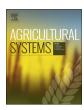
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Sustainability assessment of ecological intensification practices in coconut production[☆]



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ABSTRACT

Environmental impact and economic performance assessments are important subjects for the definition of strategies for sustainable management in agriculture. The objective of the present study was to assess such impacts in a set of reference farms dedicated to coconut production, conforming a gradient with respect to the adoption of technologies and ecological intensification practices. Ranging in scale from smaller family farms to larger corporate enterprises, and from coconut monocultures to diversified crops and integrated coconut-livestock systems, the six cases were studied through a multi-attribute utility model comprising 62 indicators related to five sustainability dimensions: (i) Landscape ecology, (ii) Environmental quality, (iii) Sociocultural values, (iv) Economic values and (v) Management and administration. Detailed cash flow analyses permitted a critical view regarding the influence of technology adoption, ecological intensification, and management for sustainability as criteria for economic viability. The results attest to the value of produce diversification as opportunity toward technology integration, which correlated positively with higher sustainability indices in all dimensions. Tradeoff analysis showed a negative correlation between socio-environmental performance indices and profitability, whereas none of the cases studied showed constrained economic viability, indicating that ecological intensification in coconut production can also entail social improvements, by promoting fairer share of revenues and benefits among stakeholders. Recommendations issued to farmers and management teams, related with agronomic factors and practices adopted in production intensification, favor the communication of appropriate mechanisms for technology adoption, translating farm-level sustainability assessments into action for sustainability.

1. Introduction

World trade of coconut-derived products is expected to increase in the years to come. Technavio's market research (Technavio, 2016a, 2016b) forecasts that, during the period of 2016–2020, the global market will show a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 27% and 15%, for tender coconut water and coconut milk, respectively. In its turn, Europe projects to record a CAGR of 4.7% for coconut oil in the 2017–2022 horizon, and the market for this product is anticipated to grow to more than US\$ 3 billion by 2022 (Fact, 2017). These market trends are being driven by increasing health-consciousness among consumers, as coconut water contains important electrolytes with

strong indications for health promotion (Radenahmad et al., 2011; DebMandal and Mandal, 2011; Radenahmad et al., 2012). In this broader movement of consumers seeking out healthier food and hydration products with simpler ingredients, coconut water has attracted the interest of world's giant companies of the beverage industry, which by means of modern packing techniques to increase the shelf life up to 18 months, are promoting a beach-to-bench approach to expand the market for tender coconut water from 100 million liters in 2012 to 350 million liters by 2020 (CBI, 2014). Similar market trends are also expected for other coconut-derived products, such as desiccated coconut meat, that showed a 102% increase in the European market in the last five years (CBI, 2015a), and virgin coconut oil (CBI, 2015b).

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^{*} Corresponding author.

Industry wide and diverse range of food

products

diversification from own origin, focusing on productivity

reduction of chemical control of weeds, using mowing; High/rainfed, chemical fertilizer, chemical control,

Enterprise

No, however with special attention to coconut breeding and genetic diversity

21,000 ha, 6000 ha coconut, started

with hybrids coconuts in 1992/93 in 1976 (tall coconuts), replanted

Geiger: Af Mean T °C:

2547 mm

1194 mm

Prec.:

26.5

Köppen-

Case 6

mulching; Green manuring with kudzu; varietal and plant health, animal traction harvest

coconut and coconut

milk

and reduced P application; fertigation; biological control of insects (B. bassiana, Dipel), Rainforest Alliance certification

High/systematic elimination of chemical control of weeds, using rotary tilling and mowing; mulching; liquid limestone

Enterprise

No, coconut monoculture, 42% tall coconut without

4532ha, 2594ha coconut, started in

1982 with tall coconut⁵ and hybrid

Geiger: Aw Mean T °C:

Köppen-

Case 4

1209 mm

coconut⁶ introduced in 1988

management, 33% rainfed hybrid coconut under

ecological management, 25% irrigated hybrid

coconut

Industry, grated

Green coconut 'in

High/micro sprinkler fertigation with liquid bovine manure

Family business

Yes, dwarf coconut, sugarcane, intensive integrated

dairy production

204 ha, 87 ha dwarf coconut, started

in 1997

Mean T °C:

Geiger: Aw 1208 mm

Köppen-

Case 5

Prec.:

27.5

compost, mulching, livestock integration, restriction in

pesticide use, chemical fertilizers

natura'

Table 1

Technical and managerial characterization of the rural establishments selected for sustainability analysis, according to their respective ecological intensification and technology adoption contexts.	and coconut planted areas, Diversification aspects Management type Intensification level/technology Main product ation year	, 60 ha dwarf coconut ", started No, dwarf coconut monoculture, irrigated Family business Medium/micro sprinkler irrigation, mulching, chemical Green coconut 'in fertilizer, chemical control natura'	a, 270 ha dwarf coconut, Yes, dwarf coconut, citriculture, diversified Family business High/micro sprinkler irrigation, organic fertilizer, Green coconut 'in d in 1998 fruitculture, horticulture natura' production and EurepGAP certification?	a, 141 ha dwarf coconut, No, dwarf coconut monoculture, irrigated Enterprise Medium/micro sprinkler irrigation, mulching, chemical Green coconut 'in d in 1999
agerial characterization of the rural establishments selected for sustainability analysi	Total and coconut planted areas, Diversification aspects cultivation year	96 ha, 60 ha dwarf coconut ⁴ , started No, dwarf coconut monoculture, irriş in 1998/9	890 ha, 270 ha dwarf coconut, Yes, dwarf coconut, citriculture, dive started in 1998 fruticulture, horticulture	181 ha, 141 ha dwarf coconut, No, dwarf coconut monoculture, irriş started in 1999
	Climate	Köppen- Geiger ¹ : Am Mean T°C ² : 24.8 Prec. ³ : 1791 mm	Köppen- Geiger: Aw Mean T°C: 23.8 Prec.: 919 mm	Köppen- Geiger: Aw
Technical and man	Rural establishment	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3

¹ Köppen-Geiger stands for Köppen-Geiger climate classification system (Am: Monsoon, Aw: Wet savanna, Af: Rainforest)

² Mean T° C is the annual daily mean temperature in Celsius.

 $^{^{\}rm 3}$ Prec. Stands for the mean annual precipitation. ⁴ Dwarf coconut: dwarf coconut cultivars.

⁵ Tall coconut: tall coconut cultivars.

 $^{^{\}rm 6}$ Hybrid coconut: hybrid coconut cultivars (hybrids between tall and dwarf).

⁷ EurepGAP is a common standard for farm management practice created by European supermarket chains and major suppliers. GAP is an acronym for Good Agricultural Practices.

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