

Abstract

The purpose of this report is to identify and study the characteristics of informal farming leaders in a community. Informal leaders are those members of the community, who although as individuals they hold no position of official authority, nonetheless, their actions and opinions influence the actions and opinions of several other members of the community.

The community chosen for study was the Land Settlement in the northern section of Maracas Valley, Trinidad. The survey in fact included private farmers in that area as well as farmers on government holdings.

A questionnaire survey of 35 farmers was conducted by the author. The questionnaire comprised questions on the characteristics of the farmers interviewed, and included a sociometric question to find out inter-farmer discussion of agricultural problems. Farmers mentioned by 4 or more people as being problem discussion contacts were selected as informal leaders.

The original 15 farmers were selected at random from a list supplied by the Land Settlement Officer. The rest were obtained from the answer given to the sociometric question. By this method 6 informal leaders were identified amongst the 35 farmers in the survey.

Some characteristics of these informal leaders were compared with the rest of the farmers. The main findings of this comparative study were as follows:

- Informal leaders
- i) tend to be younger
 - ii) tend to have farms of similar size to non-leaders.
 - iii) are not more likely to be formal community leaders.
 - iv) are more business orientated

- v) have a more favourable attitude to education
- vi) are more urbanised and cosmopolite
- vii) are more innovative than average.
- viii) use more sources for first information about new ideas and practices.
- ix) rely more on technical extra-community sources than non-leaders.
- x) discuss problems with a wider variety of people.

These findings are similar to the findings of several other studies of informal leaders in other moderately progressive farming communities, but differ, in that larger farms are not associated with informal leadership, and in the high importance of local information and discussion sources.