



PROMODEV/CTA

## Development Briefing in Haiti n° 2

### ***Adding value to local products: an alternative for food security in Haiti***

02 July 2013, Salle Hotel Le Plaza, Champ de Mars, Port-au-Prince, Haiti  
<http://brusselsbriefings.net> / <http://haitibriefings.net> / [www.promodev.ht](http://www.promodev.ht)

#### **1.- Background**

Sustainable development and how the agricultural sector can contribute to achieving this goal is clearly a highly topical issue. Agriculture remains a strategic sector that can help to ensure social stability, improve food security and boost domestic economic growth. The agricultural sector, among others, makes a significant contribution to the country's economy, accounting for approximately 25% of Gross Domestic Product. Agriculture, which represents a little over one million agricultural holdings throughout the country<sup>1</sup>, is the main source of income in rural areas. Moreover, the sector employs around 60% of the working population and according to the National Coordination for Food Security (CNSA), supplied 50% of food availability in 2011<sup>2</sup>, although it is difficult to ascertain the exact figure. The main types of crops produced are coffee, cocoa, rice, sugar cane, sisal, beans, corn and sorghum, while the main export products remain coffee, cocoa, sugar cane, sisal and fruit (especially mangos).

On the other hand, in 2012, Haiti imported around \$US 522.97 million of food products (BRH, 2012) and approximately 70% of the country's food consumption is imported. Moreover, food imports are trending upwards, thereby further undermining the country's level of self-sufficiency. It is therefore appropriate for the government, development institutions and other stakeholders to support the agricultural sector and rural areas in order to increase the sector's productivity, profitability, competitiveness and attractiveness.

Agricultural production is insufficient to meet the population's growing needs, with, as a result, a constant rise in food imports, whose contribution to food availability increased from 44% to 46% between 2010 and 2011<sup>3</sup>.

The sector is characterised by low productivity, weak competitiveness and low added value. It therefore generates low income levels among producers: *88% of the inhabitants of rural areas live below the poverty line and 77% of those classified as food insecure live in rural areas*<sup>4</sup>. According to the Bank of the Republic of Haiti's data for the 2000–2001 fiscal year and estimates for the 2010–2011 fiscal year *the added value of primary sector products fell by around 3.6%, from 3,469 million gourdes in 2000–2001 to 3,344 million gourdes in 2010–2011 (base 1986-87)*<sup>5</sup>.

Environmental damage is accelerating owing to unsustainable agricultural practices and dangerous survival mechanisms, resulting in increased risks to life and property: *less than 2% of the territory can be considered as dense forest and 85% of watersheds have undergone severe degradation or are experiencing accelerated degradation*<sup>6</sup> (MARNDR, 2010)

<sup>1</sup> Exactly 1,018,951 agricultural holdings were listed. See: Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development/FAO/European Union. 2008/2009. National Summary of the Results of the General Census of Agriculture (RGA). [http://agriculture.gouv.ht/view/01/IMG/pdf/Resultats\\_RGA\\_National\\_05-11-12.pdf](http://agriculture.gouv.ht/view/01/IMG/pdf/Resultats_RGA_National_05-11-12.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> National Coordination of Food Security. 2012. HAITI: Food Balance Sheet 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development. Haiti – National Agricultural Investment Plan. July 2010. Imprimerie NAPCO, p.13.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>5</sup> The products taken into consideration are: agriculture, forestry, livestock breeding, fishing and extractive industries. Bank of the Republic of Haiti. Website version of 6 December 2012 <http://www.brh.net/vasecteurprimaire.pdf>. Added value of the Primary Sector (in millions of gourdes of 1986-87). Sources cited by the BRH: Haitian Institute of Statistics and Informatics (National Accounts Department).

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development. Haiti – National Agricultural Investment Plan. July 2010. Imprimerie NAPCO, p.7. and p.22.

## **2. Adding value to local agricultural products**

Depending on the country and the discipline, various expressions are used to refer to “local products”, such as “local food”, “typical food”, “regional food”, “food of local origin”, even “regional heritage”, and sometimes a clever mixture of all the expressions evoking the concept of territory or location related to food culture.

In Haiti, demand for local agricultural products is increasingly high, but preservation, marketing and competitiveness problems limit their market availability, which leads to an increase in imports. In addition, Haitian farmers use very few chemical fertilizers and pesticides; this enhances the appeal of local products as well as increasing local job opportunities. It is therefore necessary for producers to optimise the value of their production.

A product may have specific characteristics, which result from a unique combination of natural resources (climate conditions, soil characteristics, local plants, crossing techniques, etc.), local expertise and know-how. Historical and cultural practices, as well as traditional knowledge with regard to the production and processing of products, can also create added value. The first step is for local stakeholders to become aware of this potential by establishing the links between product quality, the local environment and market opportunities.

