Association of Trees and Crops to Increase Seasonal Food Availability in the Republic of Haity

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Introduction The problem of Food Security is relevant in Haiti , since 48% of the population (3 .8 million people) is under the level of poverty . An example of the difficulties concerning food comes from the incredible rise of the fixed prices of basic foodstuffs that increased ten fold from 1980 to 2000 .

Food availability is actually stable enough only thanks to international aids and revenues from migrated people . Unfortunately this condition enhances the dependence of the island from abroad . Moreover drinkable water availability is limited , conservation of food is difficult due to lack of technology and electricity , and food quality controls are neglected (Département des forêts , 2007) . The problem of food security hits 550 ,000 families with 3 .8 million people mainly living in rural areas . A research carried out in the mountain of *Carrefour* has investigated the causes of difficulties and , at the same time , proposed possible solutions .

Materials and methods The research was carried out at the Province of *Carrefour* in the *Departement de l Ouest* , and interested an area of 191 km^2 , most of which mountains . Data were collected through interviews with different representants of local institutions , associations , Non Governative Organizations , farmers and animal growers . The interviews investigated : agronomic parameters of the territory , actual farming and pastoral systems plant and animal species grown . The data obtained were discussed with local technicians and authorities in order to outline the *problems* and the *possible solutions* and , at the end , the *strategy* to approach the problems . The chosen strategy is being introduced in the whole area . In this article we discuss only the problems and solutions proposed for the agro-silvo-pastoral systems , even if this sector cannot be separated from the other not complex systems (only agriculture , only pastoralism , only forestry) .

Results and discussion *Outlined problems* : the basic problem in the area is the insufficient agricultural production . This , in turn , is originated by cause-effect interactions of several factors : limited know-how of farmers , lack of plant seed and tree seedlings , environmental degradation with loss of soil fertility and reduction of biodiversity , lack of security on land tenure .

Possible solutions : increase farmers know-how by training a first group of 54 selected farmers that will be the future instructors for the others . Seeding and planting of demonstrative plots in the lands tenured by the initial group of farmers . Introduction of sustainable agronomic techniques in the demonstrative plots : terraces will be built to show how to reduce soil erosion , agroforestry techniques will be established to show how to improve the use of the soil and its conservation by the association of three levels of vegetation (herbs , shrubs , trees , multipurpose plant species will be preferred to diversify the availability of food , fuel-wood , timber , forage and by-products useful for handcrafting . Improvement of land tenure is expected to guarantee farmers investments and work by rising the rental periods at least at periods of 10-12 years .

Conclusions The project has already selected and trained the initial group of 54 farmers . Demonstration plots were also built on their land and shown to other farmers in the area . The good results achieved so far have led to new funding from the European Union (funding line *B7-201* Food security) that is being used to extend the proposed solutions to a larger number of farmers on the same area . It is understood that the results of the project are getting positive effect on environmental conservation , food production and overall life quality of local rural people .

Reference

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