

- expand refrigerated transportation;
 - strengthen cold storage infrastructure;
 - establish or improve distribution centers;
 - promote logistics partnerships;
 - strengthen post-harvest handling systems; and
 - modernize agricultural supply chains.
-
- apply documented sanitation, pest-control, temperature-management and cross-contamination-prevention procedures in storage and transport;
 - maintain traceability and recall capability throughout aggregation, storage and distribution.

6.6 Market Infrastructure Planning and Investment Readiness

Policy

Member States are encouraged to treat aggregation, preparation, storage, cold chain, processing, transportation, delivery and digital coordination as an integrated market-service system. Major rehabilitation, construction or equipment investment should proceed only after demand, capacity, existing assets, service gaps, accessibility, climate risk, operating readiness and lifecycle costs have been assessed.

Recommended Measures

Before authorizing major LAFP-related infrastructure investments, Member States and responsible partners are encouraged to:

- map verified institutional and commercial demand, supplier capacity, priority commodities and seasonal supply patterns;
- inventory existing public, private and cooperative assets and assess opportunities to repair, coordinate, upgrade or repurpose them before constructing new facilities;
- define product-specific preparation, storage, temperature, handling, collection-point, route and delivery-window requirements;
- establish demand and utilization thresholds, investment-readiness evidence and transparent project-selection criteria;
- complete climate, environmental, water, energy, disaster-risk and universal-accessibility assessments;
- identify the asset owner, operator, maintenance and replacement responsibilities, insurance, revenue or tariff model, public-support obligations and performance standards;
- demonstrate how affordable and equitable access will be protected for small, rural, emerging, youth-led and disability-inclusive enterprises;
- engage intended users, affected communities and persons with disabilities before material decisions become irreversible; and
- define monitoring, correction, operator-replacement, expansion, repurposing and exit criteria over the asset lifecycle.

6.7 Digital Market Systems

Policy

Member States are encouraged to utilize digital technologies that improve procurement transparency, market information, supplier participation, and evidence-based decision-making.

Recommended Measures

Member States are encouraged to:

- establish supplier registries;
- develop digital procurement platforms;
- strengthen market information systems;
- develop electronic product catalogues;
- establish procurement dashboards; and

- strengthen data-sharing mechanisms.
- design traceability tools that are accessible to youth, micro and small enterprises and support batch, input, destination and recall records; and
- apply appropriate data governance, access control and interoperability arrangements when linking supplier, procurement and competent-authority systems.
- connect verified supplier profiles, product and capacity catalogues, institutional demand, tender opportunities, contract delivery, invoicing and payment-status information through interoperable services;
- publish appropriately aggregated dashboards on local procurement share, contract performance and payment timeliness without disclosing protected personal or commercially sensitive information; and
- provide accessible export, correction, consent and grievance mechanisms for participating suppliers.
- provide mobile-compatible, low-bandwidth, assisted and offline registration channels, including support through extension services or designated local focal points;
- allow proportionate visibility for producers progressing toward formalization or certification while clearly displaying verified status and market eligibility; and
- test physical, communication and digital accessibility with intended users, including persons with disabilities, rural producers and persons with limited digital literacy.

6.8 Regional Seed Security and Genetic Resilience

Policy

Member States and regional institutions are encouraged to strengthen coordinated seed conservation, multiplication, quality assurance, exchange and emergency resupply arrangements that improve access to climate-resilient, locally adapted and indigenous planting material.

Recommended Measures

Member States and relevant regional institutions are encouraged to:

- map and strengthen existing national and regional seed collections, breeding programmes, genebanks and multiplication capacity;
- develop protocols for conservation, quality assurance, plant-health controls, emergency seed reserves and cross-border movement;
- protect farmers' rights, indigenous knowledge and equitable access consistent with applicable law; and
- undertake a feasibility and governance study before establishing any new centralized CARICOM seed-bank institution.

6.9 Institutional Collaboration

Policy

Member States are encouraged to strengthen collaboration among governments, regional institutions, producer organizations, the private sector, academia, and development partners to support procurement systems and agricultural market development.

Recommended Measures

Member States are encouraged to:

- strengthen inter-ministerial coordination;
- promote public-private partnerships;
- strengthen engagement with producer organizations;
- encourage collaboration with academic and research institutions;
- strengthen technical cooperation; and
- promote regional knowledge exchange.

6.10 Monitoring, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Policy

Member States are encouraged to monitor and periodically review procurement systems and market performance to strengthen evidence-based implementation of the Policy.

Recommended Measures

Member States are encouraged to:

- establish national performance indicators;
- monitor supplier participation;
- assess procurement outcomes;
- identify implementation challenges;
- document and share good practices; and
- periodically review procurement policies and implementation arrangements.

*Illustrative performance indicators and monitoring guidance are provided in **Annex I** and **Annex III** to support national implementation, monitoring and reporting.*

6.11 National Adaptation

Recognizing the diversity of legal, institutional, economic and procurement systems across CARICOM, implementation of the Policy shall be undertaken by Member States in accordance with national priorities, legislation and administrative arrangements.

The Policy provides regional guidance rather than prescriptive implementation requirements and supports nationally appropriate approaches to strengthening market access for Caribbean agricultural products while advancing shared regional objectives.

7. Institutional Arrangements

7.1 Introduction

Implementation of the Local Agriculture First Policy requires coordinated action among Member States, regional institutions, producer organizations, the private sector, academia, development partners, and civil society.

