



Research and Development for Banana Production In Latin America and The Caribbean: A Critical and Constructive Scope

L. E. Pocasangre, Director of Research and Prof. of Tropical Crops, EARTH University, Las Mercedes, Limon, Costa Rica. Email: lpocasangre@earth.ac.cr

Currently the original banana countries are facing several constrains for producing banana of high quality and keeping the high production in tired soils supporting banana production over one century. In addition, several banana plantations have been turned urbanizations or replaced by other crops, like oil palm, cacao and sugarcane and there is no largest extension of suitable land for expanding production in the region. In addition, there are other constrains affecting the production such as: growing population, lack of field workers, high cost of transport, long distance to the market, pressure for Ministries of Agriculture and health due to the high contents of chemical used for production, the OCA factor (Overall Cosmetic Appearance of the Fruit) demanded by the market. Furthermore, there are other strategic issues, which indicate that in the future Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) will not be the largest banana continent for exporting. One factor is that the multinational companies are dismantling the research departments and the public effort is too weak to develop new technologies and innovations needed for producing premium bananas. Another meaningful issue is the overtake of UFC- Chiquita Brands by the Brazilian Consortium Cutrale-Safra indicates that Brazil is the big player in the continent and it is expected that an expansion of banana production in Brazil will happened in the near future, due to this country has abundant suitable land, less pests and diseases and better agroecological conditions than Central America. Another constrain is the threat of the tropical race 4 of Panama Disease (*Fusarium oxysporum* f.sp. *cubense*), which it is a real menace to the banana industry, specially currently that it is already present in Africa (Mozambique). There is a close relationship between Brazil and Mozambique and it is possible that this connection will be a potential via of introduction of the pathogen to our continent. However the big advantages, that the banana countries in LAC have are: the banana culture, trained people, knowledge on agronomic management, new productions technologies, knowledge of the market, transport logistic and political stability in the governments, all of these advantages currently does not have Africa the future banana continent.