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Investing in rural people in **Haiti**

Haiti is the poorest country in Latin America and the Caribbean, and registers some of the highest rates of income inequality worldwide. It is also among the 13 most fragile countries in the world, ranking 170 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index in 2020.

In 2020, the poverty rate reached nearly 60 per cent, with two thirds of poor people living in rural areas. In 2021, 4.3 million people (around 44 per cent of the population) suffered from acute food insecurity. This already alarming situation is steadily worsening in 2022 due to global tensions and the resulting economic and supply crisis, which has caused prices to rise and sharply decreased the purchasing power of Haitians, to the point that an estimated 4.5 million people are currently in need of food assistance.

Haiti's history has been dogged by political instability and major natural disasters. The context further deteriorated in 2021 with the murder of President Jovenel Moïse, followed by a violent 7.2 magnitude earthquake a few weeks later, resulting in more than 2,200 deaths and US\$2 billion worth of damage in southern Haiti.

Agriculture and fisheries account for nearly 20 per cent of GDP and provide employment to half the labour force. However, agriculture's contribution to the economy has been declining since the 1980s, and Haiti must import a significant share of the agricultural products it consumes.



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Agricultural productivity is critically constrained by several factors. Small farmers lack access to technology and key production factors, especially irrigation water. Post-harvest losses are considerable, often due to a lack of storage and processing facilities. Road infrastructure is poor. Small farmers and poor rural households have extremely limited access to credit for productive activities.

Compounding these issues, Haiti is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change. The southern peninsula is particularly exposed to tropical storms, hurricanes, floods and landslides. In the coming years, temperatures are expected to increase, rainfall will decrease, and extreme climatic events will become more frequent and intense. The combined impact of climate change is expected to degrade soil and decrease yields of irrigated crops. Storms are also likely to damage or destroy crops, plantations, livestock and infrastructure.

Eradicating rural poverty in Haiti

Over the last few years, Haitian authorities have developed policies and strategies to counter poverty and inequality in the country and to foster rural development, in collaboration with the international community, including international financial institutions and the United Nations system.

This framework includes the Agricultural Development Policy (2010-2025), the Triennial Agricultural Recovery Programme and the Strategic Development Plan of Haiti (2013-2030).

Given that natural disasters have had an impact on agricultural production, affecting the development of rural communities and their food security, the Haitian government also approved a National Action Plan on the Environment and a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

Against this backdrop and in line with Haiti's main national priorities, IFAD's overall strategic objective is to contribute to reducing rural poverty, while strengthening the climate resilience of Haitian rural communities.

IFAD's strategy in Haiti

IFAD is a key partner in Haiti's rural development. Its series of strategies, projects and programmes since 1978 testify to its long-standing commitment against rural poverty, with the active participation and inclusion of the Haitian rural population.

The 2013-2018 country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP), extended until 2021, adopted a holistic approach to natural resource management, facilitating small-scale producers' access to markets and rural finance, while strengthening agriculture-related grass-roots organizations.

The strategic objective of the country strategy note is to reduce rural poverty and strengthen the climate resilience of rural Haitian communities by:

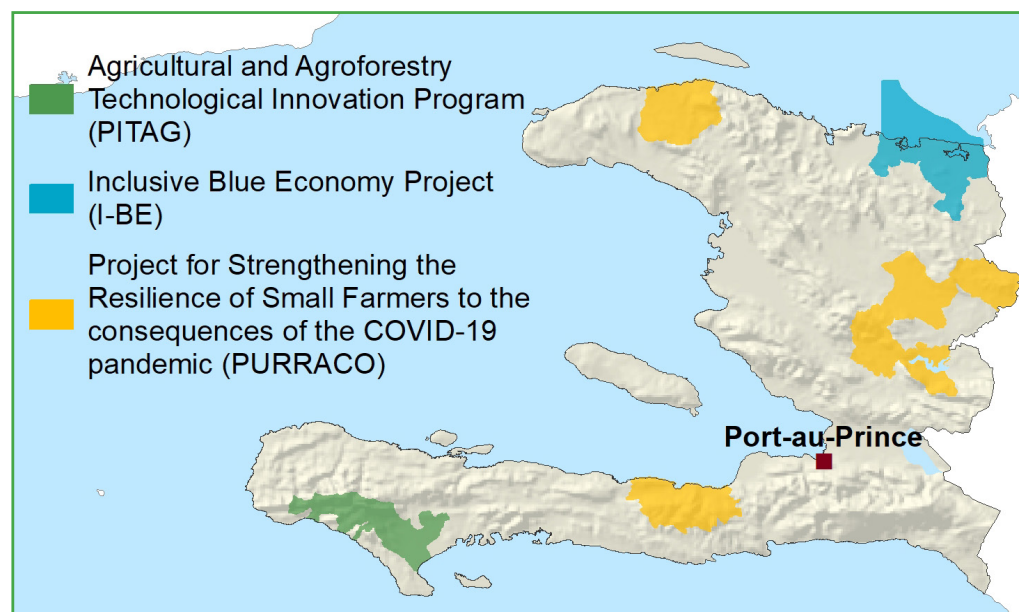
- Promoting sustainable and inclusive management of natural resources, including coastal and marine resources, adapted to climate change
- Promoting community economic ecosystems that are sustainable, diversify livelihoods and facilitate healthy nutrition
- Investing in human capital development, including capacity-building for rural community organizations responsible for natural resource management.

