

NEWS RELEASE

## AREA PROVIDES HAITIAN LABORATORIES NEW EQUIPMENT, TRAINING TO FIGHT DISEASES AND PESTS IN CROPS

PETIONVILLE, Haiti, Dec. 6, 2017 -- Researchers working for a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-sponsored project to improve Haiti's agricultural sector are lending their expertise to enhance Haitians' ability to diagnose diseases in agricultural crops.

The Appui à la Recherche et au Développement Agricole (AREA) project provided modern laboratory equipment and training at two of Haiti's chief plant pathology clinics. These are the Rural Sustainable Development Center (CRDD) at Bas-Boën in Croix-des-Bouquets and the Haitian government's plant pathology lab, which is run by the Directorate of Plant Protection, a technical branch of Haiti's Ministry of Agriculture.

AREA plant pathology experts trained lab technicians to use the equipment, which included computerized microscopes equipped with advanced software that allow technicians to examine highly magnified images of plant diseases.

The resources are part of the AREA project's multi-faceted effort to help improve Haiti's agricultural sector and address food insecurity, which has been a long-standing challenge in Haiti. Roughly 40 percent of Haiti's households are classified as undernourished and the country ranked as "alarming" on the 2015 Global Hunger Index, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Plant pathology laboratories play an important role in the detection and control of plant diseases and pests.

"These materials are an answer to the great need that we had in this area. This increases our ability to provide more high-quality laboratory services," said Jean Frisner Clervés, the head of the Directorate of Plant Protection unit of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Under the AREA project, agriculture, climate and technology experts in the United States and in Haiti are working on more than a half-dozen initiatives to build the capacity of Haiti's agricultural sector, ranging from introducing climate-resilient farming practices to sponsoring Haitian graduate students to study agricultural sciences at the University Florida and Louisiana State University.

Members of the AREA project's plant pathology research team survey plant diseases and pests that limit the productivity of major crops in Haiti, which include rice, beans, plantains and maize. The team also is spearheading improvements to the plant diagnostics network in the Feed the Future-West Corridor, a largely rural area from the highland of Kenscoff to the Montrouis area.

Plant pathologist expert Joubert Fayette and his assistant, Stéphanie Loubeau trained the staff at Bas-Boën lab, as well as Marie Pascale Constant, head of the Ministry of Agriculture's phytopathology laboratory, and other technicians in her division.

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“AREA made it possible to carry out diagnostics to identify phytopathogenic fungi at the laboratory, which was not the case before we received the new equipment and training,” Constant said.

The Bas Boën CRDD is the largest of a network of Rural Centers for Sustainable Development (CRDD) established with the help of USAID to contribute to modernize Haitian agriculture by introducing improved techniques, varieties and technologies. The laboratory has been hampered by some inoperable equipment, improperly organized lab space and a lack of trained technicians.

Specialists at the Bas-Boën CRDD process samples of plants and soils brought in by farmers whose crops are threatened by fungi and bacteria or pests like aphids and mites. After identifying the pathogens, farmers are given recommendations to help control the diseases and pests. Researchers also monitor experimental plots of beans and maize so they can more quickly spot plant diseases that impact crops and provide farmers with better solutions to increase yields.

In addition to high-tech microscopes, the AREA project provided electric pressure steam sterilizers, a laminar flow hood, chemical supplies and reference books on plant diseases. New cabinetry, coupled with a redesign of the lab’s layout, has also improved the effectiveness and functionality of the Bas-Boën clinic to allow researchers to more accurately analyze samples of plants and soils that show symptoms of disease.

### About the AREA project

Appui à la Recherche et au Développement Agricole (AREA), also known SARD (Support to Agricultural Research and Development), is a multi-faceted project to address long-standing challenges of food insecurity in Haiti by improving the country’s agricultural productivity. In 2015, the U.S. Agency for International Development provided \$13.7 million to fund the project as part of USAID’s Feed the Future initiative in Haiti. The AREA project consortium’s members are three U.S. land grant universities: the University of Florida, Louisiana State University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Science leads the project. For more information visit <http://global.ifas.ufl.edu/area-project>.

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