Recognizing that procurement systems operate primarily at the national level, implementation of the Policy shall be nationally led and regionally supported. The institutional arrangements established under this Policy are intended to strengthen coordination while respecting existing legal, institutional, and administrative frameworks across the Caribbean Community.

7.2 Member States

Member States have primary responsibility for implementing the Policy.

Member States are encouraged to:

- adapt the Policy to national circumstances;
- strengthen procurement policies and procedures;
- increase opportunities for the utilization of Caribbean agricultural products;
- strengthen supplier participation and market access;
- support coordination across agricultural value chains;
- establish appropriate implementation mechanisms;
- monitor implementation; and
- report progress through existing national and regional reporting mechanisms, where appropriate.
- Each participating Member State should establish and publish or internally approve an implementation responsibility matrix identifying the competent institutions for procurement authorization, supplier registration, food-safety and SPS oversight, aggregation and logistics, payment administration, data governance, complaints and appeals, pilot management, monitoring and evaluation.

7.3 National Governments

National Governments are encouraged to promote a whole-of-government approach by strengthening collaboration among ministries and public agencies responsible for:

- agriculture;
- finance;
- public procurement;
- trade;
- tourism;
- education;
- health;

- fisheries;
- local government; and
- other relevant sectors.

Such collaboration should promote policy coherence and alignment between procurement systems and national agricultural development priorities.

7.4 CARICOM Secretariat

The CARICOM Secretariat shall continue to provide regional coordination in support of implementation of the **CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy**.

Within its existing mandate, the Secretariat may:

- facilitate regional policy dialogue;
- promote collaboration among Member States;
- coordinate knowledge exchange;
- support regional monitoring and reporting;
- facilitate engagement with development partners; and
- provide technical coordination where appropriate.

7.5 Regional Institutions

Regional institutions support implementation of the Policy within their respective mandates.

Within its approved mandate and subject to the decisions of its governing bodies, CAHFSA should support regional technical coordination on food safety and SPS matters. This may include harmonization guidance, practical tools for youth and small enterprises, capacity building, food-safety culture, supplier assurance, laboratory linkages, risk-based monitoring, traceability, mutual-recognition dialogue and support for safe intra-regional trade.

Their contributions may include:

- agricultural research;
- food safety and standards;
- agricultural health and biosecurity;
- climate resilience;
- trade facilitation;
- digital agriculture;
- capacity development;
- market intelligence; and
- technical cooperation.

7.6 CARICOM Agriculture Youth Advisory Body (CAYAB)

The **CARICOM Agriculture Youth Advisory Body (CAYAB)** serves as a regional advisory mechanism supporting stakeholder engagement, youth participation, and policy dialogue.

Consistent with its mandate, CAYAB may:

- facilitate youth engagement in regional agricultural policy;
- support stakeholder consultations;
- encourage collaboration among youth organizations;
- promote awareness of the Policy;
- contribute policy research and recommendations;
- facilitate regional knowledge exchange; and
- provide stakeholder feedback to support continuous policy improvement.
- CAYAB, working with the responsible institutions, should maintain a Consultation Recommendation and Response Register recording each material recommendation, source, responsible authority, disposition, policy or implementation response, status, evidence and next action. Periodic summaries should be communicated to participants without representing consultation feedback as formal approval.

CAYAB supports implementation of the Policy through its advisory role and is not the implementing authority.

7.7 Producer Organizations and Cooperatives

Producer organizations, cooperatives, and commodity associations play an important role in strengthening supplier participation and market coordination.

These organizations are encouraged to:

- strengthen producer coordination;
- facilitate aggregation;
- promote quality assurance;
- improve communication between producers and buyers;
- support supplier readiness; and
- encourage compliance with food safety and market requirements.

7.8 Private Sector

Private sector organizations, including distributors, processors, retailers, supermarkets, tourism establishments, and other institutional buyers, are important partners in strengthening demand for Caribbean agricultural products.

The private sector is encouraged to:

- strengthen procurement partnerships with domestic suppliers;
- support supplier development;
- improve market information;

- encourage long-term purchasing relationships;
- collaborate with governments and producer organizations; and
- contribute to stronger agricultural value chains.

7.9 Development Partners

Development partners contribute technical assistance, financing, research, innovation, and institutional capacity development that support implementation of the Policy.

Development partners are encouraged to support:

- procurement systems;
- market infrastructure;
- agricultural innovation;
- institutional capacity;
- technical cooperation;
- monitoring and evaluation; and
- regional knowledge exchange.

Support should remain aligned with national priorities and regional development objectives.

7.10 Academia and Research Institutions

Universities, technical institutions, and research organizations contribute evidence, innovation, and technical expertise that strengthen implementation of the Policy.

These institutions are encouraged to support:

- policy research;
- market analysis;
- innovation;
- professional training;
- monitoring and evaluation; and
- knowledge generation.

7.11 Coordination

Effective implementation of the Policy depends on sustained collaboration among governments, regional institutions, producer organizations, the private sector, academia, civil society, and development partners.

Member States are encouraged to establish appropriate mechanisms for consultation, information sharing, stakeholder engagement, and coordination that strengthen implementation and support the continuous improvement of procurement systems and agricultural markets.

