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### **INTRODUCTION**

As global attitudes toward cannabis shift, the Caribbean stands at a pivotal crossroads. For decades, the plant was criminalized, its use stigmatized, and its cultivation driven underground.

Today, amidst global legalization waves, the question arises: can cannabis become the next economic engine for CARICOM nations?

From the trailblazing regulations of Jamaica to the cautious explorations in Antigua, the region reflects a mosaic of ambition, hesitation, and opportunity. At stake is not only economic diversification but also the chance to rewrite social narratives and embed sustainability into a burgeoning industry.

The stakes are high. Across CARICOM's 20 member and associate states, economic fragility persists in the wake of COVID-19, with tourism-dependent economies and declining agricultural industries seeking lifelines. Cannabis, once maligned, now emerges as a potential savior—a crop that can generate employment, attract foreign investment, and position the region as a leader in medicinal and wellness innovation.

Yet the path forward is fraught with challenges: outdated regulatory frameworks, international treaty obligations, environmental constraints, and lingering cultural stigma all threaten to stall progress.

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### **Cannabis in the Caribbean?**

### Who stands to benefit?

Governments, small-scale farmers, marginalized communities, regional institutions, and private investors all have stakes in a successful cannabis industry. Yet, equitable frameworks are needed to ensure these benefits are widely distributed.

### What is at stake?

Beyond economic gains, cannabis offers a chance to redefine social justice by decriminalizing minor offenses and integrating legacy growers into formal markets.

### When is action needed?

Now. The urgency is amplified by increasing global competition and the pressing need for post-pandemic economic recovery.

### How can it succeed?

Through harmonized CARICOM policies, public - private partnerships, and a commitment to innovation and sustainability.

### Why does it matter?

Cannabis represents more than an economic commodity—it is a chance to reimagine the region's role in global markets, rooted in equity, resilience, and environmental stewardship.

## DEFINING THE PROBLEM(S):

Challenges & Potential

The cannabis industry's promise in the Caribbean is undeniable, but **so are its challenges.** 

### **Economic Potential vs. Execution:**

How can CARICOM nations turn theoretical benefits—such as job creation, tax revenues, and export earnings—into tangible outcomes?

### **Social Equity vs. Marginalization:**

How can reforms ensure that the communities most impacted by criminalization are first in line for economic opportunities?

### Sustainability vs. Exploitation:

How can the Caribbean harness its unique biodiversity and favorable climate without compromising fragile ecosystems?

### **Fragmentation vs. Regional Unity:**

How can CARICOM members harmonize their approaches to cannabis while respecting national autonomy and meeting international obligations?

These challenges demand nuanced solutions, combining bold ambition with careful planning.

# A VISION FOR the Future

The Caribbean's path forward in cannabis is not merely about economic gains. It is about leveraging a plant historically rooted in the region's culture and struggles to forge a new chapter of innovation, equity, and sustainability. In doing so, CARICOM nations can redefine their economies, repair past injustices, and emerge as leaders in a global cannabis renaissance.

WE TRANSFORM GLOBAL
HEALTHCARE THROUGH
CANNABIS, PRIORITIZING
PREVENTIVE CARE, ACCESSIBLE
WELLNESS, AND INNOVATIVE
MEDICAL SOLUTION



# PART 1: COUNTRY PROFILES

### **LEADERS IN REGULATION AND INDUSTRY**

- Jamaica: A Model for Cannabis Development
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines: Building a Cannabis Export Hub

### **EMERGING MARKETS**

- Barbados: A Newcomer with Big Ambitions
- Saint Lucia: Building Momentum
- Antigua and Barbuda: Early Steps in Cannabis Regulation
- Bermuda: A Growing Medicinal Cannabis Market

### TRANSITIONAL MARKETS

- Grenada: Cautious but Moving Forward
- Dominica: Strong Commitments but Limited Action
- Bahamas: A Proactive Stance on Reform
- Cayman Islands: Progress Toward Decriminalization
- Additional Transitional Markets

### **LEADERS IN REGULATION AND INDUSTRY**

- Guyana: A Land of Untapped Potential
- Haiti: Burdened by Structural Challenges
- Suriname: Conservative Policies in a Favorable Climate
- Trinidad and Tobago: Strong Resistance to Reform

The Caribbean is poised to become a global cannabis hub, with its rich cultural heritage, favorable climate, and strategic location offering unique opportunities for cultivation, innovation, and export.



# JAMAICA

## A Model for Cannabis Development

Jamaica stands as a global symbol of cannabis culture and is among the most advanced CARICOM nations in regulating and leveraging the plant's potential.

The country's legal framework is anchored in the Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Act of 2015, which decriminalized the possession of up to 56 grams (2 ounces) of cannabis and established provisions for medicinal and religious use.

The Cannabis Licensing Authority (CLA), created in the same year, oversees the regulation of the industry, granting licenses for cultivation, processing, research, and retail.





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## **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

Jamaica has successfully integrated cannabis into its economy through a variety of channels:

- Local Dispensaries and Medical Use: Licensed dispensaries cater to both local and international patients, offering high-grade cannabis products.
- **Wellness Tourism:** The island capitalizes on its reputation as a cannabis-friendly destination, drawing tourists with wellness retreats and ganjathemed experiences.
- Targeted Exports: Jamaica has begun exporting medicinal cannabis to key markets, including Canada and Germany, establishing itself as a serious player in the global industry.

# CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

While Jamaica's framework is robust, challenges remain:

- **Global Competition:** As more countries legalize cannabis, Jamaica must differentiate its products through unique strains and branding.
- Small-Scale Grower Integration: Many traditional farmers remain excluded from the formal industry due to regulatory barriers and high compliance costs. Efforts are underway to create pathways for these growers to participate legally.
- **Regulatory Overlap:** Ensuring seamless cooperation between the CLA and other government bodies is critical to avoid bureaucratic delays.

