

# Land Tenure and Reform in Haiti

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## Abstract

Haiti struggles with poverty and environmental degradation. The political system is far from stable. Most Haitians do not have secure ownership of their lands because the government lacks the ability to enforce tenure. Each time the government changes hands, fighting over the land begins again. Haiti has been a democratic state for the last 7 years. They have begun testing agrarian land reform in the Artibonite Valley. This paper will discuss the development of land arrangements in Haiti and examine the results of the current land reform policies.

## 1. Introduction

Haiti is a land with much strife. The people are poor and hungry. In fact, Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. The country averages about one government per year. Many theorize that securing tenure in land is one method for combating poverty and hunger. This paper will address the history of land tenure in Haiti and the feasibility of secure tenure for improving the nation.

## 2. History

Haitians are proud of leading the only successful slave revolution in history. Haiti is the only country in Latin America whose culture is largely French and whose population is mostly African.

### 2.1 Political

Haiti is a rugged mountainous country. Christopher Columbus sighted the island of Hispaniola in 1492. The wealth of the colony came from gold exports. The original inhabitants were called Tainos or Arawaks and described as peaceable. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century the indigenous population was almost extinct.

The French were given the western 1/3 of Hispaniola in 1697 because the gold was mostly gone. Buccaneers were the first to colonize the island. The French began migrating once they realized sugar, cocoa, and coffee grew well there. Slaves from Africa were brought in after the indigenous people died from forced labor and disease. The French settlers were known to be cruel to the slaves and resentment from the slaves caused a rebellion in 1791. Toussaint became the leader and under his authority peace was restored. Slaves were ordered back to the plantations. Napoleon attempted to persuade Haiti back under French rule. The Haitians fought back and Napoleon gave up his attempts to conquer them.

Haiti declared independence in 1804. The early years of independence produced a militarized state and the collapse of plantations. The aristocrats lost their land and the people owned or squatted on their own small farms. This

produced a caste system where the elite established themselves in towns and the peasantry farmed the rural lands. The country has been shaped by the social order with a majority of illiterate, distrustful peasants and a tiny elite divided by color. There is no middle class to offer a balance.

In 1915 the United States occupied Haiti, justified by the Monroe Doctrine. The US attempted to stabilize the economy, improve health and sanitation, and create infrastructure. Occupation caused the centralization of power in the capital of Port-au-Prince. The elite classes were united across color divides and create nationalism. A professional class was established. US occupation has been followed by periods of political unrest and attempts to establish democracy. The timeline below offers a concise view of the changes in political control.

#### Timeline

1492 Columbus claims St. Domingue for Spain  
1697 1/3 of St. Domingue given to France  
1791 Slave revolt begins  
1802 Napoleon attempts to regain Haiti  
1804 Haiti declares independence by General Dessalines  
1806 Dessalines assassinated  
1807 Haiti divided  
1820 Haiti reunited under President Boyer  
1915 US occupies Haiti  
1930 President Vincent elected  
1934 US occupation ends  
1941 President Lescot elected  
1946 President Lescot overthrown, Dumarsais Estime elected  
1950 General Magloire elected president  
1957 Magloire overthrown, Francois Duvalier comes to power  
1964 Duvalier assumes presidency for life  
1971 Duvalier succeeded by son, Jean Claude Duvalier  
1986 Military assumes control, Duvalier flees to France  
1987 Constitution ratified, peasants are massacred  
1988 Leslie Manigat elected in military controlled election  
1989 Manigat overthrown, General Avril assumes presidency  
1990 Aristide elected president  
1991 Aristide overthrown  
1994 US-led international force restores Aristide  
1995 Aristide steps down, Rene Preval and parliament elected  
1999 Preval dissolves parliament  
2000 US troops leave, Aristide wins elections

#### *2.2 Land*

After independence for France, land reform subdivided plantations for the use of emancipated slaves. The released slaves refused to work in the large sugar plantations. They had small pieces of land which white growers had granted in

order to release themselves from the obligation to nourish the slaves. They squatted on the grounds of the old plantations and imposed a country agriculture against the leaders of the new state. The reform was so extensive that by 1842 no plantation was its original size. The victory of the farming community over the system of large plantations had consequences in terms of land precariousness.