8. Implementation Framework

8.1 Implementation Approach

Implementation of the Local Agriculture First Policy shall be nationally led and undertaken in accordance with the legal, institutional, administrative, and procurement frameworks of each Member State.

Recognizing the diversity of national circumstances across the Caribbean Community, Member States are encouraged to determine the most appropriate approach, sequencing, and timeframe for implementation while remaining consistent with the objectives and principles of this Policy.

Regional cooperation should support implementation through knowledge sharing, technical cooperation, capacity development, and the exchange of good practices.

8.2 National Implementation

Member States are encouraged to integrate the Policy into existing national agricultural, procurement, trade, and food security frameworks where appropriate.

Implementation may include:

- reviewing national procurement policies and procedures;
- strengthening institutional coordination;
- improving supplier participation in procurement systems;
- strengthening market coordination and aggregation;
- enhancing logistics and cold chain infrastructure;
- improving market information systems; and
- supporting supplier development and certification.

Implementation should build upon existing national institutions and programs and avoid unnecessary duplication of responsibilities.

8.3 Institutional Coordination

Successful implementation requires effective coordination among public institutions responsible for agriculture, procurement, finance, trade, tourism, education, health, fisheries, and other relevant sectors.

Member States are encouraged to establish appropriate mechanisms that facilitate coordination, information sharing, and joint planning among relevant ministries and agencies.

8.4 Stakeholder Engagement

Implementation should be supported through ongoing engagement with producer organizations, cooperatives, the private sector, academia, civil society, youth organizations, and development partners.

Stakeholder engagement should promote collaboration, strengthen implementation, and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and practical experience. Intended users, affected communities, youth enterprises and persons with disabilities should be engaged early enough to influence pilot, infrastructure, service and digital-system design before material decisions become difficult to reverse.

8.5 Capacity Development

Member States are encouraged to strengthen institutional and technical capacity to support implementation of the Policy.

Youth and small agri-enterprises should be supported through a practical market-readiness pathway that combines training, mentorship, laboratory access, technical assistance and finance so that food-safety requirements facilitate, rather than become barriers to, participation.

Capacity development may include:

- procurement training;
 - supplier development;
 - food safety and quality assurance;
 - market analysis;
 - digital systems;
 - logistics and supply chain management; and
 - monitoring and evaluation.
-
- Good Agricultural Practices, Good Hygiene Practices, basic HACCP principles, sanitation, safe pesticide use, post-harvest handling, allergen management where applicable, traceability, recall procedures and recordkeeping;
 - food-safety culture, including leadership, worker behaviour, communication, accountability, documentation and continuous improvement; and
 - apprenticeships and exchanges with compliant farms, processors, laboratories, competent authorities, aggregation facilities and established agribusinesses.
-
- enterprise pathways for youth as aggregators, cold-chain operators, processors, transporters, packagers, equipment technicians, digital-ordering providers, traceability specialists, data analysts, communicators and market-intelligence providers; and
 - accessible procurement, financial, digital and technical-literacy support delivered through online, assisted and community-based channels.

8.6 Resource Mobilization

Implementation of the Policy should, where possible, utilize existing national programs, institutional resources, and regional initiatives.

Member States may also seek technical and financial support from regional institutions, development partners, international financial institutions, and the private sector to strengthen implementation.

Eligible supplier-support and youth-financing windows should include the reasonable costs of achieving and maintaining compliance, including testing, certification or verification, potable-water and sanitation systems, food-safe equipment, cold storage, packaging, traceability tools, facility improvements and corrective actions, in addition to production and working capital.

Predictable purchase agreements and verified delivery records may improve supplier bankability but shall not be represented as guarantees of credit. Member States and partners should assess appropriate working-capital, invoice-finance, credit-guarantee, insurance and blended-finance instruments with clear consumer protection, affordability and risk-allocation safeguards.

Resource mobilization should complement national priorities and contribute to the long-term sustainability of implementation.

8.7 Pilot Implementation and Evaluation

Implementation should begin with formally authorized, time-bound pilots in volunteering Member States before any region-wide scaling decision. Dr. Agnew's proposal for three to five pilots is an indicative planning option, subject to Member-State interest, approvals, resources and readiness.

Each pilot should establish a baseline; map institutional demand, supply capacity, existing assets and service gaps; identify priority commodities, institutions, routes and delivery requirements; review procurement, trade, food-safety, accessibility and environmental requirements; define supplier-support, infrastructure, operating and payment arrangements; protect participant data; and use an independent or appropriately governed evaluation plan. Scaling should follow documented evidence on value for money, supplier inclusion, delivery reliability, nutrition, fiscal effects, food safety, utilization, accessibility and administrative feasibility.

- Pilot decision point 1: legal, fiscal, supply, food-safety and institutional readiness confirmed;
- Pilot decision point 2: procurement design, baseline, budget, roles, safeguards and evaluation protocol approved;
- Pilot decision point 3: implementation reviewed against agreed indicators and corrective actions; and
- Pilot decision point 4: scale, revise, extend or discontinue based on evidence and the decisions of the competent authorities.

8.8 Regional Cooperation and Pilot Learning

Regional cooperation should support implementation through:

- policy dialogue;
- technical cooperation;
- regional knowledge exchange;
- capacity development;
- research and innovation;
- sharing of good practices; and
- collaboration among Member States and regional institutions.

Such cooperation should strengthen implementation while respecting national ownership of the Policy.

