

Beyond Bananas: The United Fruit Company and Agricultural 'Diversification'

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The United Fruit Company is infamous for its role in transforming both the physical and political landscape of Latin America. It converted millions of acres of tropical forests and farms into plantations of bananas, destined for foreign markets. Understandably, the company is far more closely associated with the expansion of monoculture production in the region than with an interest in natural or agricultural diversity. Yet, beginning in 1926, the company embarked on a little-known crop diversification program based at its Lancetilla Experiment Station, near Tela, Honduras. As a laboratory and botanical garden with one of the world's largest living collections of tropical fruits, Lancetilla stood for more than four decades as a counterpoint to the company's otherwise myopic focus on bananas. This talk will draw on the papers of Lancetilla scientists to examine the company's changing relationship to research and the station's unexpected legacies in the landscape of global agribusiness. It also provides an opportunity to explore the multiple, shifting, and often contradictory meanings of *diversity* in the context of business, botany, economics, and agriculture in the twentieth century.



LANCETILLA EXPERIMENT STATION

Looking southward. The hills are covered with practically primeval forest

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2:30-4:30 PM

via Zoom

[Register](#) in advance

This event is part of the MIT Seminar on Environmental and Agricultural History sponsored by the History Faculty and the Program in Science, Technology and Society. For more information contact kalopes@mit.edu