

OXFAM AMERICA
RESEARCH BACKGROUNDER

Feed the Future Investment in Haiti:

Implications for sustainable
food security and poverty
reduction

Danielle Fuller-Wimbush and Cardyn Fils-Aimé



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Series editor: Kimberly Pfeifer

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFSI	L'Aquila Food Security Initiative
CASEC	Conseil Administratif de la Section Communale (Administrative Council of the Communal Section)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EFSP	Emergency Food Security Program
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFE	Food for Education
FTF	Feed the Future
GAFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GOH	Government of Haiti
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
MARNDR	Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development
NAIP	National Agricultural Investment Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WINNER	Watershed Initiative for National Natural Environmental Resources
WFP	World Food Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2009 the United States committed \$3.5 billion to start the global Feed the Future Initiative to reduce poverty and increase agricultural production in resource poor countries. The initiative emerged in response to the G8 L'Aquila Summit, during which global leaders met to address food insecurity around the world. Introduced in Haiti in 2011, the initiative brought an existing US Agency for International Development–funded watershed management project, the Watershed Initiative for National Natural Environmental Resources (WINNER), under the Feed the Future umbrella. This project became known as “Feed the Future West,” although implementers and participants continue to call it WINNER. A five-year, \$127 million project, WINNER aims to reduce poverty by increasing agricultural production, raising incomes for smallholder farmers, and boosting the overall economy of Haiti.

As part of its GROW campaign, Oxfam America commissioned this research to assess US Feed the Future investments in Haiti, their impact in participating communities, and the contribution to sustainable agriculture. The research analyzes the WINNER project in terms of participation, empowerment of smallholder producers, promotion of sustainable development practices, and building local institutions' capacity—key areas central to the project's short-term success and long-term viability.

The study used qualitative research methods, including a literature review, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews with key informants, which were carried out between March and July 2013. The researchers conducted 12 focus group discussions in communities where the WINNER project has been implemented. The focus groups included men and women smallholder farmers who participate in WINNER-funded activities. The researchers also conducted 40 interviews in Haiti and Washington, DC, with representatives of Haitian civil society, local and national government officials, donor representatives, project implementers, and experts on Haitian development.

It is evident that the Feed the Future initiative is providing real benefits to many smallholder farmers, who otherwise receive very little outside support. These benefits include trainings, introduction to new technologies, livelihood opportunities, business skills, access to better inputs, and increased access to markets. The majority of the farmers welcome this outside support.

At the same time, there are a number of opportunities to improve the design and implementation of the project so that the gains it has achieved can be sustained. Participation of the farmers and their willingness to adopt new technologies is essential to the success of the project. More can be done to include their perspective on the project design, along with mechanisms for feedback

throughout the project lifespan. Women in particular need to be included in greater numbers in the initiative so that the project provides equal benefit to both men and women in the target communities.

Given the significant investment being made in Feed the Future, it is important to ensure the sustainability of the project's gains. One of the largest obstacles to sustainability is the government's ability to oversee and maintain the work that has been done—particularly the clearing of the water channels and enforcing environmental regulation—after the project ends in 2014.

Recommendations for improving targeting and participation; empowering smallholder producers; ensuring sustainability; and strengthening the capacity of local institutions include:

- Encourage beneficiaries' active participation throughout all stages of the project, including both the design and implementation processes.
- Develop standard mechanisms for beneficiary input and feedback through the project lifespan.
- Consider the existing community layout when determining the geographic boundaries for the project.
- Increase the participation of women by implementing a clear, written gender strategy at the inception of the project.
- Include training on rights and responsibilities.
- Continue to support and strengthen the co-ops until they can operate independently.
- Include trainings on family decision-making and control over resources and finances in order to further empower women in agriculture.
- Continue to work with the ministries of agriculture and the environment to maintain the work that has been done.
- Use already available low-cost technology for tilling the land, in place of US tractors, which are expensive to maintain; tilling technologies should also be appropriate to the local soil structure.
- Equip participating farmers associations with information on where to purchase supplies for the input stores.
- Look at other training models, such as farmer field schools, which don't require the existence a national agricultural extension system.

- Ensure that each participating community has adequate processing and storage facilities, so as not to dissipate the increased yields and to protect crops from bruising and loss during transportation to the market.
- Provide funding directly to local institutions and continue to build their capacity to ensure funds are well managed, in keeping with the goals of the US Agency for International Development Forward initiative.
- Work alongside the government of Haiti, letting it guide development plans and building its capacity to maintain the investments that have been made.

The \$127 million investment in the WINNER project has the potential to make significant improvements to the agricultural sector and raise the incomes of smallholder farmers living in poverty. It is our hope that the lessons from the WINNER project can be used to inform the rollout of Feed the Future North in Haiti, which began its planning phase in April 2013.

INTRODUCTION

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 78 percent of its population living in poverty.¹ It also has one of the highest rates of inequality in the region, ranking seventh in the world with a Gini coefficient of 59.2.² Even before the devastating 7.0 earthquake that shook the country in January 2010, Haiti had one of the highest rates of hunger and malnutrition in the Western Hemisphere, with 45 percent of the population undernourished and 30 percent of children under five suffering from chronic malnutrition.³

The agriculture system in Haiti relies on smallholder farmers who cultivate small farms, with an average size of 1.5 hectares.⁴ Farmers face the challenge of planting in a mountainous topography, with plots established either on the slopes of mountains with limited means of irrigation and transportation, or in the plains, which are subject to frequent flooding that causes substantial agricultural losses. Soil erosion and deforestation⁵ have resulted in the loss of the natural forest protection and eroded essential minerals from the soil, thus constraining productivity. The denuded hillsides and mountains contribute substantially to flooding, landslides, and river siltation during the rainy season. Further, a lack of sufficient investment from the government has led to poor management of the watersheds, which in turn has resulted in blocked water channels and a broken irrigation system. This is another source of farmland flooding.

More recently, the government of Haiti has shown a strong commitment to revitalizing the agricultural sector. At the beginning of then-President René Garcia Prével's second administration (2006-2011), he identified agriculture as a key priority for the country and garnered additional donor support in the wake of the food price riots of 2008, which led to a parliamentary no-confidence vote and the removal of the prime minister. Under Prével's leadership, a National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP) was issued, in 2010, to guide the agricultural reconstruction investments of the government, the private sector, and the

¹ Poverty defined as percent of population living on less than \$2 per day PPP (77.5 percent); percent of population living in abject poverty, defined as living on less than \$1.25 per day PPP (61.7 percent). "World Bank Data Bank." 2014. (2001 estimate). <http://datatabank.worldbank.org/data/home.aspx>. A new household survey is currently underway, with updated poverty statistics forthcoming.

² The Gini Index measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country. Measured on a scale from zero to 100, where zero is perfect equality and 100 is perfect inequality. "World Bank Data Bank." 2014. (2001 estimate.)

³ "World Bank Data Bank." 2014. (Based on 2011 and 2006 data, respectively).

⁴ Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development. "Haiti: National Agricultural Investment Plan." (English translation.), 2010, 3.

⁵ Less than 2 percent of the country is covered by forests. Library of Congress, Federal Research Division. "Country Profile: Haiti." Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2006, 10.

international donor community. The five-year \$790 million plan focuses on agriculture infrastructure, productivity, and services, and has shaped the sector's post-earthquake donor investments. Under the leadership of President Michel J. Martelly, the current administration has maintained this focus on agriculture.

The donor community has supported the Haitian government's plan to revitalize the agriculture sector, especially at this time, when there is renewed focus on agriculture as a means to address global food insecurity and poverty in low-income countries. Donors are increasingly invested in the agriculture sector in low-income countries, with recent support emerging from the L'Aquila Declaration, in which where G8 leaders committed \$22 billion over three years for global food security programs.

For Haiti, additional funds have come from donors to support reconstruction efforts in the wake of the 2010 earthquake. Post-earthquake assistance has focused on agriculture, not only for food security but also as a means of creating jobs in the rural areas and helping reduce congestion in the capital. Major multilateral and bilateral donors to the agricultural sector include the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank (WB), the European Union (EU), the United States, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO), the World Food Program (WFP) and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP).⁶

Historically, the United States has been the largest bilateral donor to Haiti⁷ and provided the second largest funding after the earthquake—\$1.15 billion in relief and development programs for 2010–2012.⁸ As part of the G8 L'Aquila commitments, the US pledged \$3.5 billion and launched the Feed the Future (FtF) initiative to implement this commitment, with Haiti as one of the beneficiary countries.⁹ In Haiti, FtF is being implemented in the country's north and west; in the latter area, it essentially builds on existing US-funded programs. In the west, the FtF initiative is a \$127 million five-year project (2009–2014), the Watershed Initiative for Natural Environmental Resources (WINNER), which is also known as Feed the Future West. The second initiative was launched in the north, in 2013, with plans for implementation to commence in 2014.

