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Farmer Field Schools Completers', Non Completers' Non Participants' perceptions of Integrated Pest Management. The Case of Trinidad and Tobago.

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Abstract

The Farmer Field School (FFS) approach to agricultural extension and education was designed to enable farmers to engage in decision-making processes on the ecology of their own fields. Since 2002, the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Agriculture Lands and Marine Resources has conducted FFSs focused on building farmers' capacities for employing integrated pest management (IPM) practices, thus enabling them to discontinue dependency on pesticides as the primary pest-control measure.

The purpose of the study is to identify and analyze 1) the relationship between participation status (i.e., completion, non-completion, or non-participation) and selected sociodemographic characteristics, and 2) the relationship between participation status and perceptions regarding the use of pesticides, their willingness to take on the financial risk of adopting new farming methods, and the compatibility of IPM with local agricultural practices.

The sample population (N=109) consisted of farmers classified as FFS completers (n=56), noncompleters (n=15), and non-participants (n=38) from five FFSs in Trinidad.

FFS completers possessed a greater concern for the environment than did noncompleters and non-participants, are more likely than non-completers to be willing to take on the financial risks involved in the adoption of IPM on their farms, and believed more strongly than did non-completers that IPM is compatible with agricultural practices and the market in Trinidad and Tobago.

With the results of the study, MALMR may employ strategies that impair or eliminate the factors leading to non-completion and non-participation, thus making FFS more accessible, increase participation, and enable more farmers to benefit from an agro-ecological approach to farming.

Key words: pesticide agro-ecosystems analysis non-formal education