Jamaica's
ability to
balance its
cultural
heritage with
economic
ambition sets
it apart, but
maintaining
this balance
will require
sustained
effort and
innovation.

## SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

## Building a Cannabis Export Hub

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) has leveraged its ideal climate and fertile volcanic soils to emerge as a regional leader in cannabis exports.

The passage of the Medicinal Cannabis
Industry Act in 2018 laid the groundwork for
a thriving medicinal cannabis industry.

The government has also established the
Medicinal Cannabis Authority (MCA) to
oversee licensing, compliance, and export
logistics.



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# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- **Cultivation Excellence:** SVG's small-scale farmers benefit from an established tradition of cannabis cultivation, now being transitioned into legal markets.
- Export-Oriented Production: SVG is prioritizing medicinal cannabis exports, targeting lucrative markets in Europe and North America.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** The government collaborates with foreign investors to fund state-of-the-art processing facilities and ensure international quality standards are met.

# CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Infrastructure Deficits:** Limited transportation and processing infrastructure hinder scaling up export operations.
- **Dependence on Foreign Investors:** Heavy reliance on international partners raises concerns about profit retention within the local economy.
- **Compliance Costs:** Small-scale farmers, though integral to the industry, often struggle to meet stringent licensing and quality standards.

SVG's export-focused strategy holds immense promise, but the country must strengthen its infrastructure and enhance support for local cultivators to sustain growth.

# CIS REVIEW

## Put Ganjah First

"The brightest minds see how cannabis will reshape the Caribbean's future and unlock vast opportunities."

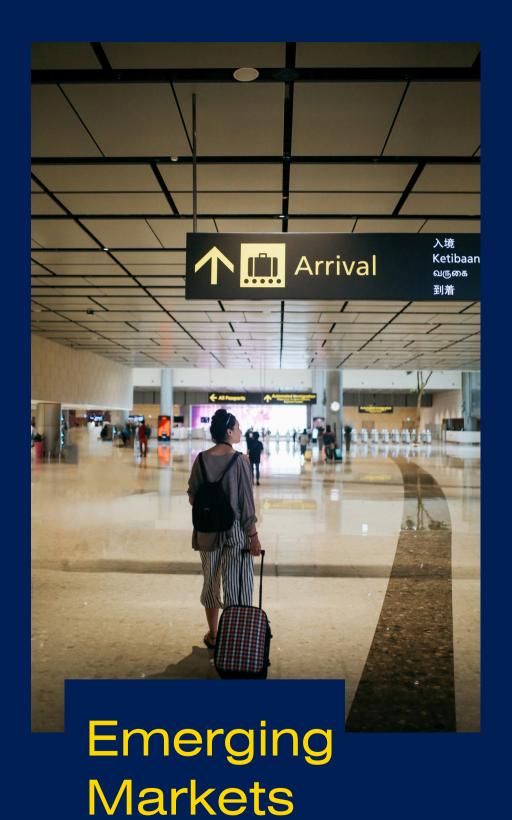
### Dr. Henry Lowe

Father of the Jamaican Cannabis Industry

- > HOW CARRIBEAN COULD BECOME A KEY PLAYER IN THE GLOBAL CANNABIS INDUSTRY?
- > SHAPERS VOICES: MEET ALEX ROGERS & PROFESSOR HENRI LOWE IN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS
- > IMPACTFUL SCIENCE: WHAT IF A SINGLE MOLECULE IN CANNABIS COULD ELIMINATE TUMORS?



NOVEMBER 2024/ NO.01



## BARBADOS

## A Newcomer with Big Ambitions

Barbados has recently stepped into the cannabis industry with the passage of the Medicinal Cannabis Industry Act in 2019, establishing the Barbados Medicinal Cannabis Licensing Authority (BMCLA) to oversee the sector.





# **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Inclusive Frameworks:** The BMCLA's licensing system prioritizes participation from local businesses and farmers, ensuring economic inclusivity.
- Tourism Integration: Barbados is exploring ways to merge its world-renowned tourism industry with cannabis-related wellness tourism.
- **Climate Advantage:** The island's tropical conditions and existing expertise in agriculture create a strong foundation for cannabis cultivation.

### **CHALLENGES**

- **Infrastructure Needs:** Developing state-of-the-art facilities for cultivation and processing requires significant investment.
- **Changing Social Perceptions:** Cannabis still faces cultural stigma, which could slow local acceptance and market growth.

Barbados is making strides in laying the groundwork for a robust medicinal cannabis industry, though its success will depend on overcoming infrastructural and societal barriers.

## SAINT LUCIA

## Building Momentum

Saint Lucia has taken significant steps toward developing its cannabis industry with the creation of the Cannabis Commission in 2021 to study and recommend policies.

The country is moving toward legalizing medicinal cannabis while simultaneously decriminalizing small amounts for personal use.





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# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- **Economic Diversification:** Cannabis represents a crucial opportunity to diversify Saint Lucia's economy, which relies heavily on tourism and agriculture.
- **Small-Scale Farmer Integration:** Plans to involve traditional growers in the formal sector signal a commitment to social equity.
- Public Consultation: Saint Lucia's approach has been inclusive, engaging communities and stakeholders to ensure broad support for cannabis reforms.

# CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Regulatory Uncertainty:** A lack of finalized legislation creates ambiguity for potential investors and stakeholders.
- Market Readiness: Limited infrastructure and expertise in cannabis cultivation and processing could delay industry development.



# ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

# Early Steps in Cannabis Regulation

Antigua and Barbuda became one of the first Eastern Caribbean nations to decriminalize cannabis possession with the Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Act in 2018, allowing for the possession of up to 15 grams.

The country has also legalized medicinal cannabis and created the Medicinal Cannabis Authority to regulate its use.





