

# Improving quality of life for coffee farmers in Haiti

Funding needed: £66,000



Support Oxfam's work helping coffee farmers in Haiti to raise their incomes and ensure they have a consistent food supply for their families.

£66,000 needed to:

- improve coffee yields through regeneration, replanting and better management of pests and crop disease;

- improve the quality of coffee processing so that coffee growers can increase sales to international markets;
- support projects that help ensure consistent income and food for coffee farming families through growing and processing alternative crops.

## Background

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 65 per cent of the population living in extreme poverty. Seventy per cent of the population depends on agriculture for its living, and coffee is a vital source of export income for the entire country.

Until the 1990s, small groups of poor farmers were scattered across the north of Haiti, isolated, unorganised and forced to sell their coffee to local 'middle men' who paid extremely low prices.

In 1998, with Oxfam's support, a co-operative of seven coffee farmer groups representing 300 farmers was established. Its aim was to become the first farmer-owned exporter of quality coffee in Haiti. From modest beginnings, the co-operative – called RECOCARNO – has come a long way, now exporting its coffee to the Fair Trade market from its own office in Cap Haitien. Farmers are receiving higher incomes and have less reliance on 'middle men'.

However, they still need support to ensure that their crops produce consistent yields and that the quality of what they grow and process is suitable for international markets. Currently, crops are vulnerable to coffee blight, which decreases yields, and processing of their coffee does not consistently result in a product suitable for the international "gourmet" coffee market.



"Before we formed the co-operative, we used to sell a pound of coffee for 1 – 1.5 gourdes. Now when we export, they buy at 30 gourdes... Our members have more income, and that is encouraging." – Luckson Bastien, a member of the co-operative in his home village, Carice

And while coffee production remains a vital source of income for small-scale growers in Haiti, total dependence on any one crop is not an ideal solution for poor families. To ensure that they have a more consistent income, as well as a steady source of food throughout the year, coffee farming families need to grow other food crops in addition to coffee. With Oxfam's support, RECOCARNO can continue to facilitate the cultivation and processing of alternative crops.



Coffee seedlings are grown in this nursery at a coffee co-operative in Dondon, Haiti

## Project aims

RECOCARNO has been very successful in helping small-scale coffee growers in Haiti to get paid a fairer price for what they produce. Oxfam will now support the co-operative in helping farmers to compete in the international "gourmet" coffee market by improving their coffee production and processing methods. Oxfam will also support RECOCARNO to investigate alternative crops that farmers can grow and process – such as yams, beans plantains and

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**Country facts** ... Life Expectancy is 49 years  
... 80 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line

... Nearly 70 per cent of all Haitians depend on the agriculture sector

Source: World FactBook 2001

bananas – both to feed their families and to provide an additional source of income that is not tied to the fluctuations of the coffee market.

## Activities

■ Regenerate 100 hectares of land, replant coffee trees and improve pest and disease control. Coffee plants that no longer produce sufficient yields will be replaced, and land will be regenerated to enable future plantings of coffee or alternative crops. Also, farmers will be trained in sustainable methods for dealing with coffee blight and other pests and diseases.

■ Train farmers to improve coffee processing methods. This will enable them to produce coffee of the required standard to sell in the international “gourmet” coffee market.

■ Provide support and training for diversification. As part of an existing project, Oxfam will actively support diversification work. This includes: investigating alternative crops; setting up model gardens that demonstrate growing the crops using sustainable methods; the introduction of credit schemes; training to help improve fruit processing and marketing skills; and exploration of alternative production chains.

■ Develop campaign and lobbying activities during the electoral and post-electoral period, in order to re-position and involve small-scale producers in political debate.

## Who will benefit?

This project will benefit more than 5,000 small-scale coffee producers in Haiti.

## Impact

■ Coffee crop yields will increase and blight will be reduced.

■ RECOCARNO members will export eight containers of coffee to international markets – 60 per cent as “gourmet” – and sell non-export coffee on the local market.

■ Co-operatives will be able to produce other agricultural commodities, such as yams, beans, plantains and bananas, for their own consumption and to sell in local and international markets.

■ Co-operative members will be assured a fair price for the coffee they grow, and they will be able to grow alternative crops for consumption and sale. This will ensure higher and more consistent income, improved food security throughout the year, and a better quality of life.

## Budget

£

Coffee production and regeneration	27,000
Coffee processing and drying equipment	4,350
Organisational strengthening	9,665
Campaigning and lobbying	5,685
Technical personnel	10,847
Project management costs	6,180
Evaluation costs	2,274
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>66,000</b>



Women sorting the dried coffee beans for export at the Carice co-operative

Photographs: James Hawkins and Pedro Guzmán/Oxfam