Island Foods Systems: An Appropriate Curriculum from an Island Perspective

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In keeping with the belief that students of Agricultural Extension must be exposed to learning experiences which facilitate an understanding of conceptual frameworks related to Sustainability, Livelihood, Equity, and Governance, a new course, AX35A Island Food Systems, is being conducted at the Saint Augustine (Trinidad) Campus of the University of the West Indies.

This course is one of several which had their synthesis in a partner initiative among Universities serving island communities. These are Dalhousie University, Dalhousie Technical College, and Nova Scotia Agricultural College; serving the islands in Canada’s North Atlantic province, The University of the Philippines, Central Vizayas serving the Central Philippines, Hassanudin University, serving South Sulawesi, Indonesia, and the the University of the West Indies serving the English-speaking Caribbean.

The Lester Pearson International Institute (LPII), managed the project, mainly funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). An extensive process of international workshops, faculty and student exchanges, multidisciplinary expertise and cultural interfacing occurred. The approach mitigated the challenges and difficulties of international development work in Agriculture. This course has provided testimony to the success of such efforts.

Island Food Systems is an enriched mixture of pedagogy, which can contribute to relevant studies on Island Sustainability, Livelihood, Equity, and Governance. A further focus becomes integrated as the issues are exemplified in the areas of Food Security, Health, Food ways and Land and Water use conflicts. It engages students in mini workshops, field visits, role-playing exercises, seminars, lectures and group discussions. A key element in delivery is to facilitate the student to integrate disciplines and expertise in order to resolve issues from an Island Foods Perspective.

At the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, it occurs over a thirteen-week semester and contributes to three credits. It has attracted final year undergraduate, first year postgraduate, and international exchange students.

A major conclusion is that this type of course is very relevant to the training of students who live in or are concerned with an Island locale. It readies them with appropriate understandings in order to confront the development issues of their intended Agricultural and related occupations.

Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to examine the development, conduct and impact of this new course over the period 1995-2002 at the University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago. Specifically the poster will present the following: Unique aspects of the curriculum development process used; Course Description; Student Profiles; Learning Experiences; Course Impact; and Future perspectives.

Educational Importance

Many island states are among the poorer countries of the world striving to maintain agrarian economies. It is important to have potential scholars understand the issues with the use of appropriate curriculum. The development, conduct and impact of IFS exemplify a useful University training approach in order to meet the said objective. The approach must motivate expertise from Island States to educate its client in relationship to the environment from which they come. It can also demonstrate to visiting International expertise and students the importance of empathy with island conditions.