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# **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

- Pioneering Role in the Eastern Caribbean: Antigua's early reforms position it as a potential model for its neighbors.
- **Focus on Social Equity:** The government actively involves Rastafarian communities in discussions and plans to integrate them into the legal industry.
- Cannabis Tourism Potential: With its idyllic beaches, Antigua is poised to attract tourists seeking wellness retreats and cannabis-friendly experiences.

# CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Scale of Market:** Antigua's small population limits its domestic market size, making export strategies crucial.
- **Capacity Building:** Developing local expertise in cultivation and quality control is essential to meet international standards.

Antigua's proactive stance on cannabis reform offers significant promise, but the nation's ability to scale its industry will depend on regional collaboration and export partnerships.

## BERMUDA

## A Growing Medicinal Cannabis Market

Bermuda has taken significant strides in developing its medicinal cannabis framework, making it one of the more advanced associate members in this category.

The Medicinal Cannabis Act (2020) provides a legal framework for cultivation, processing, and retail under the supervision of the Cannabis Licensing Authority (CLA).



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# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- **Structured Licensing:** The CLA's transparent and well-regulated licensing process provides confidence to investors and cultivators.
- **High-Value Tourism Integration:** Bermuda's reputation for luxury tourism creates opportunities to combine cannabis with premium wellness experiences.
- **Research Potential:** The government actively seeks partnerships for R&D into cannabisbased pharmaceuticals and treatments.

# CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- Legal Ambiguity on Recreational Use: The lack of clarity regarding recreational legalization restricts industry expansion.
- **Economic Viability:** Bermuda's small land area and high production costs may limit large-scale cultivation projects.



With its strong focus on medicinal cannabis and a clear regulatory framework, Bermuda is positioned to attract both investors and researchers. Scaling its operations while maintaining a premium market image will be key to its success.

# Be Part of History: Shape the Caribbean's Cannabis Future



Multipolar Cannabis Summit 2024-2025

January 13-14, 2025 Jungle Bay Dominica





## GRENADA

## Cautions but Moving Forward

Grenada has traditionally been conservative regarding cannabis reform, but recent developments signal progress. In October 2024, the government initiated public consultations to gather input on potential cannabis policy reforms. Additionally, a study has been commissioned to assess the economic and societal impacts of legalization, indicating a data-driven approach to reform.



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# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- **Public Engagement:** The consultations provide a platform for addressing societal concerns and building consensus around cannabis reform.
- **Economic Analysis:** The commissioned study will inform future legislation, offering a balanced approach to policy development.
- **Regional Influence:** Grenada can look to neighboring nations like Saint Vincent and Antigua for inspiration and guidance.

# CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- Cultural Resistance: Strong conservative and religious influences persist, making societal acceptance a gradual process.
- **Delayed Implementation:** With legislation projected over the next 12 to 18 months, opportunities for economic development may take time to materialize.

Grenada is transitioning from a stagnant market to an active reformer, and its cautious, consultative approach positions it for steady progress.

## **DOMINICA**

## Strong Commitments but Limited Action

Dominica decriminalized the possession of up to 28 grams of cannabis in 2020 and has expressed ambitions to develop a medicinal cannabis framework. However, the regulatory framework has yet to materialize, despite strong public commitments from Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit.





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# **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Cultural Acceptance:** Dominica's tradition of herbal medicine aligns well with medicinal cannabis, which could gain public support.
- Agricultural Potential: Fertile soils and favorable growing conditions create strong prospects for cultivation.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Partnering with more advanced markets like Saint Vincent could accelerate development.

# CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Policy Gaps:** The absence of an actionable framework limits industry growth.
- **Economic Constraints:** Developing infrastructure and attracting investment remain significant hurdles.
- **Commitment vs. Action:** Strong political announcements have yet to translate into tangible progress, creating uncertainty among stakeholders.

Dominica's cannabis future is promising but requires concrete legislative action to transition from potential to reality.



## **BAHAMAS**

# A Proactive Stance on Reform

The Bahamas has emerged as a notable transitional market, actively engaging in public consultations and educational initiatives through the Cannabis Bahamas platform.

The government is drafting legislation to regulate cannabis for medicinal and scientific purposes, with reforms expected within the next 12 to 18 months.





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# **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

- Centralized Communication: The Cannabis
   Bahamas website serves as an effective tool for
   engaging stakeholders and providing updates
   on policy progress.
- **Tourism Integration:** With its robust tourism industry, The Bahamas could leverage cannabis to diversify offerings and attract wellness-focused travelers.
- **Regional Leadership:** If reforms progress smoothly, The Bahamas could become a model for associate members in the Caribbean.

# CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Timeline for Implementation:** Reforms are still in the consultation phase, delaying economic benefits.
- **Legislative Complexity:** Developing a comprehensive framework requires coordination across multiple government agencies.

The Bahamas' proactive approach and transparent communications set it apart as a transitional market with high potential.

## CAYMAN ISLANDS

## Progress Toward Decriminalization

The Cayman Islands legalized medicinal cannabis in 2017 but has yet to fully embrace broader cannabis reforms. Discussions around decriminalizing small amounts are ongoing, with a public referendum planned for 2025.





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# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- Established Medical Framework: Medicinal cannabis is available through licensed pharmacies, offering a foundation for industry expansion.
- **Public Engagement:** The upcoming referendum could pave the way for broader legalization.
- Tourism Synergies: As a luxury destination, the Cayman Islands could integrate cannabis into wellness tourism.

# CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Legislative Lag:** Delayed reforms limit investor confidence and market readiness.
- **Small Domestic Market:** The limited population size restricts local demand, making exports essential.

The Cayman Islands established medicinal framework positions it well, but slow legislative progress limits its potential.

# ADDITIONAL TRANSITIONAL MARKETS



### **BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS**

- Passed the Cannabis Licensing Act (2020) but faces delays in implementation.
- Key Challenge:
   Operationalizing the licensing framework amidst logistical and regulatory hurdles.



