



PARTNERS *of the* AMERICAS



## ***Farmer to Farmer* Program Haiti Beekeeping 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 has had a successful program in Haiti for over twelve years working on a variety of agriculture projects including vegetable production, beekeeping, rabbit production and food processing.

### **Project Description**


The *Farmer to Farmer* beekeeping project works with many cooperatives and associations, as well as individual beekeepers, to improve apiculture skills and increase production and sale of quality honey. Volunteers share their expertise in hive management, disease and pest control, honey quality, and packaging, labeling, and marketing through on-farm trainings and workshops. Colony inspection, beekeeping equipment, and nectar and pollen plants are also covered.

### **Project Impact**

*Farmer to Farmer* technical assistance has improved overall hive construction, which allows bees to be more productive. Volunteers have trained beekeepers on the construction and positioning of hives and the evaluation of the overall health of the hive. As a result, beekeepers more regularly construct the standard Langstroth-type hives which, in contrast to log hives, allows beekeepers to remove individual combs for inspection.

Even with better hives, a persistent problem has been maintaining sufficient "bee space," or the proper spacing of combs in a hive. The ideal space is one centimeter - more or less will result in difficulty in managing the hives, loss of productivity and potentially killing of queens when attempting to remove combs. Volunteers have spent a significant amount of time training keepers on this topic.

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Pests and disease are also a problem. The deadly Varroa mite is prevalent and *Farmer to Farmer* volunteers have worked extensively with beekeepers to identify, manage, prevent and eliminate infestations. Beekeepers learned three easy ways to identify Varroa mite infestations: the sugar shake method, the brood examination method, and the sticky screen method, as well as ways to treat and control the spread of disease. Volunteers have also addressed European foulbrood disease, American foulbrood disease and wax moth infestations and left reference materials for current and future farmers, improving project sustainability.

Volunteers have also documented the growing presence of the Africanized bee in Haiti. This species is aggressive, which can potentially result in injury or death. To prepare beekeepers, *Farmer to Farmer* volunteers have provided techniques to working with the aggressive bees and have worked with local tailors and metal workers to reproduce protective equipment commonly used in the US, such as head masks and smokers. Haitian bee keepers will now be able to better adapt to this new species and continue keeping apiaries.

In 2000, the apiculture industry in Haiti was in great decline, with apiaries that had regularly produced 25 gallons producing less than 3 gallons a year. Since then, 21 *Farmer to Farmer* volunteer trips have been conducted and with the training and technical advice of volunteers, many beekeepers who had previously abandoned the practice returned and are moving forward. Hive loss has decreased more than twelvefold. Hives which were producing as little as half a gallon of honey are now producing between 3 and 7 gallons per hive. While raw honey after harvesting sells for \$10.30 - \$12.98/gallon, honey filtered using *Farmer to Farmer*-taught technologies sells for \$25/gallon, allowing for greater income generation for small producers.

Partners' beekeeping network has grown significantly and now includes more than 35 associations or groups and over 100 independent beekeepers. Women have benefited from interventions as well: in 2006 only five women were active in the beekeeping network, as compared to 38 women in 2008. Involvement in the beekeepers' association has helped women access loans and to produce and sell soap and other materials derived from hive products.

In order to ensure the training continues, volunteers worked with Haitians to produce several volumes of training manuals that were then translated into Creole. Volunteers have also worked to strengthen regional agricultural institutes that teach beekeeping.

For more information on Partners of the Americas and the *Farmer to Farmer* Program, please visit [www.partners.net](http://www.partners.net).

**“The beekeeping cooperative projects...have a number of indications of excellence and the program to assist them through Partners has been excellent. It has and is making a difference in Haiti.”**

- Dewey Caron, Apiculturist,  
University of Delaware