⁶ List of key donors compiled from two sources: USAID. "Feed the Future FY 2011-2015 Multi-Year Strategy for Haiti." US Government, 2011, and Tonny Joseph. "Planting Now: Revitalizing Agriculture for Reconstruction and Development in Haiti." Oxford: Oxfam International, 2012.

⁷ US Department of State. "U.S. Relations with Haiti Fact Sheet." <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1982.htm>.

⁸ Office of the UN Special Envoy for Haiti. "New York Conference Recovery Pledge Status and Modalities," 2012.

⁹ Feed the Future is President Barack Obama's global hunger and food-security initiative. It represents the US government's contribution to agriculture development in low-income countries and stems from the 2009 L'Aquila G-8 Summit, where countries committed \$22 billion over three years. For more details on FtF, see: <http://www.feedthefuture.gov>.

Given the increased flow of aid to Haiti and the country's persistent poverty and food insecurity, the public in aid-donor countries wants to know whether foreign-assistance programs are achieving meaningful and sustainable results. The purpose of this research is to examine the potential of the US Feed the Future West/WINNER project to contribute to sustainable food security and broad-based poverty reduction. Specifically, the research examined FtF's implementation approach and targets, and the implications for sustainable food security and agriculture growth. Lessons learned may be useful in informing the implementation of the FtF project starting in the north, as well as other stakeholders that include donors and non-governmental organizations with an interest in sustainable agricultural growth.

The report is organized into five sections, including a background section that outlines the NAIP; the contribution and approach of other donors to Haiti; the global US FtF initiative; the inception and expansion of the FtF project in Haiti; and the reform of USAID, known as USAID Forward. The second section outlines the analytical framework used to assess the WINNER project in four key areas: 1) participation; 2) empowering smallholder producers; 3) promoting sustainable development practices; and 4) strengthening the capacity of local institutions. Next, the report provides an explanation of the methodology used in the research, followed by a discussion of the findings. The paper concludes with recommendations for ensuring sustainable and gender-equitable outcomes.

BACKGROUND

AGRICULTURE SECTOR

Agriculture is central to the Haitian economy, accounting for 68 percent of employment and 25 percent of GDP.¹⁰ As such, it serves not only as a vital basis for food security but also as a means of employment for a country suffering from a deficit of formal jobs. Current crop yields are growing by only 0.4 percent annually, a rate that is inadequate to keep up with the 2 percent population growth rate.¹¹ A number of factors account for the low yields, including soil quality, irrigation, tropical storms, and farming practices. In particular, there have been significant droughts in recent years (2011-2013), which have affected production levels.

Agriculture in Haiti is made up primarily of a large number of smallholder farms, with a variety of crops cultivated on individual parcels of land. As of 2010, there were more than a million farms, with an average size of 1.5 hectares.¹² The practice of planting multiple crops on each parcel of land gives farmers greater security; in the absence of formal crop insurance, this practice also mitigates the impact on livelihoods of individual crop failure. At the same time, land fragmentation and intercropping practices affect mechanization options and economies of scale, making it a challenge to produce large volumes of crops at low cost for export or domestic consumption.

Agricultural production is further affected by Haiti's geography. The terrain is largely mountainous, with more than half of the land situated on slopes in excess of 40 percent, and only 20 percent of the land (550,000 hectares) located in the plains, an area better suited for farming. In total, only 420,000 hectares of the country's 2.7 million hectares are presently cultivated,¹³ with many of these farms situated on steep slopes that are not suitable for crop production. Farmers are often faced with the challenge of planting on the sides of mountains and in floodplains, usually on small farms, and with limited irrigation, storage, and transportation options.

Land tenure in Haiti is complicated, with an inadequate system for providing and verifying land titles. This results in frequent confusion and disputes over who

¹⁰ Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development. "Haiti: National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP)." (English Translation) May 2010, 3.

¹¹ US Government Document. (2011). *Feed the Future (FTF) FY 2011-2015 Multi-Year Strategy for Haiti*. U.S. Government. Retrieved from <http://www.feedthefuture.gov>.

¹² Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development, "Haiti," 3.

¹³ *Ibid*, 4.

actually owns the land. Disputes are particularly intense in the irrigated Artibonite Valley. The majority of Haitians do not legally own the land that they work on; many work land that they've inherited without legal title, lease land, sharecrop, or work as agricultural laborers. The lack of clear property rights affects land management; and it is also a deterrent for private businesses, which are reluctant to make investments in a context of land-ownership uncertainty. At the same time, secure property rights through titling would mean a new tax burden on Haitian farmers. Thus, evading titling and theoretically enforceable property rights is actually in the interest of most Haitian farmers.¹⁴ The country lacks a cadaster, a comprehensive register of real estate that includes land ownership and tenure. Titles are currently provided through a system of private notaries and surveyors that is subject to corruption and, in the case of the surveyors, is technologically underdeveloped. At the same time, multiple institutions¹⁵ are charged with handling land management in Haiti; the lack of distinction among their roles often results in confusion and inefficiencies.

Transportation is another issue affecting the sector. The road system is inadequate, and in many parts of the country, the roads are washed out during the rainy season, which leaves communities isolated and unable to bring their harvest to market. Most of the roads are filled with potholes and need repair, which means produce gets jostled and bruised during transport to market, and which contributes to the 35 percent post-harvest loss rate.¹⁶ The post-harvest loss is also due in part to a lack of storage facilities, which leaves unsold harvests to rot.¹⁷

Roughly 85 percent of the country's watersheds, or 25 out of 30, are severely deforested and thus lack the protection of the forest covering; this leads to soil erosion and a deterioration of the water channels, which in turn results in frequent flooding and significantly affects agricultural production.¹⁸

¹⁴ Marc Cohen, "Planting Now: Agricultural Challenges and Opportunities for Haiti's Reconstruction." Oxford: Oxfam International, 2010.

¹⁵ Institutions involved in land management in Haiti include ONACA (Office of the Cadaster); INARA (Agrarian Reform Institute); DGI (tax agency that covers land transactions); and CNIGS (the National Geospatial Information Center).

¹⁶ Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development, "Haiti: National Agricultural Investment Plan." English translation. 2010, 5.

¹⁷ Interview with farmers in Kenscoff, Haiti, June 2013.

¹⁸ Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development, "Haiti," 5.

FOOD SECURITY

More than half of Haiti's food is imported, accounting for 55 percent of overall food consumption,¹⁹ including 65 percent of dairy products and 80 percent of rice, eggs, and poultry meat.²⁰ Some of the imported food, such as subsidized US rice, competes with local production, reducing Haitian farmers' ability to sell their own rice. Foreign influence has contributed to a growing reliance on foreign markets and has undermined the local agriculture sector. In particular, trade liberalization beginning in the 1980s, and subsequent lowering of import tariffs, have led to the country's favoring importation of key food commodities such as rice rather than producing them locally. The government's inability to make sound investments in agriculture and watersheds has reinforced this reliance on food imports.

This dependence leaves the population vulnerable to international spikes in food prices on the global market. We saw this clearly in 2008: when the price of imported food rose, much of the population was unable to afford basic staples, which resulted in riots in urban areas.²¹

Currently, food grown in Haiti is used almost exclusively to meet domestic needs. As of 2007, only 2 percent, or \$10 million, of its food production was exported.²² Low agricultural yields, combined with institutional weaknesses and a difficult business environment, have hampered expansion of the agricultural export sector. Although the government plan calls for an expansion of the export market, and indeed WINNER seeks to help Haiti pursue its comparative advantage in producing high-quality mangoes for export, these efforts must be balanced with the need to meet the country's domestic needs, especially given its reliance on imported foods and the high economic and political cost that come with relying on other countries for food.

National Agricultural Investment Plan

In response to the vulnerability of the population to food price volatility, the government of Haiti (GOH) and the international donor community are working to improve the country's food security. In May 2010, the GOH drafted the NAIP, under the leadership of former president Préval and with the assistance of partner institutions IICA and FAO and donors, including the US government and

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ CNSA, Enquête Nationale sur la Sécurité alimentaire (ENSA), 2011, 43
<http://www.cnsa509.org/Web/Etudes/Rapport%20final%20enquete%20nationale%28ENSA%29.pdf>

²¹ In 2008, food prices rose 40 percent on average, causing unrest around the world, with riots in Haiti as well other countries, such as Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Egypt. The riots were reported by a number of news sources, including the *Guardian*:
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/apr/09/11>.

