

# Union of Cooperatives for the Development of St. Michel (UCOOPEDSA)



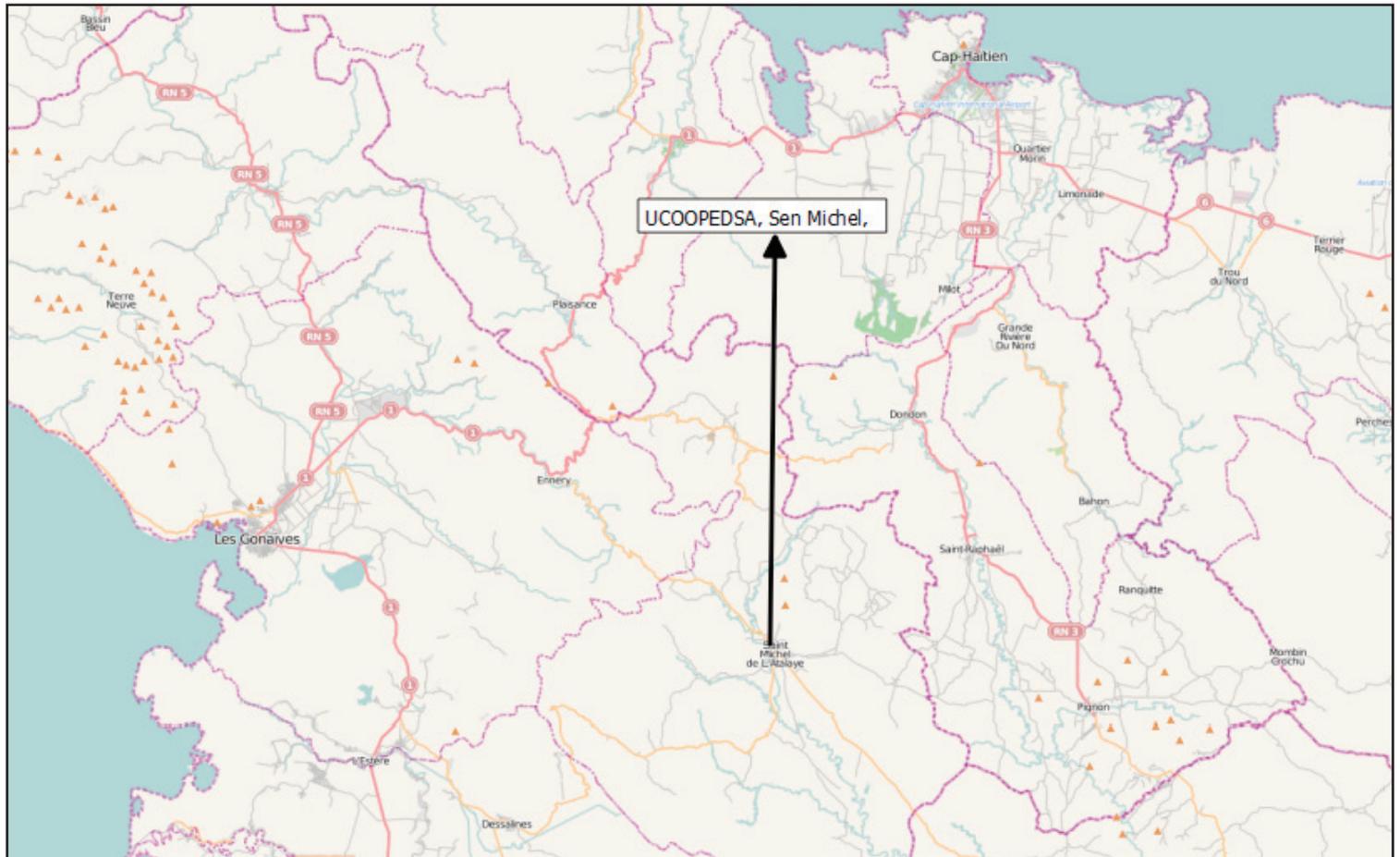
Department: Artibonite

UCOOPEDSA is a network of agricultural cooperatives in St. Michel dedicated to the transformation of agricultural products. Mangoes, its main product, are transformed into mango wine, mango cremas (a creamy liquor), mango jelly, and dried mango.



