



SUCCESS STORY

Increased income leads to more jobs on Salvadoran farm



Stakes, raised beds and terraces are used on Orellana's farm.



Cucumbers are harvested on Orellana's farm.



Farm workers sort cucumbers for the market.

Photos by Fintrac, Inc.

For most of his professional life, Jose Adalberto Orellana Argueta was primarily a cattle dealer, though he also engaged in small-scale production of chayote and plantains on his 3.5-hectare farm in Guanacaste, Arambala, Morazán. With the help of the Segundo Montes Foundation, a Salvadoran NGO, Orellana learned about the possibility of diversifying his production through technical assistance from USAID's Center for Agribusiness Investment, Development, and Export (IDEA) program. Orellana joined the program in 2005 and was able to diversify his farm's potential, grow high-value crops such as sweet peppers and tomatoes and take advantage of the water available on his property. When the IDEA program ended, Orellana continued to modernize his production with USAID's Agricultural Diversification Program (ADP) and his average monthly income jumped 445 percent.

Orellana used USAID's financial assistance to install 0.7 hectares of drip irrigation, which he later doubled with his own funds. Orellana has kept his drip-irrigated farm under constant production, planting a wide range of crops throughout the year, including green beans, chayote, sweet peppers, cucumbers and tomatoes.

Besides installing drip irrigation, Orellana has used several other ADP recommendations to improve his land's potential, including:

- Terracing his farm's hillsides to reduce erosion.
- Increasing the organic matter content of the soil and creating raised beds for planting.
- Designing a schedule for continuous planting and crop rotation.

Orellana graduated from ADP in April 2007. In the two years that he was with the program, Orellana's average monthly income jumped from \$550 to more than \$3,000, enabling him to improve his family's home and send his sons to college. Moreover, because of increased production, Orellana's farm now serves as a permanent source of employment for 11 people. Before USAID assistance he only employed two on a temporary basis.

For Orellana it has been a great personal achievement to attain such results on his farm, especially since other assistance programs declined to work with him, stating that his property was only suitable for pasture land. Now, because of its increased production and use of soil conservation, Orellana's farm has greatly increased in value and will now better provide for him, his family and his community.

USAID-ADP, which started in June 2006, is a three-year project that increases sales and incomes for small farmers, generates employment, improves farming and food safety practices and boosts Salvadoran exports. 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.