### **MONTSERRAT**

- Decriminalized
   possession of up to 15
   grams but lacks a
   medicinal or
   recreational
   framework.
- Key Challenge: Building infrastructure and drafting comprehensive legislation.



### **TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS**

- Discussions on cannabis reform are ongoing but no legislation has been passed.
- Key Challenge: Limited progress due to lack of a formalized policy framework.

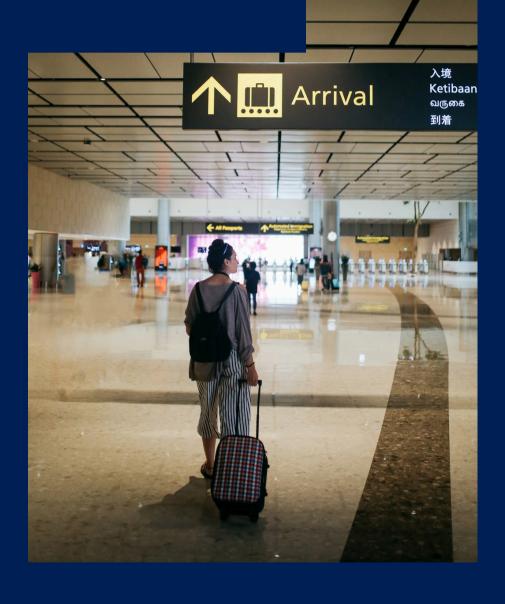


### **ANGUILLA**

- Medicinal cannabis legislation passed in 2019, with the licensing process initiated.
- Key Challenge:
   Attracting sufficient
   investment to develop
   cultivation facilities.

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# Stagnant or Conservative Markets



# GUYANA

## A Land of Untapped Potential

Guyana's vast agricultural resources and favorable climate position it as a potential leader in cannabis cultivation. However, the government has shown little interest in cannabis reform, focusing instead on its booming oil and gas sector. Cannabis possession remains illegal, with harsh penalties for even minor offenses.

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## **CHALLENGES**

- **Policy Paralysis:** No formal discussions or legislative efforts are underway to explore cannabis legalization.
- **Focus on Oil:** The government's priorities are dominated by the emerging oil industry, sidelining cannabis reform.
- Cultural Conservatism: Social stigma and resistance from religious groups further delay progress.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Agricultural Expertise:** Guyana could leverage its strong farming traditions to develop a future cannabis industry.
- **Rural Economic Development:** Legalizing cannabis could create jobs in rural areas, providing an alternative to the oil sector.

Guyana's lack of progress leaves it in the stagnant category, despite its significant untapped potential.

# HAITI

# Burdened by Structural Challenges

Haiti's socio-political instability and economic struggles have left cannabis reform far down the list of priorities. While the country has a tradition of cannabis cultivation for local use, there has been no movement toward legalization or regulation.





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## **CHALLENGES**

- Political Instability: Ongoing governance crises and public unrest make any form of reform highly unlikely in the short term.
- **Economic Hardship:** Extreme poverty and lack of infrastructure hinder the possibility of creating a viable cannabis industry.
- Criminalization: Harsh penalties and a lack of public dialogue perpetuate negative perceptions of cannabis.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Cultural Integration:** Haiti's traditional knowledge and use of cannabis could form the foundation of a future framework.
- International Support: Partnerships with NGOs and international organizations could help establish pilot projects in more stable regions.

Haiti remains one of the least likely CARICOM nations to engage in cannabis reform, constrained by deep-rooted challenges.

# SURINAME

# Conservative Policies in a Favorable Climate

Despite having an ideal environment for cannabis cultivation, Suriname remains resistant to reform. Cannabis possession and use are strictly prohibited, and there has been no significant public or political momentum for change.





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## **CHALLENGES**

- **Legal Restrictions:** Cannabis remains classified as an illegal substance, with no efforts to decriminalize or regulate its use.
- Lack of Advocacy: Unlike neighboring countries, Suriname lacks a strong public or political push for reform.
- **Economic Alternatives:** The country relies on gold mining and agriculture, leaving little room for cannabis in its economic priorities.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Climate and Soil Conditions:** Suriname's tropical environment is highly conducive to cannabis cultivation.
- **Potential Export Hub:** With its proximity to South America, Suriname could position itself as a key player in international markets if policies evolve.

Suriname's stagnant status reflects a reluctance to engage with cannabis reform, despite its economic and environmental advantages.

# TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

# Strong Resistance to Reform

Trinidad and Tobago remains firmly opposed to cannabis legalization beyond limited decriminalization. While possession of up to 30 grams was decriminalized in 2019, the government has taken no further steps toward developing a medicinal or recreational framework.





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# **CHALLENGES**

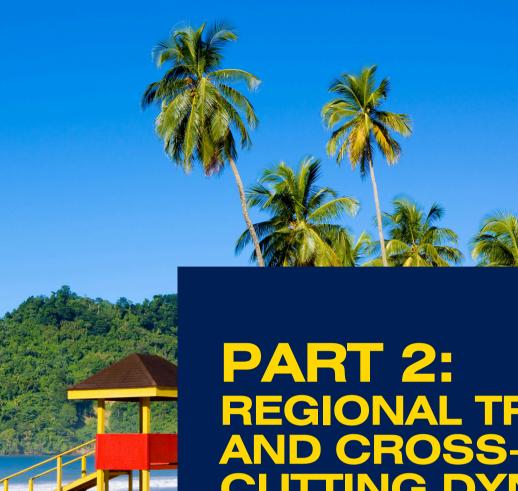
- **Political Opposition:** Strong resistance from key political figures has stalled any meaningful reform efforts.
- **Social Stigma:** Cannabis continues to face significant cultural resistance.
- **Industry Inertia:** The country's economic focus remains on oil, gas, and manufacturing, with little interest in diversifying into cannabis.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

• **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Shifting public opinion through education could pave the way for future reform.

