

# **WORLD WATER DAY 2019**

## **Summary Report**

In commemoration of World Water Day, 2019, the Department of Food Production (DFP), Faculty of Food and Agriculture (FFA), The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine in collaboration with Caribbean WaterNet, CapNet UNDP and the Caribbean Academy of Sciences, hosted a panel discussion on March 29, 2019 on Water Resource Management in Trinidad and Tobago, with special focus on the Agricultural Sector. The panel discussion was chaired by Dr. Ronald Roopnarine with welcome remarks from Dr. Mark Wuddivira (Head of DFP) and Dr. Gaius Eudoxie (Deputy Dean FFA) on behalf of Dean Wayne Ganpat of the FFA. Panelists included, Dr. Sharda Mahabir (Project Manager of the Adopt a River Programme, WASA), Mr. Hayden Romano (Managing Director of the Environmental Management Authority-EMA), Retired Captain Neville Wint (Operations Manager of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management-ODPM), Senator Avinash Singh (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries), Ms. Wendy Nelson (Analytical Chemist, Institute of Marine Affairs-IMA) and Professor Jacob Opadeyi (Professor of Geoinformatics, UWI). The feature address was given by the Minister of Agriculture Land and Fisheries, Senator The Honorable Clarence Rambharat, which ignited calls for further research efforts and dialogue towards improved management of our water resources. The minister also praised the initiative, stating that it is a key step towards addressing the long standing issue of fragmented governance that has plagued our system and undermined the sustainable use and management of our natural resources.

Panelists gave presentations on the strategies of their respective institutions aimed at improving water quality and distribution. Dr. Mahabir emphasized the importance of a community based approach and presented some examples of how her Adopt a River Programme has improved water quality in various watersheds in the country. Mr Romano explained the challenges faced by the EMA in enforcing existing water pollution rules as well as the limitations of the rules themselves. Captain Wint, highlighted the challenges faced by his institutions and the public misconceptions attached to the roles and responsibilities of the ODPM. Senator Singh focused on initiatives sanctioned by the government that hope to address improved water quality and management. Ms. Nelson touched on the importance of an integrated approach to water resource management and the influence of fresh water systems on marine ecosystems. Prof. Opadeyi completed the panelist presentations with a call for improved policies and laws, particularly those pertaining to land tenure that limits access at various points of river basins. In addition, Mrs. Ria Murray-Payne (Guardian Group), shared information with regard to insurance and its benefits in the event of unforeseen circumstances and disasters.

Overall each panelists provided a unique and thought provoking perspective that enlightened the audience and set the tone for the discussion in the open forum segment. In spite of the time constraint, there was an impactful discussion that ensued in the open forum. One of the topics raised by the audience that stirred an interesting discussion focused on the enforcement of laws to

achieve sustainable water resource solutions and management. Ultimately, panelist agreed that this was a major challenge and an area that urgently requires attention. Therefore, follow up sessions were requested so as to allow for greater participation from stakeholders. In this light all collaborating institutions assured attendees that this request would be actively pursued.

The event closed with the launch of a book titled “Water Quality in the Americas: Risks and Opportunities” which was published by InterAmerican Network of Academies of Sciences (IANAS) and Inter Academy Partnership (IAP) in digital form in Spanish and English on March 22, 2019 for International World Water Day. The book, focuses on the problems and management of Water Quality, and was developed in close collaboration with the Regional Bureau for Sciences in Latin America and the Caribbean of UNESCO in Montevideo, specifically with the International Hydrological Program for Latin America and the Caribbean (IHP-LAC). During the launch emphasis was placed on two chapters, one special chapter on “Gender, Women and the Quality of Water” co-authored by Professor Neela Badrie of the DFP, UWI. The chapter focuses on an important, but often overlooked, component of water quality and its relationship to gender, specifically women who are most often charged with the responsibilities of water usage in the home as well as in agricultural production. The other chapter entitled “Water Quality in the Americas: Caribbean-Grenada” was co-authored and coordinated by Dr. Martin Forde, St. George's University, Grenada. Attendees were provided with a brief overview of the book and the weblink to access a soft copy of the publication (<https://www.ianas.org/images/books/wb10.pdf>).

Overall the venture was extremely successful, it served to provide the impetus necessary towards alleviating the challenges which we currently face in effectively managing our water resources, while simultaneously highlighting current initiatives. All collaborating agencies were pleased with the outcome and expressed their support for future ventures of this nature.

