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Peasant Tree Planting in Haiti:
A Social Soundness Analysis

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Port-au-Prince
July 9, 1981

Submitted to USAID
under Contract
#521-000-C-00-1036-00

FOREWORD

The present document was commissioned by USAID/Haiti with two purposes in mind:

1. to provide material from which a Social Soundness Analysis could be extracted for the Agroforestry Outreach Project Paper;
2. to provide a brief training document for use by incoming technicians who will participate in that Project.

The report focuses on those social and cultural patterns which bear most directly on the feasibility of initiating peasant tree-planting efforts in rural Haiti. In addition to the general literature on Haiti and his own research, the author has also drawn heavily on three recent reports completed by Glenn and Jacqueline Strucker, which bear directly on certain aspects of the Project being contemplated. These documents are referenced in a bibliography appended to this report. In compliance with a request from the USAID/Mission, this report has been written as concisely as possible, omitting the footnotes and references that are generally included where there are no space limitations. Special thanks are given to W. Stacy Rhodes for his support during the completion of this contract.

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SOCIAL/CULTURAL ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

This social/cultural analysis will address those aspects of rural Haitian economic, social, domestic, and political organization most likely to affect, or be affected by, the proposed Agroforestry Outreach Project. After an overview of the rural population, specific attention will be directed toward cropping patterns, the role of trees in the traditional economy of rural Haiti, the livestock economy and the fundamentally important issue of rural Haitian land tenure. From there the discussion will turn to organizational matters. An examination of rural peasant domestic organization will discuss the possible involvement of women in this project, and will be followed by a discussion of traditional and recent forms of community organization that may be called upon to play a role in agroforestation activities. Patterns of local government will be discussed as well, insofar as these may influence the course of project events. In this regard particular attention will be given to the question of those aspects of Haitian law that concern themselves with the cutting and/or planting of trees.

1.1 Overview of the population

The absence of reliable recent census data for Haiti has generated a number of estimates as to current population size. Estimates range from below five million to slightly above 6 million. Even using the lower figure, Haiti has one of the highest population densities of any country in the Latin American and Caribbean Region.

As less than 30% of Haiti's surface area is considered to be arable land, this results in a density of more than 750 persons per Km² of arable land, one of the highest such ratios in the world.

The population itself has characteristics typical of populations that have not yet traversed the "demographic transition." The birth rate is a high 39 per 1,000 and the overall death rate of 17 per thousand is kept high by the mortality rate among infants (at least 115 per thousand live births). A number of factors, including emigration, is keeping the overall growth rate to a relatively modest 2% per annum. But the growth of Port-au-Prince is close to 6% each year, while that of the rural areas is about only 1%, giving clear evidence of an increasing rural urban exodus.

1.2 Rurality of the Population

Some of Haiti's less fertile Caribbean neighbors — notably Barbados — have population densities comparable to that of Haiti. But whereas the population of Barbados lives principally from non-agricultural pursuits and enjoys a relatively high standard of living despite the density of the population, Haiti remains overwhelmingly rural and fundamentally agrarian. Discrepancies in the definition of "urban" produce different indices as to the percentage of population in Haiti that is now considered urban. Under customary internationally-accepted standards of "urbanity", close to 85% of Haitians were considered "rural" in recent years. But recent urbanization trends and a broader concept of "urban" have reduced this figure somewhat. However, it is certain that at least three out of every four Haitians continue to live in villages or hamlets and depend on the cultivation of the land as the major component of their domestic economy. A more detailed discussion of the different elements of the Haitian peasant economy, as they relate to the activities contemplated in this project, is provided below.

1.3 Rural Administrative Units: "Section" vs. "Habitation"

Haiti is divided (politically) into Departments, and each Department is subdivided into civil communes. The commune itself is divided into the town center and the outlying rural sections. For organizational purposes it is important to note that the rural section is not a functional social entity that can function as a unit for project purposes. It is rather an arbitrary administrative delineation that may contain several dozen geographically dispersed villages and hamlets. The highest authority in the rural section is the chef de section, who answers not to the civilian authorities in the town center, but directly to the commander of the military district in which the commune is located. The chef de section is almost always chosen from among the residents of one of the communities that is located within the section.

The actual communities in which people live have no legal/administrative status. They are villages which may contain as few as 100 people or as many as 2,000 people (in exceptional cases). They are not referred to as "villages" or "hamlets" or even "communities" by the inhabitants. Depending on the region, they may be called bitasyon (from the French word for plantation used in colonial times) or simply lokalite. Though their administrative status is ambiguous, central authority is represented there by unpaid assistants to the chef de section, generally one being appointed from within each bitasyon. (In this report the local community will be referred to as a "village", though this word is virtually never heard in rural Haiti.)

1.4 Settlement patterns and the rural compound

Depending principally on local topography, peasant's houses within a particular village may be dispersed over a broad area, or they may be "nucleated" into clusters. Dispersed settlement is more characteristic of mountain or upland communities and is thus the prevailing mode throughout most of Haiti. Where nucleated settlement is found, it tends to be in lowland or topographically level regions.

In rural Haiti there is another social unit below the level of the village but above the level of the household. This unit is referred to as the lakou, best translated as "compound." The compound is generally composed of the houses of elder parents and their married children who have decided not to build houses elsewhere. The lakou will in many cases have some fencing around it, indicating its status as a residential unit. In times past it is reported that the lakou functioned at least to some degree as an economic unit, elder parents retaining some authority over the economic activities of even their married children. If this structure in fact existed, it has long since disappeared throughout rural Haiti. The pattern today is for each household to function somewhat autonomously as an economic unit, though there are labor and food exchanges which do occur. Exchanges, however, are neither limited to nor necessarily focused within the lakou itself. And in many mountain areas, the physical compound itself is disappearing, as recent generations opt to build houses on separate pieces of ground which they purchase and fence off from their neighbors. The individualization of economic activities has been accompanied by a simultaneous evolution of individualized residence as well.

1.5 Ethnicity, language, and religion

The phenotype of over 90% of the Haitian people gives the impression of relatively unmixed African descent. Tribal differences that characterized the colonial slave population have been completely obliterated from the external organization of daily life in rural Haiti. An anthropologist might argue that there exists a tribal basis of customs or music styles that distinguish one region from another. But the argument would be tenuous at best and it certainly would find no reflection in the self-identification of the villagers. There are, in short, no tribal or ethnic subgroups found in rural Haiti. The dominant label of self-identification found throughout Haiti is ayisyin — i.e. Haitian. There are minor phenotypical differences that could be said to characterize regions. For example, there appears to be a somewhat larger proportion of lighter skinned people on the southern peninsula than in the Cul-de-Sac plain, and in some places pejorative esthetic evaluations of very dark-skinned individuals are made (the adjective used in such cases is nwa; those with lighter skin will be called rouj, literally "red"). But these

differences are seen as being individual in nature, not ethnic or tribal. From the point of view of the organization of projects, there is nothing in rural Haiti that corresponds, for example, to the Indian/Ladino distinction found in Central and South America, which is critical to the functioning of development projects.

