



Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program

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Trip Report: Haiti

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Purpose: Plan and establish research goals and objectives for conservation agriculture production systems (CAPS) and maize field trial sites in the upcoming spring of 2012, and strengthen ties with in-country partners (Zanmi Agrikol and Caritas-Hinche).

Sites Visited: Port Au Prince; Cange; Corporant Research Site; Lachateau Research Site in Boucan Carré; Hinche; Maïssade Research Site

Description of Activities

A team from Virginia Tech visited Haiti to strengthen collaboration with Haitian partners and implement plans for the 2012 growing season. Attending were T. Thompson (new LTRA-6 P.I.), W. Thomason (co-P.I.), and M. Mulvaney (from SANREM management entity and P.I. of the soil quality/carbon sequestration cross-cutting project). Plans are in place for cover crop and maize studies in the first growing season of 2012. Cover crop seed was distributed, sites were selected, and plans were developed for trials to evaluate maize for suitability and performance in conservation agriculture (CA) systems. The team also interviewed six candidates for the position of assistant in-country coordinator, a position viewed as crucial for future project success. Overall, the project is in good position to achieve strong positive results in the upcoming year.

Thompson and Thomason spent most of the day of January 9 with R. Badio (LTRA Haiti coordinator) at the MARNDR. The two met with J. Glody Jean-Baptiste (Cabinet Secretary in the Haitian Government), who is interested in the ongoing maize variety evaluation trials in LTRA-6. Thomason discussed the progress of the variety evaluation trials at Corporant, Lachateau, and Maïssade. Glody is interested in learning more about our results and the possibility of obtaining seeds based on adaptability.

We also learned of a 'Maize Project' funded by the French government that is aimed at increasing corn production in the south of Haiti (Les Cayes) to provide food for school children. We discussed that our results could help by guiding their selection of elite varieties to test in small or large plots if seeds can be obtained from CIMMYT. We were asked to give a seminar to this group on January 13, but this did not happen.

We also discussed with Badio our proposal to hire an assistant coordinator to improve implementation and reporting on LTRA activities at the various project sites. Badio was supportive of the idea. He very much wants to continue serving as coordinator and had some very valuable suggestions for locating an assistant coordinator. Based upon his suggestions, we revised the draft job description and tentatively scheduled candidate interviews. This position description and the overall concept were discussed with our research partners at ZA and Caritas-Hinche. Both were strongly in favor of the project taking this step.

The team interviewed six candidates for the assistant coordinator position. Each was a recent (2009 or later) graduate of FAMV searching for an opportunity for social service employment, one year of which is necessary to be a licensed agronomist. Each candidate was interviewed individually for 15-25 minutes and asked a range of questions about background and relevant experience. Their facility in spoken English was also evaluated at the same time. We have been able to identify one highly-qualified candidate who will be considered for this position. Badio will conduct a follow-up interview with this candidate. Further discussions will be needed in Blacksburg regarding how to structure this position regarding salary, expenses, and other matters.

Badio and the VT team met with partners at Zamni Agrikol (ZA) from Jan 10-11. Those attending were Gillaine Warne, Ferreste Sonneus (Agronomist), Reginald Cean (Director of Agricultural Programs at the new Technical School at Corporant—CFFL), Jean-Philippe Dorzin (ZA Agronomist), Jean Louis Stenio (Agronomist), and Larose Deus (Agronomist). Three visiting Haitian undergraduate students from EARTH University in Costa Rica also attended.

We discussed the outcome of the bean and corn variety trials. 'Arroyo' beans and two CIMMYT open-pollinated corn varieties were superior in the first year trials. Yield data have been obtained. We also observed the ongoing hybrid corn variety trials at Lachateau. The corn was at the V3-V5 growth stage during our visit. Enormous differences among the CIMMYT open-pollinated varieties were observed during 2011. It was agreed that the trials will be repeated during 2012. A second black bean variety trial will be planted at Morne Michel. We will plan for planting two seasons with cover crops. Arrival of the maize seeds for the second year variety trials was discussed. Thomason has requested the seeds from CIMMYT. The goal is to deliver them by hand to ZA by April 1.

