An Examination of the Role that Educational Initiatives Can Play with Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Farmers in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

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Abstract

Tremendous opportunity exists to facilitate the development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) through the implementation of educational initiatives for Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) farmers. The purpose of this paper is to describe the current status of SIDS as it relates to education in CSA and the opportunities that exist based on the literature. One approach for determining the needs of CSA farmers in SIDS, based on the literature, is shared along with documentation of elements to be included on an instrument that could identify methods to further facilitate the growth and development of CSA in SIDS. Specific challenges exist due to the characteristics of SIDS: they face many social, environmental, and economic challenges due to their small size and physical isolation. Often, developing extensive educational programs is too costly for a small state with limited resources. SIDS have great opportunities available as well. Their small size, tendency towards ease of communication, and regional cooperation could mean that unique opportunities exist in SIDS that are not available in larger, more developed countries. Extension and outreach education can be used to deliver programs to SIDS. Much discussion has taken place on education and agricultural education in SIDS, and initiatives toward the use of distance education and technology. Concern has also been voiced as to keeping educational programming relevant, and in context with local knowledge and specific needs of the farmers themselves. The use of distance education may very well be the ideal method of delivering high quality education to farmers in SIDS, but the context must be applicable to farmers based on their needs. It is suggested that qualitative research, in the form of surveys and personal interviews, can be highly beneficial in developing the framework for educational initiatives that apply to the current state of CSA in SIDS and the specific educational needs of the farmers.

Keywords: Education, CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture), SIDS (Small Island Developing States), Distance Education, Technology, Local Knowledge