9. Policy Coherence and Complementarity

9.1 Purpose

The Local Agriculture First Policy has been developed to complement existing regional and national policies, strategies and programs that support agricultural transformation across the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

The Policy strengthens market access for Caribbean agricultural products by improving procurement systems, supplier participation, market coordination and institutional purchasing. It should therefore be implemented in a manner that promotes policy coherence, strengthens institutional coordination and builds upon existing regional and national frameworks.

9.2 Alignment with Regional Priorities

The Policy supports the implementation of the following regional priorities:

- the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy;
- the Regional Youth in Agriculture Strategy;
- the CARICOM E-Agriculture Strategy (2025–2030); and
- regional food and nutrition security priorities.

These regional priorities establish the broader strategic context within which the Local Agriculture First Policy operates. The principal regional policy instruments and reference documents that informed the development of the Policy are identified in **Annex V**.

9.3 Complementarity with Existing Programs

The Policy complements existing regional and national programs that support:

- agricultural production;
- climate-smart agriculture;

- food safety and quality assurance;
- agricultural research and innovation;
- agricultural extension and advisory services;
- digital agriculture;
- agricultural health and biosecurity; and
- agricultural resilience.

These programs remain under the responsibility of their respective institutions and continue to be implemented in accordance with their established mandates.

9.4 Policy Complementarity

The Local Agriculture First Policy contributes to regional agricultural transformation by strengthening market access through procurement systems, supplier participation, market coordination and institutional purchasing.

While many existing regional initiatives focus on increasing production, improving productivity, strengthening resilience, enhancing food safety, advancing research and promoting digital transformation, the Local Agriculture First Policy focuses on strengthening the connection between production and markets.

Accordingly, the Policy complements existing regional priorities by supporting greater utilization of Caribbean agricultural products, improving market opportunities for producers and contributing to the implementation of the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

10.1 Purpose

Monitoring, evaluation and periodic review are essential to ensuring that the Local Agriculture First Policy remains effective, responsive and aligned with the evolving needs of Member States and the Caribbean Community.

This section establishes the approach through which implementation of the Policy may be monitored, progress assessed and future revisions informed.

10.2 National Monitoring

Member States are encouraged to monitor implementation of the Policy using nationally appropriate mechanisms that are consistent with their legal, institutional and administrative arrangements.

Monitoring may include progress in:

- strengthening procurement systems;
- increasing participation of Caribbean agricultural suppliers;

- improving market coordination;
 - enhancing supplier development and certification;
 - strengthening logistics and market infrastructure; and
 - increasing the utilization of Caribbean agricultural products within institutional markets.
-
- increasing the proportion of participating youth and other priority suppliers meeting minimum food-safety requirements;
 - expanding adoption of traceability and recall systems;
 - monitoring inspection, audit, testing and certification outcomes and food-safety incidents; and
 - reducing the time and cost required for youth and small enterprises to achieve market-appropriate compliance.

Member States may determine the most appropriate indicators and reporting arrangements based on national priorities and available institutional capacity.

Illustrative performance indicators are provided in Annex I and an illustrative Monitoring and Reporting Framework is provided in Annex III to support national implementation.

10.3 Regional Monitoring

Regional monitoring should support the exchange of information, good practices and lessons learned among Member States.

Where appropriate, existing regional reporting mechanisms may be used to facilitate voluntary information sharing, encourage peer learning and identify opportunities for technical cooperation and continuous improvement.

Regional monitoring should complement, rather than duplicate, national reporting systems.

Regional monitoring should also summarize the disposition and implementation status of material consultation recommendations, including matters incorporated, partially incorporated, referred for technical review, deferred or outside the scope of the Policy.

10.4 Evaluation

Member States are encouraged to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the Policy in strengthening market access, procurement systems, supplier participation and agricultural competitiveness.

Evaluations may consider:

- progress toward national objectives;
- implementation challenges;
- institutional effectiveness;
- stakeholder participation; and

- opportunities for policy improvement.

Evaluation findings should support evidence-based decision-making and inform future implementation.

Before publication or use in formal decision-making, estimates of food-import expenditure, procurement-market size, enterprise or employment effects, economic multipliers, emissions reductions and other quantified benefits should be supported by current, cited data and an agreed methodology. Where evidence is not yet available, figures should be identified as scenarios or hypotheses for testing rather than established results.

10.5 Policy Review

The Policy should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains relevant, effective and responsive to changing national, regional and international circumstances.

A comprehensive regional review is recommended every five years, or earlier where significant developments warrant consideration.

Policy reviews should take into account:

- implementation experience across Member States;
- emerging procurement practices;
- developments in agricultural markets;
- technological innovation;
- regional policy developments; and
- stakeholder feedback.

Any revisions to the Policy should be considered through the appropriate CARICOM decision-making processes.

10.6 Continuous Improvement

Implementation of the Policy should promote a culture of continuous learning, innovation and collaboration.

Member States are encouraged to share experiences, document good practices and strengthen regional cooperation to improve procurement systems and market access over time.

Continuous improvement should support the long-term effectiveness of the Policy and contribute to the achievement of regional food security and agricultural development objectives.

11. Proposed Decisions for Consideration

The following decisions are proposed for consideration through the appropriate CARICOM processes. They do not presume approval of the Policy or any numerical procurement target.