We discussed the cover crop-tillage experiments for 2012. A protocol and plot plan were given to the ZA agronomists and discussed at length. Fields to be used for the experiments were identified. They agreed that these will be planted within the next few days. The fields can be irrigated from the nearby river. ZA committed field areas for 2012 at both the Corporant and Lachateau farms for (1) second-year corn variety yield trials and (2) cover crop-tillage

experiments. We were assured that the cover crop-tillage experiments can be repeated in the same locations during 2013 and 2014 as well. Irrigation is possible at both sites.

We discussed installing meteorological stations at both ZA farms. Collaborators were enthusiastic about the idea.

The VT team was asked to give a seminar on conservation agriculture to the entire ZA team. We immediately agreed that this is a good idea and will try to do this with our next major visit.

The VT team met with the Caritas agronomists Guedry and Evans Bien-Amie at the Caritas office in Hinche on Jan 12. The maize variety trials and cover crop-tillage experiment for 2012 were discussed. Guidry and Bien-Amie agreed that they will implement these studies soon, especially the cover crop-tillage experiment. It will be possible to irrigate this to establish the cover crops. The cover crop seeds, protocol, and plot plan were shared with Guedry and Bien Amie. They agreed that these will be planted within the next few days. Irrigation will be applied as needed to germinate the cover crops, and maize will be planted in March-April. The VT team visited the experimental farm at Maissade with Guidry and Bien-Aime. We briefly toured the farm, observed the numerous recent improvements, and identified fields for the maize variety trials and the cover crop-tillage experiments.

The Caritas Agronomists had arranged for local farmers to be at the farm near Maissaide during our visit. Our team was able to spend more than one hour with approximately 50 local farmers, about half of whom were female. Topics of discussion included the major barriers to crop production and conservation practices that they currently use. We were also able to share with them the key elements of conservation agriculture (crop rotation, reduced tillage, cover crops) and explain the basic features of our project with Caritas.

Both our partners expressed concern with difficulties in reimbursement and communication about funding and reimbursement. Thompson promised that we will be very active in addressing these problems. Immediately, the outstanding Caritas charges for which they've not been reimbursed will be addressed. Guedry agreed to send invoices and scanned receipts for any additional expenses to date. These will be treated as a priority item.

Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Follow-up interview with top Assistant Coordinator candidate (Badio)
2. Identify how best to hire Assistant Coordinator and provide for expenses (Thompson)
3. Determine if it is possible to lease a vehicle in Haiti for the Asst. Coordinator (Thompson)
4. Make banners to publicize the experimental sites (Thompson)
5. Answer questions to ensure payment of past invoice from Caritas (Thompson)
6. Provide up-to-date expenses and scanned invoices (Guidry)
7. Determine if funds could be advanced to AZ and Caritas quarterly (Thompson)
8. Ensure that needed soil samples are collected (or have been collected) at each experimental site (Mulvaney)
9. Ensure that adequate quantities of CIMMYT open-pollinated maize seed are obtained and delivered to partner agronomists (Thomason)

10. Ensure that cover crops are planted and irrigated in a timely fashion (Thomason, Thompson, Badio)
11. Determine options for weather stations (Mulvaney)
12. Determine availability of bean and maize seeds (Thomason)

Training Conducted

Program type (workshop, seminar, field day, short course, etc.)	Date	Audience	Number of Participants		Training Provider (US university, host country institution, etc.)	Training Objective
			Men	Women		
Short Course	12-Jan	50 smallholder farmers near Maissaide experimental site	26	24	Virginia Tech LTRA team, Caritas-Hinche Agronomists	SANREM LTRA objectives and plans

List of Contacts Made

Name	Title/Organization	Contact Info (address, phone, email)
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