Linguistically Haiti is also characterized by a homogeneity found in few New World societies. Though the official language is French, the universally-spoken maternal language is Creole, a language whose lexicon is principally French derived, but whose sound system incorporates certain phonemes not found in Indo-European language and whose syntax contains "non-Western" structures believed by scholars to be of West African derivation. There are regional differences in phonology and lexicon, but these are much less impressive, for example, than the dialectical differences found within the Spanish of the neighboring Dominican Republic. That is, the ethnic homogeneity of the rural population is matched by a corresponding linguistic unity.

In terms of religious affiliation, the matter is somewhat different. The vast majority of people in the rural areas are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. But there are two important (and self-conscious) groups of Catholics: those who restrict themselves to the rites of institutional Catholicism, and those who, in addition to the rites of Catholicism, also enact, participate in, and/or simply attend rituals directed at another group of spirits (the loua) whose existence is not recognized by the Church. This peasant religion is generally called "voodoo" by outsiders, though the peasants themselves do not refer to it in this fashion. They simply say they are "serving the loua." Although it is difficult to say exactly, it is estimated that 60 % of Haitian peasants "serve the loua" to some significant extent.

Recent decades have also witnessed a substantial increase in evangelization activities by different Protestant sects, most of them financed by churches in the U.S. Thus most rural communities in Haiti today will have at least some Protestants. However, most rural Protestants appear to be "first generation" — i.e. they personally converted at some point in their lives, the most frequently given reason being illness of one sort or another.

Village-level alliances and antagonisms do occur along religious lines, though the general pattern appears to be one of collaboration between members of different religious groups and joint participation in communal activities. There have been cases, however, of either spontaneous exclusiveness among villagers themselves, or "induced" exclusiveness produced by a discriminatory offering of health or educational services only to members of their own flock by certain missionaries. This, however, appears to be exceptional, and the missionaries themselves seldom take an "exclusive approach", since their interest is

usually in expanding the membership of their church group. On the whole religious factionalism will not be a major obstacle to the smooth running of a development project.

2. Food Production and Cash-Cropping: Foundations of the Rural Economy

The social feasibility of agroforestation activities hinges principally on the ability of the project designers to introduce innovations which will mesh with, complement, and enhance the already existing organization of social and economic life in rural Haiti. Some wish that a radical restructuring and reorganization of peasant social and economic life could be achieved, rather than concentrating on simple readjustments to the existing economy. However, it is not the desirability of such a restructuring which is in question, but its feasibility. In the face of certain existing constraints, the designers of development projects in Haiti must decide whether worthwhile modifications can be made in the already existing peasant economy. If the decision is positive, then the inputs must be designed so as to enhance the likelihood of their successful implementation. It is with the inputs of the proposed agroforestry Project in mind that the central features of the traditional rural economy will be discussed.

2.1 The non-subsistence character of rural Haitian life

Many writers refer loosely to the "subsistence economy" of rural Haiti, a concept which is terminologically questionable and which may lead to a basic misunderstanding. A subsistence cultivator is one who basically produces what he consumes and consumes what he produces. This is not at all an accurate characterization of the lives of most Haitian peasant families.

The following economic generalizations about Haitian peasant households would be found to hold generally throughout rural Haiti:

1. Peasants grow only part of the food which they consume; they are dependent on cash purchases for large percentages of what they eat, especially during certain times of the year.
2. Peasants consume only part of what they grow. They count heavily on the cash which they receive from the sale of part of their harvest. It goes without saying that those who harvest coffee, sugar cane, sisal, or other export crops grow them principally for sale. But even growers of corn, beans, rice, millet, manioc, and sweet potatoes may sell substantial parts of the harvest for sale in local markets. The farmers of some regions, especially those in the wetter mountainous areas, may be somewhat more self-sufficient than those of drier regions in terms of their own food. But they will still be heavily dependent on purchase, even for basic staples, during at least part of the year.

3. When given the opportunity to do so without great risk, peasants will be interested in trying new crops that give promise of generating a higher cash income. This has been dramatically demonstrated in certain vegetable growing regions, where entire communities, in response to market incentives, have turned to new crops and techniques.

It is this heavy pre-existing involvement and interest in local markets by the Haitian peasant which has provided the designers of this project with its conceptual cornerstone: the introduction of the fast-growing tree as a cash crop. The Haitian peasant's pre-existing experiences with cash-cropping, and his generalized (in many cases desperate) need for yet more cash, open the door to a creative approach to "reforestation", one that promotes the tree, not as an altruistic legacy for one's country and grandchildren, but as a new and potentially lucrative cash crop. The motivation may not be as "noble" as that advocated in traditional soil conservation projects, but the ecological and economic payoffs will be much greater than those currently available if this approach proves successful.

2.2 Regional variations

Anybody familiar with rural Haiti makes generalizations about the "Haitian peasant" only with great reservation. Though there are commonalities such as the above mentioned economic generalizations, one is also impressed by regional differences in rural economic organization. The most powerful underlying determinants of the general patterns which prevail in a given community will be rainfall and topography. Rain-bearing winds reach Haiti from the northeast. The areas of heaviest rainfall consequently are the north facing slopes. South facing slopes in contrast often fall partially within "rain shadows". But the driest areas are the lower slopes and plains lying to the south of the various mountain chains which cut across Haiti in an east-west direction.

These climatic and topographic factors will exert a heavy determining influence on the organization and quality of economic life in a community. On north-facing humid slopes, or in regions where this land-type predominates, there will be at least two growing seasons a year. These abundantly watered hillsides support intensive cultivation of food grains, coffee, and root crops. Within a given humid region there will be alternations between what the peasants refer to as "hot" land and "cool" land, a difference produced by a combination of soil type and differential exposure to sunlight. The most productive land for the cash-generating grains is that which falls in the category of le fret, cool land. At the other extreme is lowland agriculture practiced on plains located south of the major mountain chains. Here rainfall will be less than 800 mm. per year. Several plains of this type are found in the Northwest (Plaine de l'Arbre, Plaine

de Jean Rabel, and Savanne Mole St-Nicolas), and the eastern Oul-de-Sac near Thomazeau and Fond Parisien falls in the same general category. The general absence of irrigation on these plains in the Northwest produces a dependence on drought resistant millet as the principal crop. There is little inter-cropping. And the reduced viability of cropping as an economic base produces a heavier reliance on grazing and on charcoal-making among populations residing in these areas.

It is in these more arid areas, as well as in an ecologically intermediate dry mountain area (generally on the south side of the chains) that the project anticipates the most energetic response to the potentialities of using fast-growing wood trees as a cash crop.

2.3 The typical holding

The vast majority of rural Haitian households are owners of at least part of the land which they crop. (The meaning of "ownership" will be defined more precisely in the section on land tenure.) But the evidence indicates that there has been a dramatic shrinkage in the size of holdings even within the last generation. The typical holding in Haiti would fall within the category of minifundia, so common in discussing land tenure in Latin America. But within Haiti it is useful to posit a subtype of minifundia, which has been called microfundia, defined as any holding of less than a carreau (1.29 hectares). The proportion of rural households with microfundia rose from 39 percent in 1950 to a staggering 71 percent in 1971. In this latter year 48 percent of households had no more than half a carreau (.6 hectares).

These figures may underestimate the amount of land that is under the potential control of the average peasant household. Third World surveys and censuses tend to elicit conservative figures on the sensitive matters of landholdings. And even where figures are not intentionally deflated by respondents, land that is owned but out of production, or that is collectively controlled by a kin-group, is frequently not included as part of one's "holding" in survey interviews. Nonetheless it appears clear that most rural households in Haiti do not own more than a hectare of land.

