



Agriculture

Economic Development

Regional Integration

Youth

Youth and Women in Agriculture Get a Seat at Table for the Special Council of Ministers for Agriculture

OECS Press Release

June 5, 2025



June 4, 2025 – In a historical moment for agriculture in the OECS, youth and women in agriculture not only participated but actively influenced key policy decisions in the **Second Special Meeting of the OECS Council of Ministers for Agriculture (COM:AG)**. This historic meeting, held at the **Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) Headquarters** in San José, Costa Rica, saw a collaborative exchange between OECS ministers for agriculture, led by Chairman Honourable Lennox Andrews, Minister for Economic Development, Planning, Agriculture and Lands, Forestry, Marine Resources, and Cooperatives of Grenada.



The young farmers and women in agriculture outlined some critical challenges and presented solutions aimed at ensuring long-term success for youth and women in the industry. Some key points raised were:

- Limited access to finance.
- Restricted land access.
- Inadequate infrastructure and facilities for agriculture sector development.
- High costs for livestock farming, compounded by inconsistent feed availability, and climate-related difficulties.
- Difficulty in accessing essential equipment.

Proposed Solutions & Initiatives:



- Establishing mentorship programs to connect youth with experienced farmers and agri-business leaders.
- Incorporating agriculture education into primary schools and offering summer programs.
- Promoting agro-processing facilities, subsidised transport, and infrastructure improvements.
- Supporting youth access to **low-interest loans and grant programs** for agribusiness development.
- Encouraging government collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to improve sector support.

The Costa Rica Study Tour has impelled emerging youth and women in agriculture to become active decision-makers through collaboration with ministers on issues that affect the sector in the OECS. Their contributions on sustainable agriculture, innovative trade, and food security greatly impacted discussions, highlighting the next generation's leadership readiness. This initiative was supported by the Regional Integration through Growth Harmonization and Technology (RIGHT) Programme, funded by the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).



Summary of Decisions from the Council of Ministers for Agriculture Meeting:

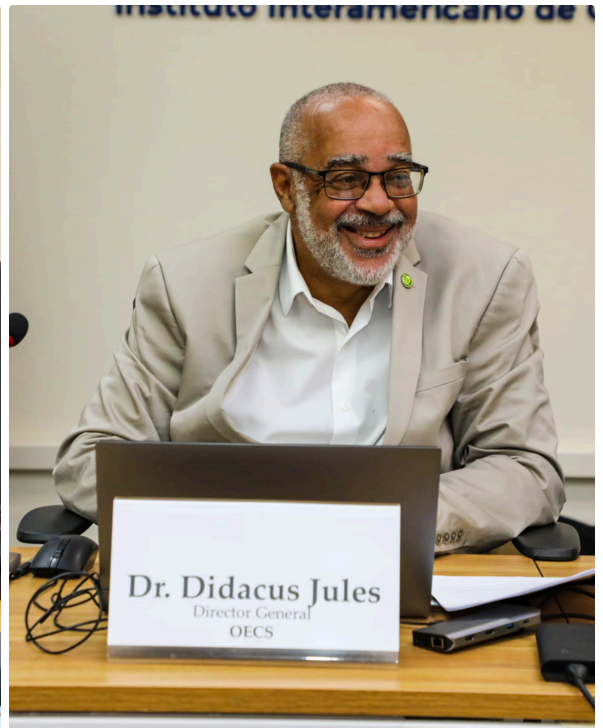
The discussions resulted in several significant decisions aimed at strengthening agricultural resilience and market connectivity across the OECS:

- IICA will support training programs for white and sweet potato cultivation.
- Further endorsement of a Technical Working Group for poultry, turkey, and pork sector development.
- A pilot project for veterinary medicine procurement through the OECS Pooled Procurement Platform.
- Establishment of a Technical Working Group to develop a shrimp hatchery.

- Ministers agreed to continue advancing the OECS Food and Agriculture Systems Transformation (FAST) Strategy.
- An OECS Agriculture Forum for Youth will be established.
- A youth representative from the Forum will be included in future COM:AG meetings.

Through these commitments, the **Council of Ministers for Agriculture** signaled a shift towards **inclusive leadership**, where young farmers, researchers, and agricultural entrepreneurs have a lasting voice in shaping the future of food production in the OECS.









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The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is an International Organisation dedicated to economic harmonisation and integration, protection of human and legal rights and the encouragement of good governance among independent and non-independent countries in the Eastern Caribbean. The OECS came into being on June 18th 1981, when seven Eastern Caribbean countries signed a treaty agreeing to cooperate with each other while promoting unity and solidarity among its Members. The Treaty became known as the Treaty of Basseterre, so named in honour of the capital city of St. Kitts and Nevis where it was signed. The OECS today, currently has twelve members, spread across the Eastern Caribbean comprising Antigua and Barbuda, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and The Grenadines, British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Saint Martin.



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