

ABSTRACT

The Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA) in Trinidad and Tobago was developed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. It is a government-sponsored programme for youths 17-25 years old. YAPA was established in 2002 and launched in 2003. Its main purpose is to provide young people with the opportunity and chance to become involved in farming and also to demonstrate that farming can be taken up and pursued successfully as a career and business-like manner. As a result, there would be the desired outcome of a rise in the number of young people entering the agricultural sector which is a necessity for sustainable agricultural development.

The main purpose of this research study is to assess the YAPA programme and outline the key points related to the strengths and weaknesses the programme faces in attracting young people into the agricultural sector and the gender relations and issues faced by the students. This is necessary as to ascertain the effectiveness and efficiency of the program offered to the youths in this country as well as to seek ways in which it can be improved. While the role of the YAPA programme has been identified, the perceived value, as well as, the associated strengths and weaknesses of the programme have yet to be fully investigated.

The results of this study is deemed to be very beneficial to the coordinators of the program as it will provide them with necessary ratings of how successful and competent the program have been in attracting youths and ways in which the quality of the programme can be improved and also give an insight of the gender relations and issues involved in promoting agriculture and food sustainability through the YAPA programme in Trinidad.

The proposed study population for this research consists of the current YAPA Phase 2 participants, past participants and the facilitators of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine

Resources in the St. Patrick West County located in Point Fortin. A formal survey using a self administered questionnaire was conducted with all the current Phase II YAPA participants (n=7) and a sample of past trainees (n=6) followed by the examination and evaluation of the recorded data.

The results showed that the majority of students in the programme had positive attitudes towards agriculture. They entered the YAPA programme because of their strong belief in the future of farming, wanted to pursue it as a main means of living and as a career. Therefore, they wanted to gain further knowledge and insights about agriculture and joined the YAPA programme. However, there are a few trainees who had negative attitudes towards the programme, coordinators and their peers. This resulted in conflict within the programme which resulted in three of the Phase 2 members leaving the programme.

The results also showed that there are few limitations with the overall structure of the programme such as lack of formal training and experience of the coordinators, poor quality in which the learning materials are being delivered to the students, presence of gender issues and inequality and lack of proper facilities, example washrooms, available.

The YAPA programme has a lot of potential for encouraging young people into the agricultural sector thus improving food sustainability and security of the nation. However, the government needs to be more supportive and follow through with promised resources and post YAPA funding, and improvement in the training facilities.