

ABSTRACT

Factors Associated with the Management & Organizational Structure of Agricultural Cooperatives in Dominica, Grenada & Trinidad.

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This study analysed the following factors associated with the management and organisational structure of agricultural cooperatives in three islands Dominica, Grenada and Trinidad, these being: the level of education, the amount of experience, the proportion of managerial skills namely, conceptual, technical and human skills, possessed by managers and also the financial status of the cooperatives. The study also described the types of organisational structures present in cooperatives and attempted to determine whether there was a felt need for changing the present structures within the cooperatives, with a view to improving the performance of the cooperatives.

Survey methodology was employed utilizing two structured questionnaires, one for managers and the other for members of the board of directors. Other forms of data included background material such as historical data on the cooperative movements in each island and records such as the financial statements from each cooperative. Data were gathered from 20 agricultural cooperatives, seven in Dominica, four in Grenada and nine in Trinidad, over an eight-month period and then analyzed.

The findings revealed that managers and board members usually had just primary or junior secondary levels of education and in some cases, no formal

education at all. The data also showed that in the majority of respondents there had been little or no previous job related experience, in either a cooperative or any other type of business. All respondents possessed a fair amount of technical skills, but the levels of both human and conceptual skills seemed to be inadequate. The financial status of cooperatives appeared unstable, although 10 cooperatives indicated that they were making at least a 50% profit margin, all of them claimed that they were in financial difficulties.

The organisational structure of agricultural cooperatives have followed the traditional Rochdale line and has not been modified in any way. Respondents identified other factors that seem to affect the development of agricultural cooperatives and the cooperative movement as follows: insufficient government support, lack of recognition by the public and private business sectors and lack of interest by the members.

There were a number of recommendations put forward in this study and these sought to help solve specific problems in the cooperatives. It was thought that cooperatives should employ managers who are qualified or experienced in management, or alternatively, they can invite these persons to sit on their board of directors. Cooperatives should also try to modify their organisational structure to include other committees to their management executive. They can then ascertain if this structure is more feasible than the traditional Rochdale structure. Finally cooperatives can try to collaborate with each other both locally and internationally so that there may be an exchange of ideas.