

Sugar is the major export crop, and claims 18.8 per cent of all cultivated lands or 8 per cent of the islands' total land area. Approximately 8 000 people are employed by the sugar industry. Production, which declined in 1984 to 96 000 t, climbed to 135 000 t in 1989, including production of refined sugar.

Coffee and cocoa production continue to decline. In 1988, 0.6 and 1.7 million Kg respectively were produced, the bulk of which was exported. On the other hand, citrus production, which had increased from 4.7 million Kg in 1985, declined to 2.9 million Kg in 1987. Production of poultry, eggs, meat, and fresh milk continues to show encouraging growth.

Major emphasis is being placed on further development of the agricultural sector, in order to curtail food imports and expand non-traditional exports. The government has shown support for agricultural development by establishing an Agricultural Development Bank, the purpose of which is to grant loans to farmers at comparatively liberal terms through its soft loans portfolio.

Within the framework of the development strategy, the sugar cane industry will be revamped to include considerable product diversification and to ensure that production is cost-effective and efficient. Other activities will be introduced to increase the efficiency of the agriculture sector overall, so that by increasing its share of exports, it will also increase its foreign exchange earnings.

Caroni (1975) Ltd. Caroni is a wholly government-owned agricultural enterprise. The company employs over 10 000 workers and owns 32 208 ha of land, of which 14 430 ha are reserved for sugar cane and 3 100 ha for food crops.

Due to depressed sugar prices on world markets and in order to ensure Caroni's viability, the government has directed the company to institute a diversification program aimed at import substitution and at developing future export markets.

Caroni currently has a herd of 800 buffalypsos on 987 ha of land under beef pasture and development. The company plans to expand the beef herd to 1 800 head in order to supply the local fresh meat market. It also maintains a feed lot at La Gloria estate where 1 000 animals are prepared for the meat market annually. Caroni's dairy herd of 300 milking cows has also been targetted for a three-stage expansion to 2 000 head.