²² USAID. "Feed the Future FY 2011-2015 Multi-Year Strategy for Haiti." US Government, 2011.

the international financial institutions. The plan outlines agricultural development in the country and aligns with the Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Development of Haiti.²³ With a budget of \$772 million, the plan focuses on a number of activities within three primary areas:²⁴

- Rural infrastructure development, including the development of watersheds and forests, irrigation, and other rural infrastructures.
- Production and development of agriculture sub-sectors, including livestock farming, fishing, and aquaculture; plant production; access to inputs; urban and peri-urban agriculture; reinforcement of business systems; rural credit; and local production and humanitarian operations (local purchases).
- Agricultural services and institutional support, including research, extension, and training; animal and plant health protection; land issues; and institutional strengthening.

This framework for agricultural development is used by donor agencies, including USAID, to align agriculture development programs in Haiti.

In 2013, the Martelly administration released a three-year national agriculture plan,²⁵ which emphasizes the role of public-private partnerships in boosting national production.

In addition to the NAIP, after the 2010 earthquake, the GOH initiated a number of programs to improve food security in the country. *Aba Grangou* (“Down with Hunger”) is a program that aims to halve the number of people suffering from hunger by 2016, and to eradicate hunger and malnutrition entirely by 2025.²⁶ Two *Aba Grangou* initiatives include an unconditional cash transfer program, *Ti Manman Cheri* (“Dear Little Mother”), targeted at vulnerable mothers with school children, and *Kore Fanmi* (“Family Support”), which targets vulnerable families.

²³ The Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Development of Haiti was published in March 2010, soon after the January 2010 earthquake and serves as an action plan to guide post-earthquake investments in the country.

²⁴ Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development, “Haiti,” 14.

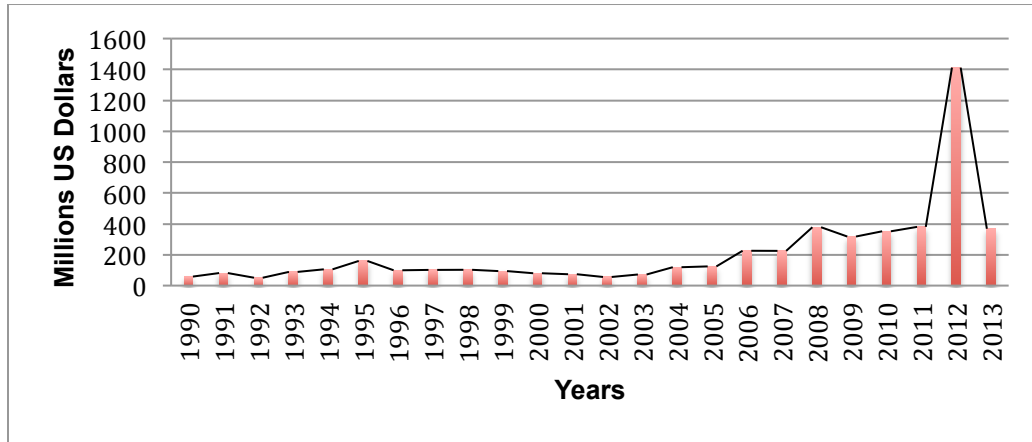
²⁵ Ministère de l’Agriculture, des Ressources Naturelles, et du Développement Rural. “Programme Triennal de Rélançe Agricole.” 2013.

²⁶ Fintrac, Inc. “USAID Office of Food for Peace: Haiti USAID-Best Analysis.” Washington, DC: USAID, March 2013, 2.

US ASSISTANCE TO HAITI

The United States has always been one of Haiti’s largest donors. Formal US assistance began in 1944 under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, following the 1915-1934 occupation of Haiti. Since then, aid has ebbed and flowed, increasing substantially in more recent years (Figure 1).

Figure 1. US foreign assistance to Haiti (1990–2013)



Source: Foreignassistance.gov (2006–2013) and US Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification, (1990–2005).²⁷

In the 1980s, the US provided much of its food aid in the form of in-kind food assistance, either directly to recipients or through the monetization²⁸ program — donating more than \$50 million in the form of beans, corn, rice, and wheat.²⁹ At the same time, the United States has advocated strongly for trade liberalization in Haiti, which has seen import tariffs for commodities such as rice reduced from 50 percent to 3 percent.³⁰ When the tariff fell, heavily subsidized rice from the US flooded the market, driving down the price of rice and causing local production to drop dramatically, virtually destroying the Haitian rice market. Today, Haiti is the second largest market for US rice exports.³¹

²⁷ The data for years 1990-2005 was compiled from Congressional budget justification reports and published in the National Academy of Public Administration report “Why Foreign Aid to Haiti Failed,” 2006.

²⁸ Monetization is the practice of NGOs’ selling food aid commodities in local markets to fund their work.

²⁹ T.T. Schwartz, “Travesty in Haiti: A True Account of Christian Missions, Orphanages, Fraud, Food Aid and Drug Trafficking.” (BookSurge: 2010, 111.)

³⁰ “Rebuilding Haiti: A New Approach to International Cooperation.” United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2010.

³¹ Marc J. Cohen, “Diri Nasyonal Ou Diri Miami? Food, Agriculture and US–Haiti Relations.” *Food Security* 5, no. 4 (2013): 597-606.

The donation of food, combined with the policy to export US rice to Haiti at subsidized prices, has been criticized for undermining the development of local production systems.³² The US has since reduced the amount of in-kind food shipments to Haiti in favor of cash assistance.³³ For instance, since the earthquake, the US has provided \$70 million in cash to procure food locally in Haiti or regionally through a cash and voucher program known as the Emergency Food Security Program (EFSP).³⁴

USAID Forward

Whereas the United States has been criticized for its trade policies with Haiti, and the subsequent impact on the agricultural sector, the agency responsible for providing development aid, USAID, has made an effort in recent years to transform how the US works with developing countries.

In 2011, USAID laid out an agenda contained in a five-year plan (2011–2015) known as USAID Forward. The agenda aims to improve the way that US aid is designed and implemented. Key among the USAID Forward reforms are the goals of building local institutional capacity and strengthening key operational principles, including gender equality and female empowerment.³⁵ This means that written gender strategies are now a required part of projects, whereas before they were conceptually a part of the project design but not necessarily explicitly stated.

In the agriculture sector, USAID Forward has resulted in a strong commitment to improving global food security through agricultural development. Similarly, the stated FtF development approach is to increase agricultural production and improve household incomes of smallholder men and women farmers. In practical terms, FtF intends to invest in technological innovations that increase output per unit area and link farmers to markets through engagements with the private sector.

Feed the Future Global Initiative

Following up on the commitments made at the L'Aquila Summit, the US launched FtF, in 2009. It is a five-year global hunger and food-security initiative with the goal of assisting 18 million vulnerable people to escape hunger and poverty. Currently implemented in 19 countries, the program aims to lift 7.5 million people out of *extreme* poverty—defined as those living on less than \$1.25 per day—and

³² Ibid.

³³ Fintrac, Inc., “USAID Office of Food for Peace: Haiti USAID-Best Analysis.” (Washington, DC: USAID, 2013), 1.

³⁴ Ibid, 1.

³⁵ USAID, “USAID Policy Framework FY 2011-2015,” 2011, iv.

to provide nutritional support to seven million children to prevent stunting and child mortality. The initiative also plans to generate \$2.8 billion in agricultural GDP through investments in research and technology, and to leverage up to \$70 million from the private sector.³⁶ The initiative intends to support technically sound country-led plans and to focus on smallholder farmers, particularly women.³⁷

Feed the Future West/ WINNER

USAID is implementing FtF in Haiti in three development corridors, two in the western region of the country, which are the focus of this report, and one in the north. In the two western corridors, implementation of the \$127 million project, referred to as Feed the Future West or WINNER, began in 2009 (before the earthquake and the inception of FtF in Haiti) and is set to end in May 2014.³⁸ Following the earthquake, USAID redesigned WINNER to meet the new priorities and to align the project with the NAIP and the 2010 post-earthquake US government Haiti strategy. The initiative provides direct support to farmers associations, including the provision of technical training and input supplies, access to irrigation water, and support to post-harvest processing and marketing operations, as well as reforestation efforts and clearing of the water channels. WINNER operates in the Port-au-Prince, St. Marc, and Cul de Sac corridors. FtF launched its work in the northern corridor in 2013.

WINNER is implemented by Chemonics, a for-profit development firm based in Washington, DC. As the largest recipient of USAID funds worldwide, Chemonics is also the largest recipient of US funding in Haiti, receiving a total of \$196 million since 2010 to implement aid projects, an amount greater than that received by the next three largest aid recipients combined.³⁹ In its second phase, in the north, FtF will be implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc., another large consulting firm based in the Washington, DC, area that has also received substantial USAID resources for work in Haiti.

The WINNER project has four primary objectives: to increase agricultural productivity; stabilize watersheds above selected plains; strengthen agricultural markets; and deliver nutrition messages and services.⁴⁰

³⁶ USAID, "USAID Policy Framework FY 2011-2015." 2011, iii.

