

Abstract

During the last 18 years the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago has sponsored a field competition which is organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries through its agricultural Extension Service. The aims of this competition are to encourage the agricultural production of the farming community and to increase the standards of cultivation and management of the small farmer.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of the field competition on the development of a small farming community, and the La Pastora land settlement area in northern Trinidad was chosen for this study. The influence of the extension service on the farmers was examined briefly and the major sources of agricultural information within the community were studied. Information for the survey was obtained through the use of a schedule which was answered by a sample of forty farmers in the area. The results were analysed using a new technique of sorting strips.

It was found that in the area studied the field competition was not achieving its full objectives and that the competitors did not have better standards than the non-competitors. The influence of the extension service was limited by the shortage of qualified staff and this had affected the relationship between farmer and extension officer in the area. There was also a lack of organised agricultural activities and a poor distribution of advisory leaflets published by the Ministry.

The major sources of information in the community were found to be the agricultural programmes on the radio and McDonald's Almanac.

It was suggested that the field competition be improved by encouraging a larger number of farmers to enter the competition and making it more effective in the adoption of new ideas. A number of recommendations were made to increase the influence of the extension service and improve the relationship between farmer and extension officer.

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