Surveys have also shown that the typical Haitian holding is not only small, but also internally diversified. The diversification is to be found not only in terms of landtypes, but households often make every effort to crop a variety of plots to minimize the risks of crop failure. In addition, plots within a typical holding will be cropped under a diversity of tenure types: inherited, purchased, sharecropped, rented, or even borrowed. There is feverish land maneuver by peasants throughout rural Haiti and, active endeavour to increase a holdings and its productivity by any means possible. Stated somewhat differently, flight from the land has not yet become the standard response of the

peasant. The time may soon be here when the bulk of the rural population loses hope in the land as a solution and joins the ranks of would-be migrants to the city or to Miami. But that time has not yet arrived. The prime concern of most rural households is still that of augmenting both the holding itself, and the income that is annually generated from its constituent plots. If a cash-generating crop adapted to the challenging ecological characteristics of many holdings can be found, there will be an active response. The proposed agroforestry Project posits that the fast-growing wood tree may be one possible alternative.

3. The Peasant and the Tree

Is there any precedent in Haitian history which justifies optimism with respect to the willingness of the peasant to become a planter of trees? Has the peasant ever planted trees as a crop? If not, what reason is there for thinking that this practice can be introduced now?

3.1 The Tree in Traditional Rural Life

The guiding classificatory principle which the peasant uses in dividing the world of trees into two groups is one which will be quite familiar to outsiders as well: the distinction between trees that give fruit of some sort and trees whose principal utility is in terms of wood. The distinction is not only terminological, but behavioral as well. For whereas there is a tradition of planting and caring for fruit trees, the wood tree is defined as something which "leve pou kol" -- grows by itself.

But even the planting of fruit trees is done on just a very small scale. The preferred residential arrangement is one in which the house is located in or near a grove of trees. The trees give shade, protection from the wind, and some valued privacy. But this residential grove has little to do with the outsider's concept of an orchard. Perhaps the grove will contain an avocado tree, a mango tree and one or two other trees which may have been planted by the father or grandfather of the current residents. Where the grove contains a wood tree, it will almost certainly be a tree that was there originally and that was spared to serve as shade when the first settlers came and built a house there. This pattern of house-and-yard is especially prevalent in humid mountain areas, where the house will be surrounded in outlying areas with trees, shrubs, spices and sometimes vegetables.

Fruit trees will also be planted on garden lands to which the individual has secure access. In some regions peasants also plant non-fruit trees as boundary markers to define the acquisition of land either through purchase or inheritance subdivision. In such cases, however, the tree is not being planted

for its wood. On the contrary, violent quarrels will ensue if a charcoal maker tries to cut it down. In short, though the concept of tree planting per se is part of the framework of Haitian peasant life, the concept of planting trees in order to harvest wood is not.

3.2 Peasants, trees, and reforestation projects

The past three decades have seen attempts at dozens of soil conservation or reforestation efforts in various parts of Haiti. How have these projects fared? The general answer is: with some exceptions, not well. Why have results been meager? And what features of the present project warrant optimism that its results will be any more encouraging?

3.2.1 Community development philosophy and the search for "felt needs"

The fifties and sixties saw the spread of a "grass roots" approach to community development whose guiding principle was: begin by identifying the "felt needs" of the community and focus project efforts on these felt needs. The technicians who have staffed the various conservation and reforestation projects have had to use a compromise version of this philosophical approach. If consulted at all, the peasants are generally approached, not with the question "Do you want to plant trees?" but with the question "What kinds of trees would you like to plant?" In view of the above described restriction of peasant tree-planting practices to fruit trees, it is not surprising that even peasants far from markets, or in areas where the feasibility of fruit trees is botanically questionable, will nonetheless provide an inventory of the fruit trees that they would like to plant. But each of the parties to the conversation will have a different interpretation of the response. Whereas the project organizer's eyes may gleam with the vision of hills and orchards stretching to the horizon, the peasant himself is probably thinking of an extra mango tree or two near his house or in one of his fields.

3.2.2 "Runaway nurseries"

In a similar fashion, project organizers have often viewed as their first task the establishment of large nurseries for the production of tens of thousands of seedlings. Nurseries are established frequently before it is known on what land the trees will be planted. There is perhaps an assumption that doing so will result in an onrush of interested peasant planters. However, on numerous occasions, these nurseries have found themselves simply unable to "unload" dangerously mature seedlings. This emphasis on technical questions and the neglect of more difficult organizational and outreach questions has led to the death of hundreds of thousands of unwanted nursery seedlings over the past years.

3.2.3 Reluctance of peasants to plant "project trees" on their land

The problem is frequently that of finding landowners willing to allocate space to the trees. The initial resistance to the trees by farmers comes from a number of sources.

1. competition with food crops for space
2. competition for scarce soil moisture
3. interference with the livestock economy
4. lack of perceived short-term benefits from the tree
5. conviction that the tree may belong either to the sponsoring project agency or the government and that the planting of this alien object on their fields may even be the first step to eventual expropriation of land

This last fear has been observed over and over in reforestation projects in different parts of Haiti.

3.2.4 Invasion of land through Food for Work

Nursery managers rarely resign themselves to the death of their seedlings. The battle to get them planted has in many cases been waged with the assistance of Food for Work. Rural work gangs have been organized to plant seedlings on hillsides. The above-mentioned resistances by farmers have been handled in a number of ways. Trees will be planted along roadsides and paths — on this "public" land — to begin. Next trees will be planted on agriculturally marginal land, land that is rarely cropped. (This of course minimizes the erosion control function of the tree, the latter best being achieved when the tree is planted on sloped land that is vulnerable to agricultural clearing.) Finally the tree-planting work-gangs in several projects have resorted to forcing their way onto peasants' land, informing reluctant landowners that they were working for a government project and that the trees being planted are "pye-boua leta" (the State's trees).

This land "invasion" goes directly against the voluntaristic philosophy of development that most project organizers espouse. But in at least some cases, the expatriate project personnel have not even known that land is being invaded by the rural work-gangs. More than one has admitted to not knowing whose land their trees are being planted on. They leave these project "details" — such as the composition of the work-gangs and the land-tenure of the reforested plots — in the hands of local subordinates. The result has been a frequently reoccurring

pattern in which 1) many of the people hired to do the work may not even be members of the community where trees are being planted and 2) the planting of the trees has been imposed as a "government" project.

3.2.5 Low survival rate of transplanted seedlings

Under these circumstances the low general survival rate of projects' trees is understandable. Because a high percentage of trees have been planted on agriculturally marginal land where animals (especially goats) are left to graze, the principal cause of mortality is from being consumed. The survival of young seedlings on such land would require an intense concern on the part of the landowner to protect the seedlings against not only his own but also his neighbors' goats. But where the planting has been done in a coercive or quasi-coercive manner, landowners have been understandably unconcerned about the survival of the trees and may in fact have felt somewhat more secure if this alien vegetation was removed from his land as quickly as possible. The result of this pattern has been the destruction of probably more than four out of every five seedlings that have been transplanted as part of "reforestation" projects in Haiti. When to these are added the thousands of unwanted seedlings that have died through overmaturity in the nurseries themselves, the result has been an ecologically-tragic waste.

