

## IICA and the reconstruction of the **Haitian** agricultural sector



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Since the January 12 earthquake, the General Directorate of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) has redoubled its cooperation efforts in support of the Government and people of the Republic of Haiti, aimed specifically at rebuilding agriculture and improving living conditions in the rural areas of the country.

The first action undertaken in the hours immediately following the tragedy was to set up an *ad hoc* group that has been working since then from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Washington, Canada and IICA Headquarters, located in Costa Rica, to assess the damage and prepare projects for investing in agriculture and rural development.

We are working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARNDR) of Haiti, while at all times

respecting the unique characteristics, culture and idiosyncrasy of the Haitian people. All of our actions are guided by the principles of social and environmental responsibility, and we are fostering human development and the participation of rural communities, individually and collectively, in ensuring their own well-being. The experience we have acquired in the 34 countries of the Americas where the

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Institute operates teaches us that this is the best path to development.

We understand that all the organizations, institutions and governments that have given so generously in solidarity with the Haitian people must coordinate their efforts, while respecting the sovereignty of national institutions and their leaders. Haitian institutions must be strengthened as agreement is reached on the priority actions to be carried out.

We are fully convinced that, in the face of tragedies such as this earthquake, the commitments assumed by the donor community under the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness take on special importance and urgency, in the sense of ensuring that it be the countries receiving international aid that direct their own development programs. Results thus achieved will be more appropriate sustainable.

## *After the catastrophe*



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The mass migration of more than 1.5 million people from flattened cities to the rural areas in the wake of the earthquake presents a unique opportunity for the development of rural areas and for a significant part of the population to set down roots in them. This will not only relieve pressure in overcrowded cities, but also provide an opportunity to promote investment in sustainable agriculture, the creation of jobs and the development of the infrastructure rural communities require, all of which will play an important role in the comprehensive reconstruction of the country.

This is why, at IICA, with a record of almost 70 years of providing technical cooperation throughout the hemisphere, we are committed to serving as facilitators and building bridges that will enable countries and organizations, working together, to implement the Program to Provide Emergency Support for Food Production in Haiti, in Response to the Hurricanes of the Summer of 2008 and the Earthquake of January 12, 2010, and for the Integration of Displaced Populations, prepared by the MARNDR with our support and that of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organizations (FAO).

We recognize that in this tragic situation the participation of the private sector of Haiti and other countries can play a strategic role in the recovery of production activities. Furthermore, in addition to the solidarity shown by so many outside Haiti, which is essential at this time, it is also necessary to encourage the men and women now inhabiting the countryside to undertake innovative projects that can meet the needs of the society as a whole. The private sectors of the countries that have come to the aid of Haiti have much to contribute in this area.

In addition, we are convinced that while we work to meet the most

immediate and urgent needs, we must also focus on solving structural problems of the Haitian agricultural sector, from a short- and medium-term perspective. We must take advantage of the great amount of aid that has entered Haiti to lay the groundwork for sustained reconstruction, based on comprehensive and inclusive development in rural areas. Only in this way can we be certain that the social and economic benefits generated will reach those most in need of them. Analyses conducted by IICA show that agriculture and the rural milieu in Haiti have characteristics that make the country unique. For example, 55% of the population lives in rural areas (the largest percentage of all the Americas); most of its soil is degraded; and the yields of its principal crops have not increased since the early 1980s. While in the United States or Chile the yield per hectare of maize (most important crop in Haiti) is more than 10 tons, in Haiti it is less than 0.75 tons per hectare (average from 2003 – 2007). These



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are the structural restrictions we are referring to.

At the heart of our proposal is the conviction that, inasmuch as agriculture and the rural milieu are a primary source of employment and income for the poorest sectors of the population,

an investment aimed at increasing yields and improving living conditions for this population will ensure that each dollar invested in agriculture and rural life in Haiti will produce a higher yield than one invested in any other non-agricultural sector of the country.

