

IICA in Haiti

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Mission accomplished:

Tractors bring hope to Haiti

The Dominican tractors entered Haiti on March 12 and remained there until the beginning of May.

Following the devastating earthquake on January 12, 2010, it was vital that the nation's farmland be prepared for the planting season as quickly as possible. The cities had suffered the most damage and a mass exodus of the population to the countryside ensued. The food security situation became even more critical, with the people

forced to eat even the seed set aside for planting.

The earthquake in Haiti, which left a death toll of 300,000 in its wake, touched people all over the world. And the international community acted in unison.

Perhaps one of the most immediate, concrete and effective responses came from the governments of the Dominican

Republic, Brazil and the United States of America. At the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARNDR) of Haiti, and in coordination with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the three countries offered to provide the resources required for Operación Tractores Solidarios, whose results are summarized in this publication. ■

Plowing the land was just a start

Despite the earthquake, in 2010 Haiti's farmers were able to produce more food.

The tractor project enabled the MARNDR to assist more than 2000 small farmers in three of the country's departments with the preparation of 5230 hectares of land, on which sorghum, corn, beans, cassava, pigeon peas and sweet potatoes were planted.

The Dominican Republic facilitated the tractors, and the governments of the United States and Brazil each paid half of the cost of the operation: US\$500,000 (half a million dollars).

The Ministry's agronomists estimate that yields rose substantially in 2010: in the case of several crops, productivity increased at least twofold.

These increases can be attributed to better preparation of the land, a good rainy season and better use of irrigation water in some areas. The MARNDR also implemented a number of initiatives that had a positive effect, such as training activities for producers, the timely distribution of improved seeds and the provision of subsidized fertilizers.

The project's achievements were not limited only to production; the initiative also had an important social impact. In the aftermath of the disaster, very few jobs were available. Operación Tractores Solidarios gave many Haitians the opportunity to earn some money. The work generated helped the beneficiaries to overcome extreme financial hardship.

The initiative also made it possible to train more than 125 people. As a result, the MARNDR is now better equipped to implement its policies and its program of emergency aid for food production.

Alfredo Mena, IICA Representative in Haiti, says that "the tractor operation will act as an incentive for similar initiatives."

Origins and achievements

Two weeks after the earthquake, from January 26-28, the Minister of Agriculture of Haiti, Joanas Gué, visited the Dominican Republic to meet with his counterpart, Minis-



Ceremony held for the handover of the agricultural machinery in the border town of Belladère.

ter Salvador Jiménez, and to present to the international community the first assessment of the damage caused by the earthquake in the agricultural sector. The activity was an IICA initiative, coordinated with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Dominican Republic.

The Director General of IICA, Víctor Villalobos, took part in the meeting. He had taken up his post only that month and stated in his inaugural address that "My first task will be to help the Haitian people."

The two ministers decided that a fleet of Dominican tractors, with their operators, would travel to Haiti to prepare the land for the spring planting season before the start of the rainy season, which was fast approaching.

A month later, following several coordination meetings held in

Crop	Yields pre-2010	Yields in 2010
Sorghum	750 kg / ha	2000 kg / ha
Corn	1000 kg / ha	2500 kg / ha
Beans	550 kg / ha	1300 kg / ha
Pigeon Peas	Not available	Not available
Cassava	10 t / ha	20 t / ha
Sweet Potato	5 t / ha	12 t / ha

Estimations from Haitian farmers and agronomists



Sorghum, corn, beans, pigeon peas, cassava and sweet potatoes were planted.

the two countries involving officials from the ministries of agriculture and IICA, the strategy for implementing the operation was adopted.

1 Institutional support

Operación Tractores Solidarios called for detailed logistical planning. The Institute's Office in Haiti worked with a MARNDR committee to determine the areas in which the tractors would work (16 hours a day, six days a week), who would operate the equipment (Haitians and Dominicans) and where the operators would live during the period in which their services would be required.

The Office in the Dominican Republic also worked with its Ministry of Agriculture counterparts to locate and prepare the tractors and select the agronomists, operators and mechanics who would travel to Haiti. To facilitate the work of the fleet of tractors - which crossed the border on March 12 - the team also had to make arrangements for supplies of fuel and parts, and for room and board.

2

Human Resources

Twenty Dominican tractor operators and a similar number of Haitians worked side by side during the operation. The idea was for them to share their expertise and ensure that the tractors were used for the longest time possible (16 hours a day). Three groups of mechanics and assistants were also needed.

The MARNDR requested further training for the Haitian personnel. As a result, two theoretical and practical training activities were carried out with Dominican instructors, on topics such as tractor management and maintenance, and diesel engine repair and maintenance. Some 102 people took part in the first training activity (in June 2010) and 25 in the second (in August 2010).

3

Areas and beneficiaries

The original goal of the project was to prepare 6000 hectares of land for planting in five areas but, at the request of the MARNDR, the effort focused on three regions in three depart-

ments (Centre, L'Artibonite and Ouest). In the end, nearly 5300 hectares of land were prepared, working directly with more than 2000 producers, 17% of whom were women. Indirectly, the project benefited 10,000 people and created 4926 person days of work over a two-month period.

4

Coordination and supervision

The project was managed by the MARNDR. The Ministry placed its human resources at the disposal of the farmers, under the leadership of a specialist from its mechanization service who coordinated the operation jointly with the Dominican technical personnel and IICA. The Institute's Offices in the two countries assigned four specialists to work with the project full time.

It took only two months to prepare the land for planting but the project lasted longer, so that the Haitian operators and mechanics could be trained. ■

A video on the project is available on IICA's website (www.iica.int).

IICA is contributing to the reconstruction of Haiti's agricultural sector



In Haiti, IICA acts as a bridge for horizontal cooperation.

All the Institute's efforts in Haiti are framed within the government's strategy: the MARNDR's agricultural policy, the emergency program in support of food security, and the agricultural sector investment plan.

These documents were prepared under the Ministry's leadership with the collaboration of IICA, FAO, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

In accordance with the institutional position, we are required to act with full respect for the specific

characteristics of the people, its culture and idiosyncrasy. We base our actions on sound principles of social and environmental responsibility, and we promote the human development and collective and individual participation of rural communities in their own well-being.

The experience we have gained in the 34 countries in the hemisphere in which the Institute operates shows us that this is the best way to achieve development. We understand that coordinated work by all the agencies, institutions and governments that have generously made common cause with the people of Haiti is absolutely essential, within a framework of respect for national institutions and without displacing their leadership.

A bridge for solidarity

Throughout 2010, IICA has carried out a large number of activities aimed at reconstructing the agricultural sector and improving food security, acting as a bridge for horizontal cooperation. Many countries in the Americas have contributed to the effort, including Canada, Argentina, USA, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Brazil, Jamaica, Barbados, Uruguay, Colombia, Venezuela and several others.

Cooperation and financing agencies are also our strategic partners. We are working closely with a large number of them, including FAO, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the European Union, CIDA-Canada, USDA and USAID. ■