 Regional Collaboration: Learning from successful models in Jamaica and Saint Vincent could inspire change. Trinidad and Tobago's minimal progress leaves it squarely in the stagnant category, despite its potential to capitalize on cannabis reform.





# REGIONAL TRENDS AND CROSS-CUTTING DYNAMICS

#### **REGIONAL TRENDS**

- Widespread Decriminalization for Small Amounts
- Uneven Implementation of Medical Cannabis Frameworks
- Opportunities for Regional Synergy

#### **CROSS-CUTTING CHALLENGES**

- Regulatory Fragmentation
- Social Stigma
- Infrastructure Gaps
- International Pressure

#### **COLLECTIVE OPPORTUNITIES**

- Develop a CARICOM-Wide Cannabis Policy
- Establish Regional Centers of Excellence in Research and Development
- Promote a Unified "Caribbean Cannabis" Export Brand
- Leverage Cannabis for Regional Tourism
- Engage in South-South Collaboration



# WIDESPREAD DECRIMINALIZATION

# for Small Amounts

Across the Caribbean, decriminalization of small cannabis quantities has gained significant traction. This trend reflects a shift toward public health-oriented policies and away from punitive measures.

- Jamaica led the movement with its 2015 amendment to the Dangerous Drugs Act, allowing possession of up to 2 ounces for personal use and accommodating Rastafarian religious practices.
- Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Dominica followed suit, decriminalizing amounts ranging from 15 to 30 grams.
- Trinidad and Tobago introduced similar measures in 2019, decriminalizing possession of up to 30 grams and allowing limited home cultivation.

#### **Key Impacts:**

- **Social Benefits:** Decriminalization reduces incarceration rates for minor offenses, addressing a key social justice concern in the region.
- **Economic Potential:** While primarily symbolic, decriminalization creates momentum for broader reforms, including the medicinal and recreational cannabis industries.



# **UNEVEN IMPLEMENTATION**

## of Medical Cannabis Frameworks

The development of medical cannabis frameworks highlights significant disparities between CARICOM nations:

- Advanced Frameworks: Countries like Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Barbados have established licensing authorities, facilitating the cultivation, processing, and export of medicinal cannabis.
- Nascent Frameworks: Nations such as Dominica and Grenada have announced intentions to regulate medical cannabis but have yet to implement comprehensive policies.
- **Lagging Behind:** Guyana, Haiti, and Suriname have shown minimal progress, remaining focused on prohibition.

### **CHALLENGES**



- > Regulatory Bottlenecks Countries like the British Virgin Islands and Bermuda face delays in operationalizing their licensing systems despite passing legislation.
- > Global Competition: While CARICOM pioneers like Saint Vincent have made strides, their global export potential is limited by established competitors such as Canada and Colombia.

# **OPPORTUNITIES FOR**

## Regional Synergy

- **Knowledge Sharing:** Pioneering nations like Jamaica can share regulatory best practices with transitional markets such as Grenada and Dominica.
- Intra-Regional Trade: A unified CARICOM framework could enable cannabis and cannabis-derived products to move freely across borders, fostering trade and reducing dependency on external markets.
- **Regional Branding:** Collective branding under a "Caribbean Cannabis" label could enhance global visibility and value.





# SUCCESS CASE: COLLABORATION IN SAINT LUCIA

Saint Lucia engaged regional experts during its policy formation process, leveraging insights from Jamaica and Saint Vincent to accelerate its regulatory development.

This approach underscores the benefits of shared knowledge within CARICOM.

# EMERGING Trends



Nations like
Jamaica, Barbados,
and Antigua are
exploring the
integration of
cannabis into
health, wellness and
recreational
tourism, aiming to
attract a high-value
demographic.



The University of the West Indies has begun collaborative studies on tropical cannabis strains, emphasizing sustainability and innovation.



development and market

expansion for the cannabis industry.

These regional trends reveal a patchwork of progress, with some nations forging ahead while others lag behind.

Decriminalization serves as a stepping stone for broader reforms, while regional collaboration offers untapped potential for unifying efforts and creating a competitive Caribbean cannabis industry.



# **REGULATORY**

## Fragmentation

The lack of a unified cannabis policy across CARICOM significantly limits scalability and competitiveness.

- Inconsistent Frameworks: While some nations like Jamaica and Saint Vincent have robust regulatory structures, others remain in nascent stages or stagnant.
- **Economic Impact:** Without harmonization, the region struggles to leverage economies of scale in cultivation, processing, and export.
- **Investor Hesitation:** Fragmented policies deter foreign investors who seek streamlined regulations and predictable market conditions.

#### **CASE STUDY:**

A company operating in Saint Vincent cannot easily export products to Jamaica due to differing regulatory requirements, despite both nations having medical cannabis frameworks.

# SOCIAL Stigma

Cannabis remains stigmatized in many CARICOM nations, despite decriminalization and the growing focus on medicinal use.

- Cultural Conservatism: Religious and traditional communities often oppose legalization, framing it as a moral issue rather than an economic or public health opportunity.
- **Public Misconceptions:** Limited education campaigns mean cannabis is still associated with crime and substance abuse in the public imagination.
- Political Caution: Leaders in more conservative nations like Grenada and Trinidad often avoid bold reforms to prevent backlash from influential voter blocs.

In **Dominica**, despite the Prime Minister's strong public commitments, resistance from conservative groups slows the legislative process.

# INFRASTRUCTURE Gaps

Weak logistics and infrastructure present significant barriers to establishing competitive cannabis industries.

- Cultivation Challenges: Many nations lack advanced agricultural technology for large-scale, highquality cannabis production.
- Processing Deficits: Facilities for extraction, testing, and packaging remain underdeveloped or nonexistent in most countries.
- Export Limitations: Poor port infrastructure and limited access to global trade networks restrict the ability to ship cannabis products internationally.

