



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/better-irrigation-systems-strengthen-agricultural-production-and-resilience-haiti>

Better Irrigation Systems Strengthen Agricultural Production and Resilience in Haiti



USAID

A new irrigation system in Haiti will help local farmers access and manage water essential for agricultural production.

In February 2015, President of Haiti Michel Martelly inaugurated a new water diversion system along the flood-prone Rivière Grise in Haiti's Cul-de-Sac corridor. The U.S. Agency for International Development has been working in partnership with the Government of Haiti under Feed the Future to sustainably improve irrigation water access in this region while reducing the risk of floods and increasing agricultural productivity.

The system replaces a prior dam rendered inoperative by a 1978 hurricane, which left farming communities vulnerable to floods and devastated local irrigation systems that they relied on for growing crops during the dry season. The long-awaited network of rehabilitated irrigation canals that branch off from the new water diversion structure will allow year-round high-value agricultural production for 10,000 farmers working on 8,500 hectares of land. These new structures – the first of their kind in a country with limited engineering capacity – are designed to withstand a stronger hurricane than Haiti has seen in the last 50 years. Seismic resilience was also considered in the design of the structure, which is primarily made out of steel.

Water distribution from the new Rivière Grise system (which is owned by Haiti's Ministry of Agriculture) will be managed by a local water users association trained with support from Feed the Future. The association will establish a regular distribution schedule and collect moderate user fees to support the long-term maintenance of the irrigation infrastructure. Through this increased access to irrigation, farmers will be able to grow more crops per year and are projected to see an additional \$20 million in annual earnings, more than a two-fold return on the project's investment in the first year alone.

The work at Rivière Grise includes various complementary structures that will control water levels in order to reduce flooding and riverbank erosion. In the event of heavy rainfall, water gates will enable operators to divert water back into the river, protecting local communities from the threat of disaster and building their resilience to extreme weather events and climate shocks.

This new water management system supports Feed the Future's strategy in Haiti to improve smallholder farmer livelihoods and agricultural markets while stabilizing fragile watershed ecosystems.