Peasant lands are becoming more fragmented as each heir receives a piece of property. Sharecropping and renting are becoming more popular arrangements. Land is becoming scarce as soils deplete and populations increase. This produces a greater competition over land than ever before. (Congress 1989)

### **3. Current Situation**

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest countries in the developing world. In 1998, its per capita income was \$250, less than 1/10 the average in Latin America. (Group 1998) Life expectancy was 57 years compared to the average of 69 in most of Latin America. Less than half the population is literate. Only a quarter of the population has access to safe water. The overwhelming majority of Haitians are living in deplorable conditions of extreme poverty.

The long history of political instability and the lack of governance has contributed to the problem of poverty in Haiti. Corruption and misuse of public funds have resulted in a decline in the quality of all public services, including such fundamental areas of traditional governmental responsibility as the police, the justice system, and the provision of basic infrastructure. The restoration of democracy has resulted in some encouraging progress but the basic problems of governance are still contributing to the poverty problem. (Group 1998)

#### **3.1 Politics**

Haiti is currently a democratic nation with an elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Aristide was born on July 15, 1953 in the coastal town of Port-Salut, Haiti. Aristide was ordained in the Catholic Church and served as a parish priest to many poor people. Aristide was an outspoken critic of the Duvalier regime, and of the social system which condemned 85% of the population to abject poverty. He rose to national prominence through the broadcasts of his sermons on the Catholic station, Radio Soleil. Shortly after Duvalier's fall in April of 1986 Aristide led a memorial march to notorious Fort Dimanche prison in memory of the 30,000 Haitians who lost their lives there under Duvalier. The Haitian military opened fire on the crowd of praying demonstrators but Aristide continued a live broadcast on Radio Soleil during the massacre, confirming his reputation as a fearless opponent of the regime. Aristide became a target of repression by the military governments that held power after Duvalier's fall. He survived at least 9 attempts on his life.

In the fall of 1990 Haiti prepared for presidential elections that many feared would end in violence as they did in 1987 when voters were massacred at the voting poles. On the final day of registration Aristide announced his candidacy for the presidency. The announcement electrified the country and after a six week campaign that Aristide dubbed "Lavalas" or a cleansing flood, he was elected president in Haiti's first free and fair election with an overwhelming 67% of the vote.

During Aristide's seven months in office his government pursued a program of change based on the principles of participation, transparency and justice. The Lavalas government began the difficult tasks of cleaning out a corrupt civil service, enforcing tax codes, fighting drug trafficking, and delivering services to its citizens. There was relative security, with military violence and criminal activity sharply reduced. Human rights organizations reported a dramatic drop in violations, the flow of refugees came to a halt, and not a single extrajudicial execution was attributed to the government during this period. The international community applauded the numerous reforms undertaken and donors pledged funds to the new government.

In September of 1991, Aristide's government was overthrown in a military coup led by Lieutenant General Raoul Cédras, and Aristide went into a three-year exile in the United States. Aristide returned to Haiti as president only after the threat of a U.S. invasion. In September 1994 a force of 20,000 U.S. troops arrived in Haiti to oversee the political transition and worked to maintain order throughout the country. In October, Aristide reassumed the presidency.

He returned to a country traumatized by the violence of the coup period and economically devastated. His commitment to justice, and his calls for peaceful rebuilding of the nation enabled the country to regain political stability and take the first steps towards economic recovery. His most significant act as President was to dismantle the Haitian military. His government created Haiti's first civilian police force. With the support of the United Nations legislative elections were held and in February 1996 Haiti witnessed its first peaceful transition from one democratically elected president to the next.

After completing his five year term as President, Aristide founded the Aristide Foundation for Democracy. Under Aristide's leadership the Foundation is dedicated to deepening the roots of Haiti's democracy by opening avenues of participation to all Haitians. The foundation has three major program areas: sponsoring forums and public dialogues on issues such as justice, land reform, and the economic future of the nation; supporting literacy programs in Haiti; and fostering community-based economic initiatives.

In December 1995 Aristide's close friend and handpicked successor Rene Preval was elected president of Haiti in a landslide victory. Preval had been Aristide's prime minister at the time of the 1991 coup. Aristide turned over power to his successor in February 1996. In 2000 Aristide was reelected president of Haiti.

The opposition boycotted the election, however, which caused the international community to question its legitimacy. Aristide assumed office in February 2001.