Of the multiple contributory causes of this waste, the most serious overriding error has been to relegate organizational, motivational, and land-tenure issues to a lower project priority, and to assume that these "details" would take care of themselves once the "technical" problems of species selection and nurseries were resolved.

3.3 The Tree as Cash Crop: Avoiding Past Errors

The design of this project has been carried out in full recognition of these organizational and motivational shortcomings. Whereas most projects have attempted to introduce tree planting by appealing to some future (and, to most peasants, frankly unconvincing) payoffs, this project will embed tree-planting in the context of the earlier-described cash-cropping complex that forms a central element in Haitian peasant economy. Peasants already make money from the provision of fuel and lumber; they are already, in addition, avid cash-croppers. The project will simply attempt to "connect" these two heretofore independent traditions, to assist the peasant to become a cash cropper of wood.

It is this conceptually simple connection which has been lacking. When wood was abundant in Haiti, there was no need for the peasant to invest labor in "cropping" it. But wood is no longer abundant and the time has arrived where the gap can and

must be bridged. The market-oriented economic and social organization of Haitian peasant society in conjunction with the increasing demand for wood-based fuel, all point to the feasibility of "the cash-cropping of wood" as an idea whose time may finally be upon us.

Despite the attractiveness of the basic idea -- the simultaneous achieving of soil stabilization, a harvested (rather than ecologically plundered) fuel supply, and an increase in rural domestic income -- a number of potential obstacles suggest themselves. Four of the more serious ones will be dealt with here:

1. Can the project be done without removing land from food production?
2. Can the project be organized in a way that makes it compatible with the current dependence of many communities on income from the raising of free-grazing goats?
3. Do peasants have access to enough land to permit expansion into tree planting activities?
4. Are peasants secure enough in their holdings to invest labor in the planting of trees as a crop?

These will be discussed in order.

4. Current Land Use Practices as They Relate to Tree Planting

4.1 Current Deployment of Trees

As indicated above, trees are currently planted by peasants in Haiti for shade or fruit in proximity to a residence or along the borders of fields (or irrigation ditches in lowland regions). An occasional fruit tree may be planted in the middle of a field. Although the Agroforestry Outreach Project will not attempt to remove land from food production, the introduction of peasant agroforestry would entail a partial shift in current land-use practices. Can this shift be done in a way that meshes with the current agricultural needs of rural communities?

4.2 Current Degradation of Land

Perhaps contrary to popular belief, much of Haiti's land is currently not under cultivation. In many rural communities, land that is currently out of cultivation may be double or treble the amount of local land that is actually under cultivation. Much of it is simply too steep to cultivate (in Haiti this means 50° slopes). But even in flatter areas though some land out of cultivation is passing through a brief fallow stage, much uncultivated land is virtually never put under

cultivation. This is particularly true in the drier regions. Deforestation, overcropping, erosion and "pseudo-drought" have effectively removed much land from cultivation. But it is in fact these eroding slopes and the drier flatlands, which offer potential land for the cash-cropping of trees. Stated differently, it is envisioned that most of the trees to be planted under this project will be planted on agriculturally marginal land that is out of cultivation, and the tree will endow the land with a potential cash-generating potential that it does not have through food cropping. The project, in short, need not compete with, but can enhance and supplement, the contemporary agrarian economy by bringing marginal lands into full production of trees. In the long run, some of the less sloped of these lands may also be brought back into food crop production as well.

4.3 Restoration of Agricultural Potential through Trees

Overcutting, overcropping and overgrazing have led to the deterioration of thousands of hectares of Haitian hillsides, which are now beyond recuperation through natural vegetative regeneration. Such hillsides have traversed the sequence from primary forest to barren savanna. The only way to restore agricultural potential to such land is through deliberate (man-made) regeneration. Wherever possible and appropriate the tree-planting programs envisioned in this project will use leguminous species whose nitrogen-fixing and general restorative capacity have been amply documented. The peasant will not plant these trees "in order to" restore land in the distant future; rather he will plant them "in order to" harvest them for cash. But the net long-run effect of such tree planting will be to restore the potential agricultural productivity of the land that is placed under trees. In this sense the project, far from being inimical to a "food first" approach, can be seen as a method available to the peasant to render degraded hillsides and flatlands once again suitable for cropping. Whereas the peasant has traditionally earned cash through agricultural practices that have degraded the environment, under this project he will be earning cash through agricultural practices (agroforestry) whose long run ecological effect is restorative and recuperative in character.

4.4 Intercropping of Trees and Traditional Food Crops

The project envisions more than the temporary afforestation or reforestation of denuded hillsides or marginal, arid flatlands. Using wider spacing strategies, and employing a variety of mini-terracing and ridging techniques, the project will also promote microeconomically viable ways of carrying out tree planting on the same plots where traditional grains and tubers are being cultivated. Under current practices, characterized by the virtual absence of fertilizing or composting techniques on hillside plots, much land can be cropped for only one or two cycles

before being left to rest. If the trees are spaced properly, then the traditional cropping can go on. The harvests will be in before the shade from the trees makes cropping unfeasible. By then the trees themselves will be fast approaching the stage where they can be harvested. It will then be up to the cultivator whether the trees will be allowed to coppice for subsequent tree harvests, or whether the land will again be cleared for cultivation purposes. If the latter decision is made, the agricultural quality of the land will have been enhanced by the trees themselves.

Some observers have pointed out that the tree takes up space and thus ipso facto reduces the food yields available from a given unit of land. But this hypothesis does not take into account the increased yield per unit of land due to the fertilizing character of leguminous species, and it completely ignores the long-term restorative and fertility enhancing potential of tree harvests on hillsides that would otherwise have been turned over to goats during fallow. In short, the current project, far from being incompatible with current food producing practices, is instead one of the few feasible approaches available for enhancing the food producing potential of Haitian soil.

5. Livestock and Tree Raising in Rural Haiti

Experience in tree-planting programs in rural Haiti has taught that perhaps the most difficult problem to solve is the incompatibility between traditional Haitian peasant grazing practices and the seedling - protection requirements of reforestation programs. Any tree-planting project must build in a number of alternative strategies for minimizing the possibility that newly transplanted seedlings will succumb to wandering goats, sheep, cattle, or other animals.

5.1 The Role of Animals in Haitian Peasant Economy

The Haitian peasant maintains a highly diversified peasant livestock inventory, at least in terms of the variety of mammalian livestock which may be found in one and the same community. It is not unusual to see a household that will have not only cattle and pigs, but also sheep, goats, and one or more beasts of burden. Most households certainly do not contain all of these animals. But in certain regions, most communities do have the complete inventory. The conceptual "model" which is passed on to peasant children is one in which the animal serves as a type of "bank", a form of savings. One begins with chickens, according to a traditional version, and moves up to goats. Goats are then sold to permit the purchase of the more expensive pig. Pigs will be sold to purchase a cow. And finally, when the long-awaited opportunity arrives to purchase a plot of ground, the individual will sell one or more cows

to make his payment. That is, livestock are conceptualized and treated as a rural banking system in which the "interest" on one's capital comes from both the growth increment and the offspring of the individual animal (and in which the "risk" comes from loss through illness or theft).

