



SUCCESS STORY

Improved techniques helps farmer expand production



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

USAID-ADP farmer Rubén Pérez grows plantains in Ahuachapán.

Pérez's is using drip irrigation in his plantain fields.



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— Rubén Pérez, USAID-ADP farmer

Rubén Pérez saw plantains as the crop of the future and started growing it on his farm in San Francisco Menéndez in the department of Ahuachapán. Though he knew the potential, he had no idea how to do it in the present.

Pérez started by planting 2.1 hectares with traditional methods used by other farmers in the area, including furrow irrigation.

His harvests typically yielded 4,200 lbs. (148 bunches with approximately 45 plantains on each one), which earned him an average of \$360 per harvest. Pérez performed the farm work with three members of his family, as well as with three day laborers for the harvest season.

He also grew papaya but always “without technique,” as Pérez put it. During one crop cycle he lost 60 percent of the harvest because of disease problems. This, together with the low productivity of his plantain crop, discouraged him from farming altogether.

Then the opportunity arose to meet with a USAID-ADP project technician. Once Pérez learned about the positive outcomes that were happening in the region, he immediately set out to obtain technical assistance. Pérez started working with USAID-ADP in October of 2006, planting 1 hectare of plantains with drip irrigation.

He also immediately moved away from traditional crop management and instead applied techniques such as raised beds, high density planting, biological controls, fertigation, integrated pest management (IPM), and postharvest management.

Pérez's improved crop management increased production to an average of 19 metric tons (743 bunches with approximately 35 plantains each). This generated \$1,330 per harvest, a 270 percent increase.

Pérez expanded his land under drip irrigation and bought a 1-hectare plot of land that he intends to grow plantains on. He also plans to diversify and rotate production by incorporating papaya. The improved production is also generating jobs. He recently hired a full-time employee and seven temporary employees.

For this reason, Pérez says “I appreciate this project’s support and I would invite other producers in the region to follow its example.”