The elections were met with much criticism. An electoral dispute that began in May of 2000 when opposition candidates contested the results of local and legislative elections swept by Aristide's Lavalas Family party. Although the vote was fair, the opposition candidates, backed by the OAS, contended that because of counting flaws ten of the Lavalas winners, who swept sixteen of seventeen senate seats, should have been forced into runoffs. Since the Haitian government refused to redress grievances concerning the May vote, they claim that Aristide is a despot, seeking to stack the parliament with flunkies. Lavalas supporters respond that the opposition, which was going to lose the elections anyway, had nothing to lose by boycotting them.

Participation in the November election was in dispute. Haiti's election commission cited a 60.5 percent turnout, a figure corroborated by a small, unofficial delegation of international monitors. The opposition, by contrast, claimed a 5 percent turnout, and the State Department--indicating its allegiance--agreed that there was a low voter turnout and called for "reconciliation among all sectors of Haitian society."

To the Haitian government, the electoral dispute is not just a matter of a few senate seats, it's part of the greater struggle for independence. Lavalas officials saw the November vote as a strike for sovereignty. Critics claim that the "election" brings an illegitimate president and government.

### *3.2 Society*

The Haitian people are divided into two social classes, the elite and peasantry. The elite are different from most countries because they do not own the land the peasants work. Through the political unrest of the first years of independence the mulatto elite monopolized the law, arts, business, and government functions. The elite adopted a Francophile view of culture because they attended French Catholic run schools. The Haitian elite is made up of only a few families who hold a monopoly on the economy. They resist attempts to redistribute wealth and raise the minimum wage. They are said to have played a part in financing coup d'états.

The peasantry emerged from the large plantations as owners of small plots of land. They live in thatch-roofed huts without electricity or water. Illiteracy is high and there is little healthcare or sanitation. Peasant villages consist of about a dozen huts with members of large extended families. These peasants band together as collective labor to work the fields. Most are subsistence farmers who grow maize, rice, red beans and tapioca. Land is a problem for peasants because poor farming techniques and ignorance of soil conservation have ruined the environment. Trees are cut down for charcoal which is the main source of energy and until recently was exported.

A new class of urban poor had developed since the 1980s. Agricultural production and export has dropped. The increased number of AIDS cases destroyed the tourist industry. The declining economy led many to migrate to the cities for jobs. There are few jobs for untrained peasants unless they have contacts among the elite. Most live in slums and are lucky to find minimum wage jobs. Health care and education may have been marginally better in cities but have now collapsed with migration. Many are also fleeing the country due as much to poverty as to political persecution.

### *3.3 Environment*

Haiti is in ecological crisis. Most of the forests have been removed. As a result the mountains are eroding, soil depleting, aquifers emptying, and rivers and lakes silting.

One reason for deforestation is the issue of land tenure and overpopulation. As the land is divided into smaller and smaller plots the plots that are farmed are barely viable. On such plots the farmer is unlikely to surrender precious soil to growing trees. Also, quite often a peasant farmer may own a widely dispersed number of tiny plots that are farmed by landless peasants. This creates a situation where the peasant farming that land has no interest in long-term environmental questions. Leaving trees standing in such circumstances becomes a luxury.

“Haiti’s environmental crisis is a direct result of the miserable conditions to which our ruling classes have condemned the masses,” said Ben Dupuy, secretary general of the Nation Popular Party. “Big landowners let large tracts lay fallow while peasants are driven to farm on mountainsides. Washington demands that Haiti lower its tariff walls, while US agribusiness dumps on us cheap rice and other crops we produce. Ruined peasants flood into the slums, where there is no gas or electricity. They must rely on charcoal, which consumes a lot of wood, greatly accelerating deforestation. State funds which could protect the environment, raise literacy, and build healthcare centers are diverted to pay the debt rung up by Duvalier, that is to pay interest to super-rich banks in New York and Paris.” Haiti’s ecological crisis can only be solved by fundamental political change, including a “true land reform” and development of policies by and for the people, not dictated by Washington. (2002)

If deforestation continues to increase it is predicted that Haiti will have to import water by 2008. The problem of deforestation in Haiti is a socio-economical as well as political problem. Erosion has contributed to overpopulation in cities, the emergence of "shanty-town" in the suburbs, social instability, and the increase of urban crime. (Beauval 2000)

There is a solution to this ecological crisis, but the solution should be ensured by a motivated population with the support of private and public sectors. The

charcoal's market provides a huge profit to the countrymen and to businessmen. The woods are also used in bakeries, in liquor's industries and a great amount in the construction industry. The environmental problem in Haiti is far from being solved. The protection of the forests and the preservation of endemic species become a common concern in Haiti.