Between 1978 and 2022, eight IFAD-supported projects invested US\$179.86 million (US\$109.36 million from IFAD funds) in the country, benefiting more than 122,316 households. Current and planned IFAD-supported investments for US\$137.88 million (US\$36.38 million from IFAD funds) are expected to benefit an additional 175,000 people.

In addition to the three ongoing investment projects, two innovative multi-country operations funded by smaller grants, implemented in collaboration with Agriterra and the German Sparkassenstiftung for International Cooperation, have the objective of providing technological tools and digital skills to Haitian smallholder farmers to improve their access to markets.

IFAD-funded initiatives in Haiti are designed and carried out in collaboration with a range of national institutions and international partners. Despite difficulties, the Fund's commitment to the Haitian people remains intact and IFAD's country programme in Haiti is rapidly increasing its size since the country director moved in-country in 2021.

Ongoing operations



Agricultural and Agroforestry Technological Innovation Program (PITAG)

The PITAG project will help restore agricultural productivity in the areas of Haiti most affected by Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. It is a US\$76.86 million project implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and funded jointly by IFAD (with US\$10.86 million), the Inter-American Development Bank, the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program and the Haitian government.

Haiti's rural population suffers from a vicious cycle of low agricultural productivity, high environmental degradation and poor nutrition. The project aims to break this cycle and help smallholder farming families improve their productivity, food security and income levels. To address these challenges, PITAG is equipping Haitian smallholder farmers with agricultural technologies and practices that are well suited to local conditions.

In recent decades, Haiti has seen its soils, water reservoirs and woods severely degraded. PITAG is enabling smallholder farmers to produce more and better while taking care of the environment – where attention is desperately needed, in a country that is both one of the world's poorest and one of the most greatly impacted by climate change.

PITAG takes a people-centred approach, with a strong focus on community involvement. IFAD's financing directly targets more than 12,000 households of municipalities in the South Department. It also funds the farmer field schools, a dialogue and training space for peer-to-peer learning among producers and technicians. It includes specific gender and youth-related activities, promoting sustainable and inclusive rural development. After their training, small farmers receive inputs and support to put into practice the innovations they have learned.

Recent initiatives have focused on **digital technologies** and merging **environmental** with **economic sustainability** in rural areas

Project for Strengthening the Resilience of Small Farmers to the Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic (PURRACO)

PURRACO aims to alleviate acute food insecurity and the drop in household incomes resulting from COVID-19 containment measures. It is a US\$5.8 million project (US\$5 million from IFAD; US\$0.5 million from the Haitian government and an in-kind contribution from beneficiaries of US\$0.3 million). It will benefit 3,250 poor rural households (around 13,000 people, half of whom will be women and 30 per cent youth).

The project targets three of the Haitian departments mostly affected by food insecurity due to structural fragilities, recently aggravated by COVID-19 impacts: the Northwest, the Centre and the West. It is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development.

PURRACO is helping households recover, increase their production to pre-COVID-19 levels and access markets, building food security with enhanced efficiency in agricultural production. At the same time, short-cycle animal husbandry (hens, rabbits and goats) will increase the availability of animal protein in these remote rural areas, compensating for historic nutritional deficiencies.

Inclusive Blue Economy Project (I-BE)

The Inclusive Blue Economy Project aims to transform the way coastal rural populations manage natural and marine resources in the north and north east of Haiti. The purpose of the project is to reduce poverty and strengthen the climate resilience of coastal rural populations.

Coordinated by Haiti's Ministry of Economy and Finance, I-BE represents a total investment of US\$26.6 million (US\$14 million from IFAD funds) and it is expected to benefit 40,000 people, with a particular focus on women (50 per cent of the beneficiaries) and youth (40 per cent).

The project is helping preserve the Three Bays Protected Area by providing economic opportunities to smallholder farmers and artisanal fishermen living in the country's north-eastern region. The project is set to allow communities to develop sustainable livelihoods that reduce the pressure on natural resources, such as mangrove forests, coral reefs and watersheds, which are key ecological assets. This pressure poses a worrying threat to the country's food security in the medium-to-long term.

Enhanced fishing techniques and salt production will create synergies that will improve fish processing and marketing. This will make it possible to sell properly salted, dried and smoked fish both locally and elsewhere in Haiti.

In parallel, better small animal breeding and vegetable production will allow participating families to improve their diets and earn complementary income.

Lessons learned from I-BE could potentially be used as a basis for policy engagement on sustainable management plans for the other 24 Haitian protected areas.

IFAD is an international financial institution and a United Nations specialized agency. Based in Rome – the United Nations food and agriculture hub – IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, we have provided more than US\$23.2 billion in grants and low-interest loans to fund projects in developing countries. Last year, IFAD-supported projects reached an estimated 130 million people.

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August 2022