



dōTERRA

# *Vetiver in Haiti*

LAND OF THE MOUNTAINS

A Cō-Impact Sourcing Story



Cleaning Vetiver roots

## Haiti: The Pearl of the Antilles

The beautiful country of Haiti, located on the western half of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, has a rich and diverse culture that values family, hard work, and creativity through the arts. However, Haiti's journey to develop this unique culture involves its history of political and personal struggle and perseverance.

Derived from the Taino word Ayiti, Haiti means "land of the mountains:" stunning mountain ranges cover nearly two-thirds of the country. Years of intensive sugarcane plantations and deforestation have depleted the soil, making it difficult to farm many food crops. In spite of this, about two-thirds of the population relies on agriculture as their primary source of income.

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 resiliency 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 hedges that prevent water and soil run 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



Harvesting Vetiver



Vetiver distillation

time improves ecological benefits and produces a higher quality oil for which the farmer receives an increased price.

dōTERRA is very proud to source Vetiver from Haiti and to work with dedicated Haitian partners.

## 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 also enabled dōTERRA's distillation partner in Haiti to give a financial bonus to farmers who leave 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 harvest 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 growers. If a farmer knows 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.



## QUICK FACTS

As of September of 2018, through dōTERRA's Cō-Impact Sourcing initiatives in Haiti, **more than 11,000 jobs have been supported**, positively impacting at least 48,000 lives

dōTERRA's involvement with Haitian Vetiver farmers helped form the beginning of **Cō-Impact Sourcing** in 2014.

It is estimated that **Haiti exports half of the world's Vetiver essential oil**, with 20,000 hectares of Vetiver grown countrywide.

Vetiver roots have been known to **grow up to 4 meters long** in one year, and can grow up to a total length of 5 meters.

**Vetiver grass can be used on roofs** to keep homes cooler.

**The warm Trade Winds cause Haiti to experience both extreme wet and dry seasons.** These winds can push the moist air out of the area, making the island prone to drought from November through March.

**The name "Haiti" is derived from the Taino word Ayiti, meaning "land of the mountains."** The rugged landscape of Haiti includes multiple mountain ranges that cover nearly two-thirds of the country.

**Haiti, with a population of over 11 million people,** covers the western 11,000 square miles of the island of Hispaniola, with the Dominican Republic occupying the eastern half of the island.



Children on harvested Vetiver

## 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

[http://haiti.ciesin.columbia.edu/haiti\\_files/documents/Freeman\\_UNEP\\_Vetiver\\_Report\\_2011\\_0.pdf](http://haiti.ciesin.columbia.edu/haiti_files/documents/Freeman_UNEP_Vetiver_Report_2011_0.pdf)

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