- note the revised Local Agriculture First Policy and the recommendations submitted by Dr. Jessica Agnew of Virginia Tech University and CAHFSA;
- authorize or request the appropriate legal, procurement, fiscal, trade, food-safety and technical review of the revised draft;
- invite interested Member States to indicate willingness to participate in a formally governed pilot-readiness process;
- request development of a costed pilot framework, baseline methodology, resource-mobilization plan and monitoring and evaluation protocol in collaboration with competent regional and national institutions;
- request a feasibility assessment of regional seed-security options before determining whether a new regional institutional mechanism is required; and
- request a progress report and evidence-based recommendations before any decision on regional scaling or a common procurement target.
- request that the costed pilot framework include an infrastructure-readiness and lifecycle-operating assessment, an accessibility plan and a transparent local-supply shortfall procedure; and
- note the Consultation Recommendation and Response Register as the accountability mechanism for documenting how Sessions 1-3 influenced subsequent policy and implementation decisions.

Conclusion

The Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP) provides regional policy guidance to assist Member States in strengthening market access and procurement systems for Caribbean agricultural products. By improving the connection between production and markets, the Policy supports stronger agricultural value chains, encourages investment and contributes to more resilient and competitive Caribbean agrifood systems.

The Policy recognizes that sustainable agricultural transformation depends not only on increasing production, but also on creating reliable and predictable market opportunities for farmers, fisherfolk, agro-processors, cooperatives and agribusiness enterprises. Through stronger procurement systems, supplier participation, market coordination and nationally appropriate implementation, Member States can expand opportunities for Caribbean agricultural products while advancing national agricultural development objectives.

Implementation of the Policy will be nationally led, with each Member State determining the most appropriate legislative, institutional and administrative arrangements for its national circumstances. Regional cooperation will continue to support knowledge sharing, technical

collaboration and the exchange of good practices in accordance with existing institutional mandates.

The Local Agriculture First Policy complements the CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy and other regional and national initiatives by strengthening market access and procurement systems as an important component of regional agricultural transformation.

Member States are invited to consider the Local Agriculture First Policy as a practical regional policy to strengthen procurement systems, improve market opportunities for Caribbean agricultural products and advance the Community's shared objectives of food security, agricultural competitiveness, economic resilience and sustainable development. Food safety, quality assurance, traceability and SPS readiness are positioned as enabling systems that protect public health while helping youth and small enterprises progress into reliable institutional and regional markets.

Adopted by: *[To be completed following consideration by the appropriate CARICOM decision-making body]*

Date of Adoption: *[To be completed]*

Review Period: *Five years from the date of adoption, or earlier as determined by Member States through the appropriate CARICOM decision-making processes.*

Annex I

Illustrative Performance Indicators

Purpose

This Annex provides illustrative performance indicators that Member States may consider when monitoring implementation of the **Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP)**. The indicators are intended to support national monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement and should be adapted to national priorities, institutional arrangements, and data availability.

Nothing in this Annex establishes mandatory reporting requirements or common regional targets.

Illustrative Indicators

Policy Area	Illustrative Indicator
Procurement	Percentage of Caribbean agricultural products procured by public institutions.
Market Access	Number of Caribbean agricultural suppliers participating in institutional procurement.
Supplier Development	Number of suppliers registered, certified, or meeting applicable quality and food safety requirements.
Institutional Procurement	Number of public institutions procuring Caribbean agricultural products.
Market Coordination	Number of procurement agreements or supply arrangements between producers and institutional buyers.
Aggregation	Number and operational capacity of national aggregation facilities supporting agricultural markets.
Cold Chain and Logistics	National cold storage capacity and utilization for Caribbean agricultural products.
Digital Market Systems	Number of institutions and suppliers utilizing digital procurement or market information systems.
Stakeholder Participation	Participation of youth, women, cooperatives, and MSMEs in procurement opportunities.
Food Safety and Quality	Percentage of participating suppliers complying with applicable food safety and quality standards.
Market Performance	Value or volume of Caribbean agricultural products supplied through institutional procurement channels.
Capacity Development	Number of suppliers or procurement officials receiving relevant training or technical assistance.
Youth Food-Safety Readiness	Percentage and number of participating youth-led enterprises meeting nationally defined minimum food-safety requirements.
Traceability and Recall	Percentage of participating suppliers and aggregation facilities maintaining product, batch, destination and withdrawal or recall records.
Training and Mentorship	Number of youth and small-enterprise suppliers completing GAP, GHP, basic HACCP,

