

ABSTRACT

Root crops production in Jamaica and indeed the rest of the Caribbean is the domain of small-scale farmers. Not only is this sector a major source of employment, but in recent years its potential as a foreign exchange earner has been increasingly realised. The paucity of good micro-scale (farm-level) data makes it difficult to formulate and implement comprehensive strategies for the expansion and development of root crop production and marketing in small farming communities.

This research therefore, analyses the spatial and temporal trends in root crop production and marketing in Jamaica over the last decade in response to initiatives to improve national food self-sufficiency, and intensive efforts to generate foreign exchange through export. Despite spatial variations, macro-scale (national level) production trends are generally reflected at the micro-scale. A study of 163 farmers in two rural communities, Sawyers (Trelawny) and Cascade (Hanover) shows contrasting trends in overall production as well as marketing orientation. These contrasts are indications not only of environmental variations which influence decision-making at the micro-scale, but also variations in the provision of infrastructure. An assessment of the socio-economic impact of changing patterns of production and marketing supports the thesis that farmers are,

vulnerable to changing marketing initiatives. Farmers
vulnerability affect their production decision making and
the economic base of small farming communities.