



## Program for Fresh Food Self-sufficiency in Haiti

### Pro-Huerta 2005-2008<sup>1</sup>

#### Summary

The Pro-Huerta Program was launched in Haiti following an experience with a similar program in Argentina spanning over 15 years. Under this program, training courses in organic vegetable production have been conducted in families, schools, the community and institutions, demonstration gardens have been built, seeds have been delivered and ongoing technical assistance has been provided. The chief objective has been to promote community production of fresh food for the Haitian population through coordinated efforts involving the Ministry of Agriculture of Haiti, its departmental directorates and community organizations, such as schools, orphanages, training centers, farmer associations, women's' associations, professional centers, parishes and congregations of various religious denominations, together with community leaders. The results of this Program have surprised its promoters. This successful enterprise is expected to be expanded for the benefit of more families in Haiti. The project also represents a significant step forward in fulfilling international cooperation commitments.

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## Background

The Argentine contribution to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti was furthered by a collaborative effort on the part of the Argentine Horizontal Cooperation Fund in the implementation of the Pro Huerta Program for the Production of Fresh Foods for Self-sufficiency. As a result, community production of fresh foods for the Haitian population has been promoted.

Initially, the governments of Argentina and Haiti signed an agreement in 2005 launching the project through an exchange of notes. That agreement was based on the 1982 Bilateral Agreement for Scientific and Technical Cooperation. Subsequently, two additional documents were signed between the units executing the project: the Office of the Inter-American Institute for

Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in Haiti, on behalf of the government of that country, and the Argentine Embassy in Haiti, on behalf of the Government of Argentina.

Subsequently, the project was presented by Argentina to the Haitian authorities at the Conference on International Cooperation with Haiti, held in Cayenne, French Guiana on March 18, 2006. Argentina already had longstanding experience with this

Program after 16 years of success with it in that country. More than 600,000 family gardens, 7,000 school gardens and 8,000 community gardens have been opened in Argentina and have helped to improve the quality and variety of nutrition for more than 3.5 million Argentines.

## Experience with the Pro-Huerta Program

As already noted, the Pro-Huerta Program in Haiti was inspired by a national Argentine program executed under the aegis of the National Agricultural Technology Institute (INTA). The Pro-Huerta Program, which is part of the National Food Security Plan of the Ministry of Social Development, promotes a more varied and balanced diet consisting of foods produced by the target populations (urban or rural populations) who do not have a healthy diet because of their social circumstances. The diet includes fresh foods produced in the organic gardens and farms of families, schools, communities and institutions.

It is with this in mind that the Pro Huerta Program that had been implemented in Argentina was replicated in Haiti. The Program was adapted to the Haitian context and the process was guided by a coordinator, of Haitian nationality, who was hired and trained for the purpose. He was charged with conducting and supervising the activities of the local technical assistants and over 500 volunteer outreach workers in 20 locations in various regions of the country.

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Project activities include training courses, the establishment of demonstration gardens, the delivery of seeds and ongoing technical assistance. The flexibility exhibited and the project's adaptability to local conditions, added to the enthusiasm of participants, have been such that the Program has expanded more than originally expected. According to the IICA Representative in Port-au-Prince, "it is not often that a program meets with success as rapidly as this one has."

Much of that success is due to the fact that the Ministry of Agriculture of Haiti has formed a strong and extended community network, which provided a solid basis

for project activities. This required coordination at the level of departmental directorates and organizations, such as schools, orphanages, training centers, farmer associations, women's associations, professional centers, Catholic parishes and congregations, Baptist and evangelical churches, along with neighbors that showed leadership skills.

In addition to seeing an improvement in the nutritional value of the foods produced in the gardens, families have been able to economize on purchases of fresh vegetables, which has helped relieve the burden of the high cost of living.

