



SUCCESS STORY

After years of failure, woman finds new hope in agriculture

For years, María Luisa Pineda, could not get her 15-hectare farm to produce. She tried to grow traditional crops such as sugar cane and coffee but was hampered by low productivity and poor quality and was only able to generate \$6,800 in annual income. She even tried hiring a local company to run her farm but the experience left only bad memories and even less income, approximately \$2,000. Turned off by agriculture, she abandoned her farm for four years.

In February 2007 she contacted a technician from the USAID-funded Agricultural Development Program (USAID-ADP), who encouraged her to plant cucumbers and tomatoes on 0.7 hectares with drip irrigation that she received from the program as a co-investment. She took out a loan for production costs and started production as the program technician trained her in soil preparation, water and soil analysis, raised beds, nutrition programs, and safe use of pesticides.

Her first planting with program guidance generated \$6,500 in six months, helping her take care of her loan and inspiring her to continue. She expanded to 1.4 hectares with drip irrigation and planted onions, sweet peppers, corn, as well as calendarized cucumbers and tomatoes.

After learning USAID-ADP's approach to agriculture production, her yields and quality improved and her annual income is now \$11,500.

Pineda has made an important impact on the zone by employing two women and 12 men. She also reactivated sugar cane production, which offers temporary work to 20 people. According to Pineda, although sugar cane is less profitable than her other crops, it allows her to keep more of her farm productive.

Pineda says USAID-ADP gave her the opportunity to make her farm productive and provide job opportunities to people in Zunca, Atiquizaya in the department of Ahuachapán.

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.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Pineda shows off her cucumber field.



A worker on Pineda's farm harvests tomatoes.