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PROSPECTS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION TRAINING AMONG VEGETABLE PRODUCERS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Abstract

This study enquired of the option of Distance Education as a mode for delivering agricultural information and training within the Extension services of Trinidad and Tobago. The researchers selected each member of the total population of frontline Extension workers in Trinidad and Tobago for a structured interview. Similarly the researchers selected a population of vegetable producers from the major vegetable growing areas in the country. There were respective response rates of 83% and 80%. There was a significant association between years of Extension agent service and interest in using the facility. Agents revealed interest in a range of topics appropriate for Vegetable production. Both agents and their clients felt that the tool will be useful in their training. Agents identified several support factors which would hinder implementation and which could be alleviated by Extension leadership and management. The first four factors were Funding, Support Service, Availability of resource material and administrative policy. Current sources of information, ownership of information sources, access to information communication technologies and willingness to become involved were attributes which both clients and their agents possess. These are essential first elements for the successful delivery of Distance Education programmes. The assessment provided adequate evidence to suggest that Distant Education can be used among vegetable producers in Trinidad and Tobago. Extension agents can be trained via the method and they can train their clients. In so doing the sources and type of information available to the Agricultural community can be suitably enhanced.