

Abstract

A Situational Analysis of Vegetable farming in Trinidad with specific Reference to Market Orientation at the Farm Level.

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The research described the farming situation of vegetable farmers in Trinidad from a socio-economic perspective, measured their market orientation and investigated the relationship of these socio-economic characteristics to farmers' market orientation.

Fourteen socio-economic variables were measured and tested against market-orientation, which was restricted to the farm level and defined as the degree to which farmers consider the dictates of the market when planning their production and selling. It was measured using a 21-item likert type scale.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used. Agricultural extension officers were interviewed through focus group discussions in the qualitative phase and vegetable farmers were interviewed using a structured questionnaire in the quantitative phase. Three focus group discussions were held and 145 vegetable farmers interviewed.

The socio economic profile of vegetable farmers is consistent with that of the average Caribbean small farmer. The vegetable farmers surveyed were fairly market oriented scoring on the higher end of the

scale. A simple multiple stepwise regression revealed that written record keeping and education were significantly associated with farmers' market orientation.

It can be concluded that the more educated farmers who kept written records were the most market oriented. It is recommended that farm management programmes be developed that teach farmers how to keep proper written farm record in a simple manner. Such programmes may lead to increased market orientation by the farmers. However, the success of these programmes may be constrained by farmers' educational level.

In the simple marketing system for vegetables that exists in Trinidad, a high degree of farmers' market orientation can be found. The agro-processing and export sectors of this system are not very developed. Growth of these sub-sectors of the system would impact on farmers' market orientation.

Keywords: Neisha Mungroo; market orientation, socio-economic factors, vegetable farmers, situational analysis.