



SUCCESS STORY

Cashew farmers unite and diversify to increase incomes



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

USAID-ADP is helping farmers in Usulután improve cashew yields and teaching them to intercrop new crops into production to maximize their land.



A USAID-ADP cashew farmer harvests and dries sesame that he planted in between rows of cashew trees.

Through technical assistance and training in crop management, USAID's IDEA program (2002-2006), increased productivity for a group of cashew farmers by 100 percent. Yields jumped from 1,200 to 2,500 per manzana increasing sales by \$273 per manzana per year. Their initial success under this program ignited excitement in the Usulután peninsula and today these farmers continue to receive training from USAID under the Agricultural Diversification Program (USAID-ADP). As they continue to improve and expand their cashew production, USAID-ADP client farmers are now learning to diversify production with new crops such as sesame and watermelon to generate income while cashew trees mature.

As the excitement carried over to the new program, more and more farmers wanted to work with USAID and the area under improved practices shot from 256 manzanas to 600 manzanas. USAID is teaching them how to prune, weed, identify pest and disease outbreaks and reduce postharvest losses. The program continues to work with producer groups to expand outreach and initiated a seedling production plan to get more farmers started.

One of the groups, headed by Raúl Arnoldo Villalta Rodríguez, organized production for exporters identified by USAID-ADP. The group also started to intercrop sesame into their cashew crops and Villalta has since seen his group's sales increase from \$273 to \$855 per manzana, a 213 percent gain.

Seeing their success, eight other groups in the area have since joined in, planting crops such as sesame and watermelon between rows of cashew trees to maximize the use of the land and earn extra income.

One of these groups planted watermelons and is annually earning \$474 per manzana while waiting for their young cashew trees to produce.

USAID-ADP, which started in June 2006, is a three-year project that increases sales and rural incomes and generates employment by improving farm production. The program also links farmers to processors, supermarket chains, importers and other marketing agents, strengthening the commercial sustainability of El Salvador's agribusiness value-chain.