

An Open Letter to the USDA and USAID on planned peanut shipment to Haiti

To: Tom Vilsack, US Secretary of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture and Gayle Smith, Administrator, United States Agency for International Development

cc: to Kenneth Merten, Haiti Special Coordinator for State Dept

We, the undersigned, represent a broad range of social movements, human rights and development organizations, food sovereignty and agriculture organizations, foundations, and community groups in both Haiti and the United States.

We stand together in calling for an immediate cancellation of the USDA's planned shipment of 500 metric tons of peanuts to Haitian schools as part of its "Stocks for Food" program. While the gesture may be well-intentioned, this program stands to become the latest in a long history of U.S-sponsored programs that have destabilized Haiti's agricultural sector, driving the nation further into poverty while increasing its dependence on foreign aid.

Peanuts play a central role in Haiti's economy and are a critical foundation of its food security and food sovereignty. The Haitian Platform to Advocate for Alternative Development (PAPDA) reports that 150,000 Haitian farmers currently produce 70,000 metric tons of peanuts annually. There is a long chain to transform peanuts into *manba*, or Haitian peanut butter, and "a conservative estimate would lead us to conclude that this is a sector which is a regular source of income for more than half a million Haitians most of whom are women. In addition, peanut plants can withstand lack of rain and can be grown in mountainous areas.

Juslene Tyresias, the Program Director of Haiti's largest peasant organization, the Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP), describes the USDA plan to send US peanuts to Haiti as "a plan of death" for Haiti's farmers.

The United States has a long history of exporting highly subsidized agricultural products to Haiti to the detriment of the Haitian agricultural economy. The USDA's peanut plan could have a similarly devastating effect on Haiti's peanut market as rice in the mid-1990s. When the U.S. pressed Haiti to lower its tariffs on rice, the Haitian market was flooded with rice mostly from the U.S. and the price of Haitian rice plummeted. Haitian rice farmers (who had previously produced nearly all of the country's rice) were left with nothing. The consequences were vast and far-reaching. Many of the farmers had to move to Port-au-Prince in search of some form of work. Thus, the loss of farmers' livelihoods is one of the factors that led to the overpopulation of Port-au-Prince, which, in turn, is a major reason why the earthquake in 2010 was so devastating.

The consequences were so dire former President Bill Clinton famously apologized, saying, "It may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas, but...it was a mistake...I have to live every day with the consequences of the lost capacity to produce a rice crop in Haiti...because of what I did."

Ricot Jean Pierre of the Haitian Platform to Advocate for Alternative Development (PAPDA) argues that the peanut program will create an even larger catastrophe than changes to Haitian rice tariffs and the flooding of markets with cheap, subsidized US rice because the production of

peanuts serves as a key livelihood strategy for hundreds of thousands of women and creates a great deal of wealth and activity in the rural areas. The proposed USDA peanut program could destroy that source of income for Haiti's rural families, and could potentially set off a series of devastating consequences while also preventing the Haitian government from developing policies to support the nation's agriculture, particularly in the peanut sector.

In recent years, the US has come to recognize agriculture's central role in Haiti's recovery and reconstruction. USAID supports a wide range of projects that increase food production and access to markets, including the cultivation and sale of peanuts. Suddenly importing a large amount of peanuts in a country that already produces their own peanuts negates the very tenets of USAID programs. The USDA's plan is directly at odds with aid delivery best practice at USAID. For many years, development practice has been moving towards local purchasing and procurement for projects, recognizing that it is a boon to local economies and markets. This has been corroborated by prominent experts in the sector, and consistent with the United Nation's World Food Program and USAID's own policy and practice. Bolstering a government's ability to feed hungry children is a worthwhile cause, but one that should be met through local procurement. Given this contradiction, we question the real objectives of the USAID's and USDA's programs in Haiti.

We are extremely concerned that the proposed USDA peanut program will destroy the incomes of vast numbers of Haiti's rural families, rolling back years of progress and hard work by Haitian farmers.