Livestock also play a central role in the folk-religious system of communities where there is still adherence to the rituals involving African and ancestral spirits. Animal sacrifice is a central part of these rituals, and it is not exaggerated to say that religious rituals constitute for many families the only occasion on which animals will be slaughtered for food. Apart from these occasions and apart from the days following the birth of a child (on which occasion the woman is seen as being entitled to large quantities of meat), it is now generally rare for peasant families to use their animals as a source of meat for their diet. Meat eating appears to be infrequent in most rural families, and the meat that is consumed is generally purchased in the market place. That is, the animals continue more as banks than as sources of protein.

5.2 Regional Variations in Livestock Dependence

Recent studies have indicated that although there may be a generalized incorporation of livestock into domestic economy throughout rural Haiti, reliance on animals as a source of income is even greater in arid or semi-arid regions where local crop potential is relatively low and where human survival is consequently dependent on alternative sources. But it is in precisely such animal-dependent regions that the ecological and economic need for agroforestation projects will also be higher, creating a situation of conflict between traditional dependence on animals and the desire to introduce new methods of land use that require at least temporary restrictions against free-grazing animals.

5.3 Traditional Grazing Strategies

In times past many regions of Haiti were considered to be open livestock grazing areas. In these regions animals had a right to graze freely. It was the obligation of garden owners to make a sturdy fence. A cultivator could claim damages against a neighbor's animal only if could be shown that the fence around the garden was in good condition. The promulgation of the Code Rural Dr. Francois Duvalier in 1962 put an end to open grazing, at least officially. Now most land in Haiti is considered to be "agricultural land". Cultivators no longer have to build fences around their gardens. If an animal damages an unfenced garden, the owner of the animal is viewed as being at fault. If the cultivator captures a neighbor's pig or goat in his garden, he has the right to kill the animal (or to accept payment for damages if the animal's owner wishes

to save it). If the invading animal is a cow or a beast of burden, the animal is tied up at the house of the local authority, and the animal's owner will have to pay a fine.

Cattle and beasts of burden are thus now rarely turned free. The most common grazing method throughout Haiti is one of "picketing". A long rope is tied around the animal's neck and tied to a stake driven in the ground. The animal grazes the vegetation within the perimeter. Young male children are assigned the task of changing the animal's position as vegetation is consumed, and of bringing the animal to water. Conflicts arise when the animal either succeeds in breaking the rope or pulling up the stake.

Pigs and goats, in contrast, are rarely tied or penned. Corraling is generally done as the final step in fattening up the animal for sale. But throughout most of its life the animal is turned loose to forage where it may. Pigs generally stay close to home and are recipients of regular food supplements from their owners. Goats in contrast receive less food and generally wander greater distances in search of forage. In areas where free grazing is still permitted by custom or law, pig and goat owners attach protruding triangular wooden collars around their necks to prevent them from entering through the gaps in garden fences. But since most areas in Haiti are now officially "agricultural," and cultivators seldom build fences around their gardens, goat and pig owners let their animals wander only at some risk.

Since so much land in Haiti is now out of agricultural production, especially in the drier regions, goat owners are able to find large stretches where they may turn their animals loose without fear that they will be captured in neighbors' gardens. Thus, despite the presence of laws forbidding free grazing, in fact free grazing continues to be the most frequent strategy for raising goats.

5.4 Grazing Practices and Tree Planting

Experienced forestry personnel have repeatedly defined the free-ranging goat as the greatest enemy to reforestation in Haiti. The majority of transplanted seedlings that have perished have succumbed, not to the inhospitable physical environment, but to the goat.

Is there no possible protection against this persistent nemesis of the young tree? The matter is particularly difficult, since the goat owners will sometimes be among the poorest members of the community, those whose lack of adequate land-holdings forces them to depend heavily on their animals.

Repressive measures against the goat will affect most directly that group of people who should be the object of solicitude, not vengeance.

There are in fact ways around this problem, and these strategies have been incorporated into the design of the present project. It must be recalled that where there are gardens both law and custom oblige animal owners to restrict free grazing or pay the consequences. But the organizers of tree-planting projects have made two errors:

- (1.) They have planted their trees mostly on agriculturally marginal land, which is precisely where there will be a greater abundance of animals.
- (2) The trees planted have often not been viewed as the property of the landowner. On the contrary, as discussed above, the more frequent arrangement is for trees to be planted to obtain Food for Work either on state land or by actually invading private land, a strategy that is hardly conducive to the birth of proprietary concern for the trees by the landowner.

The present project addresses the goat question in a number of ways:

- (1) Cultivators will be encouraged to intercrop trees with traditional crops or to plant them contiguous to gardens. Thus the trees will receive the same protection against marauding livestock that the cultivators' crops receive.
- (2) The trees will be defined wherever possible as the property of the cultivators, as a "cash crop" which they will harvest and which they will consequently protect in the same way they protect their traditional harvest.
- (3) Steps will be taken to ensure that those who have access to seedlings and, where possible, to securely leased land will belong also to the poorer class of goat owners. That is, the project will endeavour to avoid a situation in which the tree planters and goat owners are two separate groups of individuals.
- (4.) Maintenance payments will be instituted where necessary to permit the added investment of time and labor that will be necessary for the full-time vigilance over seedlings in areas that are particularly vulnerable to grazing animals. Payments will be made only for trees that survive, probably after six months and then again after a year.

- (5) Communities will be urged to undertake planting in contiguous blocs of land the first few years, leaving ample space for goats to graze elsewhere. Once the trees are beyond danger of destruction (e.g. generally after one year of growth), local herds can then be allowed to graze in the new groves while the community moves on to formerly unplanted areas. That is, though the project envisions individually controlled stands of trees, wherever possible, groups of participating individuals can coordinate their activities in such a way as to maximize the likelihood of successful vigilance against animals.
- (6) Experiments will be tried with relatively inexpensive and reusable wire fencing, as well as with other "appropriate technologies" to discourage goats.
- (7) Where necessary, only non-edible tree species (e.g. cassia siamea) will be used.

6. The Question of Land Tenure

Does the rural population have access to enough land to permit expansion into tree cropping activities? Is their control of this land secure enough to permit them to make the long-term investments that will be required for tree cropping?

6.1 Legal Basis of Haitian Peasant Land Tenure

Haitian land law is based directly on the Napoleonic Code. Land can be acquired by individual owners through inheritance or purchase. Inheritance is "bilateral" and "partible". That is, land comes down to an individual through both maternal and paternal lines, and all children — males as well as females — inherit. Some discriminations are made between children of legal unions and children of consensual unions, but the law in general supports the right of all children to acquire some rights in the holdings of both their father and their mother. The law provides as well for the acquisition of land by prescription ("squatters rights") after 20 years of de facto possession (Civil Code, articles 2030-2035), but this right is so rarely exercised as to make it a functionally non-operative principle.

6.2 Informal Arrangements that Differ from Legally Mandated Procedures

There are a number of widespread land tenure practices that have become common but which depart from the procedures formally

mandated by the law. Some of these are of relevance to tree planting.

- (1) Most inheritance subdivisions are done informally, using ropes (or stones) and community witnesses, rather than paying surveyors.
- (2) Agriculturally marginal lands inherited by a sibling group may not be subdivided into separate plots but will be kept as a bloc for common grazing.
- (3) Land purchases and sales, which are frequent occurrences among peasants, are validated only with a receipt from a notary who witnesses and validates the transactions, and not by a formal transfer of title documents.