³⁷ USAID, "Feed the Future Progress Report: Growing Innovation, Harvesting Results." June 2013, 6.

³⁸ USAID, "About Winner: Key Data," <http://www.winnerhaiti.com/index.php/en/about-winner/key-data/timing>.

³⁹ Jake Johnston and Alexander Main, "Breaking Open the Black Box: Increasing Aid Transparency and Accountability in Haiti," Center for Economic and Policy Research, April 2013, 12. Original source is USASpending.gov

⁴⁰ USAID, "Feed the Future FY 2011-2015 Multi-Year Strategy for Haiti," US Government, 2011, 19-20.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Sustainable agriculture-sector growth is multidimensional and depends on a variety of factors to ensure that progress continues beyond an individual project's lifespan. This report's analytical framework is guided by a review of the literature on sustainable agriculture, including Berdegué and Escobar's work on agricultural innovation and poverty reduction.⁴¹ The authors find that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. Because poverty is multi-dimensional, any poverty-reduction plan must consider the local context. When creating poverty-reduction strategies that focus on agricultural innovation, rather than looking to research, one must consider the determinants of poverty in a given community and how the poor respond to their condition. In the case of FtF, project success will rely ultimately on the designers' ability to craft strategies that match the local context.

Oxfam America is assessing FtF in five countries. This report looks at four key qualitative functions of sustainable agricultural investments and applies them to the FtF initiative in Haiti:

- Targeting and participation;
- Empowering men and women smallholder producers;
- Promoting sustainable farming practices; and
- Strengthening the capacity of local institutions.

We employ this framework in our Haiti assessment.

TARGETING AND PARTICIPATION

In an agricultural project seeking to promote sustainable development, targeting and effective participation of economically vulnerable and socially marginalized people are crucial for achieving sustainable agricultural growth and transformation of the rural milieu. For this, we look at the categories of farmers that receive direct support from FtF projects, and the specific enterprises and activities that the projects promote. Almost all farmers in Haiti are smallholders, but within this categorization, farmers vary significantly. This variation has been described in a number of studies on land holding, farm portfolio, agro-ecological

⁴¹ Julio A. Berdegué and Germán Escobar, *Rural Diversity, Agricultural Innovation Policies and Poverty Reduction*, Overseas Development Institute. Agricultural Research and Extension network, 2002.

zone location, orientation to markets, and livelihood strategy. FtF primarily targets smallholder farmers with a strong market orientation and a desire to specialize. However, WINNER is working in areas where there are no roads, which undercuts FtF's emphasis on commercialization and productivity gains. At the same time, the participating farmers who are active in the marketplace are not necessarily the most vulnerable ones. This omission of the most economically vulnerable and socially marginalized may compromise the project's capacity to achieve inclusive agricultural growth and rural transformation.

In Haiti, the WINNER project supports intensified production of a variety of commodities, including staples such as rice, beans, and corn, and to a small extent, high-value export crops such as mangoes. The latter value chain is male dominated.⁴² We will explore whether WINNER opens up opportunities for women in this chain.

Inclusiveness of both women and men is critical to the long-term sustainability of the region's agriculture. Women are frequently targeted for discrimination in gaining access to and control of productive resources. Although individual development interventions or projects may not redress gender inequalities in the short term, development initiatives are well positioned to bridge the gender parity gap.

The question of participation also relates to the design, management, and evaluation of FtF-supported activities, as well as the extent to which farmers were consulted about the activities intended to benefit them and how the project relates to their needs.

EMPOWERING MEN AND WOMEN SMALLHOLDER PRODUCERS

The process of empowering men and women farmers can take many forms. Sharma recommends three aspects as crucial for farmer empowerment: skills and knowledge, economic participation, and rights.⁴³ At the same time, Partev and King observe that farmer empowerment is about helping them to get organized.⁴⁴ They observe that resource-poor farmers cannot be empowered without an organization that represents them at the local, district, and national levels. The degree to which the project promotes knowledge and skill development, while also protecting the rights of farmers and strengthening the

⁴² Alexis Gardella, "Gender Assessment for USAID/Haiti Country Strategy Statement" (Port-au-Prince: USAID Haiti, 2006.)

⁴³ Raju Sharma, "Empowerment Mobilisation for Effective Women's Development." *LEISA-LEUSDEN* 17 (2001): 15-15.

⁴⁴ Rashid Partev and David King, "The Essential Role of Farmers' Organizations in Developing Countries." *Agriculture and Rural Development* 7, no. 1 (2000): 28-30.

capacity of the associations and local institutions that represent them, will influence the sustainability of the project investment.

FtF places significant emphasis on women's empowerment and has developed the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)⁴⁵ to measure the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the agricultural sector. This is an important tool to use in identifying and measuring if, and to what extent, a project affects the level of empowerment in the target population. Data collection for the WEAI index was not part of the WINNER project, so the progress in women's empowerment cannot be quantified. However, we employed qualitative methods to assess the level of empowerment for the female farmers participating in WINNER.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainability means that the aims that the project sought to achieve continue beyond the duration of the project's funding. A particular concern in Haiti is whether activities will continue in the absence of US government resources. Can farmers maintain productivity gains? Will the "master farmer" approach to extension continue without a national extension program and FtF resources to support it? Can the new agriculture services structures survive without the direct support of WINNER or sophisticated structures such as expensive research centers and laboratories?

Given the level of natural resource degradation in Haiti, we will also look at the environmental sustainability of the project. The WINNER project aims to rebuild the watersheds and plant trees in deforested areas. We will assess the extent to which these initiatives are sustainable and achieve the desired impact.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

Capacity building of local institutions has become an important part of development work as a way to better ensure projects' long-term sustainability. This effort involves working with and through local institutions and providing greater support to them so they can perform effectively and efficiently. This approach also addresses the alignment of development aid with local development priorities and ownership by local institutions. Local institutions include local governments, civil society organizations, private sector actors,

⁴⁵ See Feed the Future: Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index. IFPRI, OPHI, and USAID Publication, 2012.

technical agriculture schools, and university agronomy facilities. Local stakeholder participation is especially important in establishing local needs and setting priorities, as well as ensuring a development initiative's accountability to the beneficiaries. It is also important for achieving sustainability of results, cost efficiency, and inclusiveness.

In conclusion, we will use the four key functions of sustainable agricultural growth to examine the effectiveness of WINNER in achieving sustainable development.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative inquiry in the form of a literature review, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews with key informants. A desk review of published and unpublished reports was conducted between September 2012 and September 2013 and helped shaped the analytical framework and interview guides for the focus groups and key informant interviews.

We interviewed 40 individuals in Haiti and Washington, DC, during the weeks of March 10–22, 2013; June 24–July 6, 2013; and July 15–17, 2013. Participants were selected because of their association with the WINNER project or their expertise on the subject matter. We chose interviewees from Haitian civil society, local and national government, donors, implementers, and experts so that we could glean insights from a wide spectrum of expertise and perspectives. Interviews were conducted primarily in English with the aid of a Creole- and French-speaking translator, as necessary.

In addition, the researchers conducted 12 focus group interviews with smallholder farmers, between June 26 and July 3, 2013, following a series of planning meetings between June 21 and 28, 2013, in selected communities where the WINNER project is implemented (see Appendix A for a complete list). Communities participating in the study were located in the communes of Arcahaie, Croix des Bouquets, Kenscoff, Mirebalais, and Tomazeau. Focus groups were conducted in Creole by Cardyn Fils-Aimé and translated into English. Groups ranged in size from five to 12 participants.

Focus groups targeted seven farmers associations that receive resources from the WINNER project and include both male and female farmers as association members (one association is all female). The associations were selected to represent the diversity of activities WINNER offers. Groups were separated by gender in all but one case. Of the 12 focus groups, six were exclusively female, five were made up of men, and one was mixed. Participants within the focus groups were selected by the leaders of the association and included elected leaders of the associations and their members. The researchers chose the study associations in consultation with WINNER project staff. WINNER staff identified four associations as “model” organizations. In Croix-des-Bouquets and Arcahaie Communes, we paired a non-model association (as identified by WINNER staff) with the model association. A non-model association in Mirebalais was chosen because of its focus on mangoes, a key export crop that WINNER supports. The model association in Kenscoff was chosen in part because it works on livestock in addition to its WINNER-supported activities; it also happens to partner with Oxfam. The Tomazeau association, which is classified by WINNER as “model,”

was chosen because it is composed solely of female farmers, in contrast to the other six associations, which include both men and women.

FINDINGS

When the WINNER project was launched, in 2009, it was designed as a watershed restoration project. In 2011, it was redesigned to align with the Post-Earthquake USG Haiti Strategy, “Toward Renewal and Economic Opportunity,” and with the FtF Initiative.⁴⁶ Over the lifespan of the project, it has faced a number of external factors that have affected its overall results, including the 2010 earthquake, the subsequent cholera outbreak, hurricanes Isaac and Sandy, and recent years of drought. These external factors have influenced the project’s overall success and must be considered when assessing the impact over its five-year life.