In Haiti there are concrete examples of traditional agricultural products, linked to the product's origin, such as Haitian Blue Coffee, cocoa, cultivars such as pearl millet, lalo, callaloo, pigeon peas, mangos, especially the Francisque Bio brand, fruit and vegetables, cut flowers, fishery products, such as lobster, lambis, prawns, etc. These agricultural products can contribute to the country's economic development.

## **3. Consumption habits**

Consumption habits have changed significantly over the last twenty years with, in general, an increasingly urban, dynamic lifestyle, and consumers increasingly distanced from primary production levels. Tastes and consumption patterns change over time, in line with lifestyle changes. This loss of contact with domestic production has resulted in a lack of interest, even disillusionment with local products in favour of products that are simple to use and quick to prepare. Faced with such a situation, it is important to review the production model and consumption patterns in order to identify suitable strategies to enhance the value of agricultural products.

Consumers are increasingly interested in buying food and agro-industrial products linked to their origin. Some are associated by their reputation with the place of production, while others are deeply rooted in diverse traditional cultures and closely linked to a specific place of origin. For small and medium-sized producers and farmers, this trend could open up new opportunities and create niche markets, while supporting efforts to improve standards and bring them into line with constantly changing consumer demand.

The potential represented by the marketing of products which enjoy a certain reputation because of their origin is equally important, whether or not the place of production has a special physical or organoleptic characteristic. Some consumers are sceptical about anonymous production chains, where sourcing changes in line with market fluctuations. They want guarantees of product origin and production methods. Producers should exploit this market demand.

Stronger links between the various stakeholders, geographical regions and agricultural and food products are an important step towards sustainable rural development, while meeting the threefold challenge faced by agriculture: (a) increased production that can satisfy demand; (b) increased income for farmers, in particular those who work on smallholdings and women; (c) while protecting the environment and its natural resources in order to ensure future production capacity. The success of this approach depends on the local capacity to create added value within a global market, while remaining rooted in a specific location. Products linked to an origin have characteristics which are inseparably linked to the place where they are produced and which enable them to build a reputation over time.

Some consumers are increasingly concerned about the specific attributes of agricultural and food products, in particular with regard to their culture, their identity and the use of sustainable production

solutions. Moreover, these products contribute to biodiversity conservation, the safeguarding of cultural heritage, socio-cultural development and the reduction of rural poverty.

#### 4. Improving the quality and nutrient contribution of local products

"Quality", in the sense of "satisfying the buyer's expectations", can also help to win consumer confidence and maintain the criteria which define it. Quality assurance and traceability systems within the whole of the process are becoming basic demands of regional and international buyers. There are numerous examples in the ACP countries of best practices with regard to the sale and marketing of products via chains which preserve the product's identity and origin, thereby making it possible to indicate and guarantee the origin of the end product.

The successful marketing of these products will help to maintain or even diversify rural activities, provided that there is sufficient investment. When the product is linked to its origin, the added value and any activity linked to this origin, such as tourism and the processing of products, are generated in the rural area in question, which ultimately helps to stem emigration. Moreover, specific local resources which come into play in the production system, such as plant varieties, animal breeds, unique traditional landscapes or traditions and food culture, also have a positive impact in terms of tourism and environmental protection.

The development of typical products in Haiti represents a promising alternative for sustainable local development focused on the creation of sustainable jobs in communities. This can also contribute to food security. Haiti is not short of products, which are as rich as they are varied in the country's different regions, for example mangos in Artibonite and the Central Plateau, coffee in Grand-Anse and the south-east, cocoa and chocolate in the north, etc. Moreover, its riches are not limited to its agricultural and craft heritage, but extend to its cultural heritage. This is the approach to the Haitian economy that the Ministry of Trade and Industry, supported by the UNDP, has adopted since October 2012.

Haiti intends to replace around 25% of its food imports by local products thanks to the transfer of appropriate technologies and the upgrading of knowledge of production, processing and marketing technologies. Roots and tubers, which have a high yield potential and are carbohydrate-rich, have been identified as substitutes in this regard.

From production to consumption, the Roots and Tubers project in Haiti led by IICA/MARNDR/CARDI focuses on the entire production chain for sweet potatoes, cassava, yams and mazonbèl (*Colocassia esculenta*) and promoting their consumption, by supporting processing units in terms of the presentation and quality of processed products.

The following opportunities, among others, are noteworthy:

- Increasing demand for agricultural products on the local market, due to demographic squeeze;
- Exploiting market opportunities in organic and fair-trade products;
- Technological advances in the field of agriculture;
- Use of local products in food aid programmes;
- The regional Caribbean and Dominican Republic market;
- The proximity of the huge North American market (USA, Canada);
- The political commitment of the President of the Republic, the Haitian government and certain donors to support the development of Haitian agriculture.