The result of these practices — which are basically an attempt to cut legal costs — is a situation of general "deedlessness". That is, it is rare for a peasant to have a separate deed for each of the plots in his holding. Whether he has inherited the plot or purchased it, the acquisition of a plot nowadays generally is done without going through costly official procedures. However, this does not mean that the peasant is exposed to arbitrary eviction. Several studies have indicated that a very substantial percentage of privately "owned" land in rural Haiti, though not supported by separate deeds for each plot, nonetheless is covered by "master deeds" kept by older males in the family. If a peasant inherits a plot of ground which is covered by an old deed belonging to his grandparents or great grandparents, he is secure in his access to the plot which he has received through informal subdivision even though he has not undertaken the cost of acquiring a separate legal deed for that plot. The most dramatic evidence of this is to be found in the large amounts of money which peasants spend for purchasing plots of ground. A peasant will spend several hundred dollars to purchase from his neighbor a plot of ground for which the seller may not have a separate deed. But the presence of a "master deed" in the seller's family provides the buyer with enough assurance to justify the transfer of several hundred dollars. Were there a widespread sense of insecurity, such transactions would not be entered with such impressive frequency. Furthermore, subsequent buyers will feel perfectly safe in purchasing the plot from this first buyer, even though the latter has no deed for the plot, but only the certificate of sale from the notary's office. Said differently, there is an "informal" land tenure system actively operating in rural Haiti. And most studies based on actual fieldwork report a sense of general security among peasants in the validity of this system.

In terms of this project, what is being suggested, is that peasants will not be disinclined from tree-planting because of a hypothetical sense of land "insecurity" which they feel because of the absence of formal deeds to their plots. If they are secure enough to spend several hundred dollars on a plot of ground, they will feel secure enough to plant trees on it. The major obstacles will stem, not from the land tenure system, but rather from motivational questions centered on perceived profits and losses from this new land-use behavior.

6.3 The Question of Tenancy

The above observations concern land which the peasant calls "his property". However much cropping in Haiti is also done on land to which the peasant has access through the payment of rent to another "owner". This rent payment takes two major forms: 1) the payment of a cash sum in advance which entitles the payer to use of the plot for a stipulated period of time; or 2) the payment of a stipulated portion of the harvest (generally between a third and half) to the landowner at the end of the cropping cycle.

Rental and sharecropping arrangements can be stable over several years. In principle there is no reason for assuming a priori that fast growing trees could not be planted under some type of tenancy arrangement. The project has as its principal objective to assist small farmers to begin cropping wood, and it is desirable for this to be done on land which they own, wherever possible. But peasants voluntarily enter long-term, reasonably secure rental and sharecropping arrangements with other peasants (and less frequently with town based landowners). Though such tenancy arrangements complicate matters, they are part of the current smallholding economic system in rural Haiti and will not be excluded as unacceptable arrangements for the planting of trees through project activities. One possible arrangement will be for the "tenant" to plant, care for, and harvest the entire first rotation, leaving the coppiced rotations for the "landlord." Project personnel will exercise vigilance against the employment of blatantly inequitable arrangements, and will be particularly cautious about entering into "interclass" tenancy arrangements. But when both parties to the transaction are themselves peasants, and when the transaction adheres to the basic guidelines governing traditional tenancy relations, the project will maintain a flexible stance and will treat the arrangement as a practical, valid adaptation to pre-existing sociocultural patterns.

6.4 The Question of State Land

An undermined but substantial portion of Haiti's territory falls into the category of te leta, land that belongs to the government. In the early 19th century most land in Haiti

was State land, and the smallholding system currently prevailing is largely the result of widespread State land grants and land sales which were made during the 19th century. The most favorable agricultural land has come almost entirely under private ownership. But in many areas of the country, especially those areas where low rainfall reduces the agricultural potential of the land, substantial blocs of State land are found.

In regions such as the Island of La Gonave and certain mountainous regions both in the Southwest and near the Haitian/Dominican border, the State is the owner of land currently under agricultural production. In these cases the standard arrangement is for the cultivator to pay a rental fee to the State. These rental arrangements or cessions have themselves become quasi-permanent. Parents may pass on to their children the right to pay rent on a given bloc of State land, and individuals may purchase and sell these rights. Furthermore, in many cases arrangements have been made through which better-off individuals lease a large bloc of land from the State and then sublease it for a profit to poorer individuals. That is, State land is treated in many ways as the private land of the concessionaires.

The question arises as to whether State land may be used for tree-planting programs in the context of this project. The project does envision this possibility, but in a way that is quite different from the use which past reforestation projects have generally made of State land. In the past rural work-gangs have been formed through the Food for Work incentive to plant large numbers of trees on State land. The food wages were paid simply for the planting of the trees. The trees themselves were seen as property of the government. The only economic stake which the laborers had was in the wages paid for planting. Most trees planted under these arrangements have, of course, long since succumbed to free-grazing animals or to general neglect.

To the extent that State land is used in this project, the following general guidelines will be invoked:

- (1) The land must have soil and rainfall conditions which give the trees a substantial probability of surviving and growing. (The traditional Food for Work groups have understandably been little concerned with this matter). It is virtually certain that much State land in the Northwest Region, for example, is too barren even for the growth of drought-resistant trees. Not all State land can be considered relevant for this project's purposes.

- (2) The land must be leased in the context of the project. The question of whether the leasing will be done by a local group, a PVO, or one of the project grantees, is a detail to be decided on a case-by-case basis. But secure access to the land must be acquired preferably for at least a 10 year period that will cover two or more rotations of fast-growing trees. 25 year lease of State land are not uncommon and will be sought.
- (3) Arrangements will be made to assure, wherever possible, that trees planted will be the property, not of the State, but of the peasant planters and tenders. The project envisions that portions of large leased plots will be assigned to individual cultivators for planting, care and ultimately harvest. However, collective ownership and maintenance arrangements will be acceptable if deemed preferable and practical by project participants. But the trees will be treated in principle as some individual's or some group's crop, a radical and programmatically important departure from past project use of State land.

6.5 Dealing with Land Scarcity

The preceding discussion of tenancy arrangements and the possible use of State lands touch upon one strategy which the project will use to introduce tree planting in communities where local landholdings are too small to permit easy expansion by local farmers into agroforestry. Rigid programming on these matters would be in error as the land availability situation in rural Haiti remains somewhat unclear. On the one hand surveys turn up shockingly low per-household landholding sizes. On the other hand even casual visitors to the rural areas are impressed by the vast amounts of currently treeless and cropless land whose economic value could be substantially increased by the activities of this project. This marginal land is rarely described as being owned by the State or by absentee owners in most regions, creating the impression that perhaps there is more locally owned land available for project use than survey data seem to indicate. The project will deal with this unavoidable ambiguity, not by recommending three or four more years of research before planting any trees, but by encouraging the use of privately owned land where available and simultaneously building in the financial flexibility to lease land in regions where private land is not available.

