

ABSTRACT

This study analyses certain factors affecting root crop production in Jamaica between 1959-72. During the first eleven years, that is between 1959-69, production in the root crop sub-sector virtually remained stagnant. This occurred despite the provision of credit, subsidies, extension and marketing facilities by the state in an attempt to expand the production of these crops and other commodities produced by small farmers. However, the limited scale on which these development measures were initiated, as well as the unfavourable prices received by producers during this period rendered them ineffective.

In the subsequent period, 1970-72, there was rapid expansion in production resulting in the various root crops becoming the most important crops produced for domestic consumption. During this period the production of these crops was stimulated by developments in several areas. These were: an increased supply of public institutional credit; increased application of subsidies; greater provision of extension education; and substantial increases in prices received by producers which resulted from improvements in marketing and increased demand for these crops.

Root crop farmers were found to be positively price responsive. Elasticities of output with respect to price during the previous harvest ranged between 1.83 for Negro yam and 3.94 for Dasheen. Rainfall also contributed to the expansion in production of some of these crops. These results were based on the adoption of two supply

response models: (a) the Nerlovian adjustment model and (b) one used by Ramesh in India.

These findings should facilitate more efficient planning for the root crop sub-sector, as previously only limited economic research was undertaken in respect of these crops despite their importance in the economies of Jamaica and other Commonwealth Caribbean countries.

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