



Trees for the Future  
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PRESS RELEASE  
Contact: Alison Beckwith, 301-699-0148, [alison@alisonbeckwith.com](mailto:alison@alisonbeckwith.com)

***Trees for the Future Warns Looming Hurricane Season Poses Major Risk to Haiti  
Agroforestry experts urge for launch of official countrywide reforestation campaign***

Silver Spring, Md. -- Trees for the Future, a leading nonprofit organization providing economic opportunity and improving livelihoods worldwide through seed distribution and agroforestry training, says the upcoming hurricane season beginning June 1 could prove devastating to Haiti due to the widespread deforestation. The organization is urging the international community and the Haitian government to develop an official countrywide reforestation campaign to plant and protect existing trees as quickly as possible.

“Hurricanes exacerbate all of the problems that deforestation has created,” says Ethan Budiansky, head of Trees for the Future’s Africa and Caribbean program and leader of several tree-planting projects in Haiti. “Normally, the root systems of trees would help absorb the extra rainwater and stabilize the soil, reducing the impact of a hurricane, but without this protection the impact of a major storm could be devastating.”

Agroforestry experts at Trees for the Future say over 98 percent of Haiti is deforested, making the country susceptible to flooding, deadly mudslides and polluted drinking water. Hurricane season often results in significant environmental damage and loss of life in Haiti and this year the devastation could be the worse yet as the country continues to deal with the aftermath of January’s earthquake. In 2004, Hurricane Jeanne killed over 3,000 people. In 2008, hurricanes Gustav, Hanna and Ike killed around 1,000, destroyed 20,000 homes and wiped out 70 percent of the country’s crops.

Experts at Trees for the Future say an emphasis needs to be placed on reforesting the land especially in areas most vulnerable during the hurricane season such as the region of Gonaives. Gonaives, a highly deforested area surrounded by mountains, is often among the hardest hit regions during the hurricane season because the soil does not absorb the extra rainwater, which then runs down the mountains and floods the city below, leading to massive destruction.

“In Gonaives, we specifically plant trees in the mountains and lowlands to protect against erosion and increase water absorption during the rainy season while also improving agriculture and creating income-generating opportunities to help rural communities,” adds Budiansky. “Our programs in Haiti are designed to quickly address the problems of erosion and deforestation.”

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**About Trees for the Future:** Trees for the Future is a Maryland-based leading nonprofit organization founded in 1989 that helps communities around the world plant trees. Through seed distribution, agroforestry training, and in-country technical assistance, it has empowered rural groups to restore tree cover to their lands, protect the environment and help to preserve traditional livelihoods and cultures for generations. To learn more, visit <http://www.plant-trees.org>.

Watch the Trees documentary video here-<http://www.treesftf.org/resources/tftfvideo.htm>