Policy Area	Illustrative Indicator
	traceability or food-safety mentorship pathways.
Inspection, Testing and Certification	Inspection or audit compliance rates; relevant laboratory testing outcomes; and number of suppliers progressing to verified or certified status.
Compliance Accessibility	Average time and cost for youth and small enterprises to achieve the applicable compliance tier, and value of technical or financial support provided.
Food-Safety Performance	Number and nature of food-safety non-conformities, withdrawals, recalls or incidents associated with participating supply chains, interpreted using risk and volume context.
Local Procurement Share	Value and volume of eligible Caribbean agricultural products as a percentage of participating institutional food procurement, measured against a validated baseline.
Payment Timeliness	Median days from accepted invoice to payment; percentage paid within the applicable standard; and value of overdue payments.
Contract Performance	Delivery fulfilment, rejection, cancellation and contract-renewal rates, interpreted by commodity and supplier category.
Inclusive Supplier Participation	Number, value and share of contracts awarded to youth-, women- and disability-inclusive enterprises, where collection and use are lawful and consent-based.
Nutrition-Sensitive Procurement	Share of participating menus or food baskets meeting nationally determined nutrition and local-product specifications.
Seed Security	Availability of priority planting material, multiplication capacity, emergency-resupply readiness and access by youth and small producers.
Fiscal and Economic Effects	Validated changes in procurement cost, administrative cost, import substitution and locally retained expenditure; multiplier estimates reported only with methodology and confidence limits.
Consultation Responsiveness	Number and share of material recommendations incorporated, partially incorporated, referred, deferred or closed, with response evidence communicated to participants.
Accessible Participation	Use of assisted, offline, low-bandwidth and accessible channels; participation and completion rates by relevant inclusion categories where lawful and consent-based.
Infrastructure Readiness	Completion of demand, capacity, asset, gap, climate, accessibility, operating and lifecycle-cost assessments before major investment approval.
Infrastructure Utilization and Viability	Utilization, service affordability, operating cost, maintenance performance, downtime, loss reduction and compliance with correction, expansion or exit criteria.
Local-Supply Exceptions	Number, value, reason, duration and corrective response associated with approved local-supply shortfall exceptions.

National Adaptation

Member States are encouraged to determine the indicators, methodologies, data sources, and reporting arrangements most appropriate to their national circumstances. Additional indicators may be developed to reflect national priorities and existing monitoring systems.

Where appropriate, Member States may share implementation experiences and good practices through existing regional coordination mechanisms to support policy learning and continuous improvement.

Annex II

Illustrative Supplier Development Framework

Purpose

This Annex provides an illustrative framework that Member States may adapt to strengthen the participation of Caribbean agricultural suppliers in institutional and commercial procurement systems.

The framework is intended to support supplier readiness by promoting good agricultural and business practices, improving buyer confidence, and strengthening compliance with applicable food safety, quality assurance, and procurement requirements. It does not establish mandatory regional certification requirements and should be implemented in accordance with national legislation and institutional arrangements.

Illustrative Supplier Development Framework

Supplier development may be undertaken through a progressive approach that supports producers in achieving the standards necessary to participate effectively in institutional procurement.

Component	Illustrative Activities	Expected Outcome
Supplier Registration	Registration of producers, cooperatives, processors, and agribusiness enterprises within national supplier databases.	Improved visibility of qualified suppliers.
Business Readiness	Basic business registration, record keeping, production planning, and financial management.	Greater supplier readiness for institutional markets.
Food Safety	Tier 1: registration and foundational GAP/GHP; Tier 2: verified food-safety, traceability and recordkeeping systems; Tier 3: market-appropriate certification for institutional, intra-regional or export supply.	Proportionate progression toward demonstrated compliance without making advanced certification an immediate barrier to entry.
Quality Assurance	Product grading, quality control, packaging, labelling, and consistency of supply.	Improved product quality and market competitiveness.
Traceability	Systems to identify product origin and movement through the supply chain.	Enhanced transparency and accountability.
Technical Capacity	Training in production practices, post-harvest handling, logistics, and market requirements.	Improved productivity and operational efficiency.
Market Readiness	Understanding procurement requirements, tendering procedures, delivery schedules, and contract management.	Increased participation in institutional procurement opportunities.
Laboratory and Technical Support	Risk-based testing, corrective-action advice, mentorship and links to competent authorities and qualified food-safety professionals.	Affordable evidence of compliance and faster resolution of food-safety gaps.
SPS Market	Training and assistance on applicable food-safety,	Improved readiness for safe intra-

Component	Illustrative Activities	Expected Outcome
Readiness	veterinary, phytosanitary and trade-documentation requirements.	regional market access.
Food-Safety Finance	Finance for testing, sanitation, potable water, equipment, cold storage, packaging, certification, traceability and facility upgrades.	Reduced cost barriers for youth, micro and small enterprises.

Supporting Institutions

Implementation of supplier development programs may involve collaboration among:

- Ministries responsible for agriculture;
- public procurement authorities;
- national competent authorities responsible for food safety, plant health and animal health;
- agricultural extension services;
- producer organizations and cooperatives;
- chambers of commerce and business support organizations;
- academic and technical institutions; and
- CAHFSA and other relevant regional institutions and development partners;

Each Member State should determine the institutional arrangements most appropriate to its national circumstances.

Guiding Principles

Supplier development programs should seek to:

- promote equal access to procurement opportunities;
- strengthen food safety and quality assurance;
- encourage continuous improvement and innovation;
- support the participation of youth, women, cooperatives, and MSMEs;
- improve supplier competitiveness; and
- strengthen confidence between producers and institutional buyers.

Expected Outcomes

Effective supplier development is expected to contribute to:

- increased participation of Caribbean agricultural suppliers in procurement systems;
- improved compliance with food safety and quality requirements;
- stronger and more reliable supply chains;
- enhanced market confidence;
- reduced barriers to market entry; and
- greater competitiveness of Caribbean agricultural enterprises.

Annex III

Illustrative Monitoring and Reporting Framework

Purpose

This Annex provides an illustrative framework that Member States may adapt to monitor implementation of the **Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP)**. The framework is intended to support evidence-based implementation, facilitate continuous improvement, and encourage the exchange of good practices across the Caribbean Community.

The framework does not establish mandatory reporting requirements or create new institutional reporting obligations. Member States are encouraged to integrate monitoring and reporting into existing national systems where appropriate.