The interviews and focus groups show clearly that the WINNER project benefits communities living in poverty with few other resources available to them. Farmers frequently said that there was very little government or nongovernmental organization (NGO) presence in the areas where they live and work. Overall, beneficiaries interviewed expressed a strong sense of gratitude for the WINNER project, particularly in the communities that had received substantial investments. At the same time, we have identified critical opportunities within the control of key stakeholders that can be addressed to strengthen the program and realize significant, sustainable gains.

TARGETING AND PARTICIPATION

Targeting

A number of WINNER’s actions are oriented toward or carried out via farmer organizations. These include input stores, tree nurseries, management of tractors for soil preparation, and management of grain storage silos. All of the farmers organizations with whom we met are made up of small-scale producers. All are involved in training farmers, both male and female (except for GFVCT, the women’s farmers association). WINNER activities benefit association members first and foremost, but also the other farmers in the area without distinction. Some of the associations choose to offer advantages to members, such as price breaks on inputs.

Some associations told us that they approached WINNER about engagement with the project, whereas others indicated that WINNER came to them. In either case, in order to receive WINNER resources, an association must receive a

⁴⁶ Chemonics. Haiti WINNER Workplan October 2011-September 2012: USAID. 2012.

certificate from the project indicating that it accepts WINNER's 10 principles, making it a "champion of agriculture." In order to gain certification, associations may have to change their by-laws, internal rules, and even their methods of work.

For the majority of people interviewed, WINNER's intervention zones are in fact zones where the vast majority of residents are engaged in agriculture. Haitian agriculture is characterized overwhelmingly by small-scale family cultivation, so WINNER mostly benefits smallholders. Our interviews indicate that in the study sites, associations that wanted to have a demonstration plot for new technologies were required to have access to a parcel of land that is near a road and available for use as the plot. Although this makes sense if WINNER is to deliver project materials and inputs to plots run by participating associations, it also biases key project activities against the more remote and marginalized of Haiti's farmers.

The associations choose candidates for receiving master farmer⁴⁷ and commercialization training from WINNER. The candidates have to undergo a pre-selection test administered by WINNER staff in order to determine their capacity to undertake the training.

In sum, we found that the project does not target farmers who are the most poor, who work a particular size plot, or who are the most marginalized. Given the project's operating procedures, there is a good chance that most of the project's benefits will go to farmers who have access to information and who belong to an organization. However, in Haiti, most farmers' organizations have limited capacity to reach a large number of people. WINNER also uses a very technical approach to targeting. The beneficiaries are not involved in determining the criteria or the needs assessment. This can affect the expected outcomes.

Gender

One of the aims of the USAID Forward reforms is to support greater gender equity and female empowerment.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, according to its own reports, the WINNER project disproportionately benefits men and fails to challenge the cultural gender norms that prevail in Haiti. For example:

- Only 27 percent of individuals trained to be master farmers (2009–2012) are women.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ WINNER master farmers are farmer-extension agents. They receive six months of training, including four basic courses and two specialized courses.

⁴⁸ USAID, "USAID Policy Framework FY 2011-2015." 2011.

⁴⁹ Of the 1,689 master farmers trained to date, 27 percent are women. USAID Haiti WINNER Project, "USAID Feed the Future West/ Winner (2009-2014) Main Activities and Results." Presentation in Washington, DC February 2013.

- Only 27 percent of participants who received FtF West training in FY12 were women.⁵⁰
- Only 20 percent of individuals trained to operate tractors (an income-generating activity) were women.⁵¹
- Only 55 percent of the farmer associations supported by WINNER have women on their executive committees (and even these women are rarely in leadership positions).⁵²

Although it has not achieved female participation rates that equal those of the male farmers, the project has attempted to include women. In October 2009, for instance, WINNER signed a memo of understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, committing to be sensitive to gender issues and encourage the participation of women in project activities. However, the project lacked a gender strategy that could explicitly direct a pro-active gendered approach. Although Chemonics later drafted a gender strategy⁵³ for USAID review, in August 2012, and the project did attempt to better tailor training to women's needs, the changes occurred late in the project cycle. Adopting a gender strategy earlier in the process for the northern corridor would greatly facilitate efforts to increase participation of, and benefits to, women.

In our interviews with members of farmer associations partnering with FtF West/WINNER, there were no indications that the project has activities targeting women specifically or addressing problems specific to female farmers. SOHADERK members whom we interviewed told us that WINNER recommends that partner associations ensure that at least 30 percent of the beneficiaries are women. WINNER does not have separate consultations with female farmers, although it does partner with exclusively female associations, including GFVCT, one of the study associations. But the project works in much the same way with mixed male and female associations as it does with all-women groups. Men and women receive the same training.⁵⁴ There are women master farmers and tractor operators, and those who have completed the WINNER training for these specializations talk about their experience with pride. Women are heavily represented in WINNER commercialization activities and input stores. This is not surprising, given the role of women in marketing agricultural produce in Haiti.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Training includes core courses on basic agricultural principles, sustainable environmental management, management of small farms, and family planning, as well as elective courses. USAID, "Feed the Future West/Winner's Annual Report." FY2012, 19.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Chemonics, "Gender Assessment USAID Haiti," USAID, August 2012, 27.

⁵³ Chemonics, "Gender Assessment."

⁵⁴ According to USAID officials in Haiti, this has changed since we carried out the research.

⁵⁵ Gardella, "Gender Assessment."

At the same time, we found that women are less knowledgeable than men about certain aspects of WINNER. Men tend to dominate the ranks of association leaders, except, of course, in the case of all-women associations. Women account for about 20 percent of the leadership posts in mixed-gender associations, frequently serving as treasurer or at-large members of executive bodies. Notwithstanding WINNER's apparent requirement that women account for 30–40 percent of the participants in all project activities undertaken by partner associations, access and control of resources remain for the most part in the hands of men.

The gender disparity is not unique to Haiti. The recent global progress report on FtF,⁵⁶ based on FY12 data, shows that males benefit disproportionately to females in key performance indicators:⁵⁷

- Five males to three females: Individuals who have received US government-supported, long-term agriculture sector productivity or food security training.
- Five males to two females: Farmers and others who have applied new technologies or management practices as a result of US government assistance.
- Eight male-managed to three female-managed: Hectares under improved technologies or management practices as a result of US government assistance.

Worldwide, men often dominate key aspects of agriculture, and agricultural development projects usually view them as the heads of the households in which they are present. This is definitely the case in Haiti. Breaking out of these gender biases requires a clear strategy for how to integrate women. There is also the problem of perception bias.⁵⁸ Presumed experts often insist that women do not farm, even though those who spend even a short time in rural Haiti will see that they are clearly engaged in all aspects of agriculture.

Participation

Participation of the beneficiary population in the design and implementation of a particular development initiative is central to the success of the project's adoption and sustainability. Clearly, a project is more likely to have enduring results if the affected people have buy-in. But in the case of WINNER, the smallholder farmer project beneficiaries were not widely consulted prior its implementation. Our interviews revealed that WINNER consulted neither the association leaders nor

⁵⁶ USAID, "Feed the Future Progress Report."

⁵⁷ Disaggregated data for Haiti is not publically available.

⁵⁸ Amartya K. Sen, "Gender and Cooperative Conflicts," in *Persistent Inequalities*, ed. Irene Tinker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 123-149.

the beneficiaries about their needs and priorities during the project design phase. Instead, the plan was designed by Chemonics and USAID to align with NAIP and the US government's Haiti development strategy. There were some focus group meetings with association members, but there was no ongoing dialogue in which farmers had the chance to prioritize their needs or provide input about how they would address the challenges in their own community. Following the initial community discussion, the work plan was finalized and implemented without further input from the beneficiaries. Instead, the farmers described a process through which WINNER staff came into their community, explained what they wanted to do, and invited the associations to apply to participate in specific projects. The projects include a range of activities defined by WINNER, such as grants to open an input store, build a greenhouse, or purchase seedlings. Associations that applied were eligible for consideration if they agreed to adopt 10 principles of modern agricultural practices and good environmental stewardship, including:⁵⁹

1. Refraining from cutting down or pruning trees, or producing charcoal;
2. Refraining from farming on land with steep slopes (as required by Haitian law), and reserving land for planting trees;
3. Using commercially available seed for crops;
4. Preparing and using compost (organic fertilizer) on crops and refraining from burning the soil before planting;
5. Putting into practice the advice given by agronomists and extension farmers on cultivation and care;
6. In the hills, using terracing to prevent soil erosion and to enable transportation;
7. Agreeing individually to work two free days per month as community participation in order to maintain rural infrastructure;
8. Implementing activities that enable the organization to make money, learn how to write a business plan, develop a budget, and create an accounting system;
9. Promoting family planning; and
10. Preventing animals' grazing in reforested areas.