The US should focus any aid to Haiti on supporting local production and local procurement. We suggest a more comprehensive program that supports the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education that could help to address the problem of the hunger for the children and youths at school. This program should support small farmers and producers through local procurement.

We therefore call on you to immediately cancel plans to ship U.S. peanuts to Haiti; and instead to prioritize a model of cooperation that respects the self-determination and economic independence of the Republic of Haiti.

Yon Lèt tou louvri pou USDA ak USAID sou plan pour fourè nan gòj Ayiti yon kado pwazon ak pistach

Pou : Tom Vilsack, Sekretè Agrikilti, Etazini Depatman Agrikilti, and Gayle Smith, Administratè, Ajans Etazini pou Devlopman Entènasyonal

cc: Kenneth Merten, Kòdonatè Espesyal pou Ayiti, Depatman Deta

Nou menm, ki siyen anba lèt sa, nou se reprezantan anpil òganizasyon ak lòt aktè nan mouvman sosyal, dwa moun ak òganizasyon devlopman, òganizasyon kap travay nan Dwa granmoun nan zafè lamanjay ak agrikilti, fondasyon, ak gwoup kominotè ki ap evolye nan peyi d Ayiti ak Etazini.

Nou leve vwa ansanm pou nou rele anmwe epi pou mande kanpe prese prese sou plan gouvènman ameriken (USDA) genyen pou fourè nan gòj peyi d Ayiti yon kado pwazon ak 500 tòn metrik pistach ki ta dwe al distribiye nan lekòl ayisyen yo kòm yon pati nan pwogram "Aksyon pou Manje" li a. Menm si jès sa ta kapab sanble gen bon volonte ladan l, pwogram sa a se youn nan dènye tantativ peyi Etazini ap fè pou l kontinye destabilize sektè agrikòl Ayiti a, epi fourè peyi a pi fon nan lamizè pandan y ap ogmante depandans li sou èd etranje.

Pistach jwe yon wòl enpòtan nan ekonomi peyi d Ayiti, epi yo se yon eleman enpòtan pou asire sekirite alimentè ak dwa granmoun peyi a nan zafè lamanjay. Platfòm Ayisyen kap Plede pou yon Devlopman Altènatif (PAPDA) rapòte gen plis pase 150,000 kiltivatè ayisyen kounyea kap pwodwi 70,000 tòn metrik pistach chak ane. Gen yon bon rezo ak anpil aktè kap travay nan transfòmasyon pistach pou fè manba; yon ti estimasyon montre filyè pistach la se yon sektè se yon sous regilye pou revni pou plis pase 500,000 Ayisyen (pi fò nan yo fanm) Anplis, plant pistach kapab adapte l byen nan sityasyon sechrès peyizan yo ap viv epi mete an valè zòn ki nan mòn yo.

Juslene Tyresias, Direktè Pwogram nan youn nan pi gwo òganizasyon peyizan ki ap travay nan peyi d Ayiti, Mouvmant Peyizan Papay (MPP), dekri plan USDA a pou voye pistach ki soti nan Etazini an Ayiti kòm "yon plan lanmò" pou kiltivatè Ayisyen yo.

Sa fè lontan Peyi Etazini ap ekspòte nan peyi d Ayiti, pwodwi agrikòl ki resevwa gwo sibvansyon ki kontribye nan kraze ekonomi peyizan yo ak agrikilti peyizan ayisyen yo. Plan pou voye pistach USDA genyen an, kapab pwodui gwo katastwòf sou mache pistach Ayiti a, menm jan sa te pase nan filyè diri a nan mitan ane 1990 yo. Lè peyi Etazini ak enstitisyon entènasyonal yo te oblije Ayiti pou li desann byen ba tarif dwanye sou diri a, mache ayisyen an te anvayi ak diri etranje ki te soti sitou nan Etazini, epi pri diri ayisyen te degrengole. Kiltivatè diri ayisyen (ki te deja pwodwi prèske tout diri nan peyi a jis nan lane 1980 yo) yo vin pèdi tout sous revni yo ak tout mwayen pou yo kontinye pwodui. Konsekans aksyon peyi Etazini yo gran anpil e yo mete ekonomi peyi a ajenou. Anpil nan kiltivatè yo te demenaje ale rete nan Pòtoprens oubyen nan lòt gran vil pou yo al chache travay oubyen yon lavi miyò. Kidonk, se konsekans pwogram peyi Etazini mennen nan peyi d Ayiti ki mennen kiltivatè yo al gwosi bidonvil epi ogmante popilasyon nan Pòtoprens, epi se te youn pi gwo rezon tranbleman tè a ki pase nan lane 2010 te fè tout viktim sa yo.

