



Farmer to Farmer Program **Guyana Vegetable Project**

Overview

Partners of the Americas' USAID-funded Farmer to Farmer program provides technical assistance to local agricultural producers, producer organizations and agribusinesses in Jamaica, Haiti and Guyana. Through the program, US agricultural volunteers spend two to three weeks working with their counterparts in the Caribbean on a specific technical assignment to address local needs. Partners' Guyana program focuses on vegetables, fruits, root crops, dairy and cattle, and extension service and agriculture cooperative strengthening.

Project Description


In Guyana, Farmer to Farmer is working on vegetable production with Mar Friends Land Cooperative Society, New Friendship Land Farmers' Cooperative and several other groups in regions 3, 4, 5, and 6. Most members of the cooperatives and groups grow a wide variety of crops; vegetable crops include eggplant, hot peppers, cabbage, lettuce and tomatoes. The project aims to increase crop yields and improve the quality of produce, as well as address the overuse and improper use of pesticides with a view to establishing organic agriculture. To ensure project sustainability, the Farmer to Farmer Program includes training for community leaders, agriculture students and extension agents.

Project Impact

Farmer to Farmer volunteers provided training to farmers on identifying and controlling diseases, with a particular emphasis on integrated pest management. Volunteers gave several presentations and provided on-farm training on the importance of using reduced-risk pesticides and not mixing insecticides before application. As a result of this training, farmers have been able to better identify and treat diseases and pest, which has greatly improved their crop yield. In addition, farmers are using more effective and environmentally safe insecticides

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and improving the health of the individual farmers and their communities. Volunteers also interviewed close to 200 farmers to conduct a study, now published in the Journal of Toxicological & Environmental Chemistry, on the clinical effects from exposure to agricultural chemicals including insecticides.

Members of the Mar Friends Cooperative were able to apply knowledge imparted to them during training sessions conducted in farm management in acquiring a grant from the Guyana Micro-Projects Programme worth G\$7,157,740, which was used in part to purchase a tractor. The Cooperative was also awarded a second grant worth G\$2.8 million from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints for the purchase of farm equipment, tools, and farming inputs. Farmer to Farmer volunteers trained members of the Cooperative and personnel of the Guyana School of Agriculture in the careful handling and maintenance of agricultural machinery, and this group now offers land preparation services to its members.

“I think the *Farmer to Farmer* program has a real potential to meet its goals. Guyanese farmers certainly have the potential to feed not only themselves and their countrymen, but the entire Caribbean area.”

*- Alfred Aleguas
Farmer to Farmer Volunteer*

Utilizing knowledge from this training in farm management, members were also able to compile records which were used to substantiate their claims for flood relief in 2008. Previously, these farmers were never able to substantiate their claims and as a result were always overlooked for this type of assistance after flooding. Furthermore, members of at least three farmer groups (Mar Friends, Tri-Lakes and Central Mahaicony/Perth) have adopted practices to improve soil and water management. Among the practices adopted are crop rotation, mulching and composting.

For more information on Partners of the Americas and the Farmer to Farmer Program, please visit www.partners.net.