

**LOCAL REALITIES AND STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS OF
AGRICULTURAL HEALTH:
PESTICIDE POISONING OF JAMAICAN SMALL-HOLDERS**

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(ABSTRACT)

Field research was undertaken in three Jamaican farming communities to understand the localized health impact of pesticide poisoning in a developing country. The primary research tool was the collection of data through an intra-household survey, complemented by field observations. The goal was to gather information on the extent to which pesticides are used, the physiological symptoms experienced during or after pesticide exposure, and the farmers' knowledge, attitude, and practice of safe pesticide use. Secondly, I examined the structural constraints to regulating pesticide usage and promoting safe practices, based on interviews with local health care providers and key officials in agriculture, health, and agro-business.

The research proved that acute pesticide poisoning is widespread in Jamaica. Furthermore, health outcomes varied geographically particularly as related to the nature of the crop and pest problems. There was some effort within the agricultural and medical branch of the Jamaican government to address this concern; however, evidence that farmers had widely adopted safe application practices did not exist. I found that hazardous pesticide practices were not simply traced to farmers' ignorance. Rather, farmers showed substantial awareness of safety procedures but often chose not to practice them. The matter was further complicated by the general lack of knowledge among health care providers in identification and proper treatment of poisoning.