

# FEED FAMILIES, INCREASE INCOME, AND PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT



In many of the poorest regions of the world, farming provides the most immediate way for families to feed themselves and earn a living. Yet many farmers cannot produce enough for their own families, let alone a surplus to sell at market. Even worse, many farming practices result in deforestation, soil depletion, and other environmental harm that creates a negative cycle in which subsistence farming becomes harder and harder.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP:** Support **sustainable agriculture programs** that improve a farmer's income while preserving the environment. Programs that combine agro-forestry and farmer associations enable farmers to grow enough food for their families, sell produce for income, and contribute to regenerating land that is severely degraded by deforestation. Agro-forestry combines growing dual-purpose trees, which produce income-generating fruit and prevent land degradation, with cultivating staple crops like corn, cassava, and other vegetables, which provide short-term income and food. Farmer associations help members expand their enterprises through business training, intra-group lending, and connections with suppliers, traders, and exporters.

**HIGH IMPACT OPPORTUNITY:** Sustainable agriculture programs produce results. In Malawi, a program led by [Catholic Relief Services \(CRS\)](#) resulted in improved food security and adoption of best farming practices by more than 85 percent of participants. With crop yields increased by 20 – 90 percent, families had more food to eat and sell. Household assets, such as livestock and farm tools, increased by 110 percent. Improved farming practices and planting of dual-purpose trees resulted in regenerated land and decreased risk of soil erosion. Costs for this model vary by country, but in Haiti, for instance, we estimate a new program would cost about \$90 per beneficiary per year.

**TAKE ACTION:** Organizations such as [CRS](#), [CARE](#), and [Oxfam](#) are implementing sustainable agriculture programs throughout the developing world. To find others, see web sites of the [International Fund for Agricultural Development \(IFAD\)](#), the [Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research \(CGIAR\)](#), or the [International Center for Tropical Agriculture \(CIAT\)](#), which provide links to local partners and research centers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

**TIPS:** When assessing sustainable agriculture programs, look for organizations that make local economies grow (e.g., by promoting sales of local rather than imported seeds at seed fairs), that support farmer participation by allowing them to make decisions about what to grow, and that promote farming practices that conserve water and soil.

For additional tips and information, see our guide [Haiti: How Can I Help?](#) pages 23-27.



*Photo by David Snyder. Image provided by Catholic Relief Services.*