



**PROMODEV / CTA**  
**Development briefing on Haiti**

**Agricultural resilience in the face of crisis and shocks: the case of Haiti**

February 27 2013, Salle des Musiciens du Parc Historique de la Canne à sucre [Musicians' Hall, Historic Sugar Cane Park], Tabarre Haiti  
<http://brusselsbriefings.net> / [www.promODEV.ht](http://www.promODEV.ht)

**1.- Background**

The Republic of Haiti occupies the western third of an island located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean (27,750 km<sup>2</sup>). It is mountainous and densely populated country (288 persons/km<sup>2</sup>), with a very fast-growing population which is set to double within 30 years, exacerbating still further the demographic pressure.

Because of its geographical situation, Haiti lies in the Caribbean basin high-risk zone and is subjected to the effects of powerful tropical storms every year. Cyclones and flooding are a normal part of the seasonal weather scenario, particularly between August and November. In addition to floods and hurricane-force winds, the island must face the inevitable accompaniments to these phenomena: mudslides and landslips, tidal waves, drought, epidemics and so on.

Prior to the earthquake of January 12 2010, the country was already the poorest in the American continent and displayed some of the features of a country racked by armed conflict. Nearly 80% of the population was living below the poverty threshold (2 USD a day), with over half (56%) living in conditions of extreme poverty (less than 1 USD a day)<sup>1</sup>. Despite encouraging signs of some economic and social rallying, Haiti still ranked 149<sup>th</sup> out of 182 countries in the world in 2009, coming last in America in the United Nations Human Development Index. The vulnerability of a large proportion of the population is endemic and calls for immediate attention, while catastrophic deforestation means that almost every year different parts of the island suffer hurricanes, floods, landslips and soil erosion.

The earthquake on January 12 2010, with an epicentre very near the country's densely populated capital, Port-au-Prince, was one of the most serious in the world from the humanitarian disaster perspective, affecting over three million people, killing 300,000 and leaving 1.5 million homeless.

**2. Resilience in the Haitian context**

The concept of "resilience" has been steadily gaining ground among humanitarian action and crisis management professionals as a factor of importance in the process of defining, monitoring and assessing any action intended to reduce risk (World Bank 2009). The task of analysing resilience originated from the disciplines of psychology and physics. At this stage, the concept served only to help to explain why some individuals are able to overcome shock and trauma, while others suffer long-lasting repercussions (Werner & Smith 1982; Tusaie & Dyer 2004). Specialists in ecology (including human ecology) have independently examined the

<sup>1</sup> Haiti: From Tragedy to Opportunity. Special report, One Month On, International Federation, February 2010

phenomenon with a view to isolating the characteristics which help communities and families to tackle risk (Holling 1972; Adger 2000). Resilience is nowadays usually defined as the capacity of a system (whether this be an individual, a family, a community or a society) to withstand, overcome and even positively exploit an experience of crisis or trauma. A variety of approaches are currently being added to the literature on the subject, where the focus may be on natural disasters, governance, organisational management or the engineering sciences (Moser 2008; Everly, Strouse, & Everly 2010; Somers 2009; Chang 2009). Increasing numbers of crisis management professionals are seeing resilience as a potentially measurable effect of humanitarian aid initiatives and development, these being the forms of assistance which are designed to simultaneously tackle the vulnerability of the populations affected.<sup>2</sup>

Since food insecurity, exacerbated by two recent disastrous storms and a long drought, is threatening the fragile progress which has been achieved in Haiti since the 2010 earthquake, this is a crucial time for the donor community to refocus its agricultural and food security policies to assist the Haitian government in implementing programmes to mitigate the impact of natural disasters on Haitian agriculture, and to respond to the needs of nearly 2 million Haitian children, women and families who are hungry today. These policies and programmes must be set up via in-depth consultations with Haitian rural communities, particularly the farmers, often women, in order to help them to cultivate produce on a sustainable basis for the local markets, as well as reserves to be used in emergency post-disaster situations.

The 2010 earthquake destroyed most of Haiti's infrastructure. According to the office of the UN Special Envoy in Haiti, international donors pledged in excess of \$303 million US for agriculture. Around 45 per cent of this figure has been paid out. However, many donors see export-oriented industry as more important and favour big infrastructure projects such as roads and ports to serve agro-business backed by investment in export crops such as coffee, chocolate and mangos, with little investment dedicated to restoring the Haitian environment and sustainable agriculture for the benefit of small farmers and helping to feed local communities.<sup>3</sup>