Illustrative Monitoring Cycle

Implementation of the Policy may be monitored through a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, assessment, reporting, and review.

Stage	Illustrative Activity	Expected Outcome
Implementation	Implement national procurement and market access measures.	Policy measures integrated into national programs and institutional arrangements.
Monitoring	Collect information on implementation progress and performance using nationally determined indicators.	Reliable evidence to assess implementation progress.
Reporting	Prepare periodic national progress reports using existing reporting mechanisms where appropriate.	Improved accountability and institutional learning.
Review	Assess implementation outcomes, identify challenges, and consider opportunities for improvement.	Evidence-based policy refinement and improved implementation.
Continuous Improvement	Incorporate lessons learned, good practices, and emerging priorities into future implementation.	Stronger procurement systems and improved market performance over time.

National Monitoring

Member States are encouraged to establish monitoring arrangements that are appropriate to their legal, institutional, and administrative frameworks.

Monitoring may include information relating to:

- implementation of procurement measures;

- participation of Caribbean agricultural suppliers;
 - market coordination;
 - supplier development and certification;
 - logistics and market infrastructure;
 - utilization of Caribbean agricultural products within institutional procurement; and
 - implementation challenges and lessons learned.
- food-safety and traceability performance, including youth-disaggregated participation and compliance;
 - inspection, audit, laboratory testing and certification outcomes;
 - time, cost and support required for suppliers to progress through applicable compliance tiers.

Regional Knowledge Exchange

Member States are encouraged to share experiences, good practices, and lessons learned through existing regional coordination mechanisms where appropriate.

Regional knowledge exchange may support:

- policy dialogue;
- technical cooperation;
- institutional learning;
- identification of emerging issues; and
- continuous improvement of procurement systems across the Community.

Periodic Policy Review

The Local Agriculture First Policy should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains relevant, effective, and responsive to changing national and regional circumstances.

A comprehensive review is recommended every **five years**, or earlier where significant developments warrant consideration by Member States.

Reviews may consider:

- implementation experience;
- procurement performance;
- developments in agricultural markets;
- technological innovation;
- evolving regional priorities; and
- stakeholder feedback.

Any revisions to the Policy should be considered through the appropriate CARICOM decision-making processes.

National Adaptation

Member States are encouraged to determine the monitoring methodologies, reporting frequency, institutional responsibilities, and review arrangements most appropriate to their national circumstances.

The framework presented in this Annex is illustrative and is intended to support nationally led implementation while encouraging regional cooperation and continuous policy improvement.

