

## Banana research and development perspective Jamaica and the Windward Islands

### A look into the future

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*The banana industries of Jamaica and the Windward Islands are characterised by increasing costs of inputs with time without parallel or comparable price increases, a large number of small banana holdings in very diverse agroecological zones, and a large number of growers with a low level of formal education. In addition, the islands are prone to weather conditions which adversely affect the performance of the crop from time to time.*

*In order to keep the grower in business it is necessary to increase his profit margin. It is therefore necessary to accelerate research on technologies aimed at optimisation of resource use through :*

- 1) a more precise timing of inputs e.g. in leafspot and nematode control*
- 2) placement of inputs where they can be utilized to the greatest benefit e.g. fertilizers and pesticides*
- 3) the use of multi-purpose chemicals e.g. for borer and nematode control, weed and thrip control*
- 4) the development of combination chemicals to achieve broad spectrum activity e.g. for grasses and broad leaf weeds and contact and systemic weed control*
- 5) the development of labour optimising methodologies e.g. in fertilizer and pesticide applications*
- 6) minimisation of chemical applications through appropriate cultural practices.*

*In all this it is necessary to develop a better understanding of the anticipated response to various changes in input use and husbandry under different conditions and circumstances of our varied banana farming systems. The application of inputs in time must be related to knowledge of response surfaces at the farmer level.*

*It is recognised that leaf spot control alone cost the industry of Jamaica and the Windward Islands over US \$ 3 million per year. This will be more if Black Sigatoka becomes a problem in the islands. There is therefore urgent need to give new life to the Jamaica Banana Breeding Scheme which has already produced some tetraploid bananas resistant to Yellow Sigatoka. These tetraploids are now under commercial tests.*

*ACORBAT can play a leading role in the coordination and implementation of the above and in the transfer of banana technologies across geographical boundaries, as well as in minimising the duplication of research efforts and in rationalising research activities within its territorial sphere of influence.*

*In order to achieve the objectives of ACORBAT spelt out in its constitution and those stated above, it will be necessary for the organisation to have a permanent secretariat and to this end it is considered desirable that the organisation should seek attachment to, become an appendage of, or operate under the umbrella of an international organisation which covers ACORBAT territories.*