

Discovery learning

Imarah Radix tells us about her experience at the 'training of trainers' workshop for young agricultural extension workers conducted by the Caribbean Farmers Network and COLEACP in Saint Lucia in December 2013.

Linking farmers to markets

In December 2013 the Europe–Africa–Caribbean–Pacific Liaison Committee's PIP programme (COLEACP–PIP) and the Caribbean Farmers Network (CaFAN) held their first ever 'training of trainers' workshop on the Caribbean island of Saint Lucia. Thirteen participants from the Caribbean region were trained in agricultural extension. I attended as well, representing Guyana. It was an intensive 14 days filled with exciting and educational farm visits to observe good and bad agricultural practices, conduct group assignments, give individual presentations, and attend lecture sessions and live demonstrations. We had four excellent trainers from different countries who each brought their own style of teaching to the vast number of topics that were covered. We were trained using COLEACP's fair training system (see box).

Even before we flew into Saint Lucia we were given material to prepare for our own individual presentations, with strict instructions not to use PowerPoint. It was incredibly challenging for some of us because we were thrown into the deep end the moment the training began. The trainers taught us that clear and simple communication is one of the greatest tools we can use as trainers in

A fair-trade banana farmer at work in Saint Lucia.



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The five principles of the fair training system

- The training begins by carefully identifying the organisation's capacity building needs. This initial assessment puts the trainers in tune with the beneficiary's projects and avoids duplication with other aid programmes.
- These needs are considered by the COLEACP Training Unit in Brussels, Belgium, which ensures that the educational methods and tools used are best adapted based to the organisation's aims, materials and skill levels.
- COEACP's PIP programme has been working to replace European expertise with ACP expertise as much as possible, to favour knowledge of the terrain, accessibility, cost control and capacity building.
- The training forms part of a continuous, voluntary approach by both the organisation and COLEACP, and may bear fruit only over the long term.
- COLEACP strives, as far as possible, to increase the reach and impact of its training through partnerships with other development stakeholders, a knowledge-sharing policy, and adaptation of its training tools and methods to other areas of intervention.

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agricultural extension. We learned training methods and field training strategies for a variety of topics. The trainers gave us practical exercises, including warm-up activities and experiments that we had work on and present to the rest of the group. Afterwards, the trainers assessed our presentations and gave us constructive feedback on our training techniques.

We covered a broad spectrum of topics, including adult learning, using the 'subject, interest, objective and method' technique (the SIOM technique) in presentations, integrated pest management, the safe use of pesticides and reading pesticide labels correctly, traceability, communication techniques, the importance of hygiene and sanitation (on farms, in the packaging houses, etc.).

The practical presentations were especially useful and fun. I was given personal hygiene as a topic, specifically how to be clean and stay clean during packaging. This training session consisted of a series of exercises designed to create awareness of best practices in the packaging house. One of the key messages was: hands spread germs.

For each exercise there was an instructor manual that we read

beforehand so that we could guide our audience of farmers and ask them to connect the dots of how germs are spread, what the sources of contamination are and how often you should wash your hands, to name but a few. The exercises also encouraged lively interaction between the group and the trainer, through the fun and educational experiments and identification activities. Rule one of adult learning, I found out, is let the audience discover.

At the end of the training we were joined by Guy Stinglhamber, managing director of COLEACP. He listened as each young country representative presented an action plan for future follow-up training with the assistance of COLEACP. He was also on hand to help present the participants with their training certificates at the closing ceremony. I am now empowered to train others and am more confident in my ability to communicate and present on many agricultural topics in a simple and succinct way. This training has not only expanded my knowledge of agricultural extension but it has helped the other participants to develop their personal and professional skills as well. ◀