

TOWARDS A MODEL FOR PROMOTING YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE IN THE REGION

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Abstract

Youth engagement in agriculture has been on a decline across the globe, but even more so in developing countries and regions such as the Caribbean. The average age of farmers in the region is estimated to be over 50 years with some countries averaging over 60 years. The drudgery, hard work and little financial rewards associated with agriculture seem to be the major deterrents to young persons entering the sector. While several initiatives have been tried in the region to reverse this situation, the problem still persists and has now become more urgent.

This paper is positioned from a context of change and empowerment for youth engagement in agriculture across the Caribbean region. We contend that in order for young people to be fully vested in society, they must be given the resources to become fully empowered for productivity. We suggest components of a model for engagement based on an analysis of rural youth agricultural programs across the globe, arguing that because of the diversity in the region, a fixed model would be inappropriate. Each country could choose from the essential components to make their own model. From this perspective, we believe that the face and more importantly, the productivity of agriculture can be changed if young people within the Caribbean are supported by appropriate, sustainable interventions that allow them to fully engage the sector.

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