Konsekans sa yo te tèlman gran, sa te pouse ansyen Prezidan Bill Clinton mande eskiz, pou li di: "Pwogram sa yo te kapab bon pou kèk nan kiltivatè ki nan Arkansas, men se te yon erè ... Mwen oblije ap viv chak jou ak regrè lèm gade konsekans aksyon ki fè Ayiti pèdi kapasite pou li kontinye pwodwi diri ... akòz aksyon mwen te enpoze yo. "

Ricot Jean Pierre ki se Direktè Pwogram nan Platfòm Ayisyen kap Plede pou yon Devlopman Altènatif (PAPDA) fè konnen pwogram pou foute pistach la nan gòj peyi d Ayiti a pral kreye yon katastwòf ki ka pirèd pase konsekans liberalizasyon komèsyal yo paske se pral plizyè santèn milye moun ki pral pèdi tout mwayen pou yo kontinye viv epi kontinye pwodui pou asire dwa granmoun peyi a nan zafè lamanjay(patikilyèman fanm yo ki jwe yon gwo wòl nan filyè pistach la); konsa tou pwogram sa pral kraze tout posiblite pou kreye travay nan milye riral la. Pwogram pistach USDA pwopoze a ka detwi sous revni pou fanmi riral Ayiti yo, anmenm tan lap gen yon seri gwo konsekans sou lavi moun epi retire nan men gouvènman ayisyen an kapasite li genyen pou devlope politik piblik pou sipòte agrikilti nan peyi a, patikilyèman nan sektè pistach la.

Nan dènye ane yo, peyi Etazini rekonèt wòl santral agrikilti a nan rekiperasyon ak rekonstriksyon an Ayiti. USAID sipòte nan yon pakèt domèn pwojè ki ta dwe ogmante pwodiksyon manje ak aksè nan mache, ki gen ladan pwodiksyon ak ak vann pistach. Anvayi britsoukou Ayiti ak yon kantite pistach alòske li deja ap pwodui lakay li, sa ap kontribye nan kraze rezilta pwogram USAID ap mennen yo.. Plan USDA a pa mache ak bon pratik ki gen nan kesyon bay èd yo ki dirije aksyon USAID yo. Pandan dènye ane sa yo, bon pratik nan kesyon devlopman tap chache pou sipòte "acha lokal", sa vle di achte pwodui nan men pwodiktè ayisyennan kad pwojè ki ap ekzekite yo; yo te rekonèt pratik sa yon kore ekonomi ak mache lokal yo. Anpil espesyalis nan sektè sa konfime benefis sa yo, takou Pwogram Alimantè Mondyal Nasyonzini epi USAID ak lòt aktè ayisyen. Lè yon gouvènman ap ranfòse kapasite l pou bay timoun ki grangou manje, se yon aksyon ki enpòtan anpil,, men sa ta dwe fèt ak manje ki pwodui nan peyi a. Kontradiksyon ki genyen ant pwogram USAID ap mennen ak objektif ki prevwa anvayi mache peyi d Ayiti ak pistach pèpè a, fè nou ap poze tèt nou anpil kesyon sou reyèl objektif USAID ak pwogram USDA nan peyi d Ayiti.

Nou enkyete anpil devan gwo konsekans pwogram distribisyon pistach USDA pwopoze a pral genyen nan detwi tout sous revni ak kapasite anpil fanmi nan milye riral an Ayiti, yon aksyon ki pral kraze tout gwo jefò ak pwogrè kiltivatè ayisyen yo fè pandan plizyè lane deja..