<b>Table 1. Type of gardens established in Haiti during this period.</b>	
Family gardens	16,086
School gardens	2,700
Community gardens	1,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,686</b>

<b>Table 2. Scope of the Pro-Huerta Program in Haiti.</b>	
Locations	20
Training courses	20
Demonstration gardens	20
Promoters	508
Institutions	25



In short:

*"In the many years I have worked at the IICA Office in Haiti, I have had an opportunity to learn about all types of cooperation programs and to participate actively in the execution of successful development projects in the Haitian rural milieu. Although international cooperation often contributes effectively to improving the living conditions of Haitians, "it is not often that a program meets with success as rapidly as this one has."*

*By previous agreement with the Haitian and Argentine governments, IICA was designated as facilitator of the process for implementation of the Pro-Huerta program. This strategic partnership between IICA-Haiti and the Argentine Foreign Ministry was a very good idea. The synergy between IICA capabilities and those of the FO-AR, the work of the Argentine Embassy in Port-au-Prince and the support of the Ministry of Agriculture of Haiti have yielded positive results and in just one and a half years, thousands of low-income Haitian families now enjoy a more varied, balanced and a healthier diet, thanks to gardens of short-cycle and highly productive species that have a high nutritional value.*

*Pro-Huerta in Gonaives has proven to be an effective, low-cost solution to the serious food problems of the Haitian population and has even become an alternative for food security for many inhabitants of that city.*

*As a member of this partnership, an original participant and close witness of the successful launch of this Pro-Huerta program in Haiti, I express the wish that this program will be extended across Haitian territory."*

Alfredo J. Mena  
IICA Representative

## Coordination of donors: a cooperation strategy

From the standpoint of the FO-AR's cooperation strategy towards Haiti, noteworthy is the experience developed by Argentina in coordinating donors to the Pro-Huerta Program. Two years after activities were launched, international efforts have come together and moved forward significantly in fulfilling the commitment to make international cooperation more efficient and effective.

From the start of the project in September 2005, activities have been coordinated with major international players such as IICA, with which Argentina has concluded two cooperation agreements providing for the delivery of technical assistance and operational support for the Argentine project. Thus, IICA has become a basic on-site partner, especially in Gonaives, where Argentine cooperation has been most widespread geographically. Subsequently, IICA added the Pro Huerta program to its Pwotokol project.

In May of 2006, a joint effort was deployed with the National Democratic Institute, a US nongovernmental organization that is carrying out the Forum Civique Project in the slums on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince and in the Cul-de-Sac Plain, to the west of Port-au-Prince, in keeping with the strategy of engaging donor efforts. The purpose of that project was to promote the establishment of committees for community initiatives, a mechanism that adopted Pro-Huerta as a motivator for social organization.

Later, in October of 2006, joint cooperation activities were initiated with Brazil, through the Project on the Social Validation of Vegetables and the Building of Family Systems, which sought to make available to the target population new vegetable species and mechanisms for catching and conserving drinking water in areas with serious water shortages in the Cul de Sac Plain.

In addition, after the Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Argentine and Spanish foreign ministers in June 2006, various working meetings were held in Haiti with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation for the purpose of partnering Pro-Huerta with the Spanish program Araucaria XXI. Thus it is that since September 1, 2007, after agreement was reached on the project document, Pro-Huerta activities have been carried out in the Department of the Southeast, in fulfillment of the Argentine idea of improving food security, to which was added the Spanish objective of environmental recovery and conservation. Thanks to these activities, 420 families and four schools located in Belle Anise and Grand Glossier have been included in the program, which has made it possible to strengthen ties with the local population and embark upon a discussion of the terms of an extension of the linkage among the three parties until 2011.

In November of 2007, the working relationship was extended with the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development of Haiti through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, reaffirming relations between both



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governments. Accordingly, Pro-Huerta activities were added to those being carried out under the Project for the Increased Cultivation of Food Supplies, financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Thus, 720 families and 12 schools in six locations in the Lower Central Plateau will be included in this undertaking.

Finally, the FO-AR and the Canadian Agency for International Development initiated talks in November 2006 to join efforts in the area of food security; this is in addition to the Canadian experience in Haiti as well as the Argentine experience as a contributor over a 16-year period.

After much focused effort, a project document was drafted. That project was slated to cover approximately 180,000 people. Specialists from the following organizations were involved in the drafting of that document:

- INTA, the Ministry of Social Development and the Foreign Ministry, on behalf of Argentina.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development and the National Food Security Commission, on behalf of Haiti.