The problem of excessive deforestation is an economical and political matter. It is alleged that billions of dollars should be disbursed to solve this matter that requires a firm national willingness, a responsible organization, the production of selected plants and available lands to receive them, a campaign of education and a constant technical activity, a system of protection of the plants and permanent structures to maintain that operation. The environmental problem in Haiti seems not to be as urgent for the Haitian authorities.

The government has begun to address the environmental issues. The number of hillside farmers that have adopted improved natural resource management practices has grown from 246,000 (20%) in 2000. Hundreds of hectares of hitherto totally unproductive land were returned to productive use in several watersheds over a one-to-two year period. Four million new tree seedlings were either planted or grafted. Under Phase II of the Improved Stoves and Fuel Substitution Project, 3,500 wood and 380 kerosene stoves were produced and sold.

### *3.4 Land*

The three major forms of land tenancy in Haiti are ownership, renting, and sharecropping. Small landholders typically acquired land through purchase, inheritance, or a claim of long-term use. Many farmers also rented land temporarily from the state, absentee landlords, local owners or relatives. In turn, renters frequently subleased some of these lands, particularly parcels owned by the state. Renter generally enjoyed more rights to the land they worked than did sharecroppers. Unlike sharecroppers however, renters had to pay for land in advance. The prevalence of renting made the land market exceedingly dynamic; even small farmers rented land, depending on the amount of extra income they derived from raising cash crops. Sharecropping, also very common, was usually a shorter-term arrangement, perhaps lasting only one growing season. Sharecropper and landowner partnerships were less exploitative than those in many other Latin American countries; in most agreements, farmers gave landowners half the foods they produced on the land. (Congress 1989)

65% of the population lives in the countryside, but very few actually own the land they work. Instead, large landowners (grandons) own or run large tracts and rent land out in an exploitative sharecropping system. Those few peasants who do own land generally have a tiny patch, 70% of all farms are less than one hectare, which can only be cultivated in the most basic manner.

Haitian land tenure is based primarily on local community studies, old census data, and other more recent survey data. Haitian land tenure has many identifying characteristics. Most property is owned by individuals for private use. Most of the land is owned by peasants in small farms rather than by large owners. Most peasant farmers own the land they cultivate. Peasant farmers often own many disjoint parcels. Since they own more than one parcel they will often rent off parcels far away and rent closer ones to cultivate with their own lands. Most peasants will not update title when they purchase land. Land is divided equally among all the children when the parents die. Farm holding are built up over the course of a lifetime, then divided and dispersed. (Smucker 2000)

Land tenure arrangements are marked by two parallel systems – one legal and the other customary. The two systems work together in a type of pluralism rather than as two discrete systems. Statutory land transactions and entitlement rely heavily on documents prepared by notaries and updated survey. In general, peasant land transactions reflect skepticism of notaries, land surveyors, and virtually all agents of the state including the judiciary. (Smucker 2000)

Arrangements among peasant farmers tend to be self-regulatory. Peasants rarely update title to inherited land. Ownership rights are regulated by community ties rather than by the law. Owners of informally divided inheritance plots often have deeds to refer to that are many generations old. Farmers avoid registering their lands because of the costs involved from notary fees, survey costs, taxes, and other charges. For peasants, avoiding surveys also diminishes the risk of land loss due to the high cost of surveying and revising current plot lines to conform to old master deeds. Formal title is not necessarily more secure than informal arrangements. Formal title is more expensive and less flexible than the informal system. (Smucker 2000)

Land sales among peasants are driven by consumption and the need for cash in a household economy characterized by extreme cash scarcity. In addition to its value as a basic factor of production, land is held as a store for value or insurance fund for crisis, illness, burial, ceremonial obligations, schooling, or out-migration. (Smucker 2000)

Peasant farmers in Haiti do not enjoy land tenure security. Insecurity stems from confusing land laws and weak institutions of enforcement. Most peasant land holdings are not covered by updated title because of the high transaction costs. Those with updated title cannot adequately defend their rights in a court of law due to political instability. (Smucker 2000)

Poverty is itself an important source of land tenure insecurity. Farmers find it difficult to expand their land base by purchase, and are not inclined to invest money to update title. Land holdings are not transmitted intact to the next generation. Subdivision gives each member of the next generation a stake in the land but for most, the land is inadequate.

