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Diversity of the socio-economic strategies of valorization of the undergrowth of Guadeloupe: a typology

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While agroforestry systems have been described internationally (Nair et al., 1993, Parrotta, 2012), this study sponsored by the VALAB program provides typological insights into the reality of Guadeloupe by deciphering the extreme diversity of farming situations (Perrot et al. 1993). A combination of agronomic, techno-economic and socio-cultural criteria distinguished 5 farms types for a study sample of 40 farmers:

- Organizations with a productive and / touristic vocation are large-scale farms, with business status and a commercial or touristic vocation contrasting with the other stakeholders of the undergrowth of Guadeloupe. Their weight is undeniable in the whole actors of the three traditional sectors of the undergrowth of Guadeloupe (coffee, cocoa, vanilla).
- The traditional crops parcels out of the undergrowth are developed by farmers who have chosen to get out of the constraints that the undergrowth could have in particular in terms of regularity and profitability of the production for the supply of structured trade channels. However, this model appears vulnerable in terms of phytosanitary and socio-cultural values.
- The ONF concession farms are in vanilla monoculture. These multi-skilled farmers cannot live only on this climate-dependent productive activity. They have little leeway to change their agrosystem towards a viable activity in the undergrowth in relation to the rather coercive specifications proposed by the departmental land manager.
- Undersized private understory plantations result from the structural sharing of the activity of the farmers concerned between their farm and other sectors of labor, valuing their labor force in an immediate and less risky way. These farms reflect the current rather general situation of degraded valuation of the Guadeloupean private undergrowth. Fragilized for the most part by sectorized support exacerbating their sensitivity to climatic and economic hazards, they gather potential candidates concerning the initiative that some farmers wish to promote with agroecological integrative diversification projects in the undergrowth.
- The forest gardens are still a model of valorization by old knowledge of the agrobiodiversity of the undergrowth in an integrated and diversified way, fruit of a concomitant transmission of the land heritage and the associated intangible heritage. This mode of development is becoming rarer with the retirement of the old farmers and the structural difficulties of a transmission based on orality and proximity, for these particularly complex agroecosystems.

This typology, essential for understanding the reality of undergrowth agrosystems, is also used as a tool to study their viability. Finally, it makes it possible to envisage development actions adapted to each type of farming.

Keywords: Guadeloupe, undergrowth, socio-economy, typology, diversity.

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