

Farmers as researchers: a complementary participatory methodology for sustaining research and development in the Caribbean

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Agricultural development in the region is dependent on appropriate research results being made available regularly to farmers. Unfortunately, this development is stymied by a paucity of research primarily because of insufficient human resource capacity. Farmers carrying out simple experiments on their fields with the help of researchers can assist in reversing this situation. This paper provides experiences of watermelon farmers in Trinidad who successfully conducted Participatory Research trials on their farms to evaluate several chemical and non-chemical options for the management of Gummy stem blight and the experiences of banana farmers in St. Vincent who evaluated several cover crops for the management of watergrass using the paired -treatment design. While varying levels of successes were achieved in each set of trials, farmers were empowered to conduct research aimed at solving other problems they experience. An attitude assessment carried out with the St. Vincent farmers indicated their acceptance of the process and a general willingness to pursue other participatory research work on their farms. This methodology has potential to increase the availability of research results in a sustained manner. Such findings are desperately needed by regional farmers in these times.

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