As a result of this non-participatory approach to the project design, adoption rates of the new technologies that WINNER offers vary, with some of the farmers

⁵⁹ USAID handout, "10 Principes Asosyasyon Chanpyon."

expressing their distrust of the practices being taught and choosing not to adopt the technologies.⁶⁰ Other focus group participants admitted that WINNER responded to important needs even without their input. Beneficiaries mentioned their appreciation for the support provided, particularly training, technical advice and assistance, access to new technologies, materials, ongoing market development, establishment of demonstration plots on farms, and payments for working the land.

Participation also includes the ability to provide feedback once the project is introduced into a community. We were not able to clearly ascertain from the interviews what the mechanism is for addressing beneficiary complaints or feedback. In general, there is no standard guidance for civil society organization (CSO) input or consultation as part of USAID projects.⁶¹ WINNER's processes for resolving problems did not satisfy all of the interview groups. For example, ENENAF members whom we interviewed complained that the project's process for assigning activities to participating organizations was not transparent and did not ensure that those organizations received equitable treatment. Even though WINNER designated an association a "champion," it did not receive much from the project, other than two members' receiving master farmer training. Efforts to file complaints and resolve them were not successful. Members told us that they were treated rudely at the Croix-des-Bouquets WINNER office by one employee in the presence of other WINNER staff. Other participants indicated that they were able to communicate their concerns with WINNER staff, either by phone, at a local WINNER office, or during meetings.

Beyond the case of ENENAF, our interviewees found that WINNER provides most of the information about the project to association leaders. The associations do not receive written documents about the project. Budget information is available, but only as estimates. Association leaders, particularly of groups that partnered with WINNER early on, such as SOHADERK and GFVCT, only received information about the project at its launch. Most meetings that association members attend with WINNER staff focus primarily on technical issues.

The level of participation varies among the WINNER associations. WINNER operates by seeking out "champion" farmers associations and measures an association's capacity to implement activities. Within these parameters, association leaders are invited to submit a proposal that demonstrates their organization's technical and institutional capacity to implement WINNER activities. Sometimes associations come away from this process unsatisfied. This

⁶⁰ Finding from the focus group discussions with WINNER beneficiaries.

⁶¹ USAID is working on developing standard guidance for input by CSOs. The first step toward this goal was taken by the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid, which prepared recommendations for USAID on this subject. Recommendations have not been yet been implemented, but a task force is now in the initial stage of elaborating on the recommendations for the development of a CSO consultation handbook.

is the case with RACADAMA, whose proposal to use WINNER resources to treat a gully was rejected. In the case of ENENAF, members said that they were frustrated that they could not implement their reforestation project, even though WINNER accepted the proposal.

Equity was a concern for many of the farmers, who cited unequal access to WINNER benefits within their community. Some associations received substantial amounts of inputs from the WINNER project; at the same time, neighboring associations within the same commune were not eligible for support, because they fell outside the geographic parameters that WINNER had established without participating communities' input. In a culture built on community, this perceived lack of equity created tension and problems for some of the farmers. In Kenscoff, for instance, SOHADERK members shared that another association in their area was not eligible for support because it fell outside of the geographic parameters of the project.

Certain WINNER interventions affect communities, e.g., soil conservation works and rehabilitation of irrigation systems. However, the interviews also revealed that the associations did not know what criteria or analysis WINNER employed to choose the activities it supports and the areas where it intervenes. For example, in Kenscoff, despite the evident need and appeals for assistance, WINNER officials refused to support work in the Fifth Communal Section because it is in the Momance River Watershed, and the project is only working in communes within the Gray River Watershed. But this internally logical set of boundaries was not explained to participants.

EMPOWERING SMALLHOLDER PRODUCERS

We analyze five key aspects of farmer empowerment: knowledge and competence, economic participation, promotion of rights, organizational development, and female empowerment.

Knowledge and competence

The WINNER project works directly with men and women smallholder farmers, providing training in four key areas of knowledge and competence:⁶²

1. Agriculture: integrated pest management, food security and techniques for drying beans and cereals in better conditions so they can store products better;

⁶² USAID. "Feed the Future West."

2. Environment: natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and agro-forestry;
3. Small-farm management: administrative management, financial management, quality control, and accounting; and
4. Family planning.

The training serves to empower the farmers with skills they can use to increase their knowledge of proper farm husbandry, which will ultimately be important to beneficiary farmers beyond the duration of the project. WINNER has trained a significant number of master farmers, who were selected by their associations and have benefitted from solid training. WINNER also promised partner associations access to new technology packages, as well as knowledge about preparing and maintaining their soils, proper use of fertilizer and pesticides, and better harvesting techniques. Adoption of these new technologies, knowledge, and practices has not been universal, however. We learned that many participating farmers pushed back against the new technologies that WINNER is promoting, particularly in Arcahaie, because rapport had not been established between the trainers and the farmers, and also because the farmers did not see the technologies as relevant to their problems. Banana farmers in Arcahaie told us that WINNER's technologies failed to address some of their key problems, such as plant diseases and lack of access to water. They also said that WINNER did not agree to support rehabilitation of irrigation canals, despite their proposal, and that they could not afford the fuel to operate pumps. Adopting new technologies requires the farmers to assume a degree of risk. Some were more comfortable continuing practices that they knew well, as opposed to experimenting with something new.

Economic participation

The interviews also indicated that WINNER provides substantial economic support to partner associations. Several association leaders told us that WINNER resources boosted their organizational financial capacity. For example, SOHADERK's input store is now valued at 5 million Haitian gourdes (about \$125,000). This amount of financial reserves, coupled with budget and financial management training, is designed to empower and equip the associations to maintain the input stores and continue their operation once the WINNER project ends.

Promotion of rights

A rights-based approach to development is not part of the WINNER project design but would be a valuable tool for empowering beneficiaries to secure their rights. Interviewees did not mention any WINNER-supported policy advocacy to

pressure the government to address problems affecting the project, such as access to credit; insecurity, such as theft of livestock; trade policies that affect the sale of crops being supported by the project (including Dominican competition undercutting Arcahaie plantains); lack of land titles; and the absence of social services in some of the project areas.

Organizational development

A method of empowerment that WINNER supports but is still new in inception is investment in organizational development. The project aims to create farmer cooperatives in each of its corridors as a way to bring the partner associations together. Some of the necessary training was carried out by the National Cooperative Council, the government body that regulates co-ops in Haiti. However, these bodies were established recently, and only association leaders have had a chance to join the co-ops and pay their membership fees. At the time of this research, the cooperatives did not yet function as real economic enterprises.

Female empowerment

The WINNER project is making an effort to promote female empowerment, but there is room for growth. Interviews, focus groups, and observations in the field showed that WINNER encourages women to take community leadership roles, and the women have greater access to and control over productive resources with the introduction of the input stores. Nevertheless, they often do not have control over the income they generate or decisions about production. The level of empowerment varied among the communities. Some associations could show that WINNER had helped women to improve their businesses, with the increased income bringing them respect from their husbands and other men in the community. In other associations, men controlled the family finances, including income earned by women. The WINNER project does not specifically address the importance of women's empowerment in the trainings. The project was not involved in data collection for the WEAI, which occurred in Haiti in 2013. It will be used as a baseline measure for FtF North, to quantitatively measure changes in women's empowerment over time.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The project's sustainability beyond its five-year lifecycle will depend on the ability of the farmers and government to maintain the gains that have been made. We address the key components of the project below and their contribution to the project's sustainability.

Capacity of MARNDR and the Ministry of the Environment

A particular issue of concern for the WINNER project is the sustainability of results once the project comes to a close. The most critical issue is for the government of Haiti, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development (MARNDR) and the Ministry of the Environment, to be able to maintain the gains from the investments that have been made by the WINNER project. In order to preserve the progress that has been made by the WINNER, natural resource conservation structures will require ongoing maintenance and clearing after the project ends. WINNER staff have been working with MARNDR to develop a MOU for how they will continue with the project. Between 70 and 80 percent of the Ministry of Agriculture's budget comes from external sources, and these are largely tied to existing projects, so without significant improvement in the overall economy and better tax collection methods, it is unlikely that the financially strapped ministry will have the necessary funding.⁶³ The watersheds have been neglected by the government for decades, which has led to their decay.