## Objectives of our action

Now and for the next 18 months, the objectives of the Institute's action in Haiti will be those established by the country's Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development:

- To increase as quickly as possible the supply of domestically produced agrifood products, making more agricultural inputs available in the different production areas and improving marketing and distribution channels;
- To make it easier to acquire domestically produced foodstuffs by increasing purchasing power (job creation in rural areas);
- To ensure that international food aid does not displace domestic

agricultural production. To that end, international NGOs, the World Food Programme and cooperation agencies are urged to purchase food produced locally and to formalize contracts with producers for its distribution;

- To prepare to the country for this year's hurricane season; and,
- To encourage the plowing of land in preparation for the next planting season, which begins in mid-March.

Like the Minister of Agriculture, we believe that the implementation of this program will produce direct results. In particular, more food will be available, the State and the sector will have increased capabilities, income will be

distributed among a large percentage of the population and national competencies will be strengthened and more highly valued.

To ensure that we attain our objectives, at IICA we are working with the Ministry of Agriculture to formulate 19 project profiles, all of which could be implemented in the short term and are essential for the recovery of agriculture and the improvement of rural life in Haiti. These projects, the total budget of which is estimated to be US\$700 million, are already being presented to governments and donor organizations for funding. Based on the response so far, we are confident that they are very likely to be financed and executed in the short term.

## List of projects

- 1. *Agricultural credit and insurance*
- 2. *Modernization of banana production*
- 3. *PROHUERTA*
- 4. *Fruit tree farming*
- 5. *Reforestation*
- 6. *Rehabilitation of the hydro-agrarian development*
- 7. *Credit for rural woman*
- 8. *Production in protected environments (greenhouses)*
- 9. *Strengthening the MARNDR*
- 10. *Poultry farming*
- 11. *Reinforcement of the faculties of agronomy*
- 12. *Rural roads and development of rural markets*
- 13. *Support to goat keeping*
- 14. *Strengthening of animal health*
- 15. *Support for beekeeping*
- 16. *Tannia (malanga)*
- 17. *Support for the dairy sector (production and processing)*
- 18. *Support for the monitoring of developments in relation to food security*
- 19. *Support for the feeding of animals*

## Our support

Our actions on the ground - undertaken in close coordination with the MARNDR, FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) - began with an initial assessment of the damage caused to the agricultural infrastructure and a joint rapid response effort with the Secretariat of State for Agriculture (SEA) of the Dominican Republic. Further actions carried out since then include a meeting of representatives of donor and cooperation agencies in Santo Domingo on January 27 to present the MARNDR program to the international community.

Worthy of particular attention has been the rapid and exemplary response of the Dominican Republic, in particular of the SEA, to the needs of the people and the government of Haiti, which cannot be attributed only to the fact that both countries share a single island. Shortly after the earthquake struck, the SEA began sending food aid to Haiti, which provided some relief for large groups of the population. It also ordered the shipment of tractors, as well as necessary inputs, as support in plowing for the next planting season.

However, many countries and organizations have responded to the emergency. Given its considerable operating capacity in the hemisphere and in Europe, IICA has served as a bridge for expanding the horizontal cooperation between Haiti and the countries of the hemisphere and cooperation agencies. Even

before the earthquake, the Institute was working with Argentina on the project known as Pro-Huerta, with Brazil and Canada on different rural development actions, and with the USDA, the World Bank and the European Union, with which the IICA Office in Haiti signed an agreement to implement a number of projects aimed at promoting food security and providing support to the mango production chain. Those countries and institutions are in the process of refocusing their projects on meeting needs created by the catastrophe.

In February, IICA organized an international trip to Rome, Ottawa and Montreal, where the Minister of Agriculture of Haiti, the Secretary for Agriculture of the Dominican Republic and the Director General of IICA promoted the portfolio of projects prepared by IICA among top-level officials of international cooperation and agriculture agencies in Italy and Canada. In addition, IICA plans to organize a second trip for the three leaders to visit Washington, Brussels, Paris and Madrid for the same purpose.



*Beneficiary of the PROHUERTA project in Haiti.*