Facilitating Community Development: dōTERRA Healing Hands Foundation

One of the greatest needs in Haitian communities has been fresh water, especially after the devastating earthquake in 2010. In partnership with Water for Life, dōTERRA Healing Hands has built fresh water wells in the farming communities of St. Hilaire, Morency, Tricon, and Ducis, with more fresh water wells on the way.

Before these wells, children in these communities walked two hours or more each morning to collect a few gallons of water for their family’s daily cooking, washing, and other household needs. With easily accessible water, children can use the hours they previously spent walking to collect water to now study, and families can dedicate time to income-generating activities. The fresh, potable water also eliminates serious health problems caused by contaminated water. Each well can benefit about 350 people, 50 cattle, and allows for the watering of family farms every day.

With donations from the dōTERRA Healing Hands Foundation (HHF), the communities have been able to ensure the project’s success. Community members helped obtain cement and install the wells. They feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the wells, and continue to maintain and value them, making the project and its impact sustainable. dōTERRA and HHF plan to help the communities continue to build their resources and address additional needs, such as education and healthcare.

References

https://books.google.lu/books?id=drU3HlesN5kC&printsec=frontcover&dq=haiti+the+aftershocks+of+history&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ZU6fT4nvHpOm8gSi4sSPAQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=true

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Originally inhabited by the island’s native Taino population, Haiti was colonized for more than 500 years by Spanish and then French control due to Haiti’s central location along trade routes. Extensive sugar and coffee plantations contributed to Haiti becoming the most profitable colony in the world by the late 18th century. After winning its freedom from France in 1804, Haiti has continued to experience challenges, including multiple political coups d’état, deforestation, devastating natural disasters, and the highest poverty rate in the Western Hemisphere. While Haiti is often remembered for its hardships, Haitians have continued to demonstrate resilience and a “commitment to self-sufficiency and self-reliance” in the face of adversity. (Dubois, 2012).

**Vetiver in Haiti**

Vetiver is one crop that has grown well in Haiti for almost 100 years. It is a hearty grass that can survive difficult weather conditions, including extreme frost, drought, and flooding. Because of Vetiver’s adaptability, farmers rely on it as a dependable income stream or even as a “savings plan” that can be harvested in times of need. Vetiver helps prevent soil erosion because its stiff grass stems create channels that prevent water and soil from running off. Rather than the roots growing horizontally as most grasses do, Vetiver’s roots grow vertically down into the soil up to 5 meters long. It can be planted with other crops without competing for nutrients or water and can improve soil quality.

Farmers often plant Vetiver on hillsides. Traditionally, farmers would harvest whole plots of Vetiver at one time, pulling the roots and clearing the mountainside. Recently tilled, the loose soil would be susceptible to extreme erosion. Through training, growers partnered with dōTERRA have learned that leaving a few horizontal bands of mature Vetiver in the soil at each harvest significantly reduces erosion. Vetiver requires between 12 and 18 months before the root is mature for harvest and ready for optimal distillation yields and oil quality. Harvesting at the right time improves ecological benefits and produces a higher quality oil for which the farmer receives an increased price.

**Vetiver Distillation**

Once Vetiver roots have been loaded into the distillation unit, steam is introduced into the distillation unit. The steam permeates the roots, capturing the oil and creating an oil and water mixture. As the liquid cools, the oil and water naturally separate with the Vetiver oil settling to the bottom, as Vetiver oil is one of the few common essential oils that actually has a specific gravity greater than water—whereas most other essential oils have a specific gravity lower than water.

**Cō-Impact Sourcing and Cooperatives**

dōTERRA’s Cō-Impact Sourcing initiatives have helped to establish five Vetiver cooperatives in southwestern Haiti. Through these cooperatives, farmers receive trainings, pre-payments, and fair prices. In trainings, farmers learn to propagate the Vetiver root to ensure the grass will grow back again. They also learn about proper planting and harvest techniques to maximize essential oil yield from distillation.

dōTERRA’s Cō-Impact Sourcing initiatives have helped farmers finance their operations. In Haiti, this is a unique incentive and valuable opportunity for the farmers who have the Vetiver roots in the ground for at least 12 months to ensure optimal quality. Furthermore, through a traceability system that tracks Vetiver roots farmers are able to receive a premium for roots that yield superior quality essential oil during distillation.

Another program that benefits farmers are payments that are divided between planting, pre-harvest, and harvested to provide timely financial assistance throughout the year as opposed to one lump sum payment. dōTERRA’s partnership not only offers a consistent income, but pre-payments as well, that help farmers finance their operations. In Haiti, this is a unique incentive and valuable opportunity for the farmers who know the quantity of Vetiver they will produce, up to a 75% pre-payment is offered, with the last 25% paid immediately upon delivery of the harvest. These pre-payments can support urgent family needs, such as school or medical fees year-round.