Peyi Etazini ta dwe priyorize tout èd ki vize sipòte pwodiksyon lokal ak Acha lokal nan peyi d Ayiti. Nou pwopoze pou ta gen yon bon pwogram ki sipòte jefò Ministè Agrikilti ak Ministè Edikasyon Nasyonal nan chache repons ak pwoblèm grangou nan avantaj timoun ak jèn ki nan lekòl yo. Pwogram sa tap bay jarèt ak ti pwodiktè ak ti peyizan Ayisyen yo nan achte pwodwi ki fèt nan jaden yo.

Se poutet sa nou mande w pou ou kanpe prese prese sou plan USDA genyen pou voye pistach ki soti Etazini nan peyi d Ayiti. Nan sans sa, nap mande w tou pou ou privileje yon yon modèl koperasyon ant 2 peyi yo ki respekte otodetèminasyon ak endepandans ekonomik peyi d Ayiti.

Organizations:

1. Action Aid (Haiti)
2. Action Aid (US)
3. American Jewish World Service
4. Ayiti Resurrect, Brooklyn, NY (US)
5. Bread for the World (US)
6. Center for International Policy (US)
7. Church World Service (US)
8. Climate Justice Alliance (US)
9. Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas/Farm Workers Support Committee (US)
10. Community Alliance for Global Justice (US)
11. Community to Community Development (US)
12. Diaspora in Action, Philadelphia, PA (US)
13. Entraide & Fraternité (Belgium)
14. Environmental Justice Initiative for Haiti (US)
15. Family Farm Defenders (US)
16. Fanm Ayisyen Miyami/Haitian Women of Miami (US)
17. Farmworker Association of Florida (US)
18. Fondasyon Kole Zepòl (Fonkoze) (Haiti)
19. Fonkoze (US)
20. Food First (US)
21. Food Resource Bank (US)
22. Friends of Haiti, St. Bartholomew Catholic Parish, Columbus IN (US)
23. GARJAN (Nepal)
24. Gender Action (US)
25. Global Justice Clinic, NYU School of Law (US)*This communication does not purport to represent the institutional views, if any of NYU.
26. Grassroots International (US)
27. Groundswell International (US)
28. Grown In Haiti (Haiti)
29. Haitian-Americans United, Inc. Boston, MA (US)
30. Haiti Support Group (UK)
31. Indigenous Environmental Network (US)
32. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (US)
33. Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (US)
34. Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (US)
35. Lambi Fund (US)
36. Le Cadre de Liason Inter-ONG (Haiti)
37. Li, Li, Li! Read (US)

38. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (US)
39. Mennonite Central Committee, Washington Office (US)
40. Mouvman Peyizan Papay/Peasant Movement of Papaye (Haiti)
41. Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project (US)
42. National Human Rights Defense Network (Haiti)
43. Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (US)
44. Other Worlds (US)
45. Oxfam America (US)
46. Pesticide Action Network North America (US)
47. Plateforme des Organisations Haïtiennes des Droits Humains/ Haitian Human Rights Platform (Haiti)
48. Plateforme Haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif/Haitian Platform to Advocate for Alternative Development (Haiti)
49. Presbyterian Church (US)
50. Restoration Ministries International (US)
51. Rural Coalition (US)
52. Sant La, Haitian Neighborhood Center, Inc. (US)
53. Soil Generation (US)
54. Soul Fire Farm, Grafton NY (US)
55. Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods (US)
56. Swift Foundation (US)
57. US Food Sovereignty Alliance (US)
58. Why Hunger (US)
59. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, US Section
60. Women Thrive Worldwide (US)
61. Wynne Farm Ecological Reserve (Haiti)

Individuals:

1. Colette Lespinasse, former coordinator of Groupe d' Appui aux Repatriés et Réfugiés/Support Group for Returnees and Refugees (Haiti)
2. Yolette Etienne, Director, Action Aid-Haiti
3. Joseph Wendy Alliance, Advocacy Office, Action Aid-Haiti
4. Mark Schuller, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Center for NGO Leadership and Development, Northern Illinois University (US)