

Supporting the diversification of exports in the Caribbean and Latin American region through the development of organic horticulture -

Establishing an organic export sector - a case study, Trinidad and Tobago

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Constraints in establishing an organic export sector...

Why Organic?

Producers' response

- Lower costs of production
- Higher returns for investment
- Environmental conservation and environmental issues rarely mentioned

Consumers' response...

- Health and safety aspects
- Taste, nutrition and aroma
- Concern over range of available items and price
- Resource conservation and environmental issues seldom mentioned

Policy makers...

- Diversification of traditional markets
- Adaptability of organic technology
- Immediate eligibility of available land
- Revitalization of rural communities and integration with rural life
- Potential for adding value in producer region
- Resource conservation and environmental issues are considered

Constraints in establishing an organic export sector...

- **Why Organic Export?**

Characteristics of the local market

- Central market system would not support the premium prices
- Local marketing system - difficult to maintain organic integrity - no dedicated organic area in central marketing
- Most organic produce disposed at the farm-gate

The organic export sector as a starting point...

- Foreign exchange generation
- Strategy to jumpstart the process of diversification- attractive price premiums

Requirements for organic export...

- Certification of output
- Known market profile of the export commodity
- Available output of commodity
- Available dedicated organic equipment, materials and infrastructure - handling, transport to carrier.

The local organic industry

Meeting the challenge?

Input supply- products and services...

- Commercial inputs increasing in availability
- Still a high degree of hesitance to get stock organic inputs
- Local input production has started- research and actual production
- A lot of uncertainty and misinformation in this industry

- Input supplies and services are not suited to commercial organic agriculture
- Input services are not organized; elements are there

local production systems...

- Ecological producers are generally self taught
- Still considered a hobbyist activity
- Sporadic production- systems drift in and out of active production
- Lack of technical and government support

- Input intensive systems of vegetable production are favoured
- small acreage - generally under 1 for vegetable systems ; under 12 acres for orchard crops
- Area of active production is a small percentage of area under producer control.

Handling and distribution

- No organized post harvest handling systems
- Post harvest activities limited to on-farm processing

Meeting the challenges for organic export

- Certification aspects
- Market profile information
- Critical mass of specific outputs
- Technically efficient and reliable production base
- Dedicated post harvest/ handling and distribution systems or capacity to comply with standards for shared systems

The export challenge...

Certification aspects

No certified systems

- *Major constraints:*
- *Lack of legislation to protect the genuine article*
- *High cost - 100% borne by the producer*

Market information about organic produce

- Little is known and the information is not captured by the records of the state statistical records /agricultural /organic organizations

Technically efficient and reliable resource base

- No.
- Lack of information, technical support reduces efficiency
- Few farmers have received training in Certified organic techniques

Compliant handling and distribution systems

- Do not exist

An Action Plan - proposals from CARDI Organic Systems Development Project

Production Systems Development

- The production systems needs to be expanded and organized into a highly integrated, resilient and self-sustaining mass that is technically efficient and reliable

Elements of National Organic Programme

1. Strengthen the existing systems
 - Organization, stabilizing and expansion of the interdependent sub-systems
2. Commercialize input production and handling support systems; training component
3. Maximize use of indigenous materials for inputs

Elements of National Organic Programme

4. Required legislation to protect genuine organic products and production systems
5. Marketing systems development
6. Regional development of the industry

The export challenge...

**The development of the regional organic industry
for participation in organic trade world-wide
should not be ignored**

Elements of a Regional Organic Programme:

- Specialization
- Regional bio-safety
- Coordinated response to pest and disease outbreaks
- Policy on GMOs use in agriculture