Environmental sustainability

To advance sustainability, WINNER encourages environmental protection and good agricultural practices. The project has carried out reforestation in all the study sites. WINNER has financed tree nurseries and the free or low price (two gourdes, or about five US cents) distribution of saplings. In Kenscoff, WINNER invested in the production of fruit oils and re-establishment of coffee production. This will have a positive double environmental and economic impact on the community. However, in other areas, such as Croix-des-Bouquets, Arcahaie, and Duvivier, focus group participants thought that the project did not include an adequate focus on soil conservation or gully treatment.

Another component of the WINNER project is planting of trees and other plants to enrich the soil and protect against flooding and soil erosion. WINNER provides

⁶³ MARNDR's budget for 2012-2013 indicates national resources (in the amount of 26.2 billion gourdes) make up 30 percent of the total budget, and 70 percent (61.3 billion gourdes) comes from external sources. Other sources cite an even more dramatic disparity, with just 19 percent coming from the treasury and 80.5 percent dependent on "promised" foreign aid (Frank Saint Jean interview, March 13, 2013, citing a recent study that the Haitian NGO PAPDA did with Oxfam Great Britain).

environmental training to the communities that it works with, but when the program ends it will be essential for the Ministry of the Environment to regulate the sector and ensure that the trees that have been planted are not cut down again. It is important to note that rural Haitians will continue to cut down trees to make charcoal as long as they lack alternative livelihood options. Personnel at the ministry were unfamiliar with the WINNER project, because of a large turnover of ministry staff following the 2011 elections. Facing budget constraints similar to MARNDR's, a change in leadership, and loss of institutional knowledge, the ministry does not appear to be well positioned to maintain or continue the work of the WINNER project.

Tractors

WINNER provided nine tractors to associations in the Cul-de-Sac plain and the Matheux corridor in FY12, and provided training for 25 tractor operators (20 men and five women). The tractors, which are designed to aid in the tilling process, are expensive to maintain and have been underutilized. Four of the tractors were confiscated and re-assigned to other associations due to mismanagement by the associations and the operators.⁶⁴ For the associations that receive the tractors, the machine has proved costly. WINNER donates the tractor but the associations are expected to purchase the required extension, which costs between \$4,000 and \$9,000, a significant figure for resource-poor farmers. Two of the associations that we met with were not using the tractors, either because they did not want to purchase the extension or because it required maintenance. Tractor repair is also a notable expense, since parts come from the United States. In theory, the money made from operating the machines goes in part to paying the operators and in part to the association that will manage the funds and pay for the repairs. WINNER covers the cost of the repairs during the project, but once it ends, in 2014, the associations will need to cover the maintenance expenses on their own. The tractors are already not well utilized, and it is likely that when the project ends, the farmers will return to their traditional method of using laborers to till the land by hand, and tractors will no longer be used.

Input stores

The input stores created by the WINNER project are crucial to its success, supplying the needed inputs (seeds, fertilizer, and equipment) that were introduced to increase productivity. In order to maintain the higher yields, it will be critical that the supplies remain available and accessible to the farmers. However, some of the associations do not understand how to contact the

⁶⁴ In September, at the end of the season, WINNER conducted an assessment of the use and management of the tractors and found that some of the associations were not using the tractors in a transparent fashion and that the fees collected by the operators were not returned to the associations, so WINNER confiscated four of the tractors. Discussed in interviews with USAID and Chemonics and reported in USAID, "Feed the Future West," 16.

suppliers or where they would get the supplies after the project ends. WINNER has been working to address this and will need to continue to connect the input stores to the suppliers and make sure that the associations know how to maintain the input stores. Interviewees also questioned the system for stocking the input stores. In some cases, the goods were sold at a price other than that specified in the contract, according to a RACADAMA leader. For example, the store sold a bag of seeds costing 6,000 gourdes for just 800 gourdes. Products were also going bad because of inadequate demand.

CRDD Lab and Demonstration Center

The CRDD (Sustainable Rural Development Center) at Bas Boen serves as a national lab and agricultural demonstration center. Before it was built, soil samples had to be sent to the State University of Haiti, in Port au Prince, or to the United States, for analysis. The lab provides services for both small farmers and the private sector, and currently provides a heavily subsidized fee schedule for small farmers. Although the center is clearly an asset to the country, its sustainability is not certain. The CRDD currently receives all of its funding from WINNER. In FY 2012, WINNER started a transition plan for an entity to take over the CRDD, which includes representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, farmer associations, local authorities, and the private sector. The center is fairly large, and includes a main lab, classroom, outdoor training area, dorms and demonstration plots, and employs a staff of 10. Judging from the existing revenue sources (small fees for lab work and fees to rent the facilities), it is not clear how the center will be able to generate the needed revenue, either through existing sources or additional fundraising, to meet the overhead costs and continue operations after WINNER ends.

Master farmer agricultural extension approach

The WINNER project relies on a master farmer approach to agricultural extension, where farmers who meet certain criteria, including literacy, are selected from the associations to receive extensive agricultural training; they in turn are employed to pass on to the farmers in their community. Master farmers are currently paid by WINNER, but once the project ends, it is not clear how the master farmer training will continue. Haiti lacks a public agricultural extension system that the newly trained master farmers could join. Without compensation, they will no longer have the incentive to train others with their newfound knowledge, so the sustainability of the model and any gains achieved during the project are in jeopardy. None of the WINNER beneficiaries or association leaders with whom we spoke were able to tell us if a strategy is in place to ensure that the master farmers will continue to work as extension advisers once the project concludes.

Storage and transportation

Storage and transportation issues continue to affect the benefit of increased yields. Most communities do not have adequate storage facilities, especially cold storage, to hold the produce that is not sold at market soon after the harvest. WINNER provided a limited number of grain storage containers to some of the communities but in part because of a lack of electricity in many rural areas, did not address the issue of cold storage. Without better storage, the increase in yields will not necessarily lead to increased revenue, since the produce can rot before it can be sold. Further, transportation remains a significant issue for many communities, both those coming to the markets from the mountains and those in the plains, where roads frequently wash away during storms. The difficult terrain causes bruising, which can contribute to a post-harvest loss of up to 50 percent.⁶⁵ Transportation affects both the post-harvest loss from bruising and the associations' ability to bring their produce to market. WINNER has set up mobile collection centers and created better storage containers that reduce the bruising during transport; however, significant growth in the sector will require that more focus be placed on storage and transportation.

New technologies

WINNER has introduced new technologies and agricultural practices into its intervention zones. Among these, we note SRI (or system of rice intensification, a low-external-input approach), in Tomazeau; greenhouse and vertical agriculture and drip irrigation, in Kenscoff; construction of a vegetable packaging center; new banana cultivation practices, in Arcahaie; and improved inputs for corn and beans. Farmers are quite satisfied with the innovations that the project has introduced. However, some of the innovations are arriving late in the project cycle. For example, the greenhouses provided to members of SOHADERK do not have access to water, because the water capture systems have not yet been built.⁶⁶ This means it is not clear that members will have time to learn how to use the greenhouses before the project ends. Likewise, the cooperatives were just created. These coops, which carry the Champion label, have a way to go before they show results. The commercialization system related to WINNER is not well developed. People whom we interviewed pointed in particular to problems with transportation and processing.

The project has promoted the use of organic fertilizer in place of mineral fertilizer, and has also encouraged farmers to avoid hazardous pesticides, such as malathion, that can harm human health, in favor of alternatives. Interviewees reported that before the training, little was known about the harmful effects of

⁶⁵ Estimate for post-harvest loss provided by USAID Haiti during July 3, 2013, interview.

⁶⁶ USAID reports that in December 2013, after we carried out the research, SOHARDEK's leader said that the greenhouses make money for the association by producing commodities to meet market demand.

pesticides or the best way to apply them to minimize potentially harmful exposure to humans.

In Saintard, in Archaie, we heard that beneficiaries had had a bad experience with improved bean seeds. Farmers said that they would rather procure beans in the marketplace and plant some of the seeds from those, so as not to have the same problem again. Farmers were also uneasy about hybrid corn seeds that WINNER provided. We surmise that farmers distrust hybrids because although the seeds produce a higher yield, they are expensive imports, and they may lose desirable traits in subsequent generations. Farmers see a risk in becoming dependent on seeds that may not be available in the market every season.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

As the WINNER project draws to a close, it is focusing both on building and measuring the capacity of the farmer associations. In addition to training, WINNER provides associations with computers, office equipment and supplies, and solar energy. Part of the reform efforts of USAID Forward is to support more local institutions. In response, WINNER staff are putting together a database, both of associations and local companies, that have the accounting and management capacity to comply with USAID regulations, which will allow them to receive funding directly from USAID, outside of WINNER, after the project ends. When FtF is rolled out in the north, USAID is expected to provide direct support to local institutions. This reflects progress in their approach since the start of the WINNER project.

