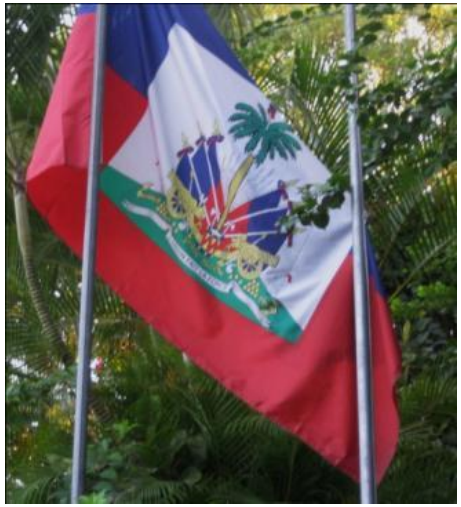
Reconstructing Agricultural Production for Food Security in Haiti



SANREM CRSP

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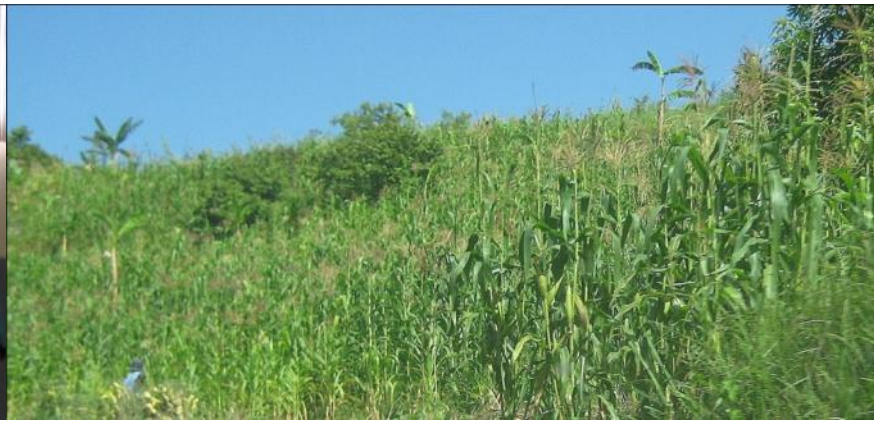
Sustainable Food Security

Give a man a fish he eats for a day;
Teach a man to fish and he can feed himself for a lifetime.

The challenge for agricultural development in Haiti is not so simple.

The SANREM Approach is participatory



- Empowers host country institutions to identify and address needs and constraints
- Creates new technologies and knowledge
- Develops human resource capacity and competencies
- Leads to institutional self-reliance and sustainability.

SANREM operates at multiple levels:

Production skills and technical knowledge	→	Farm families (men, women, and children) and producer organizations
Building and negotiating partnerships	→	Technical assistance and agricultural service providers (information, physical inputs and outputs)
Research for new Knowledge and technology	→	Researchers and educators at the universities creating new technologies and improved policies
Education of human capital for production, exchange, organization, and policy	→	Providing more highly skilled personnel for policy organizations (private and public) and government agencies

Social Learning for Adaptive Management

Learning by doing

Local stakeholders innovate management techniques adapted to local conditions

- **Negotiation**
- **Resistance**
- **Accommodation**

Virginia Tech's Potential Contributions

Institution Building – universities, research and extension services, NGOs, government agencies, and private enterprises

Long-Term Training – human capital (scientists, extension agents, private entrepreneurs, and government policy makers)

Long-Term Research – knowledge for innovation/development (new technologies and improved practices)

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Keith Moore

Comments in presentation

Slide 1

I represent the SANREM =

CRSP =

CRSPs are funded by the American People through the US Agency for International Development to mobilize land grant university expertise in aid of developing countries.

This evening I have two messages:

1. The first is: It is going to take a serious, decades long effort to attain sustainable food security in Haiti.

2. The second is: The challenge Haiti confronts is building the networks and trust (social capital) that assure sustainable food security.

I'm also going to tell you about a Virginia Tech-led research/development program addressing food security in Haiti.

Slide 2

Food security is the foundation for a healthy society.