7. Domestic Organization, the Role of Women, and the Planting of Trees

How will the introduction of tree-planting in rural communities mesh with or affect traditional domestic organization? In particular will it affect, either positively or negatively, the economic and domestic activities of women? Research carried out recently in different parts of Haiti has documented a great deal of diversity with respect to the economic tasks carried out by adult females. The following generalizations appear to be valid.

7.1 Trade and Commerce

The selling of most internally-consumed foodstuffs is normatively viewed as being the task of females, and actual behavior adheres to this prescribed pattern. This responsibility for trade includes in the first instance the marketing of the crops grown by members of the household. In humid mountain areas this may entail physically transporting homegrown produce to the nearest town and selling it in the local open-air marketplace. In other areas, where commercial penetration has been greater, traveling wholesalers may purchase produce at the farm gate. Even in these transactions, the woman of the house will generally negotiate price with the itinerant merchants.

But the female's trading role generally goes beyond this simple sale of homegrown food to the actual doing of komes, a term which implies the purchase and resale of produce. Whereas in some rural societies, this type of professional trade is seen as a lower status activity, indicative of domestic poverty, in Haiti professional trade is highly esteemed. It is in general a source of social esteem, not a stigma, to be an active market intermediary, and an impressively high percentage of rural Haitian women engage in at least some part-time trade. In some communities that have been researched, the majority of adult females are actually absent from their communities for weeks at a time and send shipments of food back to their husbands and children. But even in more remote areas where female involvement in trade is less intense, many women also become purchasers and resellers of agricultural or other goods.

7.2 Women and Agricultural Field Labor

In contrast to trading activities, agricultural labor has a somewhat weaker and lower position in terms of the expectations applied to rural women. Whereas there appears to be a general positive association between the economic status of a rural household and the intensity of female trading activities, the association between economic status and female involvement in agricultural field labor appears to be negative. In better-off

households women's physical activities in the gardens may be limited to some planting and harvesting. When, for example, a commercially successful woman "plants her own garden", she will generally do it through wage labor arrangements with poorer community members. It is in the more arid and generally poorer regions of Haiti where female involvement in field labor has been observed to be more intensive.

7.3 Women and the Charcoal Economy

Most contemporary commercial wood cutting done by peasant households is done as part of the fuel economy, the major use being the making of charcoal. The recent surge in commercial charcoal making has precluded the crystallization of strong norms with respect to sex-roles in the charcoal economy and recent research has shown that females are involved in many (though not all) phases of the charcoal making process. Such involvement also varies by region. Judging from the current division of labor in charcoal production and sale, if the current project increases local wood supplies, then it will also be providing a source of extra income to which females are as (and perhaps more) likely to gain access as males.

7.4 Women and Tree Ownership

Probably most of the fruit shade and boundary trees that have been planted in rural Haiti have been planted by men. To what degree can this project reasonably envision the active involvement of women as planters, proprietors, guardians, and harvesters of trees?

To the degree that trees become integrated into peasant communities as cash crop, the proprietary arrangements will undoubtedly be the same as those prevailing with respect to traditional crops. That is the harvest is seen as being the joint property of both spouses. It is quite unlikely that a situation will arise in which each spouse will try to claim independent ownership of a section of the domestic grove.

Most of the conjugal unions in rural Haiti, however, are consensual rather than legally (or ecclesiastically) established. In these cases property questions arise at the dissolution of the union. We can predict with virtual certainty that the ownership of trees in this case will go to the owner of the land. That is, in those cases in which a consensually united couple plants trees on land that was inherited or purchased by the wife, then on dissolution of the union the woman will retain the bulk of the rights in the trees. The only traditional argument of which a determined male might avail himself is perhaps the argument

that, since his children will "inherit" the trees from the woman, he also has some rights in them. This question is not viewed as one critical to project success or failure.

In those cases where women independently request to participate in tree planting activities, their request will be judged by the same criteria that are used in granting male participation in the project. Women do plant gardens independently of males (generally carrying out the heavier tasks through wage labor) and will be encouraged to establish independent footholds in the tree-planting and harvesting economy.

8. Patterns of Community Organization

To what degree does there exist an organizational base in rural Haiti for the carrying out of agroforestry activities envisioned by the project? Will new organizations have to be created?

8.1 Traditional Organizations

In Rural Haiti the most frequent context for the formation of groups whose membership goes beyond the individual household is the organization of communal labor. The smallest groups to be formed are rotating exchange-labor groups consisting of five to eight males organized for the purpose of providing labor on each others' gardens. These groups, referred to as "squads" or "columns", work on a "today-for-me, tomorrow-for-you" principle. The entire group may also contract its services out for wage labor tasks. And, in fact, a member may sell the services of the entire group to a third party on the day on which his "turn" comes, rather than putting the group to work on his own fields. The longevity of these squads is generally quite limited. They may be constituted for only one "round" or they may stay together for several rounds. But they rarely last for more than an entire agricultural season without some attrition or change in membership. Furthermore it is generally the younger males in a community that get involved. Membership in these rotating labor squads, while found among poorer individuals of all ages, is seen as being less appropriate or honorable for individuals in their forties and fifties, though perfectly acceptable for young men beginning their economic careers.

The agriculture labor squad is a true group (however brief) and must be distinguished from the traditional koumbit, which is a collective work party. That is the term koumbit refers, not to a human group, but to a collective event, the gathering of a large number of people to work on the fields of one community member. The composition of a koumbit will rarely be the same

from one occasion to the next. The koumbit, as well as the smaller work parties referred to as the vanjou or the jounin, are not organizations per se, but rather social events, and thus fall outside the present discussion.

In General it can be said that in traditional rural Haiti the only organizations which have been "institutionalized" are those in which people join to pool their labor. There are no reported instances of squads or work societies holding land in common. And rarely if ever have they been observed to pool the produce of their gardens for collective marketing. Property and produce are privately owned; only labor will be regularly pooled in traditional rural Haiti.

8.2 The Community Council Movement

Beginning with the relief efforts which began arriving in Haiti in the wake of hurricanes in the early '50s, there has been a proliferation through all regions of Haiti of konsey kominote. Community councils are not an indigenous form of collective organization in Haiti but have been formed largely through the sponsorship of GOH or quasi-public agencies. In many instances they constitute an organized local response to the insistence of external agencies with food commodity resources that communities form "councils" in order to receive the food supplies.

The community council movement appears to have progressed furthest, both in terms of the number of councils and the organizational maturity of the groups, in the Northwest, under the stimulus of several decades of project intervention by HACHO and CARE. HACHO has based its activities principally on the organization of local community councils, and recent research indicates that in some cases local groups have gone beyond the status of Food-for-Work collectors (konsey manje) to perform more serious developmental tasks (konsey serye).

8.3 More Recent Forms of Community Organization

Several important outside-funded projects have intentionally shied away from involvement with pre-existing community councils in view of what was perceived to be the vested interests of the economically more powerful community members and economically more powerful groups who have often monopolized the leadership roles and resource-collecting activities of many councils. Thus counter-movements have been formed in different parts of Haiti, the most frequent group name being that of groupman. In regions where community councils exist side by side with groupements, the former tend to be dominated by local political and economic interests, frequently town-based, while the latter tend to be headed by peasant leaders based in rural communities. The area

around Les Cayes has what is probably the most advanced "groupement movement", put in motion by Catholic Church outreach activities. The communities of Hinche and Gros Morne have similarly developed "groupement movements", some efforts having been made even for collective production activities.

