

PRESS RELEASE

AREA PROJECT TO HOST HAITI'S FIRST CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURAL TEACHING

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, April, 26, 2018 — Haiti has long suffered from food insecurity, and a conference May 3-4 will explore one way of ending it: Improved teaching about agriculture.

The Innovation in Agricultural Education conference will help professors in Haiti to create better learning experiences for students and aid long-term reform of the country's agricultural system.

More than 100 U.S. and Haiti university professors and other experts are expected to attend the conference, which organizers say is the first such gathering in Haiti devoted exclusively to the scholarship of teaching and learning agriculture at the postsecondary level.

"It's one thing for a professor to read a theoretical textbook about how to teach. It's quite another to talk with another professor about what actually works in the classroom," says Grady Roberts, a professor of agricultural education at the University of Florida (UF).

Roberts is an organizer of the academic gathering on behalf of Feed the Future Haiti Appui à la Recherche et au Développement Agricole (AREA), a project managed by UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences to help Haiti to improve its agricultural sector. AREA is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

University educators of animal science, biochemistry, horticulture, agronomy and other disciplines will have a chance to exchange ideas and learn from each other at the two-day conference, which will be held at the Karibe Convention Center Hotel in Port-au-Prince. Scholars from Haiti, the U.S. and other countries submitted 21 abstracts to present at the event, covering everything from ways to enhance agricultural labs and classroom experiences to teaching agricultural entrepreneurship.

Many of the Haitian professors attending the conference have participated in AREA's Faculty Development Academy, a program designed to give professors the tools they need to improve how they teach collegiate-level classes.

By teaching the teachers, the AREA project hopes to improve the educational system, which will eventually lead to better agricultural scholarship and help spark innovation across the agricultural sector — from the way food is being grown to the types of crops available.

Professors often are hired for their technical knowledge, not really how well they teach, says Absalon Pierre, Ph.D., a co-organizer of the conference and AREA's human and institutional capacity development specialist. However, teaching is a science, with its own techniques that professors need to master, he says. This conference is designed to fill the gap. "Peer-to-peer sharing about good practices in teaching is invaluable," he says.

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Media Contacts

United States: Grady Roberts, professor of agricultural education, University of Florida, 352-273-2568, groberts@ufl.edu

Haiti: Absalon Pierre, Ph.D., AREA human and institutional capacity development specialist, 509-3662 9431, absalonpierre@ufl.edu

About AREA: In May 2015, the U.S. Agency for International Development awarded a five-year contract to a consortium of three U.S. land grant institutions led by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences to support its Feed the Future initiative in Haiti. The consortium's mission is to help Haiti develop and strengthen Haiti's system for agricultural innovation, and to increase production, household income and food security. For more information, visit <http://global.ifas.ufl.edu/area-project>.

About Feed the Future: The project is funded by USAID as part of Feed the Future, the U.S. Government's global food and security initiative. With a focus on smallholder farmers, particularly women, Feed the Future supports partner countries in developing their agriculture sectors to spur economic growth and trade that increase incomes and reduce hunger, poverty and undernutrition.

www.feedthefuture.gov