## What can other communities learn from UCOODEPSA?

\* Transformation and commercialization of agricultural products, particularly mangoes



## History of the organization

St Michel has traditionally been an agricultural region. However, as in many places of rural Haiti, the lack of roads makes it difficult to ship products out. An illustration of this problem is that farmers in the region have been known for cutting down an abundance of mango and other fruit trees for charcoal, as they saw no other value in them. The Union of Cooperatives for the Development of St. Michel de Ataye (UCOODEPSA) began in 2004, when a group of farmers frustrated by the lack of productivity and profitability of their efforts decided to pool their resources and act together as a cooperative.

## Summary of the work

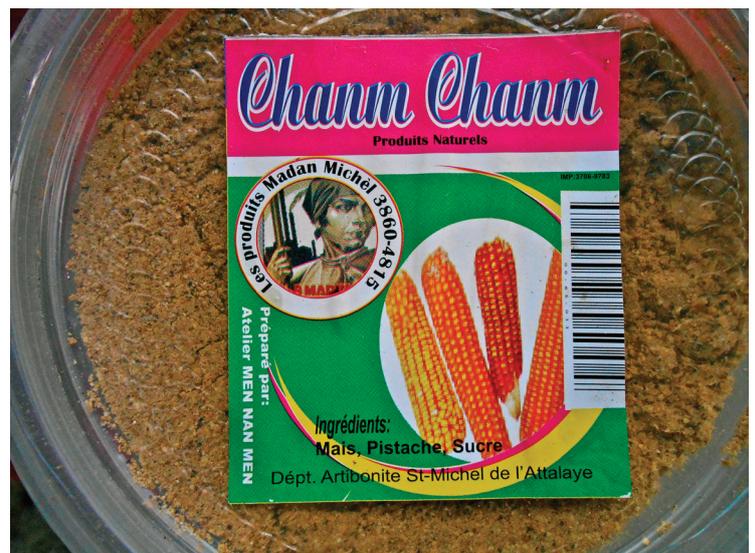
Even though UCOODEPSA began with general farm activities producing corn and beans, it later partnered with a national organization called PRODEVA and began learning how to graft and process mangos. With that training, UCOODEPSA began to offer grafts to all the members of their cooperatives, adding value to the mangoes.

Its initial activities included basic methods of transformation like drying the mangos in the sun and making mango liqueur. They established a second partnership with Oxfam Quebec in order to form a transformation center. The mayor of St Michel provided the land for the construction of the center, allowing the cooperative to scale up.

Today the cooperative transforms mangos on a large scale. Their most popular product is the mango liqueur; St Michel is often referred in Haiti as the capital of kleren alcohol. They also create mango wine, mango cremas (a creamy liquor), mango jelly, dried mango, and occasionally mango and guava ice cream. They also make mango juice, which they provide to local schools.

UCOODEPSA also has created small offshoots of its members into other organizations to process other local materials. One cooperative has begun to process tamarind, and another has begun to process other local fruits such as pineapples. Their vision is for no local products to go to waste, and that all can be transformed and brought to market.

The operational costs of the center are all financed by the profit the cooperative makes off of the products. It has a few dozen employees during the mango season, the vast majority of them that are women.





## What can other communities learn from this initiative?

UCOODEPSA has experience in grafting and transforming agricultural products into commercial ones. It clearly has experience in more than half a dozen techniques to transform mangos, not to mention for tamarind, guava, and other fruits. Although the cooperative received some material support by Oxfam, it also uses processes that don't require sophisticated or modern equipment, and that other cooperatives can learn from. The overall process of transformation and commercialization is something they feel they are still learning, but have already developed an important amount of experience with.

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