

ABSTRACT

FARM PLANNING AND FAMILY NUTRITION IN DOMINICA

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The process of agricultural development has typically involved the increasing participation of rural individuals in the monetary economy. In developing countries this process is often accomplished by the introduction of commercial crops usually destined for the export market. Many experts have questioned the effectiveness of such policies in raising the living standards of their proposed beneficiaries. Evidence exists to support the assertion that such policies may even have deleterious effects on rural populations, through the negative impact on domestic food production, prices and nutritional status.

The Commonwealth of Dominica in the West Indies has pursued a development strategy closely linked to the expansion of the banana industry. Development of the industry was largely facilitated through preferential trading arrangements with the British Government.

This study examined the hypothesis that banana producers differ in nutritional status from farmers who do not produce bananas, where nutrition is measured by intake of calories and protein. This hypothesis was tested in the North-West of the island. The study also examined the trade-off between income and nutrition in the farm planning process. A framework for determining the optimal farm production pattern to best satisfy nutritional requirements was

developed in which nutritional needs could be met from consumption of home produced and/or purchased food items.

Results of regression analysis revealed that Individual Calorie Intakes and Individual Protein Intakes were both significantly affected by banana production. Banana producers consumed less protein and Calories than did non-banana farmers.

Where the optimal production pattern for satisfaction of nutrient requirements was determined, banana production entered the solution only as a means of satisfying the nutritional requirements of the family. Results of the analysis showed that banana should be considered as a commercial enterprise only if the price were to increase, a scenario which is not part of the probable future.

It is recommended that future development strategies for the region, such as the proposed Agricultural Diversification Programme of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, must incorporate a nutritional component as one of the criteria for accepting projects.

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