



A VALUE CHAIN ANALYSIS OF THE SWEET POTATO INDUSTRY IN FOUR CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES



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Background

This article is an output of the Regional Sweet Potato Value Chain Enhancement and Technology Transfer Project (2021-2025) funded by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and implemented by the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) with collaboration from A Z Information Jamaica Ltd.

Methodology

Conduct a Value Chain Analysis, Market Assessment, Business Case study/Investment Profiles in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Some Major Findings

Antigua and Barbuda

- The value chain is relatively short and efficient; consisting of input suppliers, farmers/producers, aggregators/hucksters, agro-processors, consumers and policy makers.
- Production is mostly conducted on small farms (0.2-1.2 ha).
- Some mechanization is practiced.
- Yields are low but can be improved by increasing plant density, using technologies such as drip irrigation, better Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies to control Sweet Potato Weevil (common name Jacob), Whitefly, Grub and Rodents.
- Sweet Potato Weevil accounted for 40-60% of crop loss.

Barbados

- Value chain actors include input suppliers, farmers, hucksters, retailers, agro-processors, consumers and policy makers.
- About 300 farmers produce the crop. Majority of production occurs on small holdings (0.4-1.2 ha).
- 70% of harvest sold at farm gate.
- Sweet potato also imported from St Vincent and the Grenadines.
- In times of scarcity, hawkers reserve fields before harvest. 3% of harvest goes to agro-processing - sweet potato fries, sweet potato flour, pancake mixes, sweet potato bread, sweet potato vodka, snack chips, frozen chunks and purees.

Guyana

- Key stakeholders include input suppliers, farmers, transportation providers, agro-processors, consumers, experienced aggregators, wholesalers, retailers, and processors.
- Production is mainly by small farmers (0.4-0.8 ha).
- Farm operations rely heavily on mechanization, except for harvesting.
- Value-added sweet potato products include snacks, foods and flours.
- Public markets are the primary source (82.4%) for purchasing sweet potatoes.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

- Key stakeholders include farmers, input suppliers, hucksters /exporters, transportation providers, agro-processors, consumers.
- Sweet Potato production is largely done by small farmers (0.1-0.3 ha).
- Weekly exports to Trinidad, Barbados and St Martin.
- Sweet potato weevil and borer accounts for 30% yield loss.
- Flour and chips are the main processed products.
- Anthracnose followed by Fusarium Wilt were the main diseases affecting production on the island.

Major Conclusion

Much room for industry improvement at all segments of the value chain.