8.4 The Organizational Basis of Tree-Planting

The project under discussion here will neither reject nor endorse beforehand any currently existing community organization model. In addition to the exchange labor groups, the community councils, and the "groupements" discussed in preceding paragraphs, Haiti has seen a proliferation of competing local movements, including cooperatives, pre-cooperatives, local church committees and a particularly active Church-based organization in the Kenscoff area called Afe Neg Koumbit. The project will cooperate with any and all organizations that (1) are composed of small farmers and (2) are interested in cash-oriented tree-planting and/or more general soil conservation activities and (3) give evidence of interest that involves more than the acquisition of food or wages for tree-planting or terracing activities.

As a long range plan, the project envisions the exploration of organizational groupings whose membership is constituted by individuals cropping contiguous plots of ground on a hillside, somewhat analogous to the lowland water-users groups that are organized for the maintenance of irrigation systems. Thus far no attempts have been made in rural Haiti to form action units based on hillsides or watersheds; such organizational units would be a more effective basis for the launching of erosion control and tree-planting activities than the current groups which are based, not on contiguous cropping land, but on residence within a given community. However the project will not encumber itself from the outset with insistence on any particular organizational model. Rather the first task will be to identify as many communities as possible in which smallholding cultivators are interested in the planting of trees. The organizational context in which the activities will take place will be a function of the pre-existing organizational patterns. The design and implementation of more appropriate models will be attempted as the basic tree-planting objectives of the project have proved their technical and microeconomic feasibility.

9. Local Government and Laws

The project will be carried out in communities that not only fall within the jurisdiction of specific local authority structures, but also that are subject to a body of written laws. To what degree will these local authorities or this body of Haitian law have an impact on the feasibility of projected activities?

9.1 Local Authorities

As discussed in an earlier section, the rural Haitian population is organized into rural sections. Each of these sections is governed by a chef de section, generally a local individual, who in addition chooses from each village within the section a local unpaid assistant referred to as a marechal or adjoin. This marechal may also be assisted by another unpaid villager called a notab. Both the marechal and the notab generate some salaries from the fines that are collected on captured animals and from the fees which custom permits them to charge plaintiffs who have need of a law-enforcement service (such as pursuit of a thief or a defaulting debtor).

In traditional times the chef de section was a wielder of substantial economic, political, and military power. Recent fieldwork, however, has documented in different parts of Haiti a substantial decline in the power of the chef de section and his local assistants. His major activity is now intervening in livestock matters. The most frequent source of intracommunity friction is the destruction of crops by neighbors' livestock.

To the degree that depredation by goats will be a major source of project concern, and to the degree that peasant tree-planting find themselves obliged to take action against the owners of captured animals, then the local authorities will move into action around matters concerned with the project. But the nature of their involvement will become clearer once we discuss the three types of laws that are of most relevance to this project: land tenure laws, grazing laws, and tree-related laws.

9.2 Land-Tenure Laws

An earlier section has discussed the general issue of land tenure. The question to be asked here is: do locally prevalent land tenure laws make feasible the carrying out of the tree-planting activities envisioned in the project? The answer is an unequivocal yes. If an individual can show that he either has a deed or is a descendant of an ancestor whose deed is still extant, then his right to inherited land is recognized and supported in local courts. It is true that there are frequent land conflicts. But the conflicts entail competing claims. What is important here is that land in Haiti is

governed by a private property system in which landowners are also viewed as the owners of the vegetation -- including and especially the trees -- which stand on the land.

In terms of leasing arrangements, including the leasing of State lands, there are communities in the coffee growing region of Baptist, for example, whose holdings are entirely on land rented from the State. They have inherited coffee groves from their parents and grandparents and have enjoyed access to these coffee trees as securely as though they had a separate deed to each plot. That is, the current project can proceed without any changes in local land tenure laws. The local land tenure system could, of course, be improved and made somewhat more adapted to local peasant custom. But the point is not that there is a perfect system, but merely a system within which the projected tree-planting activities can unfold.

9.3 Grazing Laws

Another question can be asked concerning the legal rights of peasant planters of trees. Will project participants have any legal basis for taking action against animals that destroy newly transplanted seedlings? The answer is yes. Since the early 1800's the Code Rural has provided for sanctions against individuals whose livestock destroy the crops of other cultivators. These earlier provisions have been merely reinforced by the more recent Code Rural Francois Duvalier which legally abolished open-range grazing. It is now the legal obligation of livestock owners to prevent their animals from destroying crops. Where there are no gardens, open grazing still continues. But when gardens are planted, the cultivators have a right to redress if free-grazing animals destroy their crops.

These laws have rarely been invoked in traditional reforestation projects, because the trees have not been viewed by cultivators as their crop. In some cases the landowners on whose land trees were planted have been informed that the trees were government property. There has been little or no motivation for the landowner to keep even his own goats out, to say nothing of taking action against neighbors' goats. For this reason the project paper has emphasized the notion of the tree as the peasant's crop. Only when it is perceived and defined as a cash-generating crop will it be given the same protection and legal safeguards currently given to other crops in rural Haiti. But the laws which will make this redefinition enforceable already exist. In areas where open grazing and enforcement of the Code is lax, special precaution and incentive to assure the survival of the trees planted will be taken.

9.4 Tree-Related Laws

The earliest legal regulations concerning trees are to be found in the Code Rural of 1825, which explicitly prohibited cutting trees on steep hillsides and mountaintops and near bodies of flowing water. These prohibitions were repeated in a Code Rural issued in the 1860's, and remained in effect for nearly a century until the promulgation of the Code Rural Francois Duvalier in 1962. This latter body of laws pays special attention to the problem of woodcutting, and in addition makes provisions for the planting of trees, a measure which was not found in the 19th century codes. Throughout the 20th century laws have been passed prohibiting the cutting of wood. Examples include a law passed in 1926 setting aside a National Forest Reserve, a law in 1955 regulating woodcutting in watersheds, woodselling and charcoal making and a law in 1962 restricting free grazing and earmarking certain precious trees for special protection. In short there are abundant laws protecting forests. What has been lacking has been enforcement of the laws.

The critical question for this project now becomes: do the laws in principle prohibit absolutely the felling of all trees? If so, then the planting of wood trees as a cash crop technically would be against the law, as the farmer would not subsequently have the legal right to fell the trees he plants. This would undermine from the outset any effort to introduce the wood tree as a cash crop.

Several comments are in order here. In the first place, laws against cutting trees have been on the books for over 150 years, and Haiti has been deforested. The laws have never been enforced. Secondly, these laws have been directed against the cutting down of natural stands of trees, particularly those on state lands. They have not been directed at the peasant planting trees on his own land. Thirdly, the government has in fact legalized the charcoal industry by establishing a tax on each sack of charcoal sold (a fee that is collected from the intermediary seller, not the producer). That is, the presence of several decades of government taxation has essentially legitimized the cutting of wood for charcoal. This legalization is not only de facto, but formally codified in the Rural Code of May 16, 1962. Law No. XI on rural industries legalizes charcoal production by providing for the acquisition of a permit by charcoal makers and by those who supply wood to these charcoal makers.

In short, the project being contemplated here is not only sound from a sociocultural point of view, it is also in conformity with the law of the land.

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