**Saint Lucia** has fertile land for cultivation but lacks the processing facilities to create high-value products for export.

# INTERNATIONAL Pressure

Global narcotics treaties impose constraints on CARICOM nations seeking to develop cannabis industries.

- CUN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961): Requires strict controls over cannabis cultivation, limiting recreational legalization.
- British Overseas Territories (BOTs): : Nations like Bermuda, Anguilla, and the British Virgin Islands face additional restrictions due to their ties to the UK, which maintains conservative cannabis policies.
- Market Competition: CARICOM nations must navigate these constraints while competing with countries like Canada, Colombia, and the US, which have fewer barriers to entry.

Anguilla's medicinal cannabis framework is constrained by the need to align with the UK's international obligations, delaying market development.

These challenges highlight the need for strategic solutions at both the national and regional levels.

Harmonized policies, public education campaigns, and investment in infrastructure will be crucial for overcoming these barriers and unlocking the Caribbean's cannabis potential.



# Develop a CARICOM-Wide Cannabis Policy

A unified regulatory framework would harmonize cannabis policies across the region, reducing fragmentation and enhancing the Caribbean's global competitiveness.



#### **Benefits:**

- Streamlined trade across member states.
- Increased investor confidence due to reduced regulatory uncertainty.
- Improved scalability of regional cannabis production and export networks.

#### **Steps to Achieve:**

- Establish a CARICOM Cannabis Commission to draft region-wide standards.
- Align national policies with international obligations while promoting sovereignty

#### **Case Study:**

The European Union's mutual recognition of agricultural standards facilitates intraregional trade, offering a potential model for CARICOM cannabis collaboration.

# Establish Regional Centers of Excellence in Research and Development

By pooling resources and expertise, CARICOM nations can create specialized hubs for cannabis research and innovation.



#### **Focus Areas:**

- Developing tropical strains optimized for the Caribbean climate.
- Advancing medical research on cannabis-based treatments.
- Exploring sustainable cultivation methods tailored to small island economies.

#### **Benefits:**

- Enhances the region's intellectual property portfolio.
- Attracts international partnerships and funding.
- Positions the Caribbean as a knowledge leader in the global cannabis market.

#### **Example:**

The University of the West Indies (UWI) could lead regional research initiatives, supported by funding from governments and private investors.

# Promote a Unified "Caribbean Cannabis" Export Brand

A collective branding strategy could amplify the region's visibility in global cannabis markets.



#### **Key Differentiators:**

- Organic, eco-friendly cultivation practices.
- Unique tropical cannabis strains with high therapeutic value.
- A cultural heritage that aligns cannabis with wellness and sustainability.

#### **Implementation:**

- Develop marketing campaigns emphasizing the Caribbean's unique value proposition.
- Secure trade agreements with key markets such as the EU, North America, and emerging markets in Asia.

#### **Potential Impact:**

A unified export brand could significantly increase the value of Caribbean cannabis products, mirroring the success of other regional brands like "Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee."

# Leverage Cannabis for Regional Tourism

Tourism is the backbone of many Caribbean economies, and cannabis offers a high-value addition to the region's offerings.



#### **Opportunities:**

- Cannabis wellness retreats integrating natural remedies and cultural experiences.
- Dispensary tours and farm-to-table cannabis experiences for ecotourists.
- Festivals and events showcasing cannabis culture, similar to Jamaica's Ganja Fest.

#### **Benefits:**

- Attracts niche tourists seeking luxury and wellness experiences.
- Boosts local economies through job creation in hospitality and retail sectors.

#### **Potential Impact:**

Cannabis tourism can boost Caribbean economies by attracting luxury wellness tourists through retreats, tours, and cultural festivals, creating jobs, diversifying revenue and preserving traditional practices.

# Engage in South-South Collaboration

Collaborating with other developing regions excelling in cannabis, such as Latin America and Africa, can provide valuable insights and partnerships.



#### **Opportunities:**

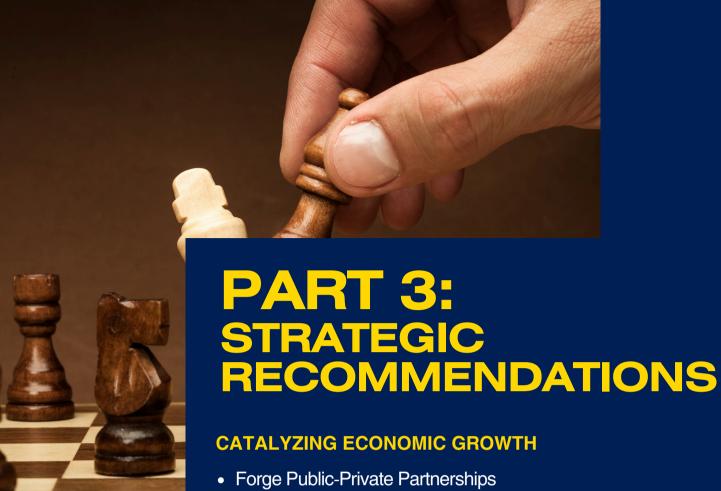
- Sharing best practices in sustainable cultivation with Colombia.
- Developing biopharmaceutical cannabis products in partnership with South African researchers.

#### **Benefits:**

- Reduces dependency on developed markets.
- Builds global alliances to advocate for cannabis policy reform at international forums.

#### **Conclusion**

Collective action among CARICOM nations can transform the region's cannabis industry into a globally competitive sector. By uniting under shared goals—such as policy harmonization, research excellence, and a unified export strategy—the Caribbean can maximize its economic, social, and cultural potential.