Haiti lacks a comprehensive, operative system for recording land ownership. The cadastre is an essential tool in reforming the system, but Haitian laws on cadastre have never been implemented and cadastre projects have generally failed. Local cadastres were undertaken in irrigated zones of Haiti's Gonaives Plaines and the Artibonite Valley with the promise of land reform. Delivery of title to peasants never materialized. Landowners in these cadastres rarely register succeeding land transaction despite the offer of free registration. (Smucker 2000)

#### **4. Resent Land Reform**

The Haitian government recently began redistributing land in conflict areas in an effort to transfer land from large landowners to peasants. Large landowners, called grandons, often rent land under exploitative conditions and pit peasant groups against each other as a means of retaining control. The area chosen to test the land reform is the Artibonite Valley.

##### *4.1 Artibonite Valley*

The Artibonite Valley is the principal rice growing region of Haiti because of the irrigation system. The establishment of the irrigation system also brought land conflicts. The Artibonite was an area where the only way peasants could meet their basic needs was by working the low-yield soils. Between 1843 and 1915, governments had been accustomed to giving gifts of property to friends and favorites, and these so-called 'grandons' already possessed a lot of land in the area. But people aware of government plans to construct the irrigation system now began acquiring more land. Backed up by arms, and often corrupt officials, they began creating divisions among the peasants, provoking major conflicts. Some chose to side with the majority property owners and so win their favor. Other banded together in peasant defense committees in an attempt to oppose absentee landlords. (International 1999)

About 87,500 acres in the Artibonite – half of the valley – is in dispute. Lawsuits over ownership clog the courts. Often, disputes turn violent. The sight of a headless peasant in a field is no uncommon. (Norton 1997)

“You have six or seven zones of big land conflicts [in the Artibonite Valley] that always reappear at the moments of political change. The peasants who were excluded from their land that believe that their rights were violated try to take back their land.. at planting time. In the month of April, if there is no pacification, there will be trouble...” (1995)

An example of the common violence that occurs in the Artibonite Valley occurred in June of 1995 when more than twenty houses were burned. Sister Mary Judith Joseph Clerfont took possession of land which she has no title and operated a school on it during President Aristide's exile. The man claiming to hold title, Mr.

Vy, didn't had recently brought the case to court, waiting so long due to distrust of the system. Sister Clerfont had arrest warrants out for her twice and has never appeared in court. Mr. Vy's house had been pillaged and burned that May. When a friend of his was missing and rumored dead, a group for the community avenged the "death" by burning houses and destroying property of Sister Clerfont's relatives. The friend later returned unharmed. One of Sister Clerfont's relatives would like to pursue justice but doesn't know how. Land disputes are among the toughest challenges facing Haiti's corrupt court system. (Teams, 1995)

#### 4.2 INARA

State attempts to bring peace to the Artibonite Valley began in 1991 with the Peace Committee. The committee went out to the peasants to discuss with them the issue of civil society. The 1987 constitution proposed a body called the National Institution of Agrarian Reform (INARA). The purpose of this organization is to "organize the fundamental structure of reform and to set in motion an agrarian reform for the benefit of the real workers of the earth. This institute will work out an agrarian politics centered on the optimization of productivity by setting up structures aimed at land protection and land management." (Article 248) The INARA came into being in 1995 after democracy was returned.

One job of the INARA is to redistribute land. INARA is authorized to take possession of state land, absentee grandon land, and land in dispute. The land registry divides confiscated land into half-hectare lots and makes them available to peasants. In October 1996, the first phase of the reform distributed land to 1600 families. Many similar redistribution have occurred since. Selections of who gets the land are made on the basis of who has the most need. A report is drawn up on each peasant and the poorest receives a parcel. The others are put on a list and remaining parcels are given away in a lottery. Methods are in place to assure that the parcels cannot be sold, mortgaged or given away. Beneficiaries also receive a low-interest loan of 1,000 Haitian dollars for buying seeds and improving walls and fences.

