



Félicité teaches her neighbors how to grow vanilla and protect the rainforest.
Photo by Mark Metzger/CRS

Rainforests: *The New Frontier*

Rainforests are a rare and valuable resource for poor farming families in Madagascar. Unfortunately, farmers are forced to clear their precious forests out of the basic need to grow food for their families. It's a relentless cycle: Clearing and unsustainable farming techniques cause erosion, soil degradation and loss of soil moisture, dramatically lowering crop yields—and driving farmers to clear even more forests.

Madagascar has lost 75% of its forestland. Deforestation not only perpetuates poverty for farmers, it destroys a fragile and dynamic ecosystem that cradles Madagascar's unique flora and fauna, including endangered lemurs and many plants that have yet to be identified. We must protect this treasure or its rich biodiversity will be lost and the Malagasy people will continue to suffer hunger, malnutrition and limited opportunities for future generations.

Going Far

Through **Go FAR: The Campaign for Catholic Relief Services**, CRS is solving the dual problems of poverty and rainforest destruction. We are transforming livelihoods by restoring degraded land. **Because we should, and because we can.**

Through a global land restoration movement, CRS will help farmers around the world adopt practices to protect soil, water and trees. In Madagascar, for example, CRS is helping farmers grow trees and valuable crops to reduce poverty and protect rainforests at the same time. We are also providing families with access to health care and education to comprehensively address the root causes of human suffering. It's what the Gospel calls us to do.

A Land of Need and Opportunity

Madagascar, the world's fourth largest island, is an epicenter of unique biodiversity. Its natural resources are so rich and diverse that it is known as the eighth continent. It is also known as the "spice island"—the world's largest producer of vanilla and among the leading producers of other valuable crops like pepper, cloves, turmeric and cinnamon, which grow in forested areas.

But people in Madagascar aren't benefitting from their own astounding resources. Instead, they are living in extreme poverty and struggling to feed their families. Almost all Malagasy rely on growing basic food crops for their livelihoods. The key to moving them out of poverty is to end farming practices that are destroying the very land they depend on, diversifying their agricultural production and increasing their access to markets for high-value crops.

AN ISLAND OF RICH RESOURCES

Madagascar is home to **5%** of the world's species

70% of plant and animal species found are unique to the island

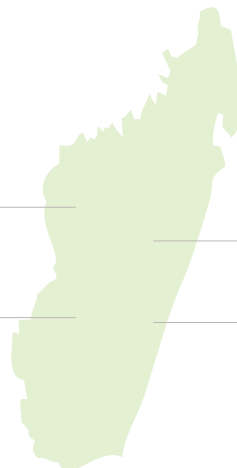
The country produces **85% of the world's vanilla**

AND YET

More than **90% of Malagasies live on less than \$2 a day**

Nearly **50% of children** are chronically malnourished

The **literacy rate** in Madagascar is **65%**





**VANILLA
IS A VINE THAT
NEEDS A TREE
TO WRAP AROUND
AND FOR SHADE**

Growing spices together **promotes sustainable land use** and income .

Vanilla is more valuable by weight than silver, at **\$250 per pound.**

Learn More
about the SPICES project
and our vision for change:
crs.org/go-far-rainforest

The Impact

Most farmers in Madagascar grow rice as their main crop, even though they must clear their precious rainforests for low-yielding harvests. But they can grow something more profitable by weight than silver from inside the forest.

By helping farmers grow spices like vanilla, turmeric and cinnamon, **Catholic Relief Services is helping Malagasy farmers increase their income from \$300 to \$3,000 per year—and protecting rainforests for future generations.**

To accomplish this, farmers need to rebuild their tree-based landscape. This only works if we help them create opportunities to use forests to improve their livelihoods, supporting them to become champions of protecting their environment. With better incomes, families can send their children to school, improve their health and well-being, overcome poverty—and go far in their lives. And because of our holistic approach, called integral human development, CRS and our partners also work with local clinics and schools to train and support staff so they can provide better education and health services.

Working with farmers, communities and partners, we are:

- Reforesting land.
- Improving incomes for farmers by teaching them techniques for growing, processing and marketing spices, fruits and vegetables.
- Helping communities protect their rich diversity of wildlife, beneficial insects and medicinal plants found only in Madagascar.
- Reducing chronic malnutrition.
- Increasing literacy for children, especially girls.

Dreams For The Future

Félicité remembers when the forest around her home in Madagascar was cleared. Her father said he had to cut down the trees to feed his family.

Félicité learned to farm from her father. The family depended on rice, and later began growing bananas and coffee. But their income was unreliable. The banana trees became diseased and the coffee trees old and fruitless.

“I start to dream, because we have always been in need.”

—Félicité

Then the family began growing vanilla. Because the vanilla plant is a vine, it needs a tree to wrap around and a forest to grow. Today, Félicité teaches her children and her neighbors the art of growing vanilla—and protecting the rainforest. “We take care of this domain together and plant together,” she says. Vanilla is opening new horizons for Félicité, her family and her community.

The Legacy

By restoring and rebuilding the rainforest in Madagascar, we are helping farming families like Félicité’s overcome poverty, while protecting some of the world’s most precious resources. But our reach doesn’t end at the island’s edge. Over the next 10 years, CRS will help farmers across the globe reverse land degradation that threatens their crops, reduces their income and limits opportunities for their children. From Africa to Central America to Asia, **CRS will help 1 million vulnerable farmers address this root cause of poverty and hunger** to build healthy and resilient communities with brighter futures. **It’s what we should do. And we can do it.** Together, we will leave a global footprint—a new way of tackling environmental sustainability that supports people and the planet.



Catholic Relief Services | 228 West Lexington Street | Baltimore, MD 21201, USA | crs.org