

Britain's favourite fresh produce magazine since 1895



By Mike Knowles

Tuesday 20th August 2013, 10:53 GMT

Dole helps revive Haiti banana trade

Company providing technical support to initiative aimed at developing large-scale banana production in Caribbean country

Haiti could soon regain its place in the international banana market following the launch of a major new commercial initiative in the country assisted by US multinational fruit company Dole.

Agri-Success, a majority-owned Haitian subsidiary of Florida-based Haiti Originale, said it planned to develop "sustainable and globally competitive" high-quality banana production in Haiti, which over the past half century has seen its once thriving banana industry stagnate and decline.

The group intends to analyse the suitability of various regions of the country over the coming year, with a view to creating a small-scale growing and packing operation supplying domestic and international markets under the name Par Haiti-Pour Haiti (From Haiti-For Haiti).

"The ultimate goal is to develop a large-scale banana operation that will serve as a foundation for the sector and one that also supports independent growers," the company said in a statement, adding that the project's overall aim was to establish long-term sources of revenue, as well as pride, based on new private-sector sources of production.

Haiti Originale's partners in the banana project include two Haitian government ministries – Agriculture and Natural Resources & Rural Development – as well as the Inter-American Development Bank.

Dole Food Company has been acting as technical adviser and providing agricultural consulting services to the project for over a year.

"Haiti is blessed with fertile soils and hard-working people, the prerequisites

for successful agribusiness ventures," said Michael Pereira, chief executive officer of Haiti Originale.

According to the company, every year Haiti produces approximately 290,000 tonnes of bananas, 295,000 tonnes of mangoes, 200,000 tonnes of plantains, 58,000 tonnes of avocados and 40,000 tonnes of coconuts.

Given Haiti's potential, he said, the banana programme was likely to be "the first of many" and would ultimately serve as a model for other agricultural sectors.

"Through this collaborative process, we will demonstrate the potential of the country to compete at a level of quality and on a scale that will attract private investors, minimise current banana import levels in Haiti and create vitally needed export earnings."

Technical assistance



The Par Haiti/Pour Haiti brand has already been used on Haitian coffee sold by US retailer Whole Foods Market

Jorge Gonzales, senior vice-president of agricultural research and development at Dole Tropical Products Latin America, said his company was proud to have been given the opportunity to provide technical assistance for the banana project.

"We recognise that the success of this programme will have a major positive impact on the lives of thousands of farming families as well as consumers, which fits with Dole's philosophy of sustainable agriculture for producers, workers and consumers," he noted.

Haiti Originale was established following the country's devastating earthquake in January 2010 to provide a platform for sustainable development and job creation.

As well as project development and investment promotion, Haiti Originale will make use of the Par Haiti-Pour Haiti brand to encourage consumers, customers and commercial partners to recognise the project's positive impact on growers and workers in the country.

Haiti Originale has already

launched a high-quality Haitian coffee line, which is sold in selected Whole Foods Markets stores in Florida.

It also partnered with the Walt Disney Company to create a Haitian garden and marketplace promoting products including fresh produce at the International Flower & Garden Festival at Florida theme park Epcot.