

Likelihood of Students in the Formal Education System in Trinidad to Pursue Agriculture as a Profession and the Implications for Development

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As part of Caribbean-wide initiatives to modernize agriculture, the formal education system for agriculture in Trinidad is coming under scrutiny. This paper investigates the perceptions students have about agriculture, the likelihood of those in the secondary school system (n=300) to pursue a formal education in agriculture, and the likelihood of those in the tertiary system (n=100) to continue in a career in agriculture. Likert-type scales were used to assess perceptions, and the likelihood of students in the formal education system in Trinidad to pursue agriculture as a profession was measured on a rating scale. Relationships were examined between school location (North, South, and Central), students' residential area (Rural, Urban), gender, and the likelihood to pursue a career in agriculture. Data were presented as descriptives and correlations. Results show that in schools where agriculture is not taught, while students firmly believed that agriculture is very important, very few would make it a career-choice. In secondary schools where agriculture is taught, students were generally favorable in their overall attitudes to agriculture, but there was only moderate indication that they would pursue the field further as a career. There were significant relationships between gender, school's location, and students' residential area and the likelihood to pursue agriculture. At the tertiary level, there was very strong indication that these students would continue in a career in agriculture. However, they were most likely to seek higher education and research in the field or seek out salaried positions in the public service. Female students were more likely to continue a career in agriculture than males. Recommendations included policy actions to introduce agriculture as a science to all students in the formal education system, a re-engineered curriculum based on modern technology use and specially developed career days, exhibitions and field visits to attract young people to the discipline.

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