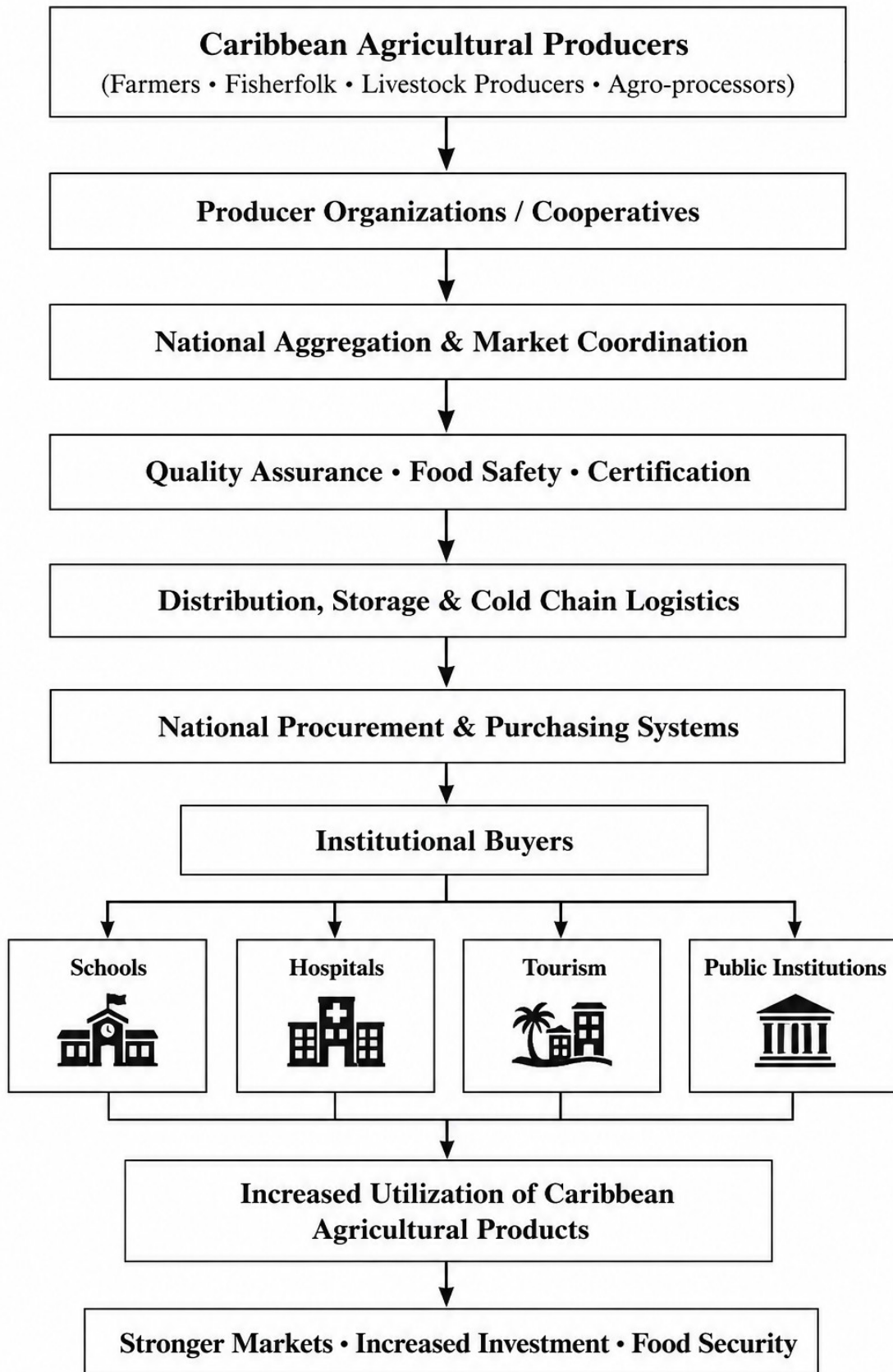
Annex IV

Illustrative Market Access Pathway

Purpose

This Annex provides an illustrative procurement pathway demonstrating how Caribbean agricultural products may move through national procurement systems under the framework established by the **Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP)**.

The pathway is intended to illustrate the relationship between producers, market coordination mechanisms, procurement systems, and institutional buyers. It is not prescriptive and should be adapted by Member States in accordance with their national legal, institutional, and procurement arrangements.



t Access Pathway Explained

The pathway illustrates the progression of Caribbean agricultural products from production to institutional markets through coordinated procurement systems.

Key elements include:

1. **Production** – Agricultural products are produced by farmers, fisherfolk, livestock producers, agro-processors, cooperatives, and other agricultural enterprises.
2. **Organization and Aggregation** – Producer organizations, cooperatives, and national aggregation systems improve supply coordination, facilitate consolidation of products, and strengthen the ability of suppliers to meet institutional demand.
3. **Quality Assurance and Certification** – Food safety, quality assurance, grading, and traceability systems strengthen buyer confidence and improve market readiness.
4. **Logistics and Distribution** – Storage, transportation, and cold chain infrastructure support efficient movement of agricultural products from producers to markets while reducing post-harvest losses.
5. **Procurement Systems** – National procurement systems create opportunities for Caribbean agricultural suppliers to participate in institutional purchasing in accordance with national procurement legislation and applicable standards.
6. **Institutional Markets** – Public institutions and other institutional buyers provide stable and predictable demand that supports investment, enterprise development, and long-term agricultural competitiveness.

National Adaptation

Member States are encouraged to adapt the procurement pathway to reflect their national procurement systems, institutional arrangements, supply chain structures, and market priorities.

The pathway presented in this Annex is illustrative and demonstrates the integrated approach promoted by the Local Agriculture First Policy. Implementation arrangements may vary among Member States while remaining consistent with the objectives and principles of the Policy.

Annex V

Reference Documents

Purpose

This Annex identifies the principal regional strategies, policies, and frameworks that informed the development of the **Local Agriculture First Policy (LAFP)**.

The documents listed below provide the strategic and policy context within which the LAFP has been developed. The Policy is intended to complement these instruments by strengthening market access, procurement systems, supplier participation, and market coordination in support of regional agricultural transformation.

Regional Strategies and Policy Frameworks

The development of the Local Agriculture First Policy has been informed by, and is intended to complement, the following regional policy instruments:

- **Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas Establishing the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).**
- **CARICOM 25 by 25 + 5 Strategy** for reducing the Region's food import bill and strengthening food and nutrition security.
- **Regional Youth in Agriculture Strategy**, promoting increased youth participation and leadership within Caribbean agrifood systems.
- **CARICOM E-Agriculture Strategy (2025–2030)**, supporting the application of digital technologies in agriculture and food systems.
- **Regional Food and Nutrition Security Frameworks**, supporting sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food systems across the Caribbean Community.
- **Regional Agricultural Health, Food Safety and Biosecurity Frameworks**, promoting safe, high-quality agricultural products and strengthening consumer confidence.
- **Relevant National Agricultural, Trade, Food Security, and Public Procurement Policies** adopted by CARICOM Member States.

International and Regional Development Context

The Policy has also been developed with due regard to broader international and regional commitments that support sustainable agricultural development, including:

- the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- relevant commitments relating to food security, sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, and rural development adopted by CARICOM Member States; and
- applicable regional and international trade obligations that govern public procurement and market access.

Technical Recommendation Inputs

- Agnew, Jessica. Local Agricultural First Policy_CARICOM: recommendations submitted for consideration in the development of the Local Agriculture First Policy, 2026. Affiliation identified as Virginia Tech University; citation does not imply institutional endorsement.
- Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA). Final Recommendations: LAFP Youth in Agriculture, 2026. Recommendations remain subject to the Agency's applicable governance and approval arrangements.

Relationship to the Local Agriculture First Policy

The Local Agriculture First Policy is intended to complement these regional and national policy instruments by addressing an important dimension of Caribbean agricultural transformation: **strengthening market access through procurement, supplier development, market coordination, and institutional purchasing.**

The Policy should therefore be implemented in a manner that promotes policy coherence, strengthens institutional coordination, and contributes to the successful implementation of existing regional and national agricultural development priorities.