The land reform of the Artibonite Valley was based on the principle of participation, where the process is defined by the population itself. This experiment made it possible for the peasants to define their needs and to work to install the mechanisms likely to satisfy those needs. The Head of the State presented the participation method as a way to integrate member of society who are normally excluded. With participation, the State is limited to the technical framing of the recipients. (Affairs)

Another duty of the INARA is to settle land disputes. Unlike courts the INARA does not charge to hear a case and has a transparent policy. Anyone can present documents or lodge complaints and all parties are told what is occurring. Parties work to reach an agreement before a grand assembly. Verbal

agreements are made which have the force of law. Anyone refusing to honor the agreements face reprisals.

#### 4.3 Success or Failure?

The Justice and Peace Commission thinks the land distribution is a success. "INARA has, at the time of the first phase, achieved a concrete success, that the big land massacres have ended, and the Valley of the Artibonite is no longer a river of blood." Violence has stopped and INARA intervention has allowed for the creation of police stations. Rice production on the redistributed parcels has increased from 2.8 tons per hectare to 4.5 tons per hectare.

The work of INARA has also been met with many critiques from the peasants. Many believe the choice of recipients is not always fair. The poorest don't always land and there are hints of favoritism. Some peasants complain that they did not receive the full amount of the loan. Many of the peasants don't know how to manage such a large sum of money. Rumors of corruption are always present.

Peasants wondered why more irrigation canals are not improved and repaired so that there is more productive land for everyone. Some claimed they had lost land they had purchased or inherited years ago, without compensation. Many complained that the local committees responsible for nominating families to receive land have named family members, friends, and girlfriends rather than those who really need the land. (Teams 1997)

One peasant stated, "We think that if INARA does its job, it will be able to make big changes both for the present generation and for those that come after. Agrarian reform is going to assure us our food, it is going to get a democracy going. It will help us so that we can become free." (International 1998) The question is if INARA is doing its job. Some peasants are aware of the need to increase production and counter erosion and think that a single policy and training in new farming techniques will help.

### **5. Analysis**

Advocates think solutions for Haiti must include debt relief, land reform, small-scale economic development projects aimed at rural poor people and tariff protection for local agriculture and industry. (Coalition)

In the mountains agrarian reform is necessary to halt deforestation and soil erosion. On the plains agrarian reform is necessary to provide employment and a living for peasants relocating from the mountains, and to share more equally the country's natural resources. Reform does not just mean redistribution but must be accompanied by state intervention in the agricultural sector in the form of subsidized fertilizers and transport, the provision of irrigation systems and roads, and the levying of tariffs to protect Haitian produce for US imports. (1996)

Haiti is a land with many struggles. The majority of people are poor and hungry. There are few jobs and little land. Most peasants own a small portion of land that is their own but often this is not enough land to feed their families. Aside from hunger Haitians deal with an insecure political system. Since the United States left in 1934 political power has change hands twelve times. Many of those were due to military coups. Haitians also struggle with environmental issues such as deforestation.

The government has created an entity responsible for agrarian reform. This is a good step. But in order for the INARA to be effective, political stability is necessary. When power changes hands all of the land reform is ignored and people return to fighting for the land. The government needs to remain steady. Corruption should be addressed. Systems should be put in place to assure that it is the truly needy that benefit from land redistribution. If this occurs then the policies set in place by the INARA may make an impact.

INARA has begun to bring peace to the nation but there are other areas that they will have to begin addressing. Most of the population is illiterate and uneducated. Teaching the farmers about the environment and efficient farming methods will help them to be more productive. They will also have to address the issue of the size of the plots. Is a half-hectare really enough land for a family? What happens when the plot is divided among the heirs? Will it still be enough? Could the land be more efficiently farmed in larger plots? The people of Haiti are proud of defeating the slave owners and dividing the larger plantations among the peasants. Convincing the people to combine their land in some sort of co-op to better farm the land might be difficult but necessary.

The Haitian government will also have to address how much control they will allow the United States to have over their policies. While it is nice to have the US for an ally, it may be necessary for the Haitians to offend them and enact tariffs. Many farmers are unable to sell their crops because the cost of bringing their produce to market is more than the costs to Americans. The US can offer cheaper food so the farmers loose out and the nation is forced to import much of its food.

## **6. Conclusions**

The Haitians have a long history of political unrest and poverty. Unlike many countries, most Haitian peasants own a small plot of land that they farm. With the reestablishment of democracy, the government has begun agrarian reforms to give the land back to the peasants. In order for this reform to be successful, political stability is a necessity. The government needs to remain the same long enough to enact changes.

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