

ABSTRACT

ENTERING NEW HORIZONS WITH PLASTICS: AN INDEPTH STUDY
OF THE PLASTICS INDUSTRY AND ITS EXPORT POTENTIAL FOR
THE CARICOM REGION, PARTICULARLY TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Janette Herma Cupid

This thesis is intended to fulfill a major need and an important function at the present critical stage of regional export development. The economies of the CARICOM region are all going through a crucial phase of adjustment after the oil shocks of the seventies and early eighties and the onset of global recession. These factors have led to serious balance of payments and, hence, foreign exchange problems.

Survival for these small states of the English-speaking Caribbean is hinged on export-orientation. This entails moving away from traditional exports which are gradually losing or, in some cases, have already lost their dynamism, and moving into areas that are bouyant. This work attempts to establish that the plastics industry, with its multiplicity of applications, is one that can provide such scope for export development.

Section 1, takes a broad perspective of the plastics industry--its origin, early development and growth. It identifies the main kinds of plastics, processing techniques and some of the current developments in materials, technology and applications.

In Section 2, an indepth analysis is done of the international market for plastics. The structure of the industry is examined with reference to such areas as cost, markets and the product cycle. A review is also made of the major industries that plastics have infiltrated-- packaging, transport, construction etc.--highlighting current developments and projections for the future.

Section 3 reviews the origin, growth and development of the plastics industry in the CARICOM region, with special reference to Trinidad and Tobago. Drawing on Section 2, it seeks to identify possible exportables and markets--both regional and extra regional. Some thoughts are expressed on the feasibility of a petro-chemical complex based on feedstocks from Trinidad's oil industry and the kind of technological infrastructure that will be required to efficiently operate same.

visited and who willingly co-operated and disclosed information that was extremely vital to this work.

My thanks to Mr. Sydney Thomas of the Department of Chemical Engineering, U.V.I. St. Augustine, for reviewing and offering helpful suggestions on the first section of this thesis and for his subsequent assistance and advice.

Special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Trevor Farrell, without whose guidance and professional advice a work of this magnitude would not have been possible.

To my family, friends, fellow graduate students and staff in the Department of Economics, I express appreciation for their encouragement, advice and well wishes.