Agricultural productive capacity existed and still exists in Haiti. For the most part it is a low-input/low output system.

As such, it has a certain degree of resilience against the shocks of weather, regime change, bad policies, and earthquakes. - albeit with diminishing levels of productivity.

Traditional practices of slash and burn agriculture with long fallow periods for recovery are no longer sustainable. Pictured are the traditional tools still in use and given as part of a starter package with new seeds by Zanmi Agrikol to poor households.

Soil erosion has washed away most of the nutrition that feeds the crops. Haiti has by far the most degraded soils in all of the Caribbean. Consequently, much of the population has crowded into Port-au-Prince.

The recent earthquake has led to a half a million Haitians leaving the city for the countryside. Although many are already said to be returning to Port-au-Prince, there is a lot of land not currently farmed (slowly restoring its natural productivity). These lands will be burned and plowed for planting this

Spring. Like the World Food Program relief supplies, this will feed the people for a short while. But, harvest's from next year's crops will diminish unless agricultural production techniques are improved.

Before the earthquake, Virginia Tech's SANREM CRSP team was initiating a research/development project with local partners to sustainably increase agricultural productivity through adapting Conservation Agriculture Production Systems for the Central Plateau.

Slide 3

In 2007 we were invited by the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia and the Diocese of Hinche Haiti to help them develop a model farm for production, demonstration, and outreach in the community of Maïssade.

This led to a similar invitation for collaboration with Zanmi Agrikol, a subsidiary of Zanmi Lasante (the Haitian counterpart of Partners in Health).

Both are situated in the central plateau of Haiti.

Pictured are Robert Badio, Ministry of Agriculture, Nathan Kennedy (VT PhD student), and Stenio Louis Jeune, Agronomist-Zanmi Agrikol - just 2 hours before the earthquake.

The agronomists will tell you that the project we are implementing is about Conservation Agriculture.

- Minimum tillage

- Permanent vegetative cover

- Crop rotations

And it is . . . But to be successful it is even more:

Slide 4

The SANREM CRSP objectives are to:

- Transform farming to become more productive and sustainable; and

- Strengthen the agricultural education, service, and market institutions with trained Haitians

SANREM activities will demonstrate a model for linking the agricultural university and ministry with local partner organizations in farming communities, providing the outreach potential never before achievable and the capacity to better understand and serve farming communities from the national level.

<click> Together with farmers (men and women) we'll be developing adapted technologies and skills

<click> our institutional partners will be building and negotiating more effective market and governance relations, supplying both inputs and information, as well as market linkages

<click> at the university level (in Haiti and at VT) we'll be promoting the exploration of better technologies and practices

<click> both Haitian and American students will be supported to learn more about building sustainable food security in Haiti

Perhaps the most innovative aspect of the SANREM approach is the new network of relationships linking the city with the countryside.

Slide 5

Conservation agriculture is neither conventional, nor traditional. It involves developing a new way of farming requiring changes throughout the agricultural community and the supporting infrastructure in order to restore the soils and improve productivity.

The learning process involves making mistakes, and building from those experiences – trust is necessary to move forward. Including partners that have never before effectively worked together will require patience and a willingness to negotiate strong, new relationships.

Farmers and their partners must become adaptable as circumstances change.

There will be resistance to changes in power relations. New flows of information will empower some. Corrupting influences will need to be avoided in the process.

Will Haitians learn to fish and to cultivate a food secure economy?

Social learning is not a linear process. At times there are set backs, learning plateaus, rapid breakthroughs.

Slide 6

The opportunities for progress are great, but so too are the challenges.

We can identify improved technologies and practices -- the question is: will they be used?

Will Haitians be afforded sufficient time to learn these new ways and to build the new networks that support them?

My reading on the science of development says that building local capacity is critical to sustainable long term development, unfortunately current project funding mechanisms drive project leaders to provide deliverables directly, and move on.

-- This short-circuits development of local knowledge and capacity building systems.

The strengths that Virginia Tech offers lie in the university vocations of research, education and outreach. With these we build institutions, partnerships, human and social capital.

In this case, we hope to furnish Haitians with the ability to invent their own future.