#### **CATALYZING ECONOMIC GROWTH**

- Incentivize Local Entrepreneurship
- Establish Trade Zones for Cannabis

#### PROMOTING SOCIAL EQUITY

- Prioritize Equity Licensing
- Expand Decriminalization
- Shift Public Perception

#### CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION

- Lead with Green Cannabis
- Invest in Regional R&D Hubs
- Build Value-Added Industries

#### **COORDINATING REGIONAL LEADERSHIP**

- Harmonize CARICOM Policies
- Advocate for Global Reform
- Establish a Regional Cannabis Observatory

The Caribbean's cannabis sector is poised for a transformative breakthrough. To fully capitalize on its potential, policymakers, investors, and industry leaders must align strategies that foster economic resilience, address social disparities, and champion sustainability.

The following recommendations provide a blueprint for achieving these goals.

WE TRANSFORM GLOBAL HEALTHCARE
THROUGH CANNABIS, PRIORITIZING
PREVENTIVE CARE, ACCESSIBLE WELLNESS,
AND INNOVATIVE MEDICAL SOLUTION

# CATALYZING ECONOMIC GROWTH



# CATALYZING Economic Growth

### Forge Public-Private Partnerships

Governments must collaborate with visionary investors to finance cannabis infrastructure across cultivation, processing, and distribution.

• Why It Matters: Public-private ventures balance risk, inject capital, and ensure projects align with national priorities.



# CATALYZING Economic Growth

## Incentivize Local Entrepreneurship

Introduce grants, low-interest loans, and tax incentives to empower local farmers and entrepreneurs to enter the legal cannabis market.

- Why It Matters: These measures democratize market access, reducing the dominance of foreign players and ensuring broadbased economic benefits.
- **Future Vision**: Imagine a Caribbean where health and wellness tourism thrives, communities flourish through sustainable farming, and a vibrant export ecosystem drives prosperity.



# **CATALYZING**

## Economic Growth

# 3

#### **Establish Trade Zones for Cannabis**

Designate cannabis-specific free trade zones to simplify export logistics, reduce costs, and attract multinational partners.

• Why It Matters: Streamlined processes position the region competitively against established global players like Canada and Colombia.





# PROMOTING SOCIAL EQUITY

# PROMOTING Social Equity



#### **Prioritize Equity Licensing**

Designate cannabis-specific free trade zones to simplify export logistics, reduce costs, and attract multinational partners.

- Why It Matters: Governments must ensure the cannabis sector rectifies past injustices by prioritizing licenses for communities historically penalized by prohibition policies.
- Inspiration: States like California and Illinois have paved the way with social equity licensing models that CARICOM nations can adapt.

# PROMOTING Social Equity

# **Expand Decriminalization**

Decriminalizing possession and cultivation of small quantities of cannabis across the region is essential for reducing incarceration rates and dismantling stigma.

• Why It Matters: This foundational step aligns legal frameworks with societal shifts and builds momentum for industry development.

## Shift Public Perception

Launch robust awareness campaigns to educate communities on the medicinal, economic, and social benefits of cannabis reform.

• Why It Matters: Overcoming stigma is critical for broad public acceptance, reducing resistance to reforms and attracting local participation.



## **CHAMPIONING**

### Sustainability and Innovation

### Lead with Green Cannabis

Position the Caribbean as a leader in environmentally sustainable cannabis cultivation by adopting water-efficient farming practices, renewable energy, and organic certifications.

• Why It Matters: Eco-conscious practices meet the demands of a discerning global market and preserve the region's fragile ecosystems.

Caribbean Green Cannabis could become a hallmark of premium quality in global markets.