For several decades, Haiti has suffered from chronic food insecurity. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), one-third of the population is in a state of "food insecurity", and lack a diet with a sufficient nutrition and calorie content because they are short of the cash or resources needed to buy or produce the food they need. Women are particularly vulnerable because they tend to have less access to financial resources or other necessities to feed themselves and their children. Haiti was struck by yet another disaster this year in the form of an intense drought in the first half of the year, followed by tropical storms Isaac in August and Sandy in October. Their impact on the agricultural sector has been estimated by the Haitian Government (GOH) at a cost of 254 million dollars, affecting the means of subsistence of nearly 2 million people. In recent months, the whole country has been racked by mass demonstrations protesting against the rocketing prices of foodstuffs and upsetting the country's delicate political stability. On November 6 2012, the Martelly-Lamothe administration declared a state of emergency and together with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) launched a joint appeal for 74 million dollars to help the agricultural sector repair the recent damage. The 74 million dollars sought in this way for the agricultural sector by the Haitian government and the FAO are to be used to rebuild irrigation systems and country roads, reinforce the banks of rivers and streams, and re-launch the activities associated with the management of catchments,

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/1436.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Action Aid. Haiti advocacy working group. 2012.

[http://www.actionaidusa.org/sites/files/actionaid/towards\\_food\\_security\\_and\\_resilience\\_in\\_haitian\\_agriculture.pdf](http://www.actionaidusa.org/sites/files/actionaid/towards_food_security_and_resilience_in_haitian_agriculture.pdf)

particularly tree-planting to prevent flooding. The funds will also be used to revive the production of local seed banks, for the distribution of seed, fertiliser and farm tools, to vaccinate stock and combat parasites, to boost continental fishing, to protect the mangroves which defend the coastal zones and to upgrade training in natural disaster preparation.

### **3. Agriculture: a key sector in the economy**

The country's usable agricultural area (UAA) is 1,053,107 *carreaux* or 1,358,508 hectares, with the UAA of Artibonite department being the largest (12% of the total) and South-East department the smallest (1% of the total). The number of agricultural holdings measuring less than one *carreau* in area (or 1.29 Ha) ranges from 49% for North-East department to 85% in South-East department, with an average of 73% for the ten geographical departments. These figures are taken from the first general agricultural census (*recensement général de l'agriculture* – RGA) undertaken in 2008 / 2009 (MARNDR, 2012).

Haiti suffers from serious shortcomings from the environmental perspective, with less than 1.5% of forest reserves, and catchments almost completely denuded. The deforestation rate of some 98% explains the huge soil losses, in the region of 30,000 tonnes per year, leading to the silting up of the lakes and water courses, the bleaching of the coral and the increasingly torrential nature of the main rivers, whose erratic flow rates threaten the stability of agricultural production in the irrigated plains (Victor, 2010).

The proportion of the total population involved in agriculture is estimated at 60% and it is assessed that this contributes less than 26% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The illiteracy rate of the population of 10 million is estimated at 60%, there are 2.5 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants and barely 50% of the population are provided with drinking water. Only 10% have access to electricity, and wood makes for 71% of the national energy consumption (MDE et al, 2010).

This being the case, food production only meets 50% of national needs, so that food security is by no means guaranteed, given the stagnation of the purchasing power of the population, 75% of whom live below the threshold of absolute poverty (CNSA, 2005; MPCE, 2007).

The breaking up of land holdings into ever smaller parcels has reached the limit of tolerability, technically speaking, since the area of the holdings under 1 *carreau* has risen from 33% of the total in 1971 to 73% of the UAA in 2012. This is the outcome of the equal division of farms between heirs at every generation. The fact is that the law of inheritance which governs this equal sharing was inherited from the Napoleonic Code. In France, it was deemed a *real machine for pulverising the land* and scrapped when the grim results were seen. But this obsolete law remains in force in Haiti despite recommendations that it be changed.

A wide range of crops are grown in Haiti, including maize, beans, rice, yams, manioc, millet and sorghum. Some 60% of the active population work in agriculture in Haiti, which represents over one-quarter of the Haitian GDP. Food insecurity in Haiti is largely a result of an export-orientated macroeconomic situation based on industrial growth, food imports and the entrenched negligence of the agricultural sector, particularly as far as the smallholders are concerned, who grow most of Haiti's food and represent a large percentage of the people suffering from food insecurity.

### **4. Boosting resilience by targeted actions benefiting small producers**

Tropical storms and hurricanes are a seasonal reality for Haiti from June to November. In addition to this, because of the widespread deforestation throughout the country, the hurricane season brings the risk of disastrous flooding, landslips and soil erosion.

In agriculture, the year 2012 in Haiti was marked by a succession of natural disasters and crises which had a negative impact on agricultural yield and the food security of the households in the

areas suffering from a drought caused by a lack of rain for about 45 days at the end of the spring, May and June, tropical storm Isaac on August 25 2012 and Hurricane Sandy on October 25–26 2012.

Hurricane Sandy was extremely deadly and qualified as a major disaster, killing 52, injuring 90 and leaving 22 missing, according to the Haitian Office of Civil Protection. It was characterised by torrential rain, violent wind gusts and masses of thick clouds. The amount of rainfall recorded during this period stood at 500 mm.

Seven of the ten geographical departments were affected, but the worst damage was in the South, Grande Anse, Nippes and West departments. The destruction affected agriculture, stock, irrigation infrastructure, roads, homes and the fishery sector.

The first evidence and estimates of damage led the Haitian Government to declare a state of emergency on October 30 2012 and to call on the humanitarian aid community to come to the assistance of the families affected in order to mitigate the deterioration of food and nutritional security.

However, while hurricanes cannot be avoided, thanks to the leadership of the MARNDR (Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development), the impact of natural disasters on Haitian small farmers has been eased somewhat. Priority must be given to buttressing the national campaigns for disaster preparation, which mainly afflict the farmers and rural women. The media must be urged in the rural zones to raise awareness of the imminence of tropical storms and hurricanes; local produce should be promoted in the distribution of foodstuffs intended to feed populations suffering from food insecurity; and decentralised stocks should be set up as locally produced food reserves.

Practical training schemes for farmers and rural communities could include measures to protect crops and stock against disasters, floods, etc.

It is also essential to establish dialogue forums involving farmers and rural communities so that their needs can be better targeted.

A resilience-oriented framework is needed to prioritise the production of foodstuffs for local consumption, and initiatives should be supported which help smallholders, particularly women, to do a better job of growing the kind of crops which can support their families and their communities.

## 5. Future prospects

Most decision-makers agree that the incorporation of measures to prepare for, mitigate and prevent disasters into the framing of policy is essential if the vulnerability of the human populations when faced with natural catastrophes is to be eased. Actions should be based on local institutions and strategies for adapting subsistence means in order to find more sustainable solutions. The current aid system should be more flexible and should envisage longer-term development approaches, even in situations of acute crisis.<sup>4</sup> The definition of resilience implies that systems should have the capacity to anticipate and plan in line with perceived and actual probabilities. Institutions and individuals then have the capacity to act to avoid potential damage and to make the most of the possibilities in order to boost resilience.<sup>5</sup>

While short-term actions in the wake of a crisis are essential to preserve food and nutritional security, investment to develop and upgrade it is also clearly necessary in order to help poor

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<sup>4</sup> Alinovi L., Hemrich G., Russo L. 2008. *"Beyond Relief: Food Security in Protracted Crisis."* FAO et Practical Action Publishing, [http://brusselsbriefings.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/reader\\_humanitarian\\_aid.pdf](http://brusselsbriefings.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/reader_humanitarian_aid.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> ADB and IFPRI. 2009. *"Building Climate Resilience in the Agriculture Sector in Asia and the Pacific."* <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/pub/2009/Building-Climate-Resilience-Agriculture-Sector.pdf>

and at-risk groups to improve their ability to manage crises and to develop their resilience to future crises. Other options for responding to the long-term needs of at-risk groups are the establishment of legal and administrative infrastructure to facilitate the placement of social safety nets, which also brace resilience to economic crises. Depending on the context, programmes such as funds transfers, food stamps, foodstuffs transfers, work paid in foodstuffs and nutritional educational campaigns would help to increase household incomes and food consumption. Social safety nets should be built into national social protection programmes and risk management strategies.<sup>6</sup>

### **3.- Briefing goals**

#### **Development goal**

To contribute to Haitian rural development by launching an integrated agricultural production system.

#### **Specific goals**

PROMODEV is offering to organise or repeat the briefings organised by the CTA in Brussels in partnership with the European Commission, the ACP Secretariat and Concord. The development briefings held in Haiti will help improve understanding of the agricultural sector issues in the country and streamline the dialogue process in the direction of solutions to the Haitian agricultural crisis.

In order to improve information distribution and stimulate networking, PROMODEV and the CTA, in collaboration with the MARNDR, the IICA and FAO will organise the first session of fortnightly briefings with the CTA on key rural development questions and issues in the context of the EU/ACP cooperation initiative. The February 27 2013 session will address issues concerned with agricultural resilience and will focus more specifically on: (i) raising awareness regarding the big challenges in the area of boosting agricultural resilience, (ii) encouraging the sharing of information and expertise in relation to the successes recorded in the area of resilience and (iii) supporting networking between the development partners.

This activity is based on a participatory approach and falls within the framework of the National Agriculture Extension Strategy.

### **4.- Expected results**

The decision-makers and development partners will be better informed on the key rural development issues which are able to help boost the resilience of the agricultural sector and the smallholders in Haiti. A communication platform and exchanges of views will be implemented for the benefit of rural development stakeholders. The media should have a better grasp of agricultural issues.

### **5.- Available resources**

The information supplied before, during and after the first briefing session in Haiti will be published on the briefings blog: <http://brusselsbriefings.net> and on the PROMODEV website: [www.promodev.ht](http://www.promodev.ht) A brief report and summary will be published shortly after the meeting.

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<sup>6</sup> FICR-IFPRI. May 2012. "Reducing the Risk of Food and Nutrition Insecurity among Vulnerable Populations." <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifrcpaper.pdf>



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## AGENDA

8:30 am – 9.00 am	Registration
9.00 am – 9.30 am	Introductory remarks: <i>Michael Hailu, Director of the CTA; PROMODEV, IICA, CARICOM, FAO, EU and MARNDR</i> Background and briefing goals: <i>Talot Bertrand, PROMODEV</i>
9.30 am – 10.45 am	<b>Panel 1: Approaches to boost agricultural resilience in Haiti</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The resilience of Haitian agriculture in the face of crises and shocks <i>Dr Jean André Victor, Environmentalist</i></li> <li>▪ Climate change, agricultural policy and poverty reduction <i>Agr. Vernet Joseph, Msc, Secretary of State for Agricultural Revival within the Ministry for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARNDR)</i></li> <li>▪ Disaster prevention and management in rural zones: lessons learned <i>Dr. Guiteau Jean-Pierre, Executive Director of the Haitian Red Cross</i></li> </ul> <p>Moderator: <i>Clarence Renois, Journalist, Haiti Press Network</i>  Reporter: <i>Roberson Geffrard, Journalist, Radio Magic 9</i></p>
10.45 am – 11.00 am	Coffee break
11.00 am – 12,30 pm	<b>Panel 2: Experiences and lessons learned from Haitian country people: Promotion of experiences for local sustainable production and marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conservation and sustainable management of soils and natural resources (fertility of soils, water, land, etc.) <i>Fremiot Nicolas, Agricultural Technician with RACPABA (Réseau des Associations Coopératives pour la Commercialisation et la Production Agricole du Bas Artibonite – Network of Cooperative Associations for the Production and Commercialisation of Lower Artibonite)</i></li> <li>• The issue of access to irrigation water and the resilience alternatives <i>Moncher Elan, CEO ACOD (Development Action and Cooperation) APV, Kore Pwodiksyon Nasyonal, Tet Kole Ti Peyizan, MPP, APFD</i></li> </ul>

	<p><i>APV, Kore Pwodiksyon Nasyonal,, Tet Kole Ti Peyizan, MPP, APFD</i></p> <p><i>Roberson Alphonse, Journal Le Nouvelliste</i></p> <p>Reporter: <i>Ruth Edouard, Haïti Fièrè</i></p>
12.30 pm – 2.00 pm	<p><b>Panel 3: The impact of climate change on rural development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Factoring in risk management and adaptation to climate change for a resilient agriculture <i>Agr. Joseph Felix, Agronomist and community development specialist</i></li> <li>▪ The impacts of climate change on food security in Haiti <i>Gary Mathieu, Coordination Nationale de la Sécurité Alimentaire – National Committee for Food Security, CNSA)</i></li> <li>▪ Effects of natural disasters on food and nutritional security <i>Agr. Kenold Cesar, PROMODEV</i></li> <li>▪ Haiti, from cataclysms to disasters: 2012 and climate change, the threat of serious drought – What can be done? <i>Audalbert Bien-Aimé, Faculté d'Agronomie et de Médecine Vétérinaire – Faculty of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine (FAMV)</i> <i>Association Haitienne de Droit de l'Environnement – Haitian Association for Environmental Law (AHDEN), Ministry for the Environment (MDE), Luc Bretous, Comité interministériel d'aménagement du territoire – Inter-Ministerial Territorial Planning Committee (CIAT)</i></li> </ul> <p>Moderator: <i>Yvener Foster Joseph, Caraïbes FM</i></p> <p>Reporter: <i>Marcel Mondesir</i></p>
2.00 pm – 2.45 pm	Lunch
2.45 – 4.00 pm	
	<p><b>Panel 4: Response of development partners to natural disasters and vulnerability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions within Haiti-EU cooperation in natural disasters management <i>Agr. Allen Henry, BON-UE</i></li> <li>• Challenges of technical assistance in the agricultural sector in Haiti <i>Agr. Volny Pautre, FAO</i></li> <li>• Ing. Steven Rault, EU Delegation, Haiti</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: <i>Rebecca Guillaume, communications expert</i></p> <p>Reporter: <i>Lesly Vertyl, journalist, Télévision Nationale d'Haïti – Haitian National Television</i></p>
4.00 pm – 5.00 pm	<p><b>Summary and closing remarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MARNDR, MDPP and Agr. Jean André Victor),</li> <li>▪ MC: Talot Bertarnd (PROMODEV) and Alain Thermil (IICA)</li> </ul>

