

CIRAD-FLHOR Professional meeting

Banana—Pineapple: new issues, new practices

CIRAD-FLHOR's professional meeting in Montpellier (France) on 5 September was devoted to the new issues for the banana and pineapple subsectors and to the practices to be used as a response, with the underlying question of how to reconcile the agri-environmental approach and market logic. Strong attendance by professionals showed their interest in the subject. *Fruitrop* is publishing all the talks and debates in issues 73 and 74.

More than a 100 non-CIRAD participants responded to the invitation to examine a theme that corresponds closely to the preoccupations of professional circles. Those present included the chairmen of the main producers' organisations in Martinique, Guadeloupe and Côte d'Ivoire, well-known managers in commercial chains—importers, ripeners and retailers—and senior public and interprofessional officials.

The talks covering commercial and phytosanitary regulations (G. Theissen of MCP and C. Guichard of COLEACP) and market segmentation policy (F. Dalle of Pomona and E. Bary of Germicopa) showed how the challenge for banana and pineapple producers is serious and preoccupying both in the French West Indian overseas departments and in African ACP countries exporting to Europe. All this is in an extremely competitive and continuously changing market context.

Agri-environmental preoccupations and increasingly strong market demand for healthy produce are resulting in the setting up of increasingly strict measures and regulations, especially with regard to the use of pesticides.

New practices are therefore needed in a spirit of rational agriculture.

Growers and other industry operators must adapt rapidly so as not to be overtaken by a situation marked by extreme public sensitivity to environmental crises and food safety. They must therefore possess a strong capacity for innovation in

order to adopt new practices that are kinder to the environment and more respectful of consumer health. In this situation, strong interaction with the research sector is more than ever essential.

For this, researchers must be able to co-operate closely with professionals in the different parts of the chain from grower to consumer and seek continuous interaction between the downstream and upstream sectors. Participative research must also be performed, with professionals becoming essential partners.

Capital in the form of innovations and available know-how. Based on the diversity of the situations encountered, forming priceless wealth in terms of innovation, the talks by CIRAD-FLHOR researchers (*Fruitrop* 74) have demonstrated the capital formed by the experience, know-how and existing innovations that can respond to these new issues: rational pest and disease control, improved plant material, diagnosis and agronomic management and the mastery of fresh and processed produce. Thus, the work undertaken in the West Indies and in Africa using the rational agriculture approach makes it possible to respond as best as possible to demand and also to anticipate it.

Professionals and the authorities have shown their strong expectations with regard to information and results. The involvement of research in the development of the measures to be implemented is also strongly hoped for ■

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