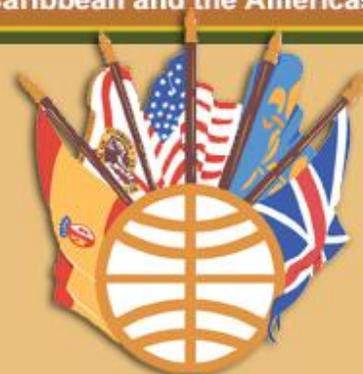


# Communi-clik

*Breaking News* from Florida's International Volunteer Agency



September 2011

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## **FOSTERING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN COLOMBIA**

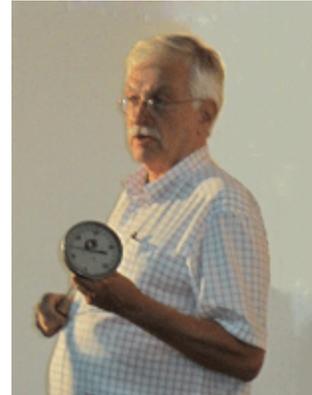
In September 2011, FAVACA launched a professional exchange program between Florida and Colombia funded by the US State Department's [Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs](#). The program will give civil society and government leaders from underserved communities in Colombia the knowledge and tools to build leadership capacity, address their communities' needs and improve opportunities for women. The program will also provide hands-on experience in areas such as organizational strengthening, community advocacy, and training in gang and human trafficking prevention, criminal and drug rehabilitation, job creation, and community leadership.

FAVACA will recruit 24 Colombian professionals, mostly women from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities to participate in five-week apprenticeships to learn techniques to strengthen their organizations and build leadership skills. The Colombian participants will also have the opportunity to network with and receive technical assistance from 18 Floridians that will travel to Colombia as part of the professional exchange program.

## **COMPOSTING HELPS ORGANIC FARMERS IN DOMINICA**

For the past three years, FAVACA has been working with the Dominica Organic Agriculture Movement (DOAM) to help improve and strengthen organic agriculture in Dominica. While organic agriculture in Dominica is growing in popularity, farmers have found it difficult to transition their fields and maintain production levels. It has also been hard to preserve the fertility of the soil without using chemical

fertilizers. Realizing these difficulties, DOAM requested FAVACA's support to provide training in soil nutrient management for tropical organic crop production systems. Dr. George Fitzpatrick, Professor of Environmental Horticulture at the [University of Florida's Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center](#) and Dr. Mary Lamberts, Extension Agent and Agricultural Program Leader for the [University of Florida's Cooperative Extension Service in Miami-Dade](#) agreed to lead the training on organic composting and crop production systems July 16-23, 2011. Fitzpatrick and Lamberts provided knowledge on basic principles of composting technology, measuring the chemical parameters (pH levels, soluble salt levels, moisture content, and organic matter content) and physical compost, and judging compost quality by reading the pile temperatures and oxygen levels while also covering the health aspects of composting and pathogen control. Training took place in Bellevue Chopin, Castle Bruce, Calibishie, and La Plaine reaching over 160 people. The FAVACA volunteers recommended that DOAM develop policies and procedures regarding raising funds for equipment for farmers and storing the equipment for shared use.



#### **ST. KITTS AND NEVIS ATTACKS SWEET POTATO PEST**

The [Caribbean Agriculture Research and Development Institute \(CARDI\)](#) has been a leader in the development of the regional sweet potato industry. The program aims to improve the commodity value chain expanding production, productivity and value-added products. Recently farmers in St. Kitts and Nevis have seen a 70-80 % decrease in sweet potato production due to the sweet potato weevil ([Cylas Formicarius](#)) resulting in severe revenue losses for farmers. CARDI and the Ministry of Agriculture in St. Kitts and Nevis requested FAVACA's support in training on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods



to control losses. Dr. Abner Hammond, Professor Emeritus and Extension Specialist at [Louisiana State University's Agricultural Center, Department of Entomology](#), provided instruction on alleviating the sweet potato weevil from August 6-14, 2011. Hammond's presentations and hands-on lessons introduced Best Management Practices for the control of insects and established post harvest procedures. Hammond taught participants to monitor fields with pheromone baited traps and remove pests through simple methods such as residue removal, which includes taking out old vines and sweet potatoes left in the field from previous plantings before establishing new crops. Another effective method recommended was to plant the sweet potatoes on

mounds to protect roots and makes access to the plant more difficult for the weevils. Lastly, Hammond also showed participants how to use reduced risk insecticides after planting to further reduce the population of the weevils.

