

# Agriculture in Haiti

Gideon Mendel/Corbis/ActionAid UK



Over 800 million people around the world suffer from hunger despite the fact that there is enough food for everyone. In most developing countries, over half the population live in rural areas, most relying on farming often degraded land. But everyone has a right to be free from hunger. ActionAid works with local communities to improve agricultural methods to improve crops and run income generation projects so poor people can provide for their own needs. We are also committed to campaigning against unfair trade rules that work for rich corporations whilst exploiting poor people.

## Introduction

Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere. More than half the population is unemployed and 70% live off the land. Deforestation is common to make way for charcoal production, but it also degrades the land making it more difficult to farm. Women constitute the majority of poor people for many reasons, among them the gender discrimination of a male-dominated society and a poor education system.

Lascahobas is in the lower central plateau of Haiti and is made up of the three communes of Petit-Fond, Juampas and Lahoye as well as the city centre of Lascahobas itself. It is a rural area dependent on rudimentary agriculture and trade within the local area and the neighbouring Dominican Republic. The area remains very poor as it has been unable to adopt sustainable development activities due, in part, to its geographical isolation.

## The problems

- People have little or no capital to either invest in their agricultural produce in order to increase its value, or to pay for other essential needs such as education for their children.
- Where local loans are available there is often a 100% interest charge annually, making it virtually impossible for rural community members to repay.
- Lack of training and organisational skills means that attempts to maximise produce and income fail and permanent progress cannot be established.

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**real lives**

Mrs. Dieumen Cezaryen is a married mother of four living in Lascahobas. The land her family lived on was extremely difficult to cultivate and she couldn't even afford tools, fertilisers, labour or water for any hope of a harvest. Her husband was forced to sell all their livestock in 2003 to prepare for the planting season. However, political instability that year virtually cut the area off from the rest of the country and all planters were faced with a crisis as they watched their produce rot.

With the help of ActionAid's credit scheme project, Mrs. Cezaryen has been able to increase her produce and earn some surplus revenue from its sale. This allows her to buy fertiliser and seeds and hire people to help plant and maintain the fields, ensuring a healthy turnover and giving her children the time to study. Mrs. Cezaryen has been able to send all of her children to school this year and is planning to repair their house.

**“ My land is now more productive than ever. I have also purchased a goat, which I keep for reproduction. Soon, I hope to have several! I can now speak of broad improvement to the quality of my family's life coupled with brighter prospects for the future of my children! Every day I thank God that I was fortunate enough to be able to participate in the ActionAid programme. ”**



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**ActionAid's response**

- Set up a micro-credit scheme enabling women to borrow capital on a six-month cycle at a low interest. This will allow the available capital for loans to increase by 25% at the start of each new cycle, enabling more women to take advantage of the scheme.
- Assist in the marketing and sale of rural products. This will include helping women turn their raw products into saleable items such as jams, peanut butter and banana flour. These will be appropriately packaged and sold.
- Eventually enable financial independence among the women through a compulsory savings scheme built into the project – after a few cycles of the scheme the savings will be enough to make the women self-sufficient.

**Unit costs**

- **£4.96** could buy a shovel or a hoe.
- **£20** could buy a 100lb sack of maize.
- **£40** could buy a 100lb sack of beans to plant for the next harvest.
- **£84** could buy 10 pick-axes.

Project code: XUK0R05002  
 60% of the donations will go towards the projects and 40% will be distributed internationally in order of greatest need.  
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