



SUCCESS STORY

Family farm generates huge profits with USAID assistance



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Mrs. Castro-Palma harvests sweet peppers in Usulután.



A farm employee checks plant development.

The Castro-Palma family of Anchilas, Usulután raised cattle and grew traditional, rain-fed crops such as corn and sesame and only earned an average annual net income of \$950.

Knowing she and her family could get more out of her land, Susana Castro-Palma sought help from USAID's Agricultural Diversification Program (ADP).

After getting in contact with a USAID-ADP technician, and hearing the program's ideas on how she could diversify and incorporate modern technologies, Mrs. Castro-Palma decided to sell her cattle to raise money for her farm.

She started by planting 0.7 hectares of sweet pepper with drip irrigation and raised beds. USAID-ADP helped her every step of the way with weekly technical assistance visits and helped share the cost of some of the equipment. The program also taught her how to grow live barriers to protect her crop from pest infestations and the safe use of pesticides to protect her family and consumers.

Yields in the first six months of harvesting sweet peppers topped 40 tons, generating \$17,420. Minus production costs of \$8,460, her profits of \$8,960 are many times greater than in years before joining USAID-ADP.

Because of this astounding success, Mrs. Castro-Palma decided to double her land under drip irrigation and incorporate new crops.

Her planting program now includes baby squash to rotate with their sweet peppers and they generated an additional \$7,200 from their first crop. She plans to use profits to increase the area under drip irrigation and plant jalapeños.

With so much more work in the field for harvesting and transplanting, the family has hired two permanent employees and three temporary ones. She is now investing in her home where she lives with her husband and four children and bought a pick-up truck to get her produce to the market.

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.