

ABSTRACT

CONTRASTS AND COMMONALITIES AMONG LIMITED-RESOURCE
CROP-BASED FARM SYSTEMS IN TRINIDAD

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Differences among small farm systems are not sufficiently recognized and generally they are regarded as being fairly homogeneous. Policies and programmes are consequently broad and uniform. Initiatives, developed to improve small farmers' welfare, are not as effective as they could be. This study investigated internal variations among small farm systems in Trinidad to highlight their contrasts and commonalities, and to profile the differentiated systems.

Data were collected from 180 limited-resource, commercially oriented, crop-based farmers, selected by a simple random sampling procedure conducted in two stages. Canonical Variates Analysis was used.

The findings highlighted: farm performance differences were mainly due to resource-base and farm-related factors; levels of technology used could be differentiated mainly on the basis of human capital, farm-related and resource-base factors; differences in access to resources were based mostly on farm-related factors. Differences between credit users and non-credit users were less pronounced and were based mainly on operators' attitudes and abilities.

Profiles, based on the important discriminating factors, were developed to characterize the various groups. A modified approach to programme development, which considers the complexities of systems, is suggested.