# **CHAMPIONING**

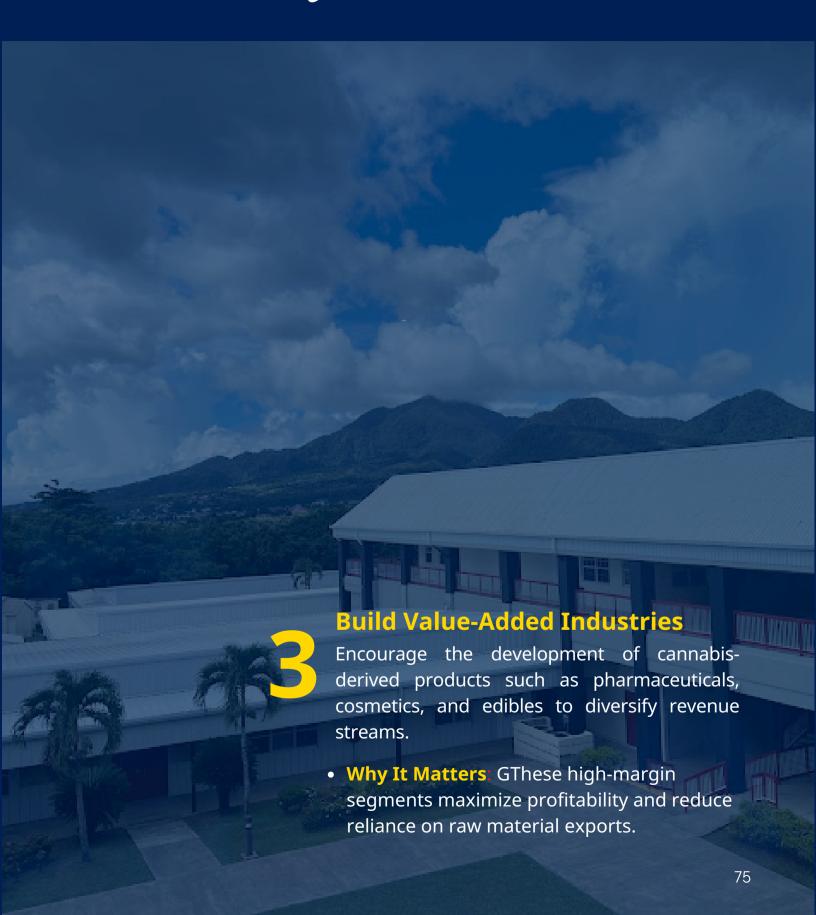
### Sustainability and Innovation

#### **Invest in Regional R&D Hubs**

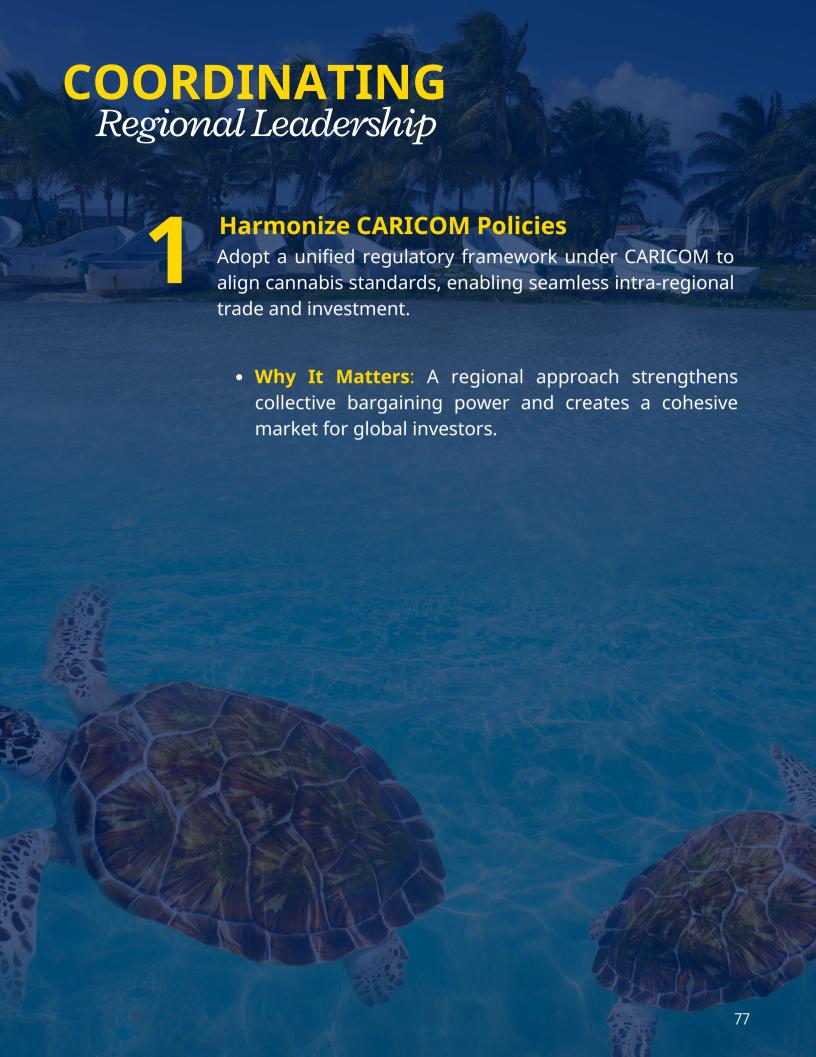
- Create centers of excellence for cannabis research focused on tropical strains, medicinal properties, and sustainable farming techniques.
- Why It Matters: These hubs will not only enhance the region's intellectual capital but also attract international research partnerships.

# **CHAMPIONING**

### Sustainability and Innovation







# COORDINATING Regional Leadership

#### **Advocate for Global Reform**

Leverage CARICOM's collective voice to push for cannabis policy reform at the United Nations and other international forums.

> • Why It Matters: Relaxing global restrictions would unlock export markets and empower CARICOM nations to compete on a level playing field.

# COORDINATING

Regional Leadership

### Establish a Regional Cannabis Observatory

Set up a CARICOM-backed institution to monitor industry trends, economic impacts, and compliance across member states.

• Why It Matters: Centralized data and insights drive smarter policymaking and attract investor confidence.

To transform cannabis into a cornerstone of Caribbean prosperity, bold yet collaborative action is essential. By prioritizing equity, innovation, and sustainability, CARICOM nations can unlock unparalleled economic opportunities while addressing deep-seated social inequities.



# Strategic Recommendations

### A Simplified List

# FOR POLICYMAKERS

Policymakers are the architects of the cannabis industry, responsible for creating an enabling environment that balances economic growth, social equity, and sustainability.

- **Forge Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with private investors to fund cultivation, processing, and distribution infrastructure.
- **Incentivize Local Participation:** Introduce grants, low-interest loans, and tax breaks to empower small farmers and local businesses.
- **Establish Cannabis Trade Zones:** Designate free trade areas to facilitate exports and streamline regulatory processes.
- **Prioritize Equity Licensing:** Ensure marginalized communities benefit from reforms through quotas or fast-tracked licensing.
- **Decriminalize Minor Offenses:** Expand decriminalization to reduce incarceration and align legal frameworks with societal attitudes.
- **Harmonize CARICOM Policies:** Create a unified regional framework to standardize licensing, compliance, and trade across member states.
- **Push for International Reform:** Advocate for global policy changes to relax export restrictions and align treaties with regional ambitions.
- **Establish a Cannabis Observatory:** Set up a CARICOM-funded institution to collect and analyze data, track trends, and guide policy decisions.

# Strategic Recommendations

### A Simplified List

# FOR INVESTORS

Private-sector players are essential for scaling the cannabis industry, driving innovation, and ensuring economic sustainability.

- **Seize Early-Market Opportunities:** Target nations with emerging frameworks, such as Saint Lucia and Dominica, for investment in infrastructure and cultivation.
- **Collaborate with Governments:** Engage in public-private partnerships to align investments with national priorities and regulatory requirements.
- **Develop Value-Added Industries:** Focus on high-margin segments such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and edibles to maximize returns.
- **Support Research and Innovation:** Partner with local universities to develop region-specific strains and sustainable practices.
- Leverage Branding Potential: Invest in "Caribbean Cannabis" as a global brand /label synonymous with quality and sustainability.

