

Communities Partake in Agro-Tour Initiative

Over the last twenty-five years coffee and cocoa sales in the Dominican Republic have plummeted, affecting the economic stability of the population of the upper basin of the Bajobonico River. Until now, an area once rich in production of cacao, oranges, mandarins, and avocados had been left behind as its educated community members emigrated to metropolitan areas in search of employment opportunities.

Local community group Fundación ProConuco, in collaboration with four neighboring communities, values new alternatives for agricultural production and opportunity for economic growth. ProConuco's verdant agro-tourism initiative takes advantage of local production activities sensitive to the area's biodiversity while seeking economic sustainability and promoting community empowerment.

With USAID-DSTA support, ProConuco will create an agro-tourism route through the communities of Altamira, where visitors can journey through orchards filled with a variety of local fruits and vegetables such as grapefruit, plantain, yucca, and sugar cane while witnessing the community harvesting process first hand.

The route integrates land owners and community members alike who will provide services along the route. In addition, the construction of a dining area, bathrooms, and a parking lot as well as the rehabilitation of ProConuco's facilities will improve the quality of operations.

ProConuco's capacity building workshops will contribute to the creation of sustainable social capital and increase community motivation to participate and manage the agrotourism route.



Javier Nuñez is one of the many land owners that will benefit from ProConuco's community agro-tourism project.



The community's heightened capacity and awareness of the project's umbrella of opportunity will inspire groups and individuals alike to contribute to the route, promoting micro-enterprise growth and diminishing migration rates.

The incorporation of local land lots and orchards managed by agriculture producers will provide a new source of employment for rural inhabitants and increase food security within the region. Heightened production along the route is suggested to attract local and national markets for organic agriculture, resulting in a flow of returns into the province of Altamira.

ProConuco is in the stages of identifying its goals and production phases, while evaluating sustainability criteria and reaching out to other community groups. It is estimated that up to 675 individuals will benefit as cooperative members in the agro-tour. Locally-generated income will reach up to 420 more families in the region, raising the standard of living for over 2,000 Dominicans.