The direct support of local institutions is a major advancement for aid from the US government, strengthening local organizations in their operational skills and reducing reliance on external forces. At the same time, there needs to be equal attention to building government capacity. Without a strong and effective government, advancements cannot be maintained, and donors can continue to pour millions of dollars into Haiti with little to show for it once the projects end. Many bilateral and multi-lateral agencies, such as the French development agency, the IDB, and the World Bank, are working directly with the government to provide budget support, work alongside the government, and build capacities where they are weak. On the other hand, because of the history of government corruption and mismanagement in Haiti, US legislative restrictions, and weak capacity, the United States has resisted providing direct budget support. The US Department of Agriculture is embedding advisors in MARNDR. Since the government of Haiti plays a crucial role in overseeing and maintaining development within its borders, the US government needs to do more to ensure

that the it is better equipped to continue and grow the investments that have been made.

The WINNER project helps strengthen the capacity of the associations that it supports to better represent their members. However, the WINNER project has not adequately engaged local government structures, such as the Communal Agricultural Offices (BACs, which are local representative offices of MARNDR) and the Administrative Councils of the Communal Sections (CASECs, local elected officials), in the management of project activities. In Croix-des-Bouquets, Kenscoff, Arcahaie, and Mirebalais, senior officials of these local institutions with whom we spoke were not able to appreciate the achievements of WINNER, as they were not well informed of project details in their areas. WINNER staff generally engage with Departmental Directorates of Agriculture (MARNDR representatives at the department level, equivalent to the province level in other countries), and sometimes with mayors, rather than with officials at lower administrative levels. None of the local officials with whom we spoke were themselves beneficiaries of WINNER assistance or training.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Feed the Future initiative in Haiti represents a significant investment by the US government in Haitian agricultural development. If implemented well, it has the opportunity to benefit smallholder farmers living in poverty and provide the country with greater food security and economic gain. Discussions with farmers, interviews with key stakeholders, and a review of the available data reveal that the project provides benefit to the communities it serves, and at the same time illuminates areas in which FtF can be improved in Haiti.

The WINNER project has provided many benefits to the farming communities in the western region of the country, introducing modern agricultural practices and providing investments that have led to productivity gains and improved farmer incomes in the study sites. Investments include technology packages; innovations in the cultivation of rice, bananas, and plantains; subsidies; introduction of improved varieties of corn and beans; and mechanization. The creation of the Champion label and the introduction of local markets, such as supermarkets, hotels, and the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), to WINNER farmers, have added value to small-scale agricultural production.

Along with these contributions there are also opportunities to strengthen the project to increase its impact, both in the west and in the next iteration of FtF, in the north. The project can improve farmers' participation by seeking their input during the project. Creating a culture of dialogue with feedback mechanisms better ensures that the farmers remain active participants, rather than passive aid recipients. Adoption of the new technologies brings a level of uncertainty and risk to the farmers, who are, in many cases, already living in extreme poverty. Including them more in the project design gives them a voice, builds trust, and helps ensure that they eventually embrace the new technologies. There is also a need to increase women's participation, to ensure that the investment made by WINNER benefits the entire community rather than supports existing gender norms, which leave many women disempowered and living in poverty.

There are also many threats to sustainability—from lack of government ownership to expensive, high-maintenance technology. The gains that have been made cannot be sustained if the Haitian government does not assume the task of maintaining what WINNER has started, particularly maintenance of the water channels and regulation of environmental impacts such as the cutting down of trees. It is not evident that the government has either the capacity or the funding to maintain the investments that have been made.

With the WINNER project drawing to a close, in 2014, it is our hope that these observations can inform the expansion of Feed the Future in the north, and at the same time provide lessons to the many development actors working in Haiti. Drawing on our research findings, we offer the following recommendations to strengthen the Feed the Future initiative in Haiti:

IMPROVE TARGETING AND PARTICIPATION

1. Increase the sustainability of the program and adoption rate of the new technologies by encouraging beneficiaries' active participation in the design and implementation process. Include the beneficiaries in the design stage of the project, seeking their input and incorporating their feedback into the priorities and approach of the project.
2. Develop standard mechanisms for beneficiary input and feedback during the project. Giving farmers a voice throughout the project not only encourages their participation but also helps to improve the project performance in order to ensure that it meets the community's needs and increases adoption rates of the new teachings and technologies.
3. Show sensitivity to the existing community layout when determining the geographic boundaries for the project. Consider drawing geographical boundaries that include whole communities so that all members of the community are eligible for support. If that is not possible, explain the disparity to the community to lessen the potential for tension and jealousy. WINNER understandably needs to draw boundaries for the areas in which it operates, but in doing so, should consider the affinities between project communities and those excluded from the project's boundaries.
4. Increase women's participation by implementing a gender strategy that includes the following:⁶⁷
 - a) Provide literacy training to increase the women's eligibility to participate in master farmer training, or pursue a model where literacy is not a requirement. Literacy is a prerequisite for the master farmer training program, yet with only a 49 percent literacy rate among Haitians over 15, this standard poses a barrier to participation by both men and women.⁶⁸ As an alternative, the farmer field school approach does not require literacy.

⁶⁸ "World Bank Data Bank." 2014. (2006 estimate).

- b) Set the timing and location of trainings in close proximity to the association members, and during times that the women are available to participate. Women generally prepare meals, take care of the children, and maintain the household. If meetings are scheduled when they are busy with these activities, they are unlikely to participate.
- c) Provide women with leadership and empowerment training. Strengthen the skills and confidence of the women to take on more leadership positions within the associations.

EMPOWER SMALLHOLDER PRODUCERS

1. Include training on rights and responsibilities, along with advocacy skills, so that the farmers can demand that the government and foreign agencies protect and ensure their rights.
2. Continue to support and strengthen the co-ops until they are independently operational.
3. Include trainings on family decision-making and control over resources and finances (key aspects of the WEAI Index), in order to further empower women in agriculture.

ENSURE PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

1. Continue to work with the Ministries of Agriculture and the Environment to maintain the work that has been done, specifically the maintenance of the water channels, enforcement of environmental regulation, and funding of the national laboratory and agricultural extension model.
2. Use low-cost technology that is available in Haiti and appropriate for the agro-ecology of the particular area (e.g. dry or irrigated land, land with little drainage, etc.) for tilling the land, in place of US tractors that require expensive maintenance and parts from the United States. For example, mechanized hand tillers have parts readily available in Haiti.
3. Help the associations to specialize as enterprises in supplying agricultural inputs by giving them information about where to buy supplies for the input stores, better ensuring that the stores remain open once the project ends.
4. For the expansion of FtF in Haiti, look at other training models such as farmer field schools, which use the principles of adult education and are much less

linear than the master/model farmer approach used in WINNER, and do not necessarily require the existence of a national agricultural extension system.⁶⁹

5. Address the issue of processing, storage, and transportation, so that the increased yields will not be left to rot or ruined in transit to the market.

STRENGTHEN LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

1. Provide funding directly to local institutions while continuing to build their capacity, to ensure that funds are well managed.
2. Work together with the government of Haiti, letting it guide development plans and building its capacity at all levels (national and local) to maintain the investments that have been made.

In addition to the above recommendations, it is crucial that the Feed the Future Initiative maintain ongoing monitoring and evaluation and include a midterm external evaluation⁷⁰ so that it gathers the critical information necessary to make adjustments as needed during the project. FtF is providing a significant investment in Haiti and has the potential to provide meaningful benefit to the lives of smallholder farmers. It is our hope that as FtF rolls out in the north, lessons from the WINNER project can be applied to ensure a successful and sustainable effort that advances the interests of men and women smallholder farmers.

⁶⁹ See FAO, “Farmer Field School,” <http://www.fao.org/nr/land/sustainable-land-management/farmer-field/school/en/>.

⁷⁰ USAID planned a mid-term evaluation for the WINNER project but abandoned the effort after a contract with an external firm did not meet expectations.

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APPENDIX A

List of focus groups conducted June 26–July 3 2013 with Farmer Associations (project beneficiaries)

Association name	Association location	Date of focus group	Gender	Number of participants
ENENAF	Croix des Bouquets	June 26, 2013	Female	7
ENENAF	Croix des Bouquets	June 26, 2013	Male	8
SOHADERK	Kenscoff	June 27, 2013	Female	5
SOHADERK	Kenscoff	June 27, 2013	Male	6
GFVCT	Tomazeau (Localite Cotin)	June 28, 2013	Female	9
CODCOA	Archaie	June 30, 2013	Male	12
CODCOA	Archaie	June 30, 2013	Female	11
ACPDD	Croix des Bouquets (Duvivier)	July 1, 2013	Female	6
ACPDD	Croix des Bouquets (Duvivier)	July 1, 2013	Male	6
CETPA	Mirebalais	July 2, 2013	Mixed	8 Male, 1 Female
RACADAMA	Archaie	July 3, 2013	Male	9
RACADAMA	Archaie	July 3, 2013	Female	2

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