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**ABSTRACT**

This study assessed whether there were differences between agricultural producers who were men and women from three rural communities of Dominica namely Calibishie, Marigot and Castle Bruce with regard to several production resources.

*The study's analytical framework is based on the premise that there is gender inequality pertaining to the distribution and availability of production related resources which is both material and ideological (Baritteau (1998), Barrow (1997), Beneria (1997, Young (1998)). The premise is perpetuated by a sexual division of labour which may not readily recognise triple roles of women who practice small farming as an occupation and which may render women invisible to the agriculture sector. Intervening variables to the gendered circumstance are derived from the social, political and cultural pressures which continue to demise the once thriving banana economy of these eastern communities in Dominica.*

The study surveyed a randomly selected 20% sample of the population. Sixty percent of the women producers were single and the main family income earner. Most of these single women headed their households. By comparison 15% of the men were single, many more, 85%, were the main income earner and most (90.6%) headed their households. Banana cultivation for an export market is still the main occupation among the sample. Male producers are the larger ones. More women (35%) are engaging mixed crop cultivation by comparison to the percentage of males (25%). Sixty five percent of the women are responsible for domestic chores and the care of children. The study found significant differences between men and women at the  $*p < .05$  level for the following variables: weekly hours spent on farm, average fortnightly farm income, obtaining farm loans and conditions of access roads. At the  $**p < .01$  levels were the following variables: land owned and farm vehicle ownership. There were no significant differences regarding the following variables: reasons for moving to another crop and available government extension services. A slightly higher number of women than men suffered displacement from the banana industry and experienced a weaker fall back position in terms of alternative economic activities.

These findings confirmed the material and ideological differences which constituted the study's analytical framework.

The study concluded with a number of recommendations which must be addressed in order to resolve gender disparities and to encourage a general improvement in the banana based economy of these three eastern communities in the Commonwealth of Dominica. In consideration of the greater disadvantages faced by the rural women as compared to the men, recommendations largely consisted of specific targeting of women in the allocation or distribution of the factors of production and service delivery as well as sensitization and advocacy for greater empowerment of women. Suggestions also seek to address the issues of credit and affordable inputs which were identifiable areas of need for both women and men farmers of the three communities.