

The **Fair Trade in Cannabis Working Group** (FTCWG), emanating from a workshop in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in November 2019 and comprising traditional cultivators, activists, academics and researchers, has produced a **Position Paper** which has been shared with Caribbean governments. We ask the CARICOM governments to be bolder and fairer in their reforms on cannabis, by recalling several of the recommendations made by the Regional Commission on Marijuana in 2018.

The Position Paper *‘For inclusive business models, well designed laws and fair(er) trade options for small-scale traditional cannabis farmers’* aims to contribute to the debate on finding sustainable and realistic solutions to the challenges posed by the developing cannabis industry, with a special focus on traditional and small scale farmers. The position paper discusses the legal reforms that occurred in a number of CARICOM member states, most of which fail to address underlying social justice issues, while the emerging medical cannabis industry should provide opportunities for those that bore the brunt of the harsh repression that prevailed before: **“We need real meaningful change, not cosmetic and pretentious while pushing out the real traditional growers. I wish Jamaica would go beyond paying lip service to this stated objective”**, says Vicki Hanson, member of the FTCWG.

With the exception of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines none of the CARICOM envisages a model that involves traditional cannabis farmers into the industry, in the words of another Working Group member, Patrick Cottle Junior: **“While, in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, there is a certain level of protection for traditional cultivators within the legal framework of medical cannabis and the amnesty, we would like to see a further deepening of the process towards legalization”**.

The position paper makes suggestions on the path forward, not just taking a next step in the reform process to be more inclusive and just, but also integrate marijuana into a regional market that could economically benefit all, and not just the big cannabis companies coming from abroad. **“The cooperative that we growers have set up here in St. Lucia, helps us protect our local interest, while using local expertise and knowledge about the cannabis plant as a medicine”**, says Andre d'Caries, a St. Lucia based FTCWG member.

For the Rastafarian community reforms are long overdue, and the historical criminalisation of its members needs to be overcome once and for all: **“Provisions for use as sacrament in Antigua and Barbuda are now included into law, but still there is an urgent need for an inclusive regional cannabis market and have our community benefit from the emerging industry”** according to Tashawn Browne, another Working Group member.

The working group is aware that the UN drug control conventions restrain individual countries from a full legal regulation of the cannabis market, but also that this status quo is currently under challenge. The FTCWG urges Caribbean governments to become actively involved and participate in the UN deliberations on drug control in general and on cannabis in particular.

For a copy of the position paper and information on the Working group, please contact wgcannabiscaribbean@gmail.com

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