

Coordination and Risk in the Philippine Banana Industry: Conditions for Responding to Panama Disease

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Abstract

Fusarium oxysporum f.sp. cubense Tropical Race 4 is a disease that traverses political, economic, geographical, and social boundaries and confronts the fragmented and highly polarized banana industry. Furthermore, the nature of TR4 has many uncertainties and unknowns. This paper investigated conditions for coordination in responding to TR4 risk. A qualitative case study of two villages in Davao del Norte, a major producing area in the Philippines with TR4 occurrence, was done to provide a contextual and in-depth analysis. Results showed that there was coordination between actors with longer working or personal relationships. They shared a common language for identifying problems and defining risks and communicate beyond the boundaries of their own organizations. There were visible signs of alliances between private and public domains in their handling of TR4 uncertainties. Actors have an urgency to react to TR4 impacts by accommodating multiple solutions. The enabling conditions for coordination identified were long-term relations forged outside the organizations/industry alliances and examination and the recognition of unknown TR4 characteristics, thus forging emerging research and information sharing. The constraints included polarization rooted from unequal access to land, blaming, and the isolated experiments and advocacy for single solutions. In conclusion, there was low coordination in responding to disease risk because of the blaming and diversities in solutions. However, there was an emerging coordination that built on social relations and deliberate efforts to bring parties together from the public and private sectors. The industry has to adapt, settle, and manage its differences to collectively address the banana disease risk.