

ABSTRACT

A critical analysis of Plant Quarantine
in the Eastern Caribbean, with special emphasis
on Trinidad and Tobago.

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Plant Quarantine is a legal system of inspection of unprocessed agricultural items being imported into a country to prevent the entry of foreign plant pests for as long as possible. Plant Quarantine Services existed in Eastern Caribbean countries from as early as 1884 when laws were introduced for the inspection of imported agricultural items, and the protection of the plantation crops being grown at the time. The laws throughout the region were amended regularly up to 1942.

However, by the end of the sixties, many territories were paying little attention to plant quarantine, not even enforcing their laws. There were hardly any trained staff, no proper equipment for treatment or destruction, and no post-entry facilities. No new plant protection laws were enacted in the Eastern Caribbean, despite repeated suggestions by the FAO, changes in plant production and plant protection techniques, and the development of rapid transport systems for mass movement of both people and produce.

Fortunately, the FAO Caribbean Plant Protection Commission (CPPC) was established in 1967 and this

resulted in a re-birth of plant quarantine activity in the region. While some progress has been made mainly in terms of trained personnel, local authorities have invested relatively little, with any improvements usually externally initiated; a lot remains still to be done.

This study reviews and analyses the development of the major plant quarantine systems in the Eastern Caribbean territories and makes the point that plant quarantine in the region needs to be vastly improved to meet minimum requirements of new international phytosanitary measures being developed, if there is to be any chance of retaining vitally important agricultural export markets and accessing as well potentially new markets for existing and new commodities coming out of the agricultural diversification thrust in all the Caribbean countries.

experience in identifying contact persons, providing information and assisting with translations.