#### **AMERINDIAN COMMUNITY IN GUYANA DEVELOPS COSMETIC PRODUCTS**

In the remote tropical forest of Guyana, the Amerindian population known as the Three Brothers Community have been producing Crabwood oil from Crabwood tree seeds ([Carapa guianensis](#)). The oil is reputed to be an anti-inflammatory, antifungal and antibacterial as well as being very high in Vitamin E and effective in repelling mosquitoes. The community wanted to utilize the oil in cosmetic products,

however they have little experience creating cosmetic and consumer products with broad appeal and requested assistance from FAVACA. In collaboration with [Partners of the Americas](#) and the [Ministry of Amerindian Affairs of Guyana](#), FAVACA recruited Dr. Henry Chan, Technical Director of [Maylan Skincare](#) and former Research and Development Manager for Blistex, to travel to Guyana August 16-29, 2011 to help community members develop cosmetic products such as lotions, creams and shampoos from Crabwood oil and other local resources. Chan provided training on the physical and chemical properties of the ingredients and the function of these ingredients in formulas for creams, lotions and shampoos. Each participant had a chance to weigh the chemicals and heat and mix the products employed. The hands-on experience allowed participants to observe the process and make changes if the product was not congealing correctly. Participants were able to take the shampoo, cream and lotion home to teach other community members to utilize Crabwood oil. Based on Chan's recommendations, the community will also be looking at ways to improve packaging in order to prevent contamination and moisture loss.

### **HAITIAN COMMUNITY RECEIVES PIGEON PEA TRAINING**

The small agricultural community of Bas Groman located just outside of Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti use to be a sugarcane stronghold when the Haitian American Sugar Company (HASCO) had a refinery outside of Port-au-Prince and employed most of the farmers in Bas Groman. HASCO maintained irrigation canals and provided inputs such as fertilizer to farmers to ensure bountiful harvests. When HASCO closed in 1987, their support for clearing irrigational canals and farm inputs ceased. Since then, the canals have overflowed due to debris from continued deforestation and years of neglect and the fertility of the soil has suffered as fertilizer is too costly for most farmers. Farmers are now growing millet – while a Haitian staple, unfortunately generates meager returns. Farmers are desperate to grow an additional crop to increase income and soil fertility. The farmers contacted Royal Palm, a Haitian organization helping to develop agriculture in Bas Groman, which requested FAVACA identify an expert in [pigeon peas](#). Pigeon peas are widely grown and eaten throughout Latin America and the crop is known as a nitrogen fixer or natural fertilizer. Grown in tandem with millet, the community of Bas Groman could increase their profits while also improve the fertility of the soil. With the support of the [Singing for Change Foundation](#), FAVACA recruited Dr. John Sloan, Associate Professor of Environmental Soil Science at the [Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Dallas](#), Texas, and expert in pigeon peas. Sloan traveled to Haiti August 22-25, 2011 and was able to verify that pigeon peas would grow successfully in Bas Groman. Sloan taught community members to grow pigeon peas interspersed with millet.



### **STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR FARMERS IN COLOMBIAN COFFEE TRIANGLE**

In July 2011 the "Coffee Triangle" of Colombia was recently designated a [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) World Heritage site. "The Coffee Triangle is one of the most beautiful regions in Colombia featuring nature, parks, art, coffee culture, and adventure sports" according to Proexport Colombia, the country tourism promotion agency. Within this region, the Chamber of Commerce of Pereira and the Association of Coffee Farmers of Pereira (ASOCAFES), wishing to take advantage of this unique tourism opportunity, requested FAVACA send an expert to help design a strategic plan to promote tourism to that area. Veteran volunteer Gabriel Parra, a native of Colombia, traveled August 29-Sept 7, 2011 to build consensus and develop the strategic plan. He was able to get many local leaders including the mayor and small coffee growers to create a vision of the rustic tourism

experience and gave ASOCAFES the necessary tools to build on their strategic plan. Parra also met with a Bogota based nonprofit organization, the Native Foundation ([Fundacion Nativa](#)) to provide organizational structure support and the US Agency for International Development office to share his experience and explore possibilities for collaboration.

**FAVACA - The Florida Association for Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas**

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