However, technology is used only to a limited extent in Haitian agriculture compared with other countries in the Caribbean region. That is why the IICA, in the belief that modern high-tech farming is the key to increasing not only food security at national level but also the incomes of people living in rural areas, is giving priority to the introduction and validation in the country of "technological packages" which have already been tested in other countries, but in this case are adapted to local conditions. The application of these technologies requires the creation of suitable infrastructures capable of reducing post-harvest losses and the processing and preservation of agricultural products.

Developing initiatives to improve the added value of local products therefore seems to be a credible option in the strategy which the agricultural sector must develop in order to meet the economic challenges

which it is now facing, and to anticipate market changes for local products. These initiatives also represent one way in which to capitalise fully on the opportunities to be grasped within the framework of the dynamics of the “agricultural products market”. Adapting to market trends does not always require a huge effort by producers, what counts above all is a positive, proactive attitude. This is the key to the success of any added value approach.

## **5.- Briefing goals and expected results**

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

### **Specific goals**

PROMODEV intends:

- To replicate the briefings organised by CTA in Brussels in partnership with the European Commission, the ACP Secretariat and Concord;
- To enhance understanding of the challenges facing the agricultural sector in Haiti;
- To promote a dialogue to identify possible solutions to the Haitian agricultural crisis;
- To raise awareness about the major challenges for boosting local production;
- To stimulate exchanges of information and expertise in relation to successes recorded in the area of food security;
- To facilitate networking between development partners.

These goals will help to improve the sharing of information and stimulate networking in response to the key challenges of rural development in the context of EU/ACP cooperation. The session on 19 June 2013, based on a participatory approach, falls within the scope of the National Strategy of Agricultural Extension.

### **Expected results**

Decision-makers and development partners will be better informed about the key rural development issues which can help to boost the resilience of the agricultural sector and smallholders in Haiti. A communication platform to facilitate exchanges between the stakeholders involved in rural development will be created. The media will have a better grasp of agricultural issues, the problems faced by this sector and the actions that need to be implemented to address these problems.

### **Publication**

The information supplied before, during and after the second briefing session in Haiti will be published on the briefings blog: <http://brusselsbriefings.net>/<http://haitibriefings.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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### AGENDA

8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:45	Introductory remarks: <i>Michael Hailu, Director of the CTA; EU, PROMODEV, and Pierre Guy Lafontant, Director General of MARNDR</i> Background and briefing goals: <i>Talot Bertrand, PROMODEV</i>
9:45 – 11:15	<p><b>Panel 1: Intersecting views on local agricultural products in Haiti</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local products contributing to food security: state of play and outlook (Garry MATHIEU from the CNSA)</li> <li>Dietary habits and promoting the local products of the various regions in Haiti (Harry NICOLAS, Kore Pwodiksyon Nasyonal)</li> <li>Adding value to local products important for nutrition and food security (Dr. Joseline Marhonne Pierre, Nutrition Director of MSPP)</li> <li>Fair trade farming and local production: issues and challenges (Rachelle Chéry, IICA)</li> <li>Adding value to local products: teaching gardens to promote applied agriculture (World Food Programme)</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: <i>Sony Esteus, Journalist, SAKS Executive Director</i> Reporter: <i>Lesly Vertyl, Journalist, Haitian National Television</i></p>
11:15 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 12:45	<p><b>Panel 2: Adding value to local resources: economic development strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The consumption of local food products: economic contribution (Kesner Pharel, CEO of Group Croissance SA)</li> <li>Adding value to local products and sustainable development (Dr Jean André Victor, President of AHDEN)</li> <li>The role of women in the development of local agricultural products versus commercialisation (Yollette Etienne, Director of OXFAM Canada)</li> <li>Food insecurity in Haiti: how to find sustainable solutions? (USAID and ACOD)</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: <i>Lemoine Bonneau, Journal Le Nouvelliste</i> Reporter: <i>Marie Orvélie Jean PREMIER</i></p>
12:45 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:00	<p><b>Panel 3: Adding value to local food products. Experiences and potential of relevant marketing strategies in Haiti</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing of local products: issues and incentives for local consumption (Ministry of Trade and Industry)</li> <li>Marketing local products: short channels and long channels (Jacob JEAN-FRANÇOIS, Executive Director of ANATRAF)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences in developing the coffee sector in Haiti (David Nicolas, Former Minister of Agriculture)</li> <li>• Project to increase the production of roots and tubers in the Caribbean: experiences and lessons learnt (IICA)</li> <li>• Development of post-harvest technology, a market opportunity (Ewal Alcindor, Professor at the Faculty of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine (FAMV))</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: <i>Caleb Desrameaux, TNH (Haitian National Television) Director of Culture and Education</i></p> <p>Reporter: <i>Alix Laroche, HPN</i></p>
15:00 – 16:00	<p><b>Summary and closing remarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Jean André Victor, Agronomist-EcoTourism, AHDEN</li> <li>• Pascal Pecos Lundy (Head of Cabinet of the Secretary of State for Agricultural Recovery)</li> <li>• Talot Bertrand (PROMODEV)</li> </ul>