- IICA and the Canadian Agency for International Development.

## Final Considerations

The Pro-Huerta Program under way in Haiti since 2005 as part of a horizontal cooperation endeavor between that country and Argentina, has helped to improve the quality of life of thousands of Haitians. It has contributed to their food security by building gardens in families, schools, communities and institutions.

Thanks to the involvement of various counterparts, the Pro-Huerta Program has achieved much success nationally and has been recognized and appreciated by beneficiaries and the community of contributors alike.

It is important to acknowledge the value of the strategies adopted so that this experience, which has been expanded in Haiti, can be replicated in other countries. Undoubtedly, it will be an effective alternative for improving food security and the quality of life of the inhabitants of other regions of the world at a time when humanity is facing a crisis of rising food prices.

# Résumé / Resumo / Resumen

## Programme autoproduction d'aliments frais à Haïti ProHuerta 2005-2008

**L**e programme ProHuerta mis en œuvre en Haïti, fondé sur l'expérience acquise en Argentine pendant plus de 15 ans, a permis d'offrir des cours sur la production, de créer des jardins de démonstration, de distribuer des semences et de fournir une assistance technique permanente. Son objectif principal a été d'encourager la production communautaire d'aliments frais pour la population haïtienne, grâce à la coordination des efforts entre le ministère de l'Agriculture d'Haïti, ses directions départementales et des organisations communautaires telles que écoles, orphelinats, centres de formation, associations paysannes, associations de femmes, centres professionnels, paroisses et diverses congrégations religieuses, et dirigeants communaux. On espère élargir cette expérience réussie, à laquelle ont participé plusieurs pays et organismes internationaux, afin qu'un plus grand nombre de familles haïtiennes puisse en profiter, sans compter que cette expérience représente un progrès important dans la réalisation des engagements en matière de coopération internationale.

## Programa de Autoprodução de alimentos frescos no Haiti Pró-Horta 2005-2008

**O** Programa Pró-Horta, implementado no Haiti com base na experiência de mais de 15 anos na Argentina, tem permitido a realização de cursos de capacitação na produção de hortas orgânicas em nível familiar, escolar, comunitário e institucional, a construção de hortas demonstrativas, a distribuição de sementes e a prestação de assistência técnica de forma permanente. O principal objetivo desse programa é incentivar a produção comunitária de alimentos frescos para a população haitiana, mediante uma ação coordenada entre o Ministério da Agricultura do Haiti, suas direções departamentais e organizações da comunidade, tais como escolas, orfanatos, centros de formação e capacitação, associações de camponeses, associações de mulheres, centros profissionais, paróquias e congregações de diferentes denominações religiosas junto a líderes comunitários. Seus resultados no âmbito local vêm surpreendendo os seus promotores. Essa bem-sucedida experiência espera ser ampliada para benefício de um maior número de famílias no Haiti, em razão de que também representa um significativo avanço no cumprimento dos compromissos da cooperação internacional.

## Programa Autoproducción de alimentos frescos en Haití: Pro-Huerta 2005-2008

**E**l Programa Pro-Huerta implementado en Haití, con base en la experiencia de más de 15 años en Argentina, ha permitido el desarrollo de cursos de capacitación en producción de huertas orgánicas a nivel familiar, escolar, comunitario e institucional, la construcción de huertas demostrativas, la entrega de semillas y la asistencia técnica permanente. Su objetivo principal ha sido fomentar la producción comunitaria de alimentos frescos para la población haitiana, mediante la coordinación entre el Ministerio de Agricultura de Haití, sus direcciones departamentales y organizaciones de las comunidades como escuelas, orfanatos, centros de formación y capacitación, asociaciones de campesinos, asociaciones de mujeres, centros profesionales, parroquias y congregaciones de diversas denominaciones religiosas, junto a líderes comunales. Sus resultados en el ámbito local sorprenden a sus promotores. Esta exitosa experiencia espera ser ampliada para beneficio de más familias en Haití, además de que representa